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## Fidelity in *Dracula* Adaptations

Jonathan Harker and Renfield

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## Introduction

In 1897, Bram Stoker wrote his *Dracula*, an epistolary novel detailing the efforts of a group of men and women to battle Count Dracula, a Transylvanian vampire who attempts to move to England and expand his race. The novel became a great success, and it contributed greatly to vampires entering contemporaneous popular culture. Even now, over a hundred years later, Count Dracula is still among the best known gothic figures, and many of the other characters, such as professor Abraham van Helsing and the lunatic Renfield, have become names that most people would know, or at least be somewhat familiar with. Bram Stoker's novel was one of the earlier representations of vampires in popular culture, and they remain popular even now. In a way, vampire franchises such as *Twilight*, *True Blood*, and *Vampire Diaries* have *Dracula* to thank for their success (Bortolotti 7). Because of the incredible success of Bram Stoker's novel, there were a large amount of adaptations in film and television series. There have been, for example, adaptations of this novel in Russia, the United States, and Turkey, which illustrates the popularity of the story not only in the United Kingdom, but far beyond its borders as well (Wicke 6). Basically, an adaptation is the transition of a narrative from one medium to another, but the term is a lot more complex and will be properly defined later. Adaptations, however, do not always follow the original narrative of the novel and often change important scenes, characters, and events. This means that adaptations contain a varying amount of fidelity, which is the term used for the extent to which an adaptation remains true to the story it was based on. Like the term adaptation, what scholars have termed fidelity will be properly defined later. In this thesis, two adaptations of *Dracula* will be examined to see to what extent they remain true to the source.

The adaptations that have been chosen are *Dracula*, the 1931 movie directed by Tod Browning and starring Bela Lugosi as Dracula, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a movie directed and composed by Francis Ford Coppola in 1992, featuring Gary Oldman and Anthony Hopkins. Throughout the twentieth century, Universal Studios produced seven *Dracula* adaptations, and Hammer Films produced several more. The 1931 *Dracula* movie was chosen because it was one of the first successful filmic adaptations of the novel, as well as one of the best known adaptations of its century (Vieira 42). *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was similar in that respect, as it was one of the largest box-office hits of its time (Fox). Furthermore, the movie was nominated for several awards, which indicates that it was a successful and popular movie. Their popularity, however, is not the only reason they were chosen. Unlike many other adaptations, these two movies present the same narrative as the novel. In this respect they differ from sequels such as *Dracula's Daughter* and *Son of Dracula*, from 1936 and 1943 respectively. This makes a comparison between the two narratives possible. It is much more difficult to screen for fidelity when two works follow completely different storylines, or, as is the case here, expand on an already existing story by adding their own stories. However, analyzing and discussing the fidelity throughout the entirety of both movies is too big a task for the scope of this research paper, leading to a loss of focus and detail. Furthermore, many elements have already been discussed by

other scholars, and doing the same again would merely lead to repetition. Therefore, the focus will shift away from the general story of the movies and onto two specific characters that appear in the novel and in both of the films. The most apparent choice would perhaps be Count Dracula himself, but he will not be discussed in this text. The reason for that decision is the fact that there have already been numerous studies into this titular character, such as J.C. Holte's *Dracula in the Dark: the Dracula film adaptation* from 1997, which focuses mainly on the Count and his role in several different adaptations compared to the original novel. Furthermore, Dracula has also been researched by Clare Haworth-Maden, who wrote *The Essential Dracula* in 1992 and analyzed and chronicled his appearances in popular media. Going back in time even further, Thomas G. Aylesworth discussed Dracula's depiction in movies in *The Story of Vampires* in 1977. Evidently, Dracula is a well-researched character, and because of this the focus of this thesis will be on two other characters. The characters that will be discussed are Jonathan Harker and Renfield. These two were chosen because both men have an important role in the novel and take part in several key events, but also because there are several interesting issues going on with them in the movies. They are interpreted differently in both movies, with their roles being diminished or enlarged, and sometimes even switched between the characters, as will be demonstrated in a later chapter.

By looking at these two characters, and determining to what extent they have been kept in line with their literary counterparts, claims can be made about the fidelity of the movies to the novel. However, that is not the only aspect on which new insights might arise. This study can also, for example, show what aspects are deemed more important in the movies than in the novel, and what the influence of the medium is in these adaptations. It is important to note that Jonathan experiences more throughout the narrative and has a more prominent position in the story than Renfield. Because of that, there is more relevant information on Jonathan than there is on Renfield. This leads to a slight imbalance in the analysis, since it is necessary to address more of Jonathan's aspects than Renfield's, resulting in less text on the latter.

Since this text will focus on Jonathan and Renfield, it is crucial to have a short overview of their roles in Bram Stoker's original novel.

### **Character overview**

Jonathan Harker is a newly trained solicitor who is sent to Transylvania to discuss business with a client, Count Dracula. Harker ended up being trapped within the Count's castle, where he slowly deduced the secrets of the vampire and his species. He eventually managed to escape with his journal, but he suffered a mental breakdown because of the traumatic events, and ended up in a convent. His fiancée, Mina Murray, arrived to take care of him. They married, and soon after returned to England, where Harker once again saw Count Dracula, now looking younger than before. When professor Van Helsing contacted Mina and Jonathan they learnt that Mina's close friend Lucy had been turned into a

vampire by the Count. They then joined the fight against the vampires, but Mina ended up in the Count's thrall, slowly becoming a vampire herself. Thus Jonathan had to deal with his lover slowly drifting away from him while tracking down Dracula to save her.

Jonathan is a passionate and driven man, who would stop at nothing to find and stop Dracula and save his wife, who was his main reason to continue fighting, rather than giving up. He proclaims that he is willing to sacrifice his own soul as long as he could send Dracula's soul to burn in hell. After Mina's turning into a vampire, Jonathan is forced to vow that he would kill her if necessary, but in his private diary, notes that if there were no other way, he would let Mina turn him into a vampire so that they could be together still.

Renfield, on the other hand, is one of the inmates of John Seward's lunatic asylum, where he was diagnosed as being a "Zoophagus maniac" (Stoker 60). Renfield harboured the illusion that he could absorb the life force of creatures by eating them, and used sugar to lure flies into his cell. When those were no longer sufficient for him, he used the flies to lure spiders, and later the spiders to lure birds, all in the hopes of prolonging his life through theirs. His affliction, however, also made him prone to influence of Count Dracula, who could control creatures such as rats and bats. The vampire made him a proposition: if Renfield worshipped and aided him, he would provide an endless amount of food. Renfield, compelled to give in, declined the offer out of desire to keep Mina Harker safe. When his release from the asylum was denied, he attempted to fight Dracula when he entered his cell, but the vampire easily overpowered him and severely injured him. The noise from the fight attracted the attention of the group of vampire hunters led by Van Helsing, and Renfield was barely able to tell them his story. The hunters, realizing Mina is in danger, rushed off, leaving Renfield to die alone in his cell.

Renfield's personality is complicated, as is often noted by John Seward, who keeps notes on Renfield because he considers him to be a special patient. Renfield would often be aggressive and violent at one moment, only to be polite and agreeable the next. Most often, these mood swings would be caused by Renfield's desire to obtain something, like a cat, and then being told he cannot have it. Renfield seemed to truly like Mina, for whom he ended up sacrificing his own life in an attempt to stop the Count from reaching her, but he never showed such affinity to any of the other characters and even seemed to dislike Van Helsing, with whom he refused to speak.

