

A Beast of Burden; The **Tumultuous Nature of Adapting** **Horror Books into Films**

Written by Justin O'Reilly

Dr. Jennifer Barker

April 30th 2020

The nature of fear is so varied and complex; it is often viewed as subjective and yet everyone will jump at a jump scare, even one they may have seen coming. And it is this kind of shock that books can't do in the way that movies can. Though many people have read Stephen King's *It* many more people responded positively to the trailer for the new remake of *It*, quickly making it one of the most watched trailers on YouTube of all time in 2017. Asking people who grew up in the 80's and 90's they would probably tell you their interest sprung not from the original text but the TV movie that aired in 1990. In fact a lot of well known horror movies throughout the years come as adaptations; *It*, *Pet Sematary*, *The Ring*, *Psycho*, *The Exorcist*, *The Haunting of Hill House* - the list goes on. Of course all big horror movies are not adaptations, but adaptation does make up a significant portion of some of the most iconic horror movies of the past 100 years.

Though horror books have waned in popularity it remains a popular genre of fiction to write within; and filmmakers have yet to give up their interest in adapting horror works. The genre continues to endure, even when we look at years in the 2000's when less than 10 horror films got theatrical releases. On the other hand, horror films contain some of the longest running franchises, with 7 *Paranormal Activity* films, 11 *Friday the 13th* films and 13 *Halloween* films, with frankly no end in sight for some of these franchises. Where these films can shock you with jump scares and gross you out with the presentation of gory kills and piles of viscera books are forced to approach scaring you in a different way. Since you go through a book at your own

pace making something scary to all potential readers isn't easy, and often results in painting detailed word pictures in an effort to flood the reader's mind with a disturbing visual of their own imagination. In this essay we will dive deep into both horror films and books, and try to dissect the beast that is adapting horror from one to the other through the lens of works including *The Ring* and *Psycho* in effort to show that adaptation is in itself not just an easy way to make a quick buck in Hollywood but is in fact a delicate art form in and of itself, one in which creators are able to sometimes create almost entirely new works that build upon and then transcend the originals, while carrying on their legacy. In terms of horror specifically a big part of this process is translating what is scary in a book to what might be scary in a movie, which can sometimes be the biggest source of changes.

This isn't the only place adaptive work needs to be done however, the process of turning a book into a movie involves a lot of tweaking, sometimes if only to make the finale movie less niche. The process of adaptation is sadly one that is still often misunderstood or mislabeled as lazy, no thanks to a fair few poorly received book to the movie adaptations that took hold after the smash success that was *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. When talking about adaptation many viewers and readers are often skeptical on the basis of accuracy; in her essay "*When the Movie is Better than the Book: Fight Club, Consumption, and Vital signs*" Professor Teresa Heffernan comments on the old way of viewing adaptation theory:

"Traditionally, the book, the source, has been privileged over the movie, so that as both Robert Stam and Linda Hutcheon have argued, most discussions about film

adaptations are “in negative terms of loss,”¹ and the film versions are often dismissed with morally loaded language and accused of betrayal, bastardization, and infidelity.² In other words, they are understood as weak, illegitimate, second-rate copies of the original leading to that predictable response, “the book was better than the movie.” In this slavish valuing of the original, hierarchies are established where literature is assumed better than film, and high art is pitted against popular culture, with all the implicit gender and class biases of “feminizing” markets and ignorant masses. The original work is vacuum sealed and stuck on a pedestal, removed from the messiness of a past life or afterlife. Hence, discussions of shifting cultural and historical contexts and questions of translation, audience, market, and media specificity are mostly absent from the more traditional approaches to adaptation criticism.”

-Heffernan, 1

The qualification that an adaption needs to be bound to the source material is one that feels very antiquated, as some of the most well liked films based on movies are often missing content, changing characters, and even in some cases changing endings to make them more well suited for the big screen. Mario Puzo’s *Godfather* has Fabrizio shot dead in the middle of the second act where Francis Ford Coppola saw fit to remove his death scene, after filming, from the final release. Again one of these is not inherently better than the other, this is ultimately a small change that doesn’t affect the story, but it’s the fact that there *was* a change at all that is worth exploring. But how does the adaptation process really work?

