

Questioning un/faithfulness in Films Adaptation: The Case of H.G Well's Novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

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Abstract:

The mutual influence between literature and cinema resulted in the emergence of a new art form called "Film Adaptations", which has opened the door wider for several dialectic issues on the question of in/fidelity or un/faithfulness to be overtly discussed. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to investigate faithfulness within the sphere of adapting novels into films and pinpoint what new scenes were added and those deleted in the adaptation of H.G Well's novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898) into a film under the same title in 1953 by the Hungarian American film director and producer George Pal. As for the method, it consists of comparing and analyzing the film (target source) to the novel on which it was based (original source). The study reveals that being un/faithful to the original source is a relative matter as the transformations happening from the script to the screen were influenced by historical, cultural, as well as political connotations that took place in the process of adaptation. The researcher concludes with the idea that the degree of faithfulness should not be the main concern in judging the quality of film adaptations and that other factors may interfere and thus must be taken into consideration.

Keywords:

Literature; film adaptation; un/faithfulness; *The War of the Worlds*; historical; cultural; political; connotations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cinematic adaptations emerged to become universally prevalent. In the quest for making good and successful films, screenwriters, film-makers, and producing companies tried hard to take literary texts as a source of inspiration. Many of the highest-grossing and successful films indebt their triumph to the original novels they are based upon in creating a real hit and Hollywood-end like movies. As an illustration, big-name films like *Dracula* (1992), *Frankenstein* (1931), *Psycho* (1960), *Fight Club* (1999), *The Time Machine* (2002) and many others proved to be successful adaptations of their original source.

The Time Machine (1895) has been adapted into three feature films of the same name, as well as two television versions. *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Food of the Gods* and *How It Came to Earth* (1904) are all good examples of adaptation.

H.G. Wells, father of science fiction and pioneer in this field, was so attached to the cinematic scope. Not only most of his works are adapted several times into major science-fiction films, but also his writings are full of cinematic narrative techniques. Among his considerable works *The War of the Worlds* (1898), has created much controversy in the world of film adaptations.

The British director George Pal was fascinated by the H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* and adapted it into a major motion picture in the 1930s under the direction of the American film and television director, cinematographer, and special-effects artist, Byron Haskin. *The War of the Worlds* was released by Universal Pictures on November 13th, 1953, as a vintage horror film. The film created a big legacy in movie theatres in the 1950's and onward. In spite of the fact that film directors and film producers did their best to be faithful to the original text, still some modifications took place in the adaptation for a variety of reasons. *The War of the Worlds* film adaptation was an iconic special-effects film of its time, yet it was the way

through which ideologies were transferred from one medium into another that is still impressive after some quarters of a century later.

2. Objective of the Study

This paper strives to prove that apart from being faithful to the original source, there are other aspects to take into consideration rather than the question of faithfulness. In our case study light was cast on literature that assesses film adaptations based on their background factors and not on their faithfulness to the original text. Thereby, Herbert George Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898) is taken as a case study to prove that any changes in a film adaptation must be constructed from the background and the circumstances that are ubiquitous during the execution of the film adaptation. To this end, the focal point of this paper is to introduce the 1953 *The War of the Worlds* adaptation and to compare it with Herbert George Wells' 1898 original work of the same title.

The main method is to analyze the changes that had undergone in the adaptation, with regards to its political, cultural, and historical background, in the hope to investigate the intentions behind the most astounding differences between the two artistic entities.

Questioning and testing faithfulness when adapting a novel into a film has always been problematic. In order to remove ambiguity over such problematic, the following questions were raised: To what extent should the question of un/faithfulness be taken into account when adapting a novel into a film?

1-What were the most eminent alterations between the novel and its adaptation?

2-What ideological transformation has the novel submitted to in the process of this adaptation?

In the same spirit, other guiding questions can be raised:

1- Does a film owe the novel anything?