### **Approach**

In order for these characters to be properly analyzed, several aspects of them will be addressed through three fundamental questions. Firstly, do their inner and outer traits in the movies differ from the description given in the novel, what is the possible effect of this, and to what extent is this caused by the shift in medium? By looking at this, a good starting description of the characters will be provided. Secondly, how do the narrative's influences on Jonathan and Renfield in the adaptation compare to the

influences in the source text? This will build on the first question and reveal the influences of certain actions and events throughout the narrative, and the results in the adaptations will be compared to those in the novel. And finally, does the importance of these two characters in the narrative of the movies differ from their importance in the novel, and what influences does this have on the narrative as a whole? Each of these three questions will be addressed in a separate chapter, in which the depictions of both Jonathan Harker and Renfield in the different works will be contrasted and compared to their original counterparts. In the end, the combination of the answers to these questions will form the answer to the main question, namely how much fidelity is there in the depictions of Jonathan Harker and Renfield in the adaptations to their original counterparts from the novel and to what extent did the change in medium influence this? In general, the first two of the three sub-questions deal with character development, whereas the third question focuses more on narrative aspects. However, before a proper analysis of the adaptations and their fidelity can be made both the terms *adaptation* and *fidelity* need further defining and explaining, which will be done in the following chapter. The next chapter will not only define these two terms, it will also provide more background information and explain how they will be handled, thus establishing a theoretical framework.

## Chapter 1

The field of adaptations is a very substantial genre, focusing mainly on literary works and movies. The range of adaptations also includes media like video games and music albums. However, the term being used to describe such a wide variety of products makes it a very ambiguous word with several different definitions. Therefore, it is crucial to have one clear working definition before the analysis of the *Dracula* adaptations can be started.

In her book, *A Theory of Adaptation* from 2006, Linda Hutcheon argues that the legal definition of adaptation as a “derivative work” is both problematic and simplified, and should therefore not be used in the adaptation discussion. She claims that, since we use *adaptation* for both the product and the process, a two-fold definition would be better, and describes the product as being “a formal entity or product” that is “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (7). Working onwards from that definition, she divides it into two separate categories, one from the point of view of the adapter, and one from the perspective of the audience. She describes it as “a creative *and* interpretive act” on the part of the adapter, and “an extended intertextual engagement” for the audience (8). Hutcheon then moves on to explain the first of these categories as being an act of creation, or re-creation, and interpretation. She also stresses that interpretation always precedes the creation, as the adaptation is a product of a different mind than the original (18). The second category, focusing more on the audience, is explained as “unavoidably [being] a kind of intertextuality.” She does add one condition to this statement: it can only be intertextuality if the audience is familiar with the adapted work (21). This particular addition, however, is not necessarily true. As long as someone can find an intertext between two works, there is intertextuality. This does not mean that everyone has to be aware of it.

The extensive definition Hutcheon provides has several implications for adaptations in general. Since she states that an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition, that means that an adaptation can only be seen as an adaptation if the audience, consisting of critics or not, actually recognizes it as an adaptation. Furthermore, an adaptation is not an adaptation if the developer did not intend it to be so. This definition of adaptations also indicates that the interpretation of the adapter has a large influence on the adaptation as a product. This might seem like a trivial or logical idea, but its importance will be addressed again when discussing the fidelity aspect of adaptations. This definition, however extensive, fails to make one crucial distinction, namely between adaptations and sequels and fan fiction. Both sequels and fan fiction are ways to artificially prolong a narrative. They still salvage aspects from a source text, but rather than interpreting and re-creating it, they alter or expand on it. The main difference between sequels and fan fiction is then that, usually, sequels are more official and canon than fan fiction, which is, as the name suggests, fiction written by fans.

Fidelity, much like adaptation, is a term that can be used in different ways. The easiest way to define the term *fidelity* however, is “the degree of adherence an adaptation shows when compared to

the adapted material” (Sanders 17). This is also the definition that will be used throughout this thesis, although it is not as narrow as it might seem at first. Fidelity does not stretch merely to the narrative of a certain work, but it also encompasses things that are normally beneath the surface, such as genre, character development and narrative structures. Fidelity has been a major issue and point of discussion in adaptation studies over the past years, but both Hutcheon and Sanders state that we should no longer look upon fidelity as the only way of determining the success of an adaptation. Hutcheon argues that “one way to think about unsuccessful adaptation is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one’s own and thus autonomous” (20-1). This inclination to move away from fidelity as the only way to determine the success of an adaptation is something relatively new in the field of adaptation studies, but is shared amongst many scholars nonetheless (Albrecht-Crane 29). Therefore, if the analysis of the *Dracula* adaptations results in the finding that their fidelity to the novel is limited, this does not necessarily mean that they are unsuccessful adaptations, or even unsuccessful movies.

If fidelity cannot be used to make claims on the success of an adaptation one might wonder what it can be used for. By comparing and contrasting the adaptations, and thus scanning for fidelity or infidelity, the changes made by the developers of the adaptations become apparent. And, while this does not necessarily say anything about how successful the adaptation is, it does say something about the liberties the developers took with the adapted material. In turn, these liberties or restraints will reveal what aspects of the adapted work were deemed more important than others by the adapters and their intended audiences. The important aspects will be put into the adaptation either unchanged or with minimal changes, whereas facets of the source text which are perceived as less important might be changed or even removed entirely.

Fidelity, however, can be a difficult concept to work with. It is a very abstract idea, and is therefore difficult to measure in an objective way. Through the three aforementioned questions, it has been made somewhat more manageable, focusing on fidelity with regard to two characters and their development. First, the outer and inner characteristics of Jonathan Harker and Renfield in both movies will be compared to the description given in the novel, focusing on features that are remarkably different from or similar to Stoker’s depiction of the characters, and analyzing how this ties in to possible changes in their personality and character, as well as looking at their thoughts and the way these are portrayed. Then, the narrative will be followed, still focusing on the two characters and the scenes in which they appear, looking at their importance, position and the point of view, and important changes or similarities between the movies and the adapted novel will be analyzed and discussed. Finally, their status at the end of the novel will be compared to their statuses at the end of both movies, once again drawing the comparison for fidelity.

Fidelity and adaptation are not the only terms used in this paper, and several other key terms need explaining and defining, the first of which is genre. Since this thesis will discuss *Dracula*, the main genre of importance is the gothic. This genre is often characterized by its gloomy atmosphere,

mysteries and supernatural entities, such as ghosts and monsters (Smith 19). A good example of these monsters are the vampires encountered in Bram Stoker's novel. Susan Chaplin wrote that the function of such a monster is often to present the evil side of a conflict in a tangible form (Chaplin 48). It has to be noted that, even though *Dracula* is a gothic novel, this does not necessarily mean that both of its adaptations are also gothic. The 1931 adaptation is classified as a vampire-horror movie, and the 1992 adaptation is considered a horror fantasy erotic drama film. In both instances the term 'gothic' is lost, and replaced by horror, which is a facet of the gothic genre. The 1992 movie adds several other aspects to this, such as drama, erotic, and fantasy, straying farther from the original genre of the source text.

Furthermore, vocalization and point of view will also be discussed in this paper. These terms are relatively similar, and are used to indicate whose experience the audience receives. For example, the first four chapters of the novel are seen from Jonathan's point of view, so the main focus is on him, and the audience reads his about his thoughts and actions. Since the novel is in epistolary form, there is always a clear point of view, namely that of the person who wrote that particular entry. In the adaptations, vocalization or point of view is often somewhat more difficult to pinpoint, because there can be multiple characters in a certain scene, without any of them clearly being the main vocalization. Certain characters, such as Dracula and Renfield, do not have a vocalization of their own in the novel. They did not write any of the documents in the novel, and we never experience anything from their point of view. Furthermore, everything we do read about them is because someone else wrote about it. However, this does not mean that they are not important to the narrative. In the filmic adaptations, these characters might get a voice of their own, resulting in scenes where they are alone, and thus the main point of view.

Another aspect that will return several times throughout the paper is the shift in medium. Since this thesis will discuss a novel and two filmic adaptations, there are bound to be difference that originate from the shift in medium: from novel to film. In certain instances, movie-techniques such as camera angles, voice-overs and music become equally, of not more, important than the actual spoken text and actions performed by the characters.

In the next chapter, the actual analysis of this thesis begins. It will focus on the outward appearance and character traits of the chosen characters, comparing those with the description provided by Bram Stoker in the original novel and looking at the role of the medium.