In scientific terms adaptation refers to the idea of changing for the purposes of survival, and in media changes have to be made from books so that they can thrive as films. When embarking on this translation of the content from one medium from another one has to ask themselves what will work on the screen and what won't, what kinds of things have changed in society since this book came out, how do people today feel about this or that, these questions and more are not designed to destroy the original text but transform it. Typically the process begins simply with picking the subject that will serve as your source material. No one wants to watch a movie that uses the book as a script, so it's someone's job to interpret the different elements of a potential book and boil it down, then rework into a screenplay. For *good* adaptations this process involves garnering a deep understanding of the original work, perhaps working with an author or a team of writers reading the book together and giving their different interpretations on it.

Some authors are opposed to the adaptation of their works for this very reason, or because they don't like the idea of someone making changes to their work. Others would argue that the importance of adaptation, from any medium to any other, offers a chance for a totally new creatively enticing experience. The purpose then of a movie being exactly like its source book suddenly feels very moot; though some people's personal attachment to a text may be such that they can't look past any inconsistencies the offering of a film is a shared experience that should be different, because adaption is, in a sense, a translation.

Some people will take the stance that the author's original vision is the most important thing when it comes to a book, but some authors including a master of horror Stephen King don't

feel this way at all; Thought he was infamously criticized Kubrick's The Shining over the years King is adamantly for adaptation and changes.

“DEADLINE: Authors want to do more than cash a check and cross their fingers when they sell their books to Hollywood. You’ve likely made more of these deals than any living author I can think of, and you always seem to option your works for almost no money, with a short leash. What do you ask these days when you entrust one of your books to a film company?

KING: I want a dollar, and I want approvals over the screenwriter, the director and the principal cast. We try to make these people understand, the people that are doing the deal, that I want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. I’m not a hard guy to get along with. In all the time we’ve been doing this, I’ve never put up a red light to anybody about anything that they wanted to do. Because if they want to make changes, if they want to be a little bit out on the edge, I’m all for it. I like it.”

- Mike Fleming, Deadline

Stephen King doesn’t want someone to treat his works like they’re the end all be all, he simply wants the people who are working on translating his works into another medium to ones that understand the original text. The same way you would want someone fluent in Spanish to translate Don Quixote into English, King wants someone who knows what his books are really about to translate them into films.

It's tough to give examples that give a concrete understanding of this scenario but a quick google search for "Harry Potter movie and book differences" will show you not a series of articles that list differences but a series of articles taking sides. One such article being "'Harry Potter': 15 Unforgivable Differences Between Characters In The Books VS Movies" while another on the first page of results is named "How the 'Harry Potter' Movies Succeeded Where the Books Failed". One of these groups isn't right where the other is wrong but rather both miss what's most important here; the medium of books and the medium of films are very different; books are longer and more detailed, designed to immerse you in a world that you can create visually in your mind. No matter how clearly something is described, your own personal biases and life experiences will affect how you read and how you interpret what you read. When two people read the first Harry Potter book, without having seen any other media surrounding the text, they will both know that Harry wears glasses and has a scar on his forehead, but if you asked them both to describe Harry without mentioning those two features you would probably get two different looking interpretations of the character based on what each person thinks the child protagonist of a fantasy book should look like.

Movies aren't like this; while many films deal with haughty subject matter and leave room to interpret characters feelings and motivations as well as story implications and determined overall meanings there is not the same amount of interpretive freedom. Everyone who has seen Star Wars : A New Hope would describe the same looking Luke, Han, and Leia because they all watched the same movie. When you watch a movie your going for a ride on a train that is being lead by a team of people who collaborate to create a specific experience; the

music, editing, and acting are the same for everyone who views it, and the director acts as the conductor of the train who's in charge of the whole creative vision.

