

TRANSMUTATIONS OF PLOT AND CHARACTERS: THE ANIMATED FILM *THE LION KING (1994)* TO THE LIVE-ACTION *THE LION KING (2019)*

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the existence of transmutations of the plot and characters in the film adaptation. This study uses the theory of Stam, Robert (2000) to find transmutations of plot and characters and the theory of O'Flynn and Hutcheon, L (2012) for a comparative analysis of the film adaptation of the animated version of *The Lion King (1994)* and the live-action version of *The Lion King (2019)*. In this study, the researcher used a descriptive-qualitative research method, and data collection was carried out visually and textually in the film. Based on Spradley's theory and analysis, the researcher first found that the transmutations in the plot are in the film adaptation, especially regarding the removal and addition of scenes that were not there before. Second, transmutations of characters occur in several characters, such as Zazu, Rafiki, Timon, and Pumbaa. As such, Zazu is purple in animation, while it is black in live-action. Then, there are changes in the narration of the characters. Thus, this research finds changes or transmutations to the plot and the characters in the film.

INTRODUCTION

The Lion King (1994) is an American animated epic musical drama film produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation. *The Lion King* tells the story of Simba (Swahili for lion), a lion cub who succeeds his father, Mufasa, as King of the Pride Lands. However, after his paternal uncle Scar kills Mufasa to usurp the throne, Simba is tricked into believing he is responsible for his father's death and flees into exile. After growing up with the carefree outcasts Timon and Pumbaa, Simba receives valuable perspective from his childhood friends Nala and Rafiki. Before returning, challenge Scar to end his tenure and take his place as the rightful king. Meanwhile, *The Lion King (2019)* is a remake of the 1994 film based on the adaptation and then expands upon the story elements of the original film. Although the live-action version of *The Lion King (2019)* looks different from the 1994 animated version, the general narrative of the movie is almost the same, and the characters are the same. However,

the film's adaptation from animation to live-action has more or less shifted, such as changes in some storylines, character styles (colors, shapes, and attitude patterns), and music changes.

Adapting animated films to live-action, such as *The Lion King*, has changed characters and plots. An example of character changes in the adaptation is in the animated version, the hornbill, Zazu, is coloured purple and white. Meanwhile, in the live-action version, Zazu is black and white. This difference has a slight impact on the character of the film adaptation. The purple and white colours in the animated version symbolize struggle and honour. It exists in the animated version of Zazu's character. Zazu is the guardian of honour of the animal kingdom and an advisor to King Mufasa, whereas live-action with black and white colour shifts the character; not only the colour but also the attitude pattern of the character shifts. In this case, it is in line with the opinion of Woolf (2016), who lamented the simplification of literature that inevitably occurred in its transmutations to a new visual medium and called the film a "parasite" and literature "prey" and "victim," which changes to the characters in the film adaptation will provide a shift in the original work, not only in the form of characters and plots but also in the essence of the meaning therein.

The changes that occur in the film adaptation are called transmutation, when the adaptation changes the shape of the characters and the narrative flow presented (Stam, R. 2000, p. 71). Although the changes occurred in the adaptation of *The Lion King* to the live-action version, it made the movie a new work that displayed new surprises. O'Flynn and Hutcheon (2012) stated that adaptation comes from repetition with variety, ease of ritual, and the excitement of surprise. This is evident in the animated film adaptation of *The Lion King*, which mesmerizes audiences with a cinematic look different from the live-action version. At its screening in 2019, the movie broke the box office record for Disney's largest audience. Even so, there are still differences or changes in the plot and characters from the previous movie. Therefore, this analysis compares *The Lion King's* animated and live-action film adaptations.