## Chapter 2

This chapter will focus on the inner and outer traits of Jonathan and Renfield, answering the question whether their inner and outer characteristics in the adaptations differ from the novel, and to what extent that may be caused by the shift in medium. First, their outward appearance in the adaptations will be discussed and compared to the descriptions provided in the novel. After that, their personalities and psyche will be analyzed, once again relating the adaptations to the source text. An important process to keep in mind is the change of medium from novel to movie, and its influence on the depictions of these characters, as well as certain genre conventions of, for example the gothic genre, that may have influenced either the author or the directors, and are therefore important to the shaping of the characters.

### Appearances

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is an epistolary novel, in this case consisting of diary entries, journals and letters. Because of this, the descriptions of the specific characters in the novel are often very general, vague, or even completely absent. After all, if someone keeps a journal or diary, it would make little sense to give elaborate descriptions of people he or she knows, since journal entries are often for personal use only. This is also the case for the fictional diary and journal transcripts found in *Dracula*, and the letters are mostly to close friends who know the individuals that appear in the text, making an extensive description futile. Furthermore, the gothic genre, to which *Dracula* belongs, is well known for its sense of mystery, and not describing everything fully is one of the ways in which such an atmosphere can be created (Gamer 26). This, however, does not mean that the novel does not give us any ideas on the physical appearance of Jonathan Harker and Renfield at all.

The only description of Jonathan Harker's appearance is found in a part of the journal kept by John Seward, a close friend of Jonathan and the warden of the asylum. After Mina's encounter with Dracula, Seward writes:

Last night he was a frank, happy-looking man, with strong youthful face, full of energy, and with dark brown hair. Today he is a drawn, haggard, old man, whose white hair matches well with the hollow burning eyes and grief-written lines on his face (Stoker 251).

This does not only give us a general idea of Harker's appearance, it also shows that, after the incident between Mina and Count Dracula, there is a significant change in his physique, because his emotional grief leaves its mark on his appearance. In the 1931 movie *Dracula*, Jonathan is played by David Manners, who was in his early thirties during the shooting of the movie. Surely enough, he looks like the youthful man described in the novel. However, after Mina turns into a vampire, there is no physical change to Jonathan – he remains evenly youthful, and the only change is in his behaviour. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* from 1992 also contains a depiction of Jonathan Harker as youthful at the start

of the narrative, portrayed by Keanu Reeves. In this movie, however, his hair turns grey after Mina's troubles start. While this is indeed in line with the novel, any further change, such as the haggardness and grief-written lines have not been applied. There can, of course, be several reasons for this. One of these reasons is provided by Francis Ford Coppola's son, Roman, in a documentary about his father's work, in which he explained that his father made the decision not to use computers for their special effects (Coppola). A lack of time or attention may also have contributed to this. The most likely reason, however, is that it was decided to keep Keanu Reeves attractive, as Coppola stated that they "tried to get some kind of matinee idol for the part of Jonathan, because it isn't such a great part. If we all were to go to the airport with Winona and Gary Oldman and I and anyone shy of Tom Cruise, Keanu is the one that the girls would just besiege" (*New Strait Times*). This shows that Keanu was casted for the role due to his popularity, and making him look haggard and aged would have counteracted the maker's intentions, and it could have resulted in decreased sales. Nevertheless, the lack of change in Jonathan, intentional or not, suggests that he is not as worried about Mina as in the novels.

When compared to Jonathan, the depiction of Renfield's physical appearance and its fidelity to the novel are somewhat harder to pinpoint, as we are not given an actual description of his outward appearance. The only clue Stoker left for us in his novel is the following quote: "R. M. Renfield, aetat 59 – Sanguine temperament, great physical strength; morbidly excitable; periods of gloom ending in some fixed idea which I cannot make out" (Stoker 58). This reveals the fact that Renfield is 59 years old, and apparently in good physical shape. These points, however brief, are already interesting to look at. In the 1931 movie, Renfield is portrayed by Dwight Frye, who was in his early thirties, but looks considerably younger in the movie. In the 1992 movie, Tom Waits fills the role, and he was already in his forties. Add to that the fact that Renfield is portrayed with half-long grey hair and glasses in the 1992 movie, this rendition of the character appears to be much closer to the Renfield encountered in the source text. Furthermore, Frye is not very tall, but appears to be physically fit in the movie, whereas the Renfield played by Waits appears considerably older and more feeble. These changes are not as important as the lack of change in Jonathan's appearance, and do not really represent an underlying idea, which might be the reason the producers of the adaptations seem to have paid less attention to it.

All in all, appearance-wise, the renditions of Jonathan Harker appear to be quite different, due to the actors looking nothing alike. However, since we have no description of Jonathan's facial structure, lengths, and weight, they both fit the role well. The only major change made between the movies is the change in hair colour, whereas the renditions of Renfield differ dramatically. This, however, might be explained by the lack of actual descriptions in the novel. It should also be noted that the shift in medium has a large impact on the appearances of these characters in the adaptations. Movies are dependent on actors to provide a tangible embodiment of the fictional characters, and it is virtually impossible to find an actor who looks exactly like the character described in a novel, which

means that appearances are incredibly likely to deviate from the descriptions. As was stated before, the lack of descriptions is inherent to the gothic novel. Since filmic adaptations feature an actual visible representation of a character, this genre trait is immediately lost in the movies, diminishing the sense of mystery to a certain degree and thus slowly moving away from the gothic genre. The more important aspect to focus on might be their personality and behaviour, which will provide more material to work with.

### **Jonathan's personality**

At the start of the novel, Harker might best be described as an intelligent and polite solicitor, although he is also somewhat naïve and unwitting. His naïveté is lost after his escape from Count Dracula in Transylvania and his subsequent recovery from the brain fever. He is very passionate about his love for Mina, and an honest and loyal friend to the rest of the group, but otherwise Jonathan has little that makes him special, essentially making him a flat character. Many of the other characters, such as the eccentric Van Helsing and the brave Quincey Morris, tend to overshadow him when they share scenes. Jonathan is usually seen and described as the quiet business-like gentleman, who is uncommonly clever but usually remains in the background. There is, however, a visible change in his psyche when comparing the Jonathan from the start of the novel to the Jonathan at the end. When he travels to Transylvania, he is described as “full of energy,” “discreet,” and “grown into manhood” (Stoker 27). He is, however, also described as a “sufficient substitute” which gives the impression that he is not being taken seriously in his professional life yet. In Dracula's castle, once he realizes he is imprisoned, he “demonstrates both surprising initiative and immense personal courage [. . .] to outwit the Count.” (Leatherdale 115). It is in the castle that we learn of Jonathan being capable of using “extreme physical violence when aroused” (116). Judging from Jonathan's reaction to his own actions, it may well be that this was also the first time he realized this about himself, never having been in such a situation before.

Following his escape, Jonathan has a short period of weakness and doubt, not being sure whether the events that transpired within Castle Dracula actually took place, and during this time Mina described him as being “a wreck of himself” and “thin and pale and weak-looking” (Stoker 127). He soon realizes that the events did actually take place, which seems to fill him with a sense of duty and determination. Towards the end of the novel, when Mina and Jonathan hold hands, his grip is described as being “so strong, so self-reliant, so resolute” (Stoker 284). This evolution of his character is also seen when he cuts Dracula's throat, a very violent physical act, and something he would probably not have been capable of at the start of the novel.

As was said before, Jonathan's relationship with Mina is one of the defining aspects of his character. He places his full trust in her when he gives her his diary containing the events at Castle Dracula, and asking her to do with it as she thinks right. Furthermore, Jonathan's motivation to take

down Dracula increases drastically after Dracula forces Mina to drink his blood, thus making her lose her purity and virtue. Despite these new 'flaws' in Mina, he never gives up on her or stops loving her, showing that his love is true and deep. Before they journey to Transylvania to chase the Count, Mina makes all of her friends promise her that they would kill her if it proved to be necessary. Jonathan eventually gives in to her demands, albeit reluctantly. In his private diary, however, he writes that he is willing to become a vampire himself if that is the only way to continue his life with Mina. Despite that, he is very driven to save her and would sacrifice his own soul to kill Dracula and save his beloved.