2- Do films dependent on the novels or are they self-reliant works of art?

The analysis reviews the plot and the narrative, in other words, the newly added scenes, the deleted ones, and the modified sequence of scenes are analyzed in both the novel and the film.

3. Review of Literature

Most critics and scholars acknowledge that Wells writings helped to grant the cinema with a very rich heritage of science fiction to be adapted into the screen. His masterpieces influenced filmmakers to produce more inexhaustible film adaptations.

Many commentators and reviewers specialists in the domain were eager to explore the tied link between the British novelist and the cinema. In *H.G.Wells in the Cinema* (1977) Alan Whykes laid the ground for researchers to well consider the subject of Wells and the film. In another study entitled *H.G Wells on Film: the Utopian Nightmare* (2002), Don.G. Smith clearly states that rather than considering Wells novels as merely popular entertainment, one has to delve deeper into his ideological thoughts. He even goes a step further by emphasizing on how adapters destroyed Wells utopian themes referring to it as an act of 'betrayal' by the cinema. A prominent figure in the field of cinematographic studies, Thomas .C. Renzi asserts in his book *H.G.Wells Six Scientific Romances Adapted for Film* (2004) that Wells's devotion and commitment to cinema cannot be denied. He affirms that Wells inspiration by cinema multiple devices and special effects made of him a giant in the world of cinema. High regard was held by Renzi for the 1953 adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* confirming that in spite of all the changes and transformations, the film adaptation managed to convey most of Wells's ideological concerns (Renzi 143-191).

4. Theoretical Foundation and Related Concepts

4.1. Film Adaptation as a New Art Form

Even though adapting a novel into a film may seem plain and superficial, it is quite challenging for critics to give an exact definition to adaptation. Simply defined, a film adaptation is the transfer of a work or story, in whole or in part, to a feature film. The *Online Oxford English Dictionary*⁽¹⁾ offers a variety of explanations and functions for a film adaptation. In its broader sense, adaptation is defined as a "film, television drama, or stage play that has been adapted from a written work" (Oxford Dictionaries 2018).

The Cambridge Online Dictionary describes adaptation in its literary context as "a film, book, play, etc. that have been made from another film,

book, play, etc." (Dictionary of Cambridge 2018) As for *the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (3 ed.), it deems "adaptation" a practice of transferring a work (text or image) from one medium of expression to another.

When the American screenwriter Charlie Kaufman was faced with the task of adapting a favorite book of his into a film, he thought adaptation "a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents" (Hutcheon 18). Subsequently, adapters are interpreters in the first instance and then creators.

Adaptation is a type of a derivative work. It is, in its common form, the use of a novel as the basis of a feature film. Other works such as non-fiction, historical sources, biographies, plays, and even other films may be adapted into films.

Although adaptations are broadly acknowledged as being a big part of cinema, yet no strict process of adaptation exists. The question of fidelity to the original text is very much debated when it comes to adaptations. In this regard, Brian Macfarlane points that "There are many kinds of relations which may exist between film and literature, and fidelity is only one _ and rarely the most exciting" (McFarlane 11). He insists on the question of fidelity when it comes to what relates a film to a given novel. Occasionally, critics and scholars have not reached an agreement on a precise procedure or framework by which adaptations can be judged as successful or not. More precisely, voices that advocated contextual, cultural, or economic perspectives to view the phenomenon of adaptation have been barely discussed.

4.2. Intersection between Cinema and Literature

The relationship between cinema and literature has been one of the major concerns of literary critics and cinema producers alike. George Bluestone⁽²⁾, a prominent figure in this field, portrayed the relationship between cinema and literature in the mould of "two intersecting lines, they meet at a point then diverge" (Bluestone 63). He also distinguished (novel) from image (film) by bringing to light the idea that while a novel is seen as a "linguistic medium", a film is essentially "visual". Drawing on the connection between

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text and screen, he thinks up of a dichotomy that delineates the "conceptuality" of literature from the "perceptuality" of film.