So, as King puts it, you want someone who has a deep understanding of the content, whether it's someone like King being on the set of an adaptation of his work, or someone King trusts as a person with a deep understanding of or connection to the source material. This could be viewed as one of the main reasons people treat their favorite books with such sanctity; because the version of the story they experienced involved them a lot more than their viewing of a movie. This vast difference in mediums means that books and movies are often hard to compare because the personal experience is important with a book, and it is less personal to some extent with a movie.

When it comes to horror adaptation perhaps the most curious metric by which to judge the adaptation and the source is by how scary they both are, which as we have discussed is incredibly difficult when books can be such a subjective and personal experience. Why some things might be scary in a book and not carry over into a film can be up to the individual viewer and come down to a thousand tiny details. Since fear is so subjective the best way to approach this type of analysis would be to look at what kinds of things are scary in a book and why those may be different from things being scary in a movie. In essence is the media delivery mechanism being so different influencing the way changes are made, or are these changes coming about for other reasons ? To build up to this question however we first have to answer a more baseline question; how does fiction scare us in the first place ?

This is a complicated question, since being afraid of something is so subjective in nature it's hard to say that something is universally scary. Horror films with a lot of hype often get touted as "the scariest movie of all time", and sometimes this claim is so bombastic that it can soften the blow. For our purposes this is where books and movies most often differ in the types of horror they can produce and the ways in which they scare you. A novel isn't going to show you a scary picture and expect you to be afraid, and a movie isn't going to show you a line of text describing a murder and expecting you to be afraid, but it all comes back to the idea of the personal experience.

Reading this you share at least one common personal experience with everyone else who may someday read this essay; you are all people. While fear is often looked at in the same way as comedy in terms of subjectivity there are things often viewed as universally funny and universally scary. Masahiro Ito, lead artists behind some of Japan's most well loved horror games in the *Silent Hill* franchise states in the *Making of Silent Hill 2* documentary gives his ideas on how to make a scary monster that everyone will be afraid of; "My basic idea in creating the monsters of *Silent Hill 2* was to give them human aspect. In the beginning the player would believe they were human. Then I proceed to undermine this human aspect, by giving weird movements to these creatures and using improbable angles for their bodies, based on the mannerisms and movements of drunk people or the tentative walk of very young children." (Ito Masahiro, *Making of Silent Hill 2*).

Pictured below is the monster known as the Lying Figure, a quick glance shows you a vague humanoid shape that is undermined by indescribable fleshy features, in place of a normal human face or arms. A commonly understood human fear is that of the uncanny valley, when the image of a human is supposed to bring us comfort through relatability to ourselves monsters like this disturb us because we can't fully understand them despite our minds desire to relate it to us as almost human. Your mind then attempts to interpret the faceless creature to the best of its ability but your lack of understanding visually (a visual metaphor for a man in a straight jacket) triggers your unconscious fight or flight response because your mind doesn't immediately know how to interface with something it is so unable to comprehend.



The true master craft of a Horror media isn't always just showing you something scary and you being scared; it's a process in which you the reader or viewer convinces yourself that you're afraid of something that isn't real. It's why there was such a long standing trend of horror

movies being “based on true events” in the early 2000’s, it’s easier to convince an audience that they should be afraid if they think what they’re seeing could have really happened. This is an area where the idea of the personal experience becomes very important, when you read a book it is entirely up to you to scare yourself while reading. In a movie on the other hand you are being subjected to a more static experience and it is the job of the horror movie to elicit the fear reaction from you. Stephen King’s analogy for why the two mediums work so differently is very simple “ The thing that books do that movies can’t, it’s like the difference between baseball and football. You know football is played on a clock and so are movies. Books and baseball run on their own time.” (King)

However there are areas of fear in which both mediums can affect you in similar ways, returning to *The Making of Silent Hill 2* “Psychological horror has to shake humans hearts deeply. Shaking people’s hearts deeply means to uncover people’s core emotion and core motivation for life. Everybody is thinking and concerning (themselves) about sex and death everyday. And if we want to scare or shake or touch the users or the spectators then we have to think about, ya know, sex and death deeply.” (Sato Takayoshi) For a simple comparison let’s look at a movie and a roller coaster; a roller coaster is simulated danger. Your brain knows that under the conditions your body is in while riding an intense thrill ride with loops and turns and drops that you should be in danger and that forces your brain to have a chemical reaction of fear, which you can then translate to a thrill or excitement since you consciously know that you are safe (hopefully). In a movie you’re literally separated from what is happening, so for a movie to create similar chemical reactions in your brain it has to reach you either through jumpscare or

through something deeply psychological like, as Sato says; your fear of death, anxiety about sex, or a confrontational mixture of the two.