In the 1931 movie, Jonathan appears to have a relatively similar personality, although he seems to be a little more social and spontaneous. He exchanges more pleasantries than he does in the novel, although that might also be attributed to the fact that the particular scene, taking place in an opera, is not present in the novel at all. A strange change is made in the interaction between Jonathan and Dracula, who meet each other in an English opera and get along relatively well. This, of course, is only possible because Jonathan never travelled to Transylvania in the movie and thus has not met the Count before, nor does he know of his vampiric nature. Due to the change in the opening scene and Jonathan not travelling to Castle Dracula, his change in personality from the polite young solicitor to the violent vampire killer is never really explained in the movie, making it very unclear what brought the sudden change about, and constituting a break from the novel, in which Jonathan's darker side slowly rises as the narrative unfolds. Furthermore, Jonathan does appear to love Mina, but his emotions never quite reach the high point as in the novel. Combining all these facts leads to the impression that character development is not as important in this adaptation as it was in the source text, since the audience essentially only sees the starting and ending point of his personality change.

In the 1992 movie, Jonathan does travel to Transylvania, and as he visits Count Dracula, he acts much like the young man we read about in the novel. He is somewhat shy and reluctant to initiate conversation, which may be attributed to Dracula's rather erratic behaviour, but answers questions politely and sticks to the etiquette. His period of emotional downfall appears to be completely absent from the movie, and he instead moves from the polite young man to the ruthless vampire hunter without anything in between, which means the audience sees very little character development in this adaptation as well. Like the 1931 movie, Jonathan is clearly in love with Mina, but his expressions of the emotion always remain somewhat timid. They share many kisses, but that is most likely due to the movie being meant as a horror fantasy erotic drama film, marking a large shift in genre, as well as the shift from novel to movie. Physical affection is one of the primary ways to express love on screen, and Coppola probably felt that the wordy expressions of love in the novel would not do well in a movie.

### **Renfield's personality**

Renfield's personality is much more defined than Jonathan's in the novel. At some point, doctor Seward writes about him in his diary, and the entry reads as follows:

The case of Renfield grows more interesting the more I get to understand the man. He has certain qualities very largely developed: selfishness, secrecy, and purpose. I wish I could get at what is the object of the latter. He seems to have some settled scheme of his own, but what it is I do not yet know. His redeeming quality is a love of animals, though, indeed, he has such curious turns in it that I sometimes imagine he is only abnormally cruel. (Stoker 58)

This quote highlights some of Renfield's most interesting characteristics. In general, Renfield suffers from extreme mood swings and delusions. One of the most striking features of his personality in the novel is the fact that he can be nice and polite to someone, before suddenly turning aggressive and attacking them. An instance of this can be seen when Renfield attacks Doctor Seward in an attempt to drink his blood. Furthermore, his character also heavily depends on who he is interacting with. He is usually polite to Seward, but he plainly refuses to speak to Abraham van Helsing, while being overly pleasant to Mina.

Renfield's clinical vampirism, nowadays better known as Renfield Syndrome, is the reason he was admitted to the lunatic asylum. He collects small animals, such as flies, spiders, and small birds, and eats them alive. Doing so, he believes he is able to absorb their life force and add it to his own. While it is clear that Renfield has some connection to Dracula, it is never really explained whether Renfield became like this due to Dracula's influence, or that he was susceptible to Dracula because of his already existing affliction. Nonetheless, his clinical vampirism is the reason Dracula can take advantage of him by promising him a lifetime supply of rats.

Despite all his quirks, though, it would be wrong to think of Renfield as just a lunatic. In the novel, he is described as very intelligent. This can be seen when he is concocting his schemes, such as using smaller animals to lure in other animals. However, Renfield also shows that he knows Shakespeare and is aware of Abraham van Helsing's research and reputation, even though he is from the Netherlands. This shows that Renfield was most likely a higher ranking member of society before succumbing to his illness.

However, Renfield also has a very important redeeming quality: his affection for Mina and his subsequent attempts to protect her from Dracula. When Renfield is introduced to Mina for the first time, he is unusually polite to her and suddenly explains his own situation in a learned language. Shortly thereafter, Dracula starts pressuring Renfield into letting him into the asylum, and Renfield begs Doctor Seward to let him leave, so that he cannot endanger Mina by letting Dracula enter. This is

his only way of protecting Mina, knowing that he is not strong enough, both mentally and physically, to resist Dracula for long. Naturally, however, his request is denied, and he remains locked inside the asylum. When Dracula eventually deems the time right to make his move, he enters the asylum through Renfield's window, and even though he refers to him as "master" and seems to worship the vampire, Renfield refuses to let him pass. Dracula enters as mist and takes his physical form, which is when Renfield violently attacks him in a vain attempt to protect Mina from his influence. Unfortunately, the vampire easily overpowered him, resulting in his death shortly afterwards, but not before he tells the vampire hunters his story as a final show of good intentions.

Many of these aspects can also be found in the 1931 movie's Renfield. Strangely enough, both movies depict Renfield as being a solicitor, which already shows that he is at the very least somewhat learned. Whereas his level of education is also mentioned in the novel, the adaptations make it more apparent, due to which he comes across as more humane. In the 1931 movie, however, he also appears to be generally more timid than in the novel. His outbreaks of violent aggression, however, still remain, and there are a few instances where Renfield either tries to attack someone or recoils from their touch as if disgusted. Naturally, his clinical vampirism, which is his most important trait and the one he is best known for, is also present in the movie, although its details are somewhat downscaled. For example, Renfield only mentions the flies and the spiders, but there is never any mention of the sparrows nor does he ever ask for a cat. His affections for Mina are also present in the movie, and he eventually begs Seward to let him leave the asylum. When asked for what reason, he replies "My cries at night, they might disturb Miss Mina. They might give her bad dreams" (Browning). Even though the audience knows this is not the actual reason, it does show that he cares for Mina and wishes to protect her. This is also seen when Dracula wants to enter the asylum, and Renfield begs him to spare her, even going so far as to shed tears for her. When Dracula eventually kidnaps Mina, Renfield also comes along, and he implores him to keep Mina from harm. Dracula, believing Renfield betrayed him, kills him.

The Renfield seen in the 1992 movie also seems to be close to his original depiction. The mood swings appear to be less pronounced and happen less often, but they are still there and Renfield still attacks Seward to drink his blood. His clinical vampirism is shown a little better than in the 1931 movie, and the first time we see Renfield, he has a plate of bugs, such as beetles, flies, worms and ants, and eats one of them. He also goes on to beg his doctor to get a kitten, though once again the sparrows remain nowhere to be found. Renfield also seems to be intelligent, as he was a solicitor before he went mad, and still has a certain flair of intelligence about him, even in his madness. There are no further clues to this, though, and it remains an abstract feeling throughout the movie. Renfield's attempt to protect and save Mina, however, have been severely diminished. Renfield asks her to leave the asylum when he first meets her, but after that his role is no longer there. This may be because Mina has, at that point, already fallen under the curse of Dracula, having met him in town and visited the

cinematograph with him. Whatever the reason for this change might have been, it leads to a decrease in the amount of effort Renfield does to protect Mina, thus making him somewhat less redeeming.

An interesting change is made in Renfield where it concerns the adaptations. The gothic genre is well known for its monsters, ghosts and other beasts. These supernatural creatures often serve to clearly illustrate the struggle between good and evil, with the monster being the evil side (Hogle 68). In a certain way, Renfield is also a kind of beast. He is a lunatic, eating life creatures to attain immortality, who behaves erratically and often gets physical. In the novel, this sense is strengthened by the fact that we do not get any background information about him, making him even more mysterious. However, after his final confession to the vampire hunters, readers start to understand Renfield, to a certain point, and he starts to lose his monster-like nature and becomes more human. In the adaptations, however, the contrary is the case. Here Renfield does get a background story – namely his journey to Transylvania – making him more of a human character from the start. However, with the omission of the confession and explanation scene, he ends up as the evil minion of a vampire, making him more akin to a monster again. Since the monsters are ‘supposed’ to represent the evil side of a conflict, that should also go for Renfield. In the novel, this is certainly true, until he explains himself and thus becomes more humane. Since the adaptations turn the beast-human concept around, the same argument cannot be made here.

