

The Narrative Structure of George R.R. Martin's Fire & Blood and Ryan Condal's House of the Dragon TV Series

by Mesy Rino Nindia

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¹¹The Narrative Structure of George R.R. Martin's *Fire & Blood* and Ryan Condal's *House of the Dragon* TV Series

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ABSTRACT

¹¹This study discussed the narrative structure of George R. R. Martin's *Fire & Blood* Chapter 12 and Ryan Condal's *House of the Dragon* TV Series Episode 1. The objective of this study is to analyse the similarities and differences between the two data sources. This study was conducted using New Criticism approach by Tyson (2006), literary analysis theory by Schirova (2006), and adaptation theory by Hutcheon and ²²O'Flynn (2013). The approach and theories were to help the analysis of the data and explain the similarities and differences found between the novel and ²²the script. This study used a qualitative descriptive method. The analysis results on the various similarities and differences found between the novel and the script. The similarities were found in the characters, time and place setting, the plot and the theme. The differences were found in the characters, settings, and point of view. Some of characters in the novel were not appear in the script and the ages of the characters were slightly changed to enhance the intensity of the characters' relationships with each other. The differences of the time and place settings suggests the objective to fit the adaptation medium. The point of view in the script differs from the novel because it follows the structure of the script, that is to be read by all casts to understand their roles and tell the narrative in a third person point of view. The similar narrative structures were kept to follow the story of the original work and the differences were done to fit in the new narrative of the adaptation medium.

Keywords: *adaptation, comparative study, narrative structure*

INTRODUCTION

⁷Adaptation works are more common than people realised. They are on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the Internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and video arcade (Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013). Adaptation—in the context of this study—refers to the ¹⁰process of changes in telling a story and includes various disciplines, as Griggs (2016) states, from film, literature, history, ²⁰languages, creative writing, media, music, drama, performance art, visual art, and new media. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators (Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013). ²

According to Griggs (2016), the contradiction, in terms of adapting a book to the screen, is the challenge of being faithful to the original but also unfaithful because it's a different artistic creation. Many still have ¹⁰mixed thoughts over moving image adaptations from books, such as movies and TV series, despite its increasing popularity as an intriguing and accessible means to explore literature. Nevertheless, Literature and Cinema share a history of connections with close bonds and parallel routes, unite genres, eras, countries and formats, demanding literary and cinematic analyses, technical considerations and ideological issues (WellsLassagne & Armelle Parey, 2019). These similarities may bring different creative ideas, depending on the authors, scriptwriters, and directors of each creation. Therefore, it is also common to separate canon events with adaptations.

Particularly in this ¹ research, the object of analysis will be a prequel story of *A Song of Ice and Fire* series titled *Fire & Blood* by George R.R. Martin with its TV Series adaptation, *House of the Dragon*. After the major disappointment about the main story's failure to close its show, to say the least, many did not know what to expect from the continuation of the franchise. But in the hands of the author of the book as co-director, fans could rest assured that ¹ the adaptation would go well. Simply taken, *Fire & Blood* is considered an academic paper about the Targaryen dynasty written by an Archmaester—a historian—within the world of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Archmaester Gyldayn. The story follows the unification of the seven kingdoms of Westeros and its aftermath by House Targaryen until their downfall. Thus, the book has almost no dialogue and few additional hearsays to explain the situations happening in the timeline. Surely it is a unique way to write a novel and adapting such monologues to a TV Series filled with the characters of the said story reliving the past is an interesting topic to analyse.

A study conducted by Khomsah (2019) titled ⁶ “A Comparative Study of Dialogues Between Lewis’ Novel “The Voyage of The Dawn Treader” and Its Film” explores the reduction, addition, and modification of the main characters’ dialogues from the novel to its film adaptation. Using Eneste’s ecranisation theory to analyse the changes in the dialogues, she found the differences of the dialogues based on seven sequences of event. Result shows the reductions that occurs shifts the main topic, the additions that occurs elaborate the main topic, and the modification is to create variations in the dialogue. The focus on the comparison analysis of an aspect in a novel and its adaptation contributes in the process of making of this study. Subsequently, a comparative study was conducted by Anidar (2020) titled “Comparative Study of Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid” and Clements’ “The Little Mermaid” (Disney Version)”. The study used intrinsic and extrinsic approach with Roland Barthes’ theory on cultural code and symbolism to analyse the similarities and differences between the two literatures. Anidar (2020) found the similarities, present in the age of the main character and storyline. Additionally, the differences such as in the characters, setting, and plot heavily influenced by the perspective authors which had different cultural and social background. Thus, the similarities and differences highlight the influences both from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. These result, especially in intrinsic approach, have contributed in formulating the concept of this study.