Being considered as the forerunner to the early adaptation studies, Bluestone instructed filmmakers about his methodology to adapt novels into the screen. In this regard, he claimed that an adapter must pay attention to the common conflicting conventions between literature and cinema. He further explained that an adapter must view the source text as a "type of raw material" through looking for "thematic content, characters, and key incidents as major qualities or components for the film". Consequently, a film adaptation according to him is a different and independent form of art in which an adapter becomes a true author of his own work and not a translator of the source material (Bluestone 218).

Another major contribution to the literature of adaptation is made by Brian Macfarlane. He is deemed by some critics and scholars in the field the new primary guide in adaptation studies, as he led a transitional pathway for scholars to move from the mere concentration on fidelity issues to a more systematic theorization about the relationship between the film version and its verbal origins (Leitch 99).

Thus, the dialectic of faithfulness and unfaithfulness became an elementary and a starting-point that scholars endeavored to distinguish about in the research area. This was notably claimed by Robert Stam who said that "the moral language in which we cast this discussion—fidelity, faithfulness, betrayal, violation, and desecration—indicates our strong feelings on the subject." (Naremore 54). It seems obvious then, that the question of un/faithfulness deserves to be given such great importance. However, and in terms of delimitation, it should not be our main concern.

5. *The War of the Worlds* and the Process of Adaptation

First published in 1897, H.G. Wells' alien invasion narrative *The War of the Worlds* was a landmark work of science fiction that has inspired numerous adaptations and imitations. It continues to be remade and referenced to in the 21st century.

Before being adapted into a film, *The War of the Worlds* had undergone many transformations. Its early adaptations appeared for the first time as

three-part drama for the BBC One by Peter Harness. Upon writing the war of the worlds, the latter says:” I’m feeling phenomenally lucky to be writing *The War of the Worlds*, and blowing up gigantic swathes of Home Counties at the dawn of the twentieth century Wells’s book is ground zero”. Commenting on the first adaptation, screen managing director, Damien Timmer argues that: “it’s a great honor to bring H.G.Wells’s masterpiece to BBC One. This huge title –the original alien invasion story– has been adapted and riffed on countless times, but no one has ever attempted to follow Wells and located the story in working at the turn of the last century. We hope peter’s adaptation will be the definite of one of the great classic novels–and a visceral, thought-provoking thrill ride!”.

After its publication in 1897, *The War of the Worlds* appeared in the form of serials by Pearson’s Magazine at the U.K. and by The Cosmopolitan magazine in the U.S. Shortly afterwards, the actor and director Orson Welles presented an adaptation of it on his radio program, The Mercury Theatre on the Air, on October 30, 1938. Welles then thought of the matter and asked one of his writers, Howard Koch, to rewrite the story of *War of the Worlds*. Welles’ story subsequently appeared in serial form in several American newspapers, including *The New York Evening Journal* and the *Boston Post*. After various revisions by Welles, the script transformed the novel into a radio play. Besides shortening the story, they also modernized it by changing the location and time from Victorian England to present-day New England. These changes gave a boost to the story, making it more personal for the listeners.

The circulated news around Martian landing in New Jersey provoked panic in America, though of course exaggerated by the media; it is evidence to the greatness of Wells’ fiction. Later radio adaptations also produced mass hysteria, including an incident in Ecuador that resulted in several deaths (Seeger, 22).

The War of the Worlds is George Palm⁽³⁾ film adaptation of H. G. Wells’s novel under the same title. As for the length, the original version of the film is 180 minutes. Contrary to other films, this one stands out against the other film version in that it is set in the same time and place as that of the novel. Owing to this fact, the film has generated much controversy due to what

many perceive as lies and deceptions from Paramount Pictures. In addition to these accusations, harsh criticism has been put on the film over the special effects, the actions as well as its editing and place.