Other studies have explored this topic and object. The first research by Schlögl and Zagalo (2019), entitled *From animation to live-action: Reconstructing Maleficent* focused on Maleficent's character modification in two studio films: the animated film *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and the live-action film version of *Maleficent* (2014). Starting with modifying the aesthetics and narrative of the latest film compared to the previous film, this research aims to observe how the deconstruction of the villain occurs from one film to another. In the animation, Maleficent appears only as a supporting character, an antagonist to the main

character. In live-action films, on the other hand, Maleficent is the main character, and a backstory is provided to justify the protagonist's presumptions. The second research was written by Rogalski (2021) with the title *Emotional Portrayal in Popular Children's Movies: Coding Basic and Complex Emotion in Aladdin (1992) and Aladdin (2019)*. This research focuses on analyzing the facial expressions of Aladdin (1992) and Aladdin (2019) by investigating how young children might respond to the emotional content of each movie version. Descriptive statistics on the primary and complex emotions portrayed by the various characters were compared. Facial expressions, particularly in early childhood, may contribute significantly to how children interpret the television, movies, and other media they watch. The third study, written by Alagić and Supheert (2022), is entitled *Cultural Representation in Disney's Cinderella and Its Live-Action Adaptation*. This research focuses on the cultural representation in Cinderella animation and live-action. There, the plot of the film is analyzed, which represents the culture and characters in it.

The fourth was written by Galizia (2022). A journal article entitled *A Trousers Matter: Are Disney's Female Characters Clothes of the Latest Animated and Live-action Films Empowering or a Weak façade?*, published by Rivista Italiana in Filosofia del linguaggio. This research analyzes whether feminine women's clothing in Walt Disney Animation films, from Maleficent to Toy Story 4 to Frozen II, can characterize femininity in live-action films since many female characters started wearing more comfortable clothing that would allow them to fight and move around comfortably wherever they wanted. Disney dived into his old filmography and rethought their classic fairy tales, changing key characteristics to make the story more "feminist" by contemporary standards. The fifth research article by Friedman (2022), entitled *The Differing Effects of Narrative Transportation Across Animated and Live Action Movies*. The research intends to thoroughly study the differences in the level of narrative transportation between animated and live-action films. Animated and live-action movies will create different levels of narrative transportation based on the different natures of the two styles. Specifically, due to the complete control and computer-generated content found in animated films, the level of narrative transport will be higher than that found in films created using live-action formats.

In the five previous studies, the topic and phenomena regarding the change in the film adaptation (animation to live-action) differ from the object under study. The phenomenon has previously been discussed, but not in the context of *The Lion King*. Therefore, the transmutation of the plot and characters based on the dialogic theory of adaptation is a gap in

this research, which is helpful in reviewing the new surprises in the adaptation that increase the audience in the film. The researcher investigated the differences in movie adaptations to show the changes in plot and characters. The researchers used as objects the animated film version of *The Lion King (1994)* and the live-action version of *The Lion King (2019)*. The transmutation of plot and character is studied using Robert Stam (2000) to show visible differences in the film adaptation. Meanwhile, O'Flynn and Hutcheon's (2012) theory of adaptation is used for comparative analysis of film adaptations with the original media. Therefore, this research is a reference for investigating changes in the transmutation of film adaptations from animation to live-action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "transmutations" in plots and characters refers to the different ways of conveying messages from the original medium to new media, or in this case, from an animated film adaptation to a live-action film. It becomes commonplace when adaptation is applied. Stam R. (2000) stated that when transposing to another medium or transferring to the same medium, there will always be changes or reformatting in the language of the new medium, and there will always be gains and losses. However, according to O'Flynn and Hutcheon, L. (2012), "adapt" is to adjust, alter, and make suitable. However, there will be differences before and after the adaptation. In this case, the adaptation seeks to thoroughly adjust both the narrative of the story and the characters in it. Besides, the adjustment effort presents a new atmosphere that is different from the original work of the previous adaptation, so it can be said that literary works adapted from film to film with a new atmosphere, such as animation to live-action, are said to be the production of new literary works.

When adaptation is already a product, there are usually character changes in film character transmutations. Stam, R. (2000) refers to him as a "condensation character" who appears in the film adaptation opposite to the source, such as a character depicted as brave and thoughtful in the film adaptation who becomes not thoughtful and brave. There could even be a reduction in characters or additional characters. Besides that, there are also subtle character changes, such as young black people becoming white people. In Godard's *Contempts*, he explains that another shift in a character can be voice, metaphor, or narration, referred to as "focalization" (Stam, R., 2000, p. 72). The change in the adaptation film becomes a problem when there is a noticeable shift, especially in the character. The character's shape has a meaning that reflects attitude patterns such as speech, movement, body, and attitude. In addition, character changes also affect the plot of the movie that occurs in it. The shape of the

character that changes will shift the movie's narrative. Moreover, the character pattern in animation is opposite to the attitude found in the narrative.