Another comparative study research previously ¹⁴ done by Pradana (2020) is added as one of the base concepts of this study with the title “Ecranisation Between a Novel of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s ‘A Little Princess’ and Film of Walter Lang’s ‘Shirley Temple in the Little Princess’”. The study aimed to find the similarities and differences in the narrative aspects with Eneste’s ecranisation theory. The changes found in the analysis resulted from the various factors such as the important aspects and limitation ¹⁷ the adaptation. Therefore, the analysis of the similarities and conducted differences between the novel *Fire & Blood* and the TV Series ¹⁷ *House of The Dragon* will be in this thesis. The analysis will focus solely on these changes in the novel *Fire & Blood* shown in the TV series *House of The Dragon*.

RELATED LITERATURE

Narrative Structure

Wolfreys et al. (2006) define narrative, at its most basic meaning, as an interpretation of occurrence, whether real or fictional, and “differs from the idea of a simple unordered account

or report of events". In addition, Abbott (2008) stated that "a common element in the narrativity of narrative is the sense of coherence, and particularly coherence that derives from a linear structure of cause and effect". It means that a narrative should have a structure. Therefore, to understand this particular coherence narration and a proper structure of cause and effect, the elements below are what is needed to be analysed.

Characters

The characters are short prose sketches of different types of people moulded to a pattern (Schirova, 2006). Edward Forster (1927), quoted by Weking and Pramesti (2024), stated that characters have various traits, personalities, and background that make them unique and complex. There are ways to describe a character. The most common term for the leading character who engages the readers' interest and empathy is the protagonist. The protagonist's opponent is called the antagonist, who stand directly opposed to the protagonist and given rise to the conflict of the story (Schirova, 2006: 22). There is also hero (heroine) and villain. Which held the same meaning as the former pairing. Characters may be major and minor, flat (simple) or round (complex). Major characters are those we see more or over a longer period of time than minor characters. Flat characters embody one or two qualities, ideas or personality traits that can be readily described in a brief summary. On the other hand, round characters are more complex than flat or stock characters and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in real people.

The author may reveal the characterization of the characters directly or indirectly. In the direct method, he simply tells the reader what the character is like. In the indirect method, as Griffith (1995) stated and quoted by Schirova (2006), the author writes through external poetic details through their thoughts, speech, and deeds. A direct method of characterization, such as describing a character's appearance or personality, can break the flow of a story and sounds dull and lazy so descriptions of a character might come from other character point of view, and it will still be a direct method. Indirect method would sound better, however, giving readers their own perception of a character through their personality or actions told in the story.

Setting

Setting is the total environment for the action of a fictional work (Schirova, 2006). It builds the action and support the narrative to highlight where a story goes. Setting (Schirova, 2006: 34) is made of the place—both physical and sensuous world—of actions, the time in which the action takes place – "the where and when of the story", social environment (moral values that govern the characters' society, manners, customs etc.) and atmosphere—that is the emotional reaction, the mood, and the feeling evoked by a literary work.

Point of View

As stated by Schirova (2006), point of view (perspective, vision) is "the author's relationship to his fictional world, especially to the minds of the characters, the position from which the story is told". The narrator, the perspective of the narration written, shows how the author wants the story leads to, conceals or reveals the characters' thoughts, chooses between direct or indirect discourse, between chronological order and temporal disruptions.

Theme

Theme is the central idea of a work (Schirova, 2006: 48). He also argues how the author works with theme throughout the work, and it is slowly realized as the reader processes the text. Theme is always an abstraction drawn from details, – to state it the reader should move

from the situation and the characters of the work and generalize about people outside it (Schirove, 2006: 28). Thus, readers will find the theme (and/or subthemes) differently throughout the work as each has their own way of thinking of the same literary work and according to their perspectives.

Plot

Plot is what happens in the narrative. It is the arrangement of the action, accordingly inducing curiosity and suspense, for the outcome of a literary work (Schorova, 2006: 11). A plot contains causative related events and this usually describes as conflict. According to Schirova (2006), there are two types of conflict: internal and external. Internal conflict is within the mind of characters. External conflict is between characters, between groups in society, between a character and the society or between a character and the forces of nature (Schirova, 2006).

Adaptation

According to its dictionary meaning, as quoted by Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2013), "to adapt" is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable. It means that adaptation is a work of adjustment, to alter is to change certain or some part in the literature to suit the type of adaptation, whether it's a stage drama, a film, or even other type of literature such as poem. Adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called "sources" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). These sources, not only become a reference for adapters, but also for fans/players of the literature to compare them with the adaptation.

The appeal of adaptation as adaptations "comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013: 4). They also said that adapters "use the same tools that storytellers have always used: they actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on". Therefore, work of adaptations won't be stray far from the sources. When we call a work an adaptation, we openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Thus, adaptation study is often also a comparative study.