Being the pioneer of fiction texts, H. G. Wells's, *The War of the Worlds* brings in a theme that triggered countless imitations. His work has been reproduced directly in film, comic, and even progressive rock ⁽⁴⁾. The infamous radio broadcast of 1938 stands as an exception and as Orson Welles's well-known exploration. This is evidenced in Welles' confession to reporters stating that no one connected with the broadcast had any idea that it would cause panic.

6. From Novel to Film

Pal's adaptation has many outstanding differences which were due to many constraints whether they are related to time, budget or any other considerations. But let us start with stating the most common similarities between H. G. Wells' novel and George Pal's film. The closest resemblance is probably the choice of characters and mainly that of the antagonists. The aliens are indeed Martians who invade Earth for the same reasons stated in the film as those mentioned in the novel. They landed in the same way, by crashing to the Earth. The Martians come into sight from their craft in the same way; by unscrewing large round hatch The Martian weaponry is also moderately unchanged.

Considering the differences, the film is very different from the original novel in a myriad of ways. Differences appear most notably at the level of characters, setting and plot. The first difference between the novel and the movie is the way it approaches religion. The attitude towards religion can be summed up in three instances. The first instance is particularly concerned with the portrayal of clergymen as characters. The second is concerned with Forrester, a major character in the film search for Sylvia through a couple of churches and finally finding her in one of the churches praying among the survivors. The third instance is linked with the Martians striking the church, how their machines suddenly crash as a sort of punishment from God; and how the Martians were destroyed and humanity

was saved by the tiniest things, which God, in His wisdom, had created upon this Earth.

One another difference resides in the instruments used in the film and in the novel. One can notice that compared to the film's meteorite-spaceships, the novel's spacecraft are large cylinder-shaped projectiles. The latter appear to have no use for humans in the film. The Martians are fed in two different ways. In the novel the invaders are fed on humans by the use of pipettes by gravely transfusing their captives' blood supply directly into Martian bodies or from the blood of the remaining survivors after the Martians have conquered Earth. Probably the most striking difference to consider is the way and the period Martians die. Distinct from the film, in which the Martians are destroyed by the mere effects of the microorganisms within three days of the landing of the first meteorite-ship; in the novel, they die within about three weeks of their invasion of England.

If we refer to the Martians as characters they bear no physical resemblance to the novel's Martians, who are described as bear-sized, roundish creatures with brown bodies, "merely heads", with quivering beak-like, V-shaped mouths dripping saliva; they have sixteen whip-like tentacles in two groupings of eight arranged on each side of their mouths and two large "luminous, disk-like eyes". Due to budget constraints, their film counterparts are short, reddish-brown creatures with two long, thin arms with three long, thin fingers with suction cup tips.

Technically speaking, the film's war machines are undeniably tripods, although they are never given that description. Whereas the novel's war machines had no protection against the British army and navy cannon fire, the film's war machines have a force field surrounding them; this invisible shield is described by Forrester as a "protective blister".

In spite of the fact that the novel meets with the film at certain points from the crash-landing of the Martian to their eventual defeat, the plot of the film is very different from the novel. Contrary to the novel which tells the story of first-person narrative of both an unnamed protagonist in Surrey and of his younger brother in London as southern England is invaded by Martians; the film recounts the story of Dr. Clayton Forrester, the protagonist, a California scientist who falls in love with a former college

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student named Sylvia after the Martian invasion begins and who were eventually being reunited as the Martians were defeated by the virus to which they have no immunity.

By setting is understood the place and time where and when the events took place. As for the place of the original text it can be tracked the narrator's and his brother's movements through the English countryside and more precisely Surrey. All the settings in *The War of the Worlds* are real places in England. They are locations where Wells lived or often visited. Concerning the time, nothing is known when exactly the Martians invaded earth. The latest speculations reveal that the events took place after 1899. In the case of the film, the setting has been changed from Victorian era-England and transported to the 1950s Los Angeles, and more precisely, 1953 southern California.