Next is the transmutation of the plot; other things cause changes to the story. One of the factors is (perhaps unconscious) ideological reasons. It is removed from the scene if it is considered to affect the essence of the story. According to Stam, R. (2000), to ignore or omit scenes in an adaptation is called "uncinematic." A filmmaker may assume that the scene does not affect the audience, or a producer may assume that the audience cannot get high narrative and allegories. A comparative analysis is presented to explain the transmutations of the plot and characters. It compares one medium to another so that new film interpretations can be seen. According to O'Flynn and Hutcheon L. (2012), telling a story differs from showing it, and "in the process of dramatization, there is inevitably a certain amount of re-accentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot." Therefore, the comparison aims to show the differences in film adaptations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative design. The research data comes from visual and textual elements visible at the source. The data were taken from the animated version of *The Lion King (1994)* produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation and the live-action version of *The Lion King (2019)* produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Fairview Entertainment. Both films are objects of research based on plot and characters. To determine whether the film has the phenomenon of film adaptation shifts, determining the transpositions of the plot and characters in the study is the focus of the researcher's findings.

The researcher used Spradley's (2016) analysis technique to analyze the data. Four stages of analysis are applied: domain, taxonomy, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. First, in domain analysis, Robert Stam's "The Dialogics of Adaptation theory" is applied to reveal transpositions in plots and characters. After revealing the forms of transposition in plot and characters, a comparative analysis by O'Flynn and Hutcheon, L. (2012) is applied here by comparing the two films in the scope of film adaptations. Second, taxonomic analysis and transpositions of plot and characters are aimed at films adapted from the animated version to live-action. The next step is to review and compare the two films using comparative theory analysis from O'Flynn and Hutcheon, L. The next step is componential analysis. Here, the findings from the domain and taxonomy analyses are presented in a descriptive form to show their relationship. This relationship will show the categorization of transpositions in a film adaptation. The last is a cultural theme analysis. At this stage, the forms

of transposition in the plot and characters are analyzed by showing the film's visual and textual elements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into three parts to show the adaptation of *The Lion King's* animated and live-action versions. The first part discusses the transmutations of the plot. The second discusses character transmutations. The third is the discussion regarding transmutation as a mainstream audience. There is then a comparative analysis of the animated and live-action versions of the film in each sub-section.

Transmutation of Plot

A comparative analysis of the two films shows differences in the plots. There is a slight change in the story between the two films of *The Lion King (TLK)*, *The Lion King* (1994) and *The Lion King* (2019). This can be seen when the scene of a mouse moving in a cave differs from the live-action version. In the minute 04:50 of the adaptation, there is an additional scene in which the mouse is shown not in the cave but outside the cave and then enters the cave. Another difference can be seen in the the two figures below: Scar in the animated film is holding a mouse, which is different from the live-action version, where Scar is not holding a mouse. This change illustrates Stam's concept (2000) that there are additions and subtractions to the plot called uncinematic. It shows that the difference makes the plot of the film adaptation to live-action shifts and the meaning of the expression also changes. Scar, a male lion full of ambition and desire for power, powerfully represents the symbol of power and ambition by holding a mouse in the animated version. However, that meaning was lost when adapted to the live-action version by eliminating the scene of Scar holding the mouse. This causes a shift in the narrative plot in the live-action version.

Figure 1

TLK 1994 minute 04:41



Figure 2

TLK 2019 minute 04:47



Another scene also shows the changes in the plot as seen from figure 3 and 4. In a comparative analysis of the animated version of the film, minute 05:44, Scar wants to eat Zazu, even though Zazu is already in Scar's mouth. Meanwhile, the live-action version shows Scar trying to chase Zazu to be eaten. This is the difference in adaptation, that it changes the "uncinematic" aspect, and there are reduced scenes that make changes to the story. There is a reason for this adaptation. According to Boggs (1996), fictional films generally have a plot or storyline that contributes to the development of this theme. Therefore, plots and the events, conflicts, and characters that compose them must be carefully selected and arranged to clarify their connection with the theme. If analyzed in depth, much meaning is lost in the plot. It is strikingly different from the live-action version, where the character patterns that appear are different from the animated version. Scar is portrayed as a fearsome and tough-tempered lion and then appears in the live-action version of Scar as a lion who is cold and not enough to represent an uncompromising attitude. In addition, Zazu looks more brilliant and has the power to evade Scar's attacks easily in the live-action version.