METHODOLOGY

This study will use intrinsic approach as its main literary approach to analyse the elements of the data sources, which are a novel and a script. In analysing a literature, a criticism theory called "New Criticism" has been around for quite a while, and though the practice in literary study has been depleted for the last decades, it has introduced "close reading" to America (Tyson, 2006). Tyson (2006) stated in his theory about new Criticism that "the text itself became the battle cry of the New Critical effort to focus our attention on the literary work as the sole source of evidence for interpreting it". It means there is no other sources or extrinsic factors that will be considered in the analysis of the literary work, such as author identity or any related knowledge outside the studied literature.

Following literary approach used in this research, a fitting research design will be a descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive method in qualitative research is an approach to analysis where the researcher, as the instrument, stays close to the data, uses limited frameworks and interpretation for explaining the data, and catalogues the information into themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2023: 46). This research uses two data sources, namely a novel titled *Fire & Blood* by George R.R. Martin and a script of the first episode of TV Series

adaptation titled *House of The Dragon*. As described in the introduction, *Fire & Blood* is considered a scholarly work about the Targaryen dynasty written by a historian within the world of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Archmaester Gyldayn. The story follows the unification of the seven kingdoms of Westeros and its aftermath by House Targaryen until their downfall. As its limitation mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, there will be 17 pages to be read for the data will be taken from, which is the twelfth chapter titled *The Heirs of The Dragon*. Its adaptation, written by Ryan Condal (2021) with the same title, begins less old as it follows the end reign of King Jaehaerys I Targaryen, and the history of the civil war in the book's chapter titled *Dance of the Dragons*. For its first episode's script there are 77 pages that will be taken the data from.

The data were collected by applying close reading method to read the data sources and the researcher selected the words, phrases, or sentences suitable for analysis. To create better categorization, the researcher separated the five intrinsic elements found in the data sources. The data found then be analysed by analysing the differences and similarities between the novel and the script in order to answer the research question.

DISCUSSION

The Similarities

As how adaptations works are, it will always take a portion, if not all, elements of the literary work it is adapted from. Particularly in this research, *House of The Dragon*'s first episode is analysed by the five elements and compared to the source, *Fire & Blood* by George R.R. Martin. From the detailed analysis above on both works' five intrinsic elements, the similarities vary on some of the said elements, which in some extent carries the similarities of characters, settings, plot, and theme. Below is the analysis of the similarities found between the novel and the script.

The Characters

There are similar characters that is written in the adaptation, namely, the Targaryens: King Jaehaerys Targaryen—though very briefly in the beginning of the script, King Viserys, Prince Daemon, Princess Rhaenys, Queen Aemma, and Princess Rhaenyra; and the Hand of the King Ser Otto Hightower and his daughter Alicent Hightower, and Ser Criston Cole. The similarities are specific in their appearance descriptions and personalities. Some other details, such as their age, are mainly changed in the script and will be discussed on the differences analysis.

The Settings

As the finding analysis in 4.1 above, the settings hold both similarities and differences. The similarities are varying on time setting, place setting, social environment and atmospheres. The time setting is particularly precise, since it's a retelling of history that happens in the story. Although there are also changes made, from only mentioned by year to days count of events, the time set doesn't change. Though the Great Council is only revealed in a short act to introduce the story in the script, it was still mentioned that it was held in the same year, that is 101 AC (Condal, 2021: 2).

According to the findings and discussion in 4.1, the events in the script and the twelfth chapter of the novel both happens in King's Landing, the capital city of the Seven Kingdoms, and the Harrenhal Castle for the Great Council. Both the novel and the script have the similar monarch politics based on the plot, the presence of royal family, and the small council. The

atmosphere that is depicted in the Great Council event, both in the novel and the script, carries the similar powerful and tense atmosphere. Although the death of King Jaehaerys and the ascension of King Viserys is not included in the script, the similar atmosphere of sombre and serene still present in the adaptation, for the death of Queen Aemma and the Rhaenyra's coronation.

The Plot

House of the Dragon carries the plot of the novel. Though, the script relays the narration starting from the twelfth chapter, not from the beginning. Regardless, the plot carries on similarly on the major conflicts in the narrative, that is about the matter of succession, the conflict between characters, and the relationships they have with each other.

The Theme

The theme of both data sources brings the concept of power. Power that is held by the most powerful people and at the same time its own weakness, that is themselves. Both stories also bring in the conflict of tradition. The plot employs the struggle of the unfairness in the tradition to the Targaryen themselves, discriminate female descendants and regardless of birth lineage, favour the male descendants to be heir.

The Differences

Adaptation is a work of adjustment. From a novel to a screenplay, a change or two tends to happen, to adjust them from one media to another. While House of the Dragon brings the plot and story quite similarly, as discussed above, there are changes made in the five elements that has been identified and analysed in this research.