7. Critical Reception of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*

The novel's critical reception was diverse. The first critical reception for the novel was favourable. Critics and readers of the time were fascinated by the greatness of Wells's vision, and the novel was a remarkable commercial success. Surprisingly, the novel had been translated into ten languages after five years of its publication.

From the time of its publication, *The War of the Worlds* has been interpreted in a multitude of ways: an anti-imperialist polemic, a prophetic tract on modern warfare, and a Darwinian screed. With regard to the last way, Wells' influence by Darwin is manifested in his detailed descriptions of Martians' biology, and assumptions about their development. The majority of critics argue that Wells is the sort of storyteller who knew how to best incorporate such themes into a strong narrative so that the one never overshadows the other.

As any acclaimed work, H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* has been subject to severe critical reception. The following are some of different newspaper editors reviews:

- "Since H. G. Wells published *War of the Worlds* in 1898, artists have struggled to depict his alien invaders. Perhaps none succeeded so well as the illustrator Edward Gorey...His wonderfully creepy 1960 edition

eschews the Robby the Robot designs of pulp fiction, and the slickness of the bad 1953 film, instead of delivering an insect-like infestation of pen-and-ink tendrils." — New York Magazine

- "The most delightful of the many editions of *The War of the Worlds* includes illustrations by Edward Gorey (originally published in 1960 and long out of print until now), in which those creatures look like giant mushrooms on spindly legs, primitive ancestors of the Spielberg tripods."— Caryn James, *The New York Times*⁽⁵⁾.

- "These illustrations perfectly depict not only Wells's half-sinister, half-ridiculous Martians, but also the destruction they leave in their wake: 'a patch of silent common, smouldering in places, and with a few dark, dimly seen objects lying in contorted attitudes here and there', for example. How Gorey-esque."—Joshua Glenn, *The Boston Globe*.

- "This novel was tailor-made for Gorey. His black-and-white etching-like drawing style makes the aliens (dainty but oppressive-looking hydras), landscapes and figures suitably spooky and Victorian. Which, of course, they were."— Karen Krangle, *The Vancouver Sun*.

It is worth noting that Wells himself insists on commenting on the ethics of the ostensibly advanced Victorian world. He draws a parallel comparison between the Martians' acts of destruction and British people eradication of indigenous animal and human populations in the name of the so-called "progress". There is even a strong belief, throughout the novel, that humanity deserves this invasion and shouldn't think of itself as all-powerful.

While chronicling the novel's multi-media adaptations, one cannot deny the fact that each generation has viewed HG Wells's sci-fi classic in different ways and therefore has adapted it to reflect its own concerns. Starting with the initial serializations in US newspapers, Peter Beck goes on to examine Orson Welles's legendary 1938 radio adaptation, TV and film adaptations from George Pal to Steven Spielberg, Jeff Wayne's rock opera and the numerous other works that have taken their inspiration from Wells's original. Drawing on new archival research, this is a comprehensive account of the continuing impact of *The War of the Worlds*.

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“If you want to discover how HG Wells created *The War of the Worlds*, how others have refashioned it for different times and media, and how a 'scientific romance' reshaped our collective imaginations, Peter Beck's treasure trove of a book has the answers – a clear, reliable, fascinating study.” – ***Dr Michael Sherborne, author of HG Wells: Another Kind of Life.***

“H. G. Wells is one of the great modern myth-makers, and *The War of the Worlds* is his most terrifying vision of future warfare. Peter Beck's richly rewarding study traces Wells's story from its origins in the 1890s to its current status as cinema classic and multi-media icon. This book is both a mine of information and a pleasure to read.” – ***Patrick Parrinder, Emeritus Professor, University of Reading.***

“No one would have believed in the early years of the twenty-first century that an intelligence as vast and cool and sympathetic as Peter Beck