Figure 3

TLK 1994 minute 05:44



Figure 4

TLK 2019 minute 07:05



Another plot change is shown in Figure 5 and 6 in which Zazu's scene talking to other characters. Between minute 11:03 and 11:05 in the animated film, Zazu is shown talking to another Gopher character, but in the live-action version, Gopher is not there. This change is almost the same as the principle of transposition. According to Genette, G. (1997), transposition is minimizing or modifying. In this phenomenon, there is a reduction in character. The omitted character Gopher in the live-action version is a mole that digs holes in the 1994 animated version, where Zazu has several conversations with Gopher but does not exist in the 2019 live-action version. With the omission of the character, the movie's plot shifts slightly, and the character pattern of Zazu, who is intelligent and the king's advisor, is not visible in the live-action version.

Figure 5

TLK 1994 minute 11:03



Figure 6

TLK 2019 minute 14:21



Transmutation of Characters

Other changes can be seen in the character of the film adaptation. Referring to the theory of Stam R (2000), the shift in the film adaptation, namely the character, is called "condensation.". This can be seen in Table 4. The character Zazu in the animated film is purple, while in the live-action film, Zazu is black. This difference changes the character, and of course, this will affect the characteristics of the character.

Moreover, Tillman (2019)) stated that the colour that dominates the character would influence the nature of the character. Changes in character forms such as colour, body shape, and voice will give a shift to the nature of the character, or what is called attitude patterns. In the 1994 animated version, Zazu is a hornbill bird with a dominant purple colour. The purple colour that appears symbolizes struggle and honour. It exists in the animated version of the Zazu character. Zazu is the guardian of honour of the animal kingdom and advisor to King Mufasa. In addition, purple also symbolizes romantic energy, wisdom, and courage. The animated version of Zazu represents that psychological pattern. However, the live-action version of Zazu shifts the dominant colour to black, similar to the real-world hornbills. Unfortunately, this version of Zazu's black colour resembles the mysterious one. In this case, it contradicts the character of Zazu in the movie narrative.

Figure 7

TLK 1994 minute 02:29



Figure 8

TLK 2019 minute 02:39



Rafiki's character, a wise baboon, in animated version is similar to his live-action adaptation. Nevertheless, in minute 03:25–03:27, the live-action version looks different, where Rafiki holds a plant root and then breaks it. Meanwhile, the animated version of Rafiki is seen holding the fruit and then breaking it. This includes the aspect referred to by Robert Stam as "condensation" changes in the style of the characters that appear in the film adaptation. The stark difference has its meaning in the movie. Rafiki holding the roots in the 2019 live-action version is a sturdy root, characterizing resilience and continuous growth. In addition, tree roots symbolize sincerity in life because of their essential role. This strongly represents the role of Simba, the lion cub, who is expected to be the successor to the king of the African forest and has an essential role in the survival of forest animals.

Meanwhile, in the 1994 animated version, Rafiki holds a fruit, which, in feng shui, is considered a symbol of longevity, wealth, prosperity, and fertility. In this case, it also represents Rafiki's character, who has hope for Simba. Although the media used by Rafiki is different in the two movie versions, the representation of the attitude shown is equally hopeful as the successor to the king of the African jungle kingdom.

Figure 9

TLK 1994 minute 03:17



Figure 10

TLK 2019 minute 03:25



Figure 11 and 12 show the other characters, Timon and Pumbaa. They are friends of Simba, the lion. It is seen there that the character transmutation is in the form of "focalization" from the film adaptation. In the animated version minute 42:41–42:45, Timon and Pumbaa's conversation is "Jezz, I'm fried. Let's get out of here and find some shade." While in the live-action version minute 53:17–53:20, Timon and Pumbaa said, "We're gonna name him Fred!" This is very different from the animated version of the film adaptation. According to Stam, R. (2000), such a change shifts the narrative and metaphor and can change the film's plot.