### **Conclusion**

Fidelity is an abstract term, and when analyzing characters to see how true they remain to their counterparts, it is not a matter of yes or no. There is always fidelity to some extent: for instance, their appearance might be generally the same, but someone may have a larger nose or bushier eyebrows. The same is true for the adaptations of Jonathan and Renfield. In general, their appearances and characters all show are relatively similar, and the differences are not very extreme. All in all, the 1992 appearances appear to closer to the novel, whereas both movies seem to be more or less similar where it concerns the personalities. Due to the shift in medium, certain personality traits are either lost or less visible, since it is harder to get there traits across with acting than it is to described them with words.

In general, however, the adaptations seem less focused on character development, which will also be seen in the next chapter. There can be several reasons for this, but the most likely reason is the fact that movies are often more action-driven than novels are, which leads to character development’s decrease in importance. Jonathan’s relationship with Mina is also changed considerably in both adaptations: it seems much more shallow in the 1931 adaptation, and much more physical in the 1992 adaptation. The most striking change to Renfield is that he appears to be more humane throughout the adaptation when compared to the source text, until his death. Because both movies do not give him the chance to redeem himself much, he ends up as being more of a beast than he was at the end of the novel.

## Chapter 3

In this chapter, some of the important events of the narrative in which Jonathan and Renfield were involved will be examined, paying special attention to the influence this has had their development, in what way this is similar to or deviates from the descriptions provided by Stoker in his novel. The question that will be answered in this chapter is: how do the narrative's influences on these characters in the adaptation compare to the influences in the novel? Naturally, not all events in which the characters were involved are equally important, and not all of them can be discussed. The chosen events are the ones that either had a significant influence on their personality or mindset, or events that show remarkable similarities or deviations in the adaptations when compared to the novel. As was already stated before, movies often tend to be more action driven than novels, and this might very well account for some of the differences discussed in this chapter.

### **Jonathan's character development**

Starting with Jonathan, it is important to point out that, as was said before, Jonathan is somewhat of a weak character at the start of the novel. He has little experience outside his field of work, and accidentally ends up in an entirely different world. His first predicament is his imprisonment in Count Dracula's castle and his subsequent discovery that Dracula is a vampire, a creature Jonathan only knows from myth and folklore. First, Jonathan discovers he is a prisoner, which worries and scares him, as seen in the following quote:

But I am not in heart to describe beauty, for when I had seen the view I explored further; doors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bolted. In no place save from the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!  
(Stoker 24)

This quote shows that Jonathan is very worried when he discovers he is a prisoner, however, in the novel his anguish is strengthened by certain actions of the Count, who impersonates Jonathan and makes sure everyone in England thinks he is fine. These actions are not in either of the adaptations, perhaps because they were not deemed crucial enough to the overall narrative to be included. Jonathan's worries and fears may be the reason for the most important change in Jonathan's personality throughout the narrative, namely his loss of certain inhibitions, such as fear for the Count and his own death. He is, for instance, willing to scale the wall of the castle to reach Dracula's private rooms, knowing he would not survive it if he were to fall.

In the 1931 movie, Jonathan does not experience these emotions, since he is not the solicitor sent to visit Dracula, and he is thus never imprisoned within the castle. Renfield, who takes Harker's place in Transylvania, however, also does not experience these feelings, as the movie has altered into Dracula leaving the castle the day after the solicitor's arrival. This change has a considerably impact on the character development in this adaptation: Jonathan's vocalization at the start of the narrative is

removed entirely. Renfield gets a background, and extra vocalization, but it does not impact his personality as much as it did Jonathan's in the novel. In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Jonathan does experience these feelings of discomforts in Dracula's castle, and he even sees Dracula climbing down the castle walls. However, rather than being visibly shown, they are relayed to the audience via a voice-over, which might be an idea taken from the narrative form of novel, which is epistolary. The voice-over is done by Keanu Reeves, who also portrays the role, and despite a slightly different text than the quote above, gets the message across quite well. Notably, the 1931 movie does not feature any voice-overs, possibly due to a limited level of technology available to the producers.

This is not the only important event Jonathan is faced with during his stay in Transylvania. Sometime during his stay in the castle, Jonathan encountered three other vampires, most commonly known as Dracula's brides, who attempted to drink his blood. It is in this scene that Jonathan's faithfulness to his fiancée becomes more feeble, as he wrote in his journal:

I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive (Stoker 33)

Jonathan describes the women as being both attractive and repulsive at the same time, and as the women get ready to drink his blood, there is an erotic undertone attached to it. Before they can really get started, however, they are sent away by the Count. In the 1931 movie, in which Renfield is approached by the women, the erotic feeling is entirely lost because Dracula gestures them away before they can even get close. However, even if the erotic atmosphere would be there, it would have less of an impact, because Renfield did not have a fiancée or wife whom he would be betraying through his actions. The 1992 movie is an entirely different case. In this movie, Jonathan ends up in a bed with the three women, who are partially undressed, and use Mina's voice to lure him there. Once they have Jonathan in their grasp, they kiss him several times before actually biting him. One of the women also unzips his pants, and it is implicated, but not shown, that he is 'bitten' there too. Add to that the fact that the scene is filled with moaning, heavy breathing, and sensual music, and the erotic feeling is certainly there. However, when comparing this adaptation to the novel, the erotic part is certainly overdone, while the emotional after-effect that Jonathan would feel over betraying his fiancée in such a way are mostly neglected. This could imply that the relationship between Mina and Jonathan is not considered as important in the adaptation as it is in the novel. This has a tremendous impact on the fidelity of the movie, since the relationship is one of the main aspects of Jonathan's personality, and the comparison between the novel's Jonathan and the movie's Jonathan shows a remarkable difference in this aspect. If the relationship is not as important, the focus must have shifted towards something else, in this case Jonathan's actions. This is likely due to the fact that the filmic adaptation is more action and plot driven than the novel, making character development issues less important.

The next important event that had a great impact on Jonathan, and will be discussed in this thesis, takes place back in England, namely the converting of Mina into a vampiric being. In the novel, Dracula enters her room while she is asleep with Jonathan, and the Count uses his powers to render Jonathan powerless, as Seward wrote in his diary: “on the bed beside the window lay Jonathan Harker, his face flushed, and breathing heavily as though in a stupor” (Stoker 234). Afterwards, Jonathan expresses feelings of guilt for not being able to protect his wife. In *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, Jonathan is not present when Dracula visits Mina, which was probably done because Mina, in this movie a reincarnation of Elisabeta, Dracula’s former wife, is a willing victim of the vampire and it is made into an erotic event, rather than the horrifying act it is described to be in the original text. In the 1931 adaptation, the scene has been removed in its entirety because Mina and Lucy’s roles have been combined into one, and Mina is turned into a vampire by Dracula repeatedly visiting her bedroom and biting her in her sleep, which was the way Lucy turned into a vampire in the novel. This means that in both of the adaptations, Jonathan does not have to deal with the feelings of guilt over not being able to protect her. Not unlike the issue regarding the journey to Transylvania, Jonathan also loses vocalization during this event, since he is not present in the 1992 adaptation, and the entire event does not occur in the 1931 movie. The difference is that Jonathan’s involvement in this event is slightly less crucial, since it is never seen from his point of view. Furthermore, since Jonathan does not have to deal with his feelings over his inability to protect Mina, he loses even more character development, making Jonathan an even flatter, and maybe even less appealing, character.

