

Abstract

Although there have been vampires in literature before Stoker, like Polidori's *The Vampyre* or Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, Stoker's Count Dracula is steeped in Romanian myth and topography, rendering it amenable to historical criticism. On the one hand, there are scholars like McNally and Florescu who linked Stoker's vampiric Dracula to the 15th century Romanian ruler Vlad Tepes, in their 1972 study of the novel. They correlated the ruthlessness of the monster to the historical violence committed by Vlad, tracing the historical genealogy of the Count to the Order of the Dragon in Romania. On the other hand, there are critics who point towards the historical inaccuracy of such an interpretation. Elizabeth Miller for example in her books *Dracula: The Shade and the Shadow* and *Dracula: Sense and Nonsense* refutes these assumptions about the historical Dracula, arguing that Stoker's knowledge about the historical figure of Vlad Tepes was limited, and that the sources which he relied on for creating the character of the Count have been seriously misunderstood. Research on both sides of this debate on the historicity of Stoker's *Dracula* try to prove or disprove the Romanian authenticity of the text. Across the years however, a lot of authors have adapted the figure of the Count, displacing him from the Romanian cultural space. Within these new cultural contexts Dracula has been successfully used as a signifier of otherness with a wide array of historical meanings. Judith Halberstam for example, argues that what Dracula embodies is not timeless or universal but temporally specific ideas about race, class, gender and sexuality. However, there is a lack of adequate research on the effect of this spatial and cultural displacement of Count Dracula from his Romanian home. This research will try to address this research gap by answering the following questions:

- In what ways does a spatial displacement of Dracula from the isolated Transylvanian mountains contribute to narrative alterations in Stoker's depiction of the vampire? Despite Stoker creating the Count as a regional character tied to Transylvanian roots, how did the Count become a universal figure of vampirism?

- In the different adaptations of *Dracula* set in locales other than Transylvania, how is the element of horror culturally translated? The aim of this research will be to see how the displacement of Count Dracula from Transylvania to other historical, geographical, and cultural paradigms changes the nature of the horror in the adaptations and appropriations. I intend to address the research gap in the study of the cultural translation of the element of horror across translations, and to identify the mechanism that guides the cross-cultural adaptations of a popular horror icon.

While studying these adaptations and translations I will observe how resituating the figure of Dracula to different geographical and historical setups lead to the addition of new cultural meanings to the text, further expanding the myth of the vampiric Count. Studying these new meanings will lead to an understanding of how the text of *Dracula* has successfully implanted itself in the popular imagination of other cultures into which it has been translated. I will also analyse how these translations/adaptations/appropriations use new symbolisms, historical markers, and geographical details of the region where the Count was resituated.

I will design a comparative model for analysis in this study. On the one hand, I will try to isolate the factors which contribute to the Romanian nature of Stoker's *Dracula*. This will include topographical markers, which highlight the use of Romanian geography in the novel; historical markers, which will highlight the use of specific historic personages or events; and cultural markers, which will highlight specific cultural practices and rituals of the time. On the other hand, I will study the adaptations or reworkings of Stoker's novel and see the narrative variations which are caused as a result of changing the above variables. I will then study the thematic patterns which exist across cultural translations, and observe how changing one or more of these variables modify the nature of horror in these texts. An inductive approach will be followed in this research, using these narrative and cultural variations across *Dracula* adaptations to identify and study broader elements of horror literature, and their successful transmission across geographical and historical locations. My thesis will use the framework of the overlap between horror studies and translation as

the basis of textual interpretation. By recognising the way in which the visual narrative, the historical/socio-cultural factors, and the affective outcome interact with each other I will be able to devise a methodology that is suitable for studying the cultural adaptation of Dracula across different media. The methodology that will be used in this thesis will also be a synthesis of the three critical approaches including the visual narrative, historical/socio-cultural factors, and the affective dimension. The development of this methodology and its application to study the translation/adaptation of Dracula in other cultural setups will provide a broader mechanism to study those inter-cultural and inter-textual spaces where texts of horror literature across the world converge, interact, and overlap with each other.

The texts selected in each of the sections are not always direct adaptations of Stoker's novel. Some of these texts like Hemendra Kumar Roy's 'Mrs Kumudini Chowdhury,' Md. Alamgir Taimur's 'Kantajew-er Pishach' ('The Vampire of Kantajew'), Parimal Bhattacharya's film *Nishi Trishna* ('Night-Thirst'), Himadrikishore Dasgupta's 'Mosmai Orchid,' Manojit Dey's 'Roktobhi Pishach' ('The Bloodthirsty Vampire'), Prithviraj Sen's 'Roktochoshar Hahakar' ('The Blood-sucker's Howl'), Debajyoti Bhattacharya's 'Mrityuheen' ('Undead'), Shouvik Chakraborty's 'Kuashar Rong Laal' ('The Fog's Colour is Red'), and Souren Dutta's 'Roktopishach' ('The Vampire') use familiar tropes from Stoker's Dracula like the entrapment of the victim in the vampire's abode, the discovery of a courteous host being a blood-thirsty monster, or the regeneration of the vampire's body through blood-drinking. By including these texts, I wish to establish how the text of Dracula has pervaded vampire literature across cultures, influencing the way the character of the blood-thirsty monster is written or portrayed onscreen. I have also included graphic novels written in Hindi and in English that do not follow the narrative of Stoker's novel but utilise the character of Dracula to reinvent the story of the Count. By studying these texts, I will be able to observe the role popular imagination plays in the translation of the horror of a cult vampire figure.

The main idea of this thesis is to question whether the horror of Dracula can be translated to other cultures and to identify the factors which contribute to the same. I will try to show how the successful translation of Dracula's horror across different cultural contexts depends on aesthetic, affective, and historical changes made in the adaptations. I will try to analyse whether and how the horror of Dracula is seamlessly translated to other cultures even when the London-Romania dynamic is changed, and new socio-cultural meanings are added to the text. The narrative alterations to Stoker's portrayal of vampirism through changes to the visual and socio-political aspects of the text will also be studied.