Furthermore, it is proven in the live-action version that Timon and Pumbaa did not take Simba away and douse him with water. In the animated version, Timon and Pumbaa do not take Simba away; Simba even wakes up instead of awakening. The change is also included in the plot transmutations because the change in character focalization also changes the point of view of the storyline that occurs in it. In particular, the live-action version gives the impression

of eliminating scenes considered not to change the plot. However, in this study, the changes impact the plot and character changes, such as metaphorical conversations with the character.

Figure 11

TLK 1994 minute 42:41



Figure 12

TLK 2019 minute 53:17



Another transmutation is changing the narrative from the point of view of the characters that appear. In this case, it can see the depiction of Zazu's character. In the animated version of the film shown by figure 13, Scar caged Zazu, and he cannot do anything. Meanwhile, in the live-action version shown by figure 14, Zazu is not locked up at all and he is even free to fly, providing information about Scar. Stam, R. (2000) stated that it is included in "focalization" due to a change in narrative from the animated adaptation.

The change affects the plot of the film adaptation. Even that shift gives a different view for the audience. According to O'Flynn and Hutcheon, L. (2012), since the adaptation is in the form of a product, there will be changes in the story's content, even though there are shifts in the characters and narration that are displayed. The difference provides a plot interpretation that makes the plot pattern shift. It also gives meaning to the character shift where Zazu in the animated version looks like he has no power in front of Scar because he is locked up, while in the live-action version, Zazu looks like he has power as an advisor to the king, and provides information to Simba. The different attitude patterns concern Zazu's inconsistent character style in the two versions.

Figure 13

TLK 1994 minute 42:41



Figure 14

TLK 2019 minute 53:17



Transmutation as a Mainstreaming Audience

Transmutations in some scenes in the plot and characters in film adaptations often occur in adapted films. These changes are sometimes called transposition or transformation, where the

adaptation process provides changes or shifts, especially in this case, shifts in character and plot. Transmutation in every film adaptation is vital in adjusting to the source, especially to attract the audience. Stam, R. (2000) called "mainstreaming" a new surprise in film that offers razzle-dazzle, mimetic aspirations, aesthetics, and impressionism. New surprises aimed at the audience can hook the audience with a new atmosphere and new imagination. In addition, transmutation in adaptation films can be called a new work product. Griggs (2018) argued that the reconceptualization of existing narratives functions as a provocation; they situate a reassessment of the audience's understanding of adaptation as a cultural, theoretical, and creative process by inviting audiences to rethink questions of narrative and authorship and ownership and consider both.

The adaptation of the animated version of *The Lion King* to the live-action version provides a new atmosphere to attract audiences. Although there is a transmutation of the plot and characters, it adds a new nuance by repeating the imagination and rethinking the narrative of the original movie story. Hutcheon, Linda (2006) stated that adaptation, as a formal entity or product, is the announced and extensive transposition of a particular work; it can involve a shift in medium or genre or a change in frame and context. The changes in the live-action version of *The Lion King* adapted the context of the characters and plot in the real world. It aims to make it a new product. When the live-action version of *The Lion King* premiered, it broke several box-office records, including overtaking *Frozen* to become the highest-grossing animated film of all time.

CONCLUSION

The Lion King (2019) is an adaptation of *The Lion King (1994)*; both share the plot and characters. However, some changes impact the plot and characters appearing in the film adaptation's live-action version. Even though the main story is the same, a significant difference impacts the film's duration, as shown in the adaptation. After the comparative analysis is applied, there are several conclusions from the film, including that the transmutations of the plot and characters exist in *The Lion King*. With the transmutations of the plot and characters, the researcher encourages other researchers to do other research, especially on the object of the film adaptation of *The Lion King*. In addition, the researcher hopes that transmutation is found in the two and can also occur in the music used in building a new atmosphere. The difference in music gives the nuance of a narrative shift in adaptation. The changes or transmutations are done with a reason. Other researchers should find the cause of the changes in the film adaptation of *The Lion King*.

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