The Characters

One of the most noticeable changes is in the characters. For one, there is a noticeably missing character, that is Mushroom. As discussed in 4.1, Mushroom is the court fool, who—for his appearance is judged as a simple-minded person—turns out a cunning character whom testimony of the court affairs has brought the King Baelon himself to order the demolition of his chronicles. While Septon Eustace and Grand Maester Runciter are also not making appearance in the script, their presence in the novel is also kept minimum as they have no direct inclusive interaction with the other characters within the court. However, Mushroom has been there with King Viserys and Princess Rhaenyra in the novel, but he has yet appeared in the script, though the setting shows that King Viserys has been ruling the kingdom for nine years.

Another change that has been made for the script is the characters' age. The first noticeable change of age is King Viserys' age because he is one of the earliest characters introduced in the script. In the novel, "At the time of his ascent, King Viserys was twenty-six years old" (Martin, 2018: 356). However, in the adaptation, he is already in his thirties by the time of the Great Council, where he is named as heir. Additionally, another distinguishable change is Alicent Hightower's age change. Alicent Hightower is introduced in the novel as a fifteen years old girl, the daughter of the Hand of the King who stays beside King Jaehaerys' bed and takes care of him until his last breath in 103 AC. Thus, she is older than Princess Rhaenyra. However, they are the same age in the adaptation.

The age differences highlight the conflict of marriage and relationships that has been going on in the story and it adds characters' personalities. For instance, Alicent's age change underlines Ser Otto's personality, his cruelty and ambition to reach a higher position in court, by asking his fourteen years old daughter to attract the King's attention—who is in his forties

when this act is happening. It is also used as a way to show how close Rhaenyra and her in the script, which deepens the conflict, if Alicent successfully attracts Viserys' attention. Another character who has noticeably changed is Princess Rhaenyra. By the time she meets Ser Criston Cole she is still six years old, because Ser Criston Cole shows up in the King Viserys' accession tournament (Martin, 2018: 361), and in the script, she is already fourteen years old when Ser Criston Cole first shows up in the Heir's Tournament.

The Settings

The settings, though the area where events happen are similar, has different specific location description. For instance, the novel describes the place where Queen Aemma dies on her labor is Maegor's Holdfast (Martin, 2018: 362) and in the script Queen Aemma dies in the Queen's Apartment (Condal, 2021: 40). The mention of each act with specific place set, such as the Small Council Chamber, Rhaenyra's Apartment, the Throne Room, and the King's Apartment are not mentioned in the twelfth chapter of the novel. These changes are made to make it easier for the readers to know where the acts are taken, especially the actors and crews to set the location for filming.

Furthermore, the time setting doesn't have major changes but a certain event, where Princess Rhaenyra and Alicent Hightower meet Ser Criston Cole for the first time, takes different time set in the script. They meet the man first time in King Viserys' Accession Tournament in the novel (Martin, 2018: 361) and in the script Ser Criston Cole first appearance both in the script and in front of other characters in the narration is at the Heir's Tournament (Condal, 2021: 34). Lastly, the social environment and the atmosphere don't have any differences.

The Point of View

The point of view in the novel and the script is difference, but almost similar in narration. The novel is taking the point of view of Archmaester Gylday²³ who is the fictitious writer of the book, with fictitious sources and possibly a bias. Thus, it is a **first-person point of view** despite the narration that **tells a story** of other characters and not of something Archmaester Gyldayn himself experience. On the other hand, the script uses a third-person point of view because other than the narration carries all characters' actions, it also covers the thoughts of the characters. Therefore, both narrations might be told in almost similar manner, but the certainty of the story told is different as the novel is written in a style of a history book and the script is what happens as it is.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the similarities and differences found in the narrative structure between the twelfth chapter of *Fire & Dragon* by George R. R. Martin and *House of the Dragon*'s first episode script by Ryan Condal varies from each intrinsic elements analysed in this research. The characters from the twelfth chapter of the novel are mostly included in the script of the first episode of *House of The Dragon*. However, the three fictitious sources of the novel that ArchMaester Gyldayn are excluded for other than Mushroom, the other two sources don't interact with the main characters of the story. Another than the presence of some characters, the age of some characters is also different. The shift on age is remarkably change the characters' relationship with one another and their personalities.

The settings are also changes to suit the type of narration of both the source and the adaptation. The source has faster—deliberate annual time frame and the adaptation, other than

the introduction, is happening in the count of days. Correspondingly, the place setting for the script is the more detailed—specific location of what is described in the novel. This change is certainly made to create a proper placing for the acts to happen. The social environment and atmospheres are exactly similar that portray the conflicts happening in the narrative. The plot and theme carry the same meaning of power and conflict between character. Lastly, the point of view might be somewhat similar but as the novel is in a style of history book and the adaptation is a recollection of what actually happens in the novel.

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