### **Renfield’s character development**

The first important event for Renfield would be the cause of his madness. This cause, however, is never provided or even hinted at in the novel. Both movies have resolved this issue in the same way, namely making Renfield a solicitor that visited Dracula in Transylvania, and returned as a lunatic. Due to this background story, the Renfield seen in both adaptations are less mysterious, and more easily seen as humans, rather than lunatics. In the 1992 movie, Seward says:

What manner of man is this? R.M. Renfield, successful solicitor in the firm of Hawkins and Tomkins, respected member of the Lord Regent’s Windham Club, returns from business abroad in Transylvania. Promptly suffers a complete mental breakdown. He’s now obsessed with some bloodlust. (Coppola)

The fact that both of the movies have made the same choice for explaining Renfield’s history is interesting. It makes sense for an adaptation to want to explain things that were left out of the original text in an attempt to leave an audience with as little questions as possible. An audience that is not aware of the original work might, after all, be irked when they are left with too many questions at the end of a movie. This choice does mean the directors took an inherent part of *Dracula’s* genre away, namely the mystery that was Renfield’s pas, resulting in a deviation from the source text and thus more infidelity. The fact that the 1992 movie chose the same explanation shows that it did not only

base itself on the novel, but also on earlier adaptations. This shows that there is intertextuality not only between both adaptations and the novel, but also between the 1931 adaptation and the 1992 adaptation, the latter of which ‘borrowed’ from the earlier. The explanation itself seems to be a rather logical one: due to Renfield’s bloodlust it is often speculated he may have had earlier contact with either Count Dracula or another vampire.

The other major event concerning Renfield in the narrative is the one that causes his death, namely his attempt to stop Dracula from entering the asylum and getting to Mina. In the novel, Renfield confesses that he already knew something was wrong with Mina when she visited him before the Count visited her, saying:

When Mrs. Harker came in to see me this afternoon she wasn’t the same; it was tea after the teapot had been watered. [...] I didn’t know that she was here till she spoke; and she didn’t look the same. I don’t care for the pale people, I like them with lots of blood in them, and hers had all seemed to have run out. (Stoker 233)

This, coupled with his initial attitude towards Mina, caused him to try and deny Dracula entry, even though he had already given him permission to enter the asylum days earlier. When Dracula enters his cell, and Renfield confronts him, a fight ensues, which Renfield described as follows:

He had to come out of the mist to struggle with me. I held tight; and I thought I was going to win, for I didn’t mean Him to take any more of her life, till I saw His eyes. They burned into me and my strength became like water. He slipped through it, and when I tried to cling to Him, He raised me up and flung me down. There was a red cloud before me, and a noise like thunder, and the red mist seemed to steal away under the door. (Stoker 233)

The 1931 movie, however, gave a completely different twist to the scene. In this movie, Dracula abducts Mina and takes her and Renfield with him to Carfax Abbey. Jonathan and Van Helsing follow them there, and they attract their attention through one of the windows. Renfield immediately grows scared, telling his master that he did not lead them to his dwelling. Dracula, however, grabs him by his throat, and throws him down the stairs, assumedly killing him. The 1992 movie is somewhat more loyal to Stoker’s novel and has the scene take place in the asylum’s cell. We see Dracula leaving Carfax Abbey in the form of a green fog, and entering Renfield’s cell, where he accuses the lunatic of betraying him. Renfield, however, denies this, and claims that he is a loyal servant. Following that, we see Renfield throwing himself, or being thrown, against the bars of his cell until he collapses. An interesting deviation to point out is that both adaptations have Renfield as a passive victim, rather than the initial aggressor in the conflict between him and Dracula, which takes away the most redeeming aspect of his character. Whereas Renfield ends up as a benevolent character in the novel, he is nothing but the lackey of the villain in both adaptations, again making him more monstrous in the adaptations than he was at the end of the novel

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the most vital events relating to Jonathan and Renfield. Renfield has considerably less important events in which he was involved, and has an overall more minor position in the narrative when compared to Jonathan. He never leaves his cell, and the only interaction between him and anyone else is when they choose to interact with him. This chapter has shown that the effects of certain events are hardly ever the same as in the novel, either because of the shift in medium, making action more important than character development, it being to depict emotions properly, or because another narrative was deemed more important, as is the case with the love story between Mina and Dracula.

Jonathan loses a great deal of vocalization and character development in the 1931 adaptation, since he did not travel to Transylvania and did not have to endure the horrors there, such as being locked up by the Count and getting close to being bitten by three vampire brides. In the 1992 adaptation, he did travel to Transylvania, but the emotional aftermath of his experience is mostly ignored, making Jonathan a lesser character than he was in the novel. Furthermore, he did not need to feel guilty over his inability to protect Mina after Dracula tainted her with his blood, since the event did not take place and Jonathan was not present, in the 1931 and 1992 movies respectively.

Contrary to Jonathan, Renfield gets extra vocalization in the 1931 movie, in which he travelled to Transylvania in Jonathan's place. Both movies use this as the cause of this madness, giving him a past that he did not have in the novel, and thus making him more humane. In the confrontation with Dracula, however, the opposite is true: whereas he tries to fight Dracula in the novel, hoping to protect Mina, this is not really seen in either of the filmic adaptations, making him more monstrous than he was in the novel.

## Chapter 4

Whenever a work is adapted, such as the movies discussed in this thesis, priorities often shift, due to the change in producers, directors and authors. Because of this, certain events in an adaptation are sometimes altered to fit those priorities better. But even if the scene or event is depicted in a very similar way, it might be so that a certain character is added, omitted, or made more or less important. Such instances can also show what the developers deemed more or less important. Naturally, such instances can then also be used to make claims about the fidelity of an adaptation to its source text. This chapter will look at such instances for Jonathan and Renfield, looking at their importance in several key scenes. The question to be answered in this chapter is whether or not the importance of Jonathan and Renfield in the narrative of the movies has changed when compared to their importance in the novel, and what influences it has on the narrative as a whole. In order for this question to be answered, several important scenes in which the discussed characters feature will be analyzed and compared to their counterpart in the novel.

### **Jonathan's importance in the narrative**

The first four chapters of the novel deal with Jonathan's experiences in Transylvania. These chapters lay the foundation of the story, introducing Dracula, his plans, and his species, as well as Jonathan himself. Since these chapters are told from Jonathan's perspective, they provide a lot of information about him, and here he is one of the most important characters, alongside Dracula. It is therefore remarkable that the 1931 movie removed Jonathan from these scenes and replaced him with Renfield. Because of this choice, Jonathan becomes a much less developed character throughout the movie, which leads to him becoming less important in the entire movie. Furthermore, since Jonathan is never 'properly' introduced to the audience, he also loses vocalization throughout the rest of the movie, making him more of a flat and unimportant character than one of the main characters, like he was in the novel. Renfield, on the other hand, gets the background story he never had, and gains importance in the overall narrative through these scenes. The 1992 movie goes back to the original and does focus on Jonathan during the scenes in Transylvania, which restores the character to its proper place and provides the necessary information and screen time to allow the character to develop. It must be noted that because of Jonathan not travelling to Dracula's castle in the earlier movie, his role in the entire narrative is severely diminished, as he is no longer the one to discover Dracula's secret and he does not recognize the Count in England – this important discovery is instead made by Abraham van Helsing, who becomes even more vital in the adaptations.

During the meetings in which the vampire hunters discuss their tactics and plans, Jonathan usually sticks to the background. Van Helsing and Seward, who are the learned men of the group, make most of the plans, Quincey Morris is the avid fighter and Arthur Holmwood uses his position in society and his money to help the plans come to fruition, but there is not really such a specific role for Jonathan. Because of this, he does not really have much importance in the discussion scenes in the novel. In the adaptation from 1931, these scenes have been omitted mostly, since Arthur Holmwood and Quincey Morris are not even in the movie, and it is only Van Helsing, Seward and Jonathan who fight Dracula. Since two other characters have been removed, Jonathan gets a slightly more important role in the discussions, although the majority of the planning and speculating is still done by Seward and Van Helsing, who are both learned men and have, apparently, more wisdom to offer on the subject.

The 1992 adaptation does feature all the characters, but most of the discussion scenes have still been omitted. This was probably done because the scenes mostly consist of a group of men sitting around a table and talking, which would not really entertain the audience of a movie and would make the movie considerably longer. However, when the vampire hunters travel to Varna by train, and they discover that the Count has slipped away and is travelling to Galatz, Jonathan appears to take the lead, saying:

Varna. Galatz. It's about two-hundred miles. I think that, with the horses, we can cut him off, reach him before he reaches the castle. I will dispatch Van Helsing straight for the Borgo Pass. If we fail in our task, you will have to finish him. (Coppola)

Jonathan taking the lead like this and suddenly making the plans is a remarkable break from his behaviour in the rest of the movie, where he took much more to the background. In the novel, it is not revealed who made the plans, but since Van Helsing made all the previous ones, it stands to reason that this too was his decision. The director's decision to have Jonathan take the lead might have been an attempt to give the character, who can be seen as the least appealing of all, a little more screen time and personality in the adaptation.

As was stated before, most of the discussion scenes have been omitted from the adaptations, which leads to fewer scenes and less explanations on certain events than the novel provided, thus making the adaptations less fidelity-oriented. The choice to leave these scenes out was probably made by the directors because they felt the movie needed to be more action-oriented, which is usually what an audience would expect when visiting a horror movie. The lengthy discussions without much action would not do well on the screen, and leave directors with the risk of boring their audience. The change in genre that accompanied the shift in medium also plays a role here: while the novel is a gothic work, both movies classify themselves as horror, leaving audiences with different expectations.

Another scene in which Jonathan takes the lead is the final fight with Dracula, where he used his kukri knife to cut the vampire's throat open. In the novel, this is done in Transylvania, close to the castle, and at the same time Quincey Morris plunges a knife in his heart. This scene was taken from

the novel and put into the 1992 movie in nearly the exact same way, but there is one major change: Dracula survives the attack from the two men and he and Mina flee to the castle, where Mina eventually puts him out of his misery in an act of passion and mercy, and drives the knife further into his heart and cuts off his head. So, while Jonathan's actions in this scene are remarkably similar, the importance of them is diminished, as he does wound the vampire mortally, but does not manage to kill him entirely. This, again, was most likely done to emphasize the love story between Mina and Dracula, which does not exist in the novel, and allow Mina and Dracula to have a final moment together, showing empathy and having Mina put Dracula out of his suffering. The 1931 movie, on the other hand, does not feature the journey to Transylvania at all, and Dracula is instead killed in Carfax Abbey. It might be expected that, due to the absence of Morris and Holmwood, Jonathan would have a larger role in the Count's death in this movie, but the opposite is true. Van Helsing and Jonathan find the vampire in his coffin in the basement underneath the building, where Van Helsing is the one to drive a stake through his heart. Jonathan only hands him a piece of metal to use as a hammer before setting off to find Mina. All in all, Jonathan's role in Dracula's death is close to nothing in this movie, which corresponds with the general lack of importance ascribed to the character in this adaptation. The reason for this change might be that the director chose to lift Jonathan's love for Mina above his desire to kill Dracula, with whom he does not really have a bond throughout the movie.

Something else that is worth remarking is the final note of Jonathan that is included in the narrative. This note was written seven years after the rest of the narrative, and reveals what became of the vampire hunters after Dracula's death, with Holmwood and Seward both having married, and Jonathan and Mina having a young son. It also speaks of a visit they made to Dracula's castle that year, and them reviewing their journals a final time. None of this, however, is included in either of the adaptations, in which the narrative ends with the death of Dracula. This shows that he is the main character around which the narrative revolves, and with his death, they deemed the story finished. This marks a certain infidelity when compared to the novel, where the narrative continues after Dracula's death. Jonathan vocalizes this final part of the novel, but due to its omission in the adaptations, he does not only lose his vocalisation and point of view in this scene, but his entire future is lost. The audience of the adaptations will not know what became of the vampire hunters after Dracula's death, showing that the focus of the movies is much more on Dracula himself than that of the novel.

### **Renfield's position in the narrative**

As was already mentioned in the introduction, Renfield is involved in less events than Jonathan. By far the most important event he was involved in, though, is Renfield's death, which was already touched upon in the previous chapter, stating that the changes the adaptations made to this scene led to him becoming more of a villain than an anti-hero. However, the changes made in both adaptations also have implications for the importance of Renfield as a character. Due to him not actively fighting back

against Dracula, he is far less memorable and crucial to the scenes – it could have been any of the inmates that invited Dracula in. However, since his final words, in which he explains his interaction with Dracula and his change of mind, are also left out of both adaptations, he lost even more of his importance, almost making Renfield irrelevant to the story.

The novel also contains a scene in which Renfield escapes from the asylum, only to be found near Carfax Abbey, Dracula's new abode, by the guards some time later. This scene is often used to display Renfield's desire to be close to the vampire count before he turns on him, as Renfield was found begging near the front door, trying to get in. This scene, however, is not present in either of the adaptations, probably because his allegiance to Dracula was already made quite clear through the clinical vampirism and his conversation with the vampire outside the asylum. This further diminishes the depth and importance of Renfield's character position in the narrative by removing one of his scenes, and 'weakening' his link to Dracula. This link is mostly what Renfield's character is all about, and while it is present in both adaptations, neither of them pronounce it as strongly as the novel does. This, in turn, leads to a certain amount of infidelity concerning Renfield's function in the narrative.

When looking at specific scenes featuring Renfield in the adaptations, one easily notes that he is always presented with someone else, for example Dracula or Seward. This is in line with the novel, in which we never hear or see from Renfield directly – everything we know he did and said is through the records kept by Seward and Van Helsing. Both adaptations, however, have a scene in which Renfield is alone, meaning that the focus is entirely on him. In the 1931 adaptation, this scene shows Renfield crying in his cell right before Dracula calls on him. As soon as Renfield moves to the window, though, he sees Dracula, and from that moment on he has to share the focus, as Dracula gains importance. In the 1992 adaptation, Renfield's scene shows him in a fit of madness struggling in his straightjacket when Dracula summons the storm that allows his ship to sail into the port. In this adaptation, no one else comes into his scene, and even though it is a short scene, and not very relevant for the movie as a whole, it does show Renfield from his own perspective, rather than someone else's.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter it has become clear that, even when events are depicted in a similar way, the importance of certain characters does not necessarily have to be similar as well. Jonathan often loses importance in scenes when looking at the adaptations. Examples of this can be found in the discussion scenes, his journey to Transylvania and the final fight with Dracula. Renfield also loses importance in several scenes, mostly due to his character not being allowed to redeem himself in the adaptations, degrading him to a simple minion and making him less humane than he ended up in the novel.

The priorities of the directors were different from Stoker's priorities when he wrote the novel. The 1992 adaptation, for example, added the romantic element between Mina and Dracula, while the 1931 adaptation provided Renfield with a larger role and made him travel to Dracula's castle in

Jonathan's stead. Such a change in priorities, as well as the more action-drive nature of movies when compared to the more psychological element of a novel led to the changes in importance of characters in certain scenes.

There are significant changes in vocalization as well. Jonathan loses most of his vocalization in the 1931 movie, in which he is generally less important and overshadowed by Van Helsing and Seward. Renfield gains his own vocalization in certain short scenes, which he never had in the original novel, where everything the audience learned of him came from the writings of one of the vampire hunters. While this vocalization gives him slightly more importance, it does not measure up to the importance he lost by not getting his final words, as he did in the novel.

## Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, three questions relating to the fidelity of the characters of Jonathan Harker and Renfield in the original novel and two adaptations have been answered. In this conclusion, the answers to these questions will be brought together and combined, forming the answer of the main question.

The first question that was answered was to what extent the inner and outer traits of Jonathan and Renfield in both adaptations were similar or different from the descriptions in the novel. The gothic genre generally does not feature extensive descriptions, but the lack of outward descriptions made their appearance slightly harder to judge. The general conclusion arising from this sub-question was that the differences were minor, and not relevant for the movie as a whole, since the shift in medium made it impossible to present characters exactly as they were described. The characters in the adaptations appear to be somewhat more shallow, even though the general outlines of their personalities were there, which may have been caused by the shift in medium necessitating more action. For Jonathan, there was a change in his character development, since neither of the adaptations clearly show how he grew from an innocent solicitor to a ruthless vampire killer, and his relationship with Mina became more shallow in the 1931 movie, and much more physical in the 1992 movie, most likely due to the shift in medium and genre. Renfield's personality also underwent changes. His madness was explained by a journey to Transylvania in both adaptations, clearly indicating intertextuality between the two movies. Furthermore, his intelligence and redemption were less pronounced in the adaptations. Due to the lack of redemption, Renfield became more akin to the monster of the gothic genre than an actual human being. These changes clearly show that fidelity regarding these characters' personalities had to make way for a more action driven and less psychological narrative than the source text provided for its audience.

The second question dealt with specific events in the narrative in which Jonathan or Renfield were involved, and the influences of these events on the characters. Comparing the findings in the adaptations to the findings in the novel revealed little similarities. Jonathan does not travel to Transylvania in the 1931 adaptation, nor does he meet the three vampire brides. In the 1992 adaptation, these events do take place, but the emotional aftermath is mostly ignored. Furthermore, the 1931 movie does not feature the scene in which Jonathan sees himself as being responsible for Mina becoming a vampire, and in the 1992 movie, Jonathan is not present during the event. In the earlier adaptation, this is because the roles of Lucy and Mina merge into one, whereas the later adaptation put the romantic relationship between Mina and Dracula above fidelity to the novel. Renfield does travel to Transylvania in the 1931 movie, taking Jonathan's place, but due to a re-written timeline, he is there

only one day, and does not experience the horrors Jonathan experienced in the novel. This journey to Transylvania does form the cause of his madness in both movies, though, thus moving away from the mysterious background that was inherent to the gothic genre. Furthermore, Renfield does not redeem himself by actively trying to thwart Dracula from entering the asylum. Due to this, he ends up as a simple villain's minion, rather than the anti-hero he was in the novel. The main reasons for this lack of similarities were the changes made in the adaptations, such as the love story between Mina and Dracula, the change in genre from gothic to gothic erotic fantasy drama, or the omission of many scenes and characters, as was the case in the 1931 adaptation.

The third question was whether the importance of the characters in the adaptations differed from their importance in the novel, and whether this changed the narrative as a whole. It became apparent that, even when a scene appears to be similar on the surface, the importance of a certain character can still differ drastically. For Jonathan, this was the case with the journey to Transylvania in the 1931 movie, which he did not make, as well as for the meetings with his fellow vampire hunters, which were mostly omitted to make the movies more attractive to the audience. His role in the death of Dracula was also slightly diminished, because the romantic subplot between Mina and Dracula was deemed more important. Furthermore, both adaptations focused much more on Dracula, and their narratives ended with his death, whereas the source text contained an epilogue, vocalized by Jonathan, describing the lives of the main characters after Dracula's death. Renfield's importance in the narrative also diminished, as was seen by looking at the lack of resistance against Dracula, or the removal of the escape scene, which functioned to show Renfield's allegiance to the vampire count. He did gain his own vocalization in some scenes, which he never had in the novel, but this hardly measured up against the losses of the removed scenes.

The main question this thesis has tried to answer was: how much fidelity do the depictions of Jonathan Harker and Renfield in the adaptations show to their original counterparts from the novel and to what extent has the change in medium influenced this? By combining the answers of the three sub-questions, this main question can be answered. Where it concerns outward appearances, the shift in medium has made it incredibly difficult to stick to the novel, seeing as it would be near impossible to find an actor who fits the descriptions perfectly. These differences, however, do not have an effect on the narrative as a whole. Personalities are much more important to a character, especially in the genre and narrative type of *Dracula*, and the adaptations seem to have tried to remain true to their source when rendering Jonathan and Renfield's personalities. However, again due to a shift in medium, adaptations have a harder time showing certain personality traits. The 1992 adaptation solves this through the use of voice-overs, revealing thoughts and feelings of certain characters where those could not be shown clearly by the actors. The 1931 adaptation, due to a more limited set of possibilities because of its era, does not make use of this, causing the loss of certain traits.

A character's personality is often influenced by the events they are involved in, and this is also the case in *Dracula*. However, the 1931 adaptation omitted many scenes that were present in the

novel, causing some events to never take place at all, and thus not having any effect on anyone. The 1992 movie, on the other hand, added a second narrative, making Mina the reincarnation of Dracula's lost love. This romantic subplot became a priority, causing the love story to become more important than fidelity to Bram Stoker's novel, as evidenced by the many changes made to facilitate it. So, when it comes to the effects of the narrative on Jonathan and Renfield, neither of the movies seem to keep fidelity in a very high regard, since they changed or removed many scenes to fit their own priorities better.

The importance of Jonathan and Renfield within certain scenes in the narrative was also altered often, mostly for similar reasons as the influence of the events has been diminished. In the 1992 adaptation, the focus is much more on Dracula, and the main priority seems to have been their attempt to give him a background story and turn him from a villain into an anti-hero, due to which 'lesser' characters like Jonathan and Renfield had to be adapted to fit this goal. The 1931 adaptation tries to follow the narrative on a whole, but due to some scenes being omitted, and others being changed, these characters are still pushed to the background. This makes them less important than they were in the novel, which means the directors moved away from the original novel, leading to infidelity to the source text.

In conclusion, it can be said that both *Dracula* from 1931 and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* from 1992 only show a limited fidelity to the original *Dracula* novel. Fidelity, however, is not something that can be quantified easily, making it hard, if not impossible, to say exactly how much fidelity there is, or is not. Some concluding remarks, however, should clarify the statement to a certain extent. The 1931 adaptation focuses on a certain part of the original narrative, namely Lucy's illness and death. However, since Lucy nor Arthur are in this movie, the roles are filled by Mina and Jonathan, which changes the narrative considerably, and means that Mina becoming a vampire and the subsequent chase of Dracula were removed. These missing scenes had a great impact on the narrative importance and character development of Jonathan and Renfield. The 1992 movie did not remove scenes like the 1931 adaptation did, but added a new romantic subplot, which was probably deemed more important than the original source text. In order for this subplot to work, several scenes had to be changed. Furthermore, both adaptations were subject to a shift in medium, from novel to film, which caused them to become more action-oriented. This occasionally hindered a proper character development, or the depiction of emotions.

It is important to note that this thesis has only discussed two characters from two adaptations. Because of that, there is still a great deal of research to be done on this subject. Other characters, such as Van Helsing, Mina Murray, Lucy Westenra, Quincey Morris and Arthur Holmwood, have only been touched upon when it was relevant for my argument about either Jonathan or Renfield, but each of these characters could be the subject of an entirely independent study. Furthermore, there are many more adaptations of Bram Stoker's famous novel, each of which contains several, if not all, of the important characters, and thus features enough material for a few independent studies on their own.

Naturally, some characters and some adaptations have already been analyzed by scholars, but since *Dracula* is such a widespread and popular icon, there is much more to be dealt with.

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## Images



1931 Renfield



1931 Jonathan



1992 Renfield



1992 Jonathan

## Summary

This thesis compares two filmic adaptations to their source text, namely *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker. The chosen adaptations are *Dracula* from 1931 by Tod Browning and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* from 1992 by Francis Ford Coppola. The focus is on two characters, Jonathan Harker and Renfield. By comparing these characters in the adaptations with their original counterparts, how much fidelity the depictions of Jonathan and Renfield in the adaptations show to their literary counterparts, and to what extent the change in medium played a role in these changes. To come to an answer to this question, three smaller questions are answered first. The first of these is whether their inner and outer characteristics in the adaptations differ from the novel, and to what extent that may be caused by the shift in medium. After that, the influence of certain events in the narrative on their personalities will be discussed. Finally, their importance in key events will be examined and compared to the novel. These questions will result in the conclusion that both movies have limited fidelity to the source text, due to varying reasons.

## Key terms

Adaptations, fidelity, *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker, Renfield, genre, medium, vocalization, importance, character development