So again when we look at the adaptation process of a horror book into a movie we now have a more specific understanding of things that can work in one but don't work in the other; horror that we would call psychological, as described above, could work in either medium even if the way they're approached is different. A horrible monster such as the Lying Figure works in a visual medium but isn't possible in a novel, you can show something that a brain can't fully comprehend but there's no way to describe it in a way that will be just as scary. A simpler example of this kind of visual horror is when a movie like *Hostel* shows you a person getting their limb hacked off you're getting a very different sensory experience than if you read about it. If you've never seen an arm get chopped off a description in a text might not be evocative enough to conjure up the gross image in your head, whereas if everyone is seeing the arm get chopped off on a screen the fear comes from just how gross it is and the idea that your arm may at some point be chopped off and how painful it looks on screen makes you wince at the thought of it happening to you.

The third technique is one that is most closely tied to each medium: the jump scare. This is a type of scare that is often viewed as the cheapest; in film this is the closest that roller coaster of feeling of simulated danger that you can get, when something jumps out and a loud stinger plays your brain goes into the fight or flight response for a split second, until it remembers that the danger isn't immediate or real, just perceived. Books are theoretically capable of this, but it's

not something that you often see as most writers don't deal as much with the form and meta presentation of their writing as the content. The idea of a page turn jump scare exists in comics and manga, which are a visual medium and despite being a static visual medium are closer to film and TV than books. So of these three main ways to scare you it seems clear that a book's best chance to scare you is to reach you psychologically as reading about a spooky image is not going to be as scary as showing one to someone through a visual medium.

This could be the simplest explanation then of why horror movies are more popular, and today more commonly created, than horror novels. The fun and sometimes simulated fear requires the most work in the written word, when in a film, despite being a more elaborate and collaborative process, the end result of a scare is easier. It still doesn't mean that one medium is better than another but it does answer part of our original questioning in this essay; the transformative work done to adapt a horror book into a horror movie does influence the amount and kind of scares in the final product because there are *more* ways a movie can scare you than a book. The content doesn't always have to change but you are more likely to be scared of horror imagery that you are being confronted with than imagery that you're reading about. To understand these theoretical points more clearly we can take a look at some horror book to movie adaptations and try to find specific reasons and instances for changes.

Koji Suzuki's novel *Ring* has been adapted into several feature films since its publication in 1991 but the original adaptation to film is 1998's famous Japanese horror movie *Ringu*. This instance of adaptation is a good example to how horror can be so different on the page, and while

there aren't a lot of changes in translation the few that exist are significant. More interesting still is the later American remake in the form of 2002's *The Ring* which is nearly a shot for shot remake of *Ringu*, and is thus even further divorced from Koji Suzuki's original novel. The first and perhaps most interesting change made in *Ringu* is that the main character changes from a married man with a daughter to a single divorced woman with a son. The second big change is the content of the cursed video that exists at the center of the story, and the third is the nature of the antagonistic ghost Sadako.

In order of importance the changing of the protagonist, Kazuyuki Asakawa, into a woman, Reiko Asakawa, is the biggest change. This is an interesting change because it both makes the character more sympathetic, but also introduces an entirely new thematic layer into the film that doesn't exist in the book. The original novel is laid out more like a horror mystery, and the protagonist is almost a classic gumshoe; Kazuyuki is a reporter who's smart but ran into trouble in the past because he's published writings on UFO sightings and other wacky conspiracy theories. Reiko comes off as a strong independent woman who has cast her old husband aside to focus on her career, and is raising her son on her own. While this isn't that odd to us now in the 90's in Japan this would have been pretty uncommon, however the way it changes the major themes of the text makes it a worthwhile change, transforming the anxieties of the text into something almost entirely new.

In the book *Ring* Sadako, the ghost girl antagonist, has imprinted herself onto a cursed video tape in an effort to spread a, and stay with me here, a psychically infused version of the

smallpox virus that infects people who watches the tape and kills them after 7 days via a heart attack. So while Sadako is the origin of the virus, she's not much of an antagonist in the second half when they start to learn more about how people are actually dying. In *Ringu* Sadako is the antagonist directly, and the mystery of the film is trying to discover her origins and how to appease her so that she will spare Reiko and her son. But the resolution to the plot is also thematically altered by Reiko being a woman; in *Ring* they are able to find and bury Sadako which they think will placate her but it turns out that is not the solution. In *Ringu* Reiko finds and buries Sadako as well, but the implication of the ending is that Reiko has discovered her "true motherly self". This theme that is present in the film but not in the book is that of Reiko being a modern woman that's clashing with Japanese traditions.

A theme that is common among both texts is a sort of general anxiety of the old clashing with the new, as the tape represents the way technology is advancing quickly and leaving the old ways of Japanese culture behind, which is represented by the curse that is imbued onto the tape. But for Reiko, she's pushing back against her classical role as a mother; leaving her son home by himself and letting him walk to school on his own as she makes her job such a priority. Casting out her clearly problematic husband, who has no relationship with their son at all. And in the end she is the one who finds Sadako's remains, leading to the ending that part of her journey was accepting her role as a mother. This leads to the much darker ending where her ex-husband still dies (in the book he's just Kazuyuki's best friend) and she realizes, as Kazuyuki does in the book, that making copies of the tape and showing it to someone else can pass on the death curse for the time being, sparing oneself until Sadako has worked her way down the line back to you.

In the end of the film Reiko is driving to her father's house to pick up her son and show the video to her father, putting her role as a mother first for the first time in the film.

This adaptation then, while it doesn't change much in terms of the plot, simplifies a lot to make the story more well suited in length for a film. But what it does change with the characters, and the new themes and additions, transforms the work so much that it garners new value as its own piece. In terms of the horror the movie translates a lot of horrific elements from the text as they are described, but adding twists that work well visually such as the way Sadako moves out of the TV, which is scarier as a visual because it's so abnormal. It's worth noting that there is also an American film to make this a trio; Gore Verbinski's 2002 film *The Ring* is a curious case because it is *not* an adaptation of the novel but instead a very calculated remake, almost shot for shot, of the Japanese film *Ringu*. Everything from the new mother/son dynamic to the conclusion of the plot follows *Ringu* closely, and the film takes nothing new from the original text that *Ringu* did not.

However *The Ring* presents viewers with one key piece of horror imagery that's different; the content of the cursed video tape. In Steven Rawle's "*Video Killed the Movie: Cultural Translation in Ringu and The Ring*," Rawle discusses at length how the differences in the video, and another key plot point, signify major differences in culture between that of Japan and the United States. Rawle argues that despite the two films being so similar *The Ring* is made less impactful because it goes out of its way to change things that Americans would more traditionally understand as "scary". Let's address them point by point:

For starters Rawle says: “*Translating Ringu into The Ring entailed diminishing certain specific Japanese elements in the original, especially the use of language as visual signifiers and intertextual references to traditional conceptions of ghosts and the amplification of other elements that have equivalents in Western and/or global culture, such as technological fears, patriarchal discourses, and generic iconography.*” (99). This idea of cross cultural adaptation is one that commonly clashes with the idea that adaptations don’t need to be married to the source material, as instead of being married to one person’s creative vision a cross cultural adaptation can instead potentially trample over someone’s culture which runs the risk of being more overtly offensive rather than a free license creative change.

A specific example Rawle gives is the use of Kanji: “*The use of kanji in the video pertains to a central characteristic of Japanese art. The flattened, depthless nature of artistic presentation is typical of Japanese artforms, including the cinema.*” (103). Rawle argues in this passage of the essay that the use of Kanji is critical to the Japanese horror iconography, as the letters of the writing are more closely tied to Japanese beliefs and religious practices. This then wouldn’t work as well in the American version where the written word has the potential to take the viewer out of the experience. Later Rawle broadly compares the two films’ cursed tapes and tries to find a general explanation for the change:

“The Ringu video is predominantly a sensory experience. The metallic aural elements of the video stimulate the proprioceptive senses of the viewer (like listening to fingernails being drawn down a blackboard).” (104)

“The repetition of the video in The Ring forms the core of the translational process of remaking Ringu as a Western experience. At almost twice the length, with more than four times the number of shots than its predecessor, the cursed video in The Ring is a substantially different object. Despite this appeal to the senses, however, the video also exhibits a rigid narrative determinism that presents objects in the video as direct representations of those in the diegesis. Whereas Ringu maintained the “real”/“abstract” dichotomy from the novel, The Ring suggests that all the images in the video are “real” in some sense. We eventually discover all the objects, landscapes and people in the video throughout the course of Rachel and Noah’s investigation...” (110)

- Steven Rawle

This is an element of adaptation not always considered by adapters, but critically important when analyzing them critically, in an effort to make *The Ring* more western changes were made, and these changes were not, as some have been, influenced by the medium because the medium is the same. This further answers one of our initial questions, that other reasons for these kinds of changes in adaptation can exist, cultural boundaries of understanding can hinder the enjoyment of a text. The content of the cursed video is one of the biggest differences between *Ringu* and *The Ring* and serves as a clear example of changes being made to a text to make the content more palatable to a wider audience, and though both tapes are scary the western interpretation of the tape is clearly meant to be scary with or without the context of the film.

The other big plot point that gets changed is the ending and Patti Zettler, in her essay on the two films, *Media Literacy Analysis: Comparative Analysis of Ringu and The Ring*, makes a crucial observation that the specific nature of the two film's endings signify very different family values between Japanese and American culture. At the end of *Ringu* Reiko takes the tape to show to her father to protect her son while at the end of *The Ring* they copy the tape and exactly whoever is going to receive it and watch it is not important. "*this difference seems to signify that, culturally, Americans are more worried about themselves individually, while the Japanese consider everyone as part of a whole.*" (Zettler, 44) It's worth noting that the father in *The Ring* is never introduced, so it would be a lot to add just to reach the same conclusion but Zettler's point is more that American values are different, and she thinks Americans relate more to the ending of *The Ring* anyways, whereas the ending of *Ringu* is 'too Japanese'.

These are not the only differences between the two films, nor between the book and the films, but they represent the biggest changes and serve our purposes of understanding the adaptation of horror more directly. To widen our sample size we can look at another iconic horror film that finds its origins in a book, Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho*, Alfred Hitchcock's hit film *Psycho*, and even Gus Van Sant's later remake *Psycho*. The first thing that most strikingly sets the different interpretations apart is the focal character of Norman Bates; in the book Norman is described as an unappealing, creepy, and clearly unwell man. The book does not aim to create tension through wondering who the killer is because it's made plainly obvious from the start. This appears to be because the book is inspired by the real life serial killer Ed Gein,

Stephen Robello explains a bit of the history in his book on the making of the film: “ Following his bent for abnormal psychology, Bloch began to spin feasible- if sensational- means and motivations for his bizarre main character” (Robello, 40)

Norman Bates in the text is meant to be this twisted and evil person because of an internal conflict; a war being waged between three personalities all vying for control over his actions. The movie, to structure a more traditional narrative that would become the framework for the slasher movie, doesn't deal with any inner monologues from Norman. Instead we get one long explanation at the end about his personality being split in two (not three like in the book) that closes out the film in an effort to make sure the audience understands what happens. It's not an elegant solution but by shaving off a lot of the writer-interpreted psychology Hitchcock is able to turn the novel into a suspenseful thriller, with violent deaths driven by strong musical stings and implied stabbings. Music is probably the strongest component of the film that couldn't work in a novel, texts don't have soundtracks so even if the novel was adapted one to one on screen the music adds a whole new layer of fear.

The tension built by both the music and the camera work in Hitchcock's classic makes the work feel like a major transformation from Bloch's psychological drama of a novel about a broken man. But in truth one would not exist without the other, and the two could never be so similar that they would step on each other's toes. Though the film has seen a lot of success historically it succeeds in ways the original text cannot, and thus is a strong example of a transformative adaptation without the additive of crossing cultural boundaries. There is however

another layer that hasn't come yet; in movie to movie adaptations such as the universally reviled *Psycho* remake you get into the realm of casting. This is yet another thing a book doesn't have to deal with as actors playing roles are bound by the script, whereas the characters in a book are simply described visually. The personal reading experience provided by the book allows you to formulate how a character looks, but casting commits the look to one solitary person.



The Gus Van Sant remake of *Psycho* is one of the most universally reviled remakes in cinemas history, with critics all over the world asking “Why, oh god why?” (Everyone, all the time). The most common complaints leveled against this movie aren't even technical in nature but instead they come down to the fact that the movie is a shot for shot remake of the older film, and the only difference is the casting of the characters with new actors several years later. This movie is so hated it's often used in arguments against remaking films all together, and rumors that it was purposefully bad have circulated for a long time. Why is this important to our argument? Well it fundamentally breaks the most important rule of adaptation; Gus Van Sant

does not in any way adapt Hitchcock's work, instead the film seems to exist as a vehicle for a group of actor's to show they can be just as good as their predecessors and the critics agree that they were not, with Vince Vaughn in particular being a sticking point for many as a horrible representation of Norman Bates. It's this total lack of effort to actually adapt Hitchcock's work that shows how good some adaptations are. *The Ring* is similar to *Ringu* but it does enough differently to validate its own existence in the franchise, Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* does not.

And when one considers all the stories throughout history it's easy to imagine that a lot of them fall into the genre of horror, because throughout history life has always been scary. Through different mediums of storytelling horror has always been there, whether to keep children from wandering off at night, or keep a society of people in check. Yet horror is both one of the most liked and least well recognized genres of all media; horror is often considered the least artistic genre one can work within and whether you agree with this or not it lands us in a world in which horror is not often respected in the same way that other genres are.

While people aren't always coming out in saying this the United States has more than one big award show centered around films, and none of them give out horror specific awards, even if other genre specific awards exist. Only 6 horror films have ever even been nominated for academy awards and horror, and I think most people would agree looking back that at least the Exorcist deserves a little more recognition. Despite getting trounced by *The Godfather* and *Cabaret* at the Academy Awards *The Exorcist* is clearly an iconic film that has had as much of a legacy in the history of cinema. It is interesting considering that horror movies can be some of

the most mentally and emotionally affecting kinds of films and literature one can experience; striking fear into the hearts and minds is the different way that horror can have a lasting legacy.

And whether people want to admit it or not adaptation is an important part of this legacy, going as far back as some of the earliest horror movies, such as *Haxan* and *Nosferatu*, being adaptation of classic fairy tales and folklore. Those did not go through the rigorous adaptation processes we looked at in this study but the point is that adaptation can be as complex and creatively driven as creating something entirely new. Art, movies, books, tv, paintings etc. all have the potential to carry personal weight within their audiences, so it's easy to be offended when someone takes out your favorite scene from a book just to make a movie shorter.

But you can take a more critical look at adaptations and get a lot more out of them; in the case of *The Ring* the book has some scares but feels antiquated compared to the movie *Ringu* which tells a more harrowing and sympathetic story of a mother trying to save her son from a force she cannot hope to fight, injecting in new themes and ideas that make it the same story but told in almost a completely different way. Contrarily *Psycho* is a different more horror focused take on Boch's classic novel, but Gus Van Sant's remake does nothing to deserve attention, and makes no strides to try something new. It is important to remember that first and foremost an adaptation, no matter how good or bad, never invalidates the existence of the original. Heffernan still puts it best when she says that looking down on adaptations is an old way of thinking; *Psycho* and *The Ring* both serve as excellent case studies of the nature of adaptations, and how horror in particular can see such dramatic changes from the written word to the silver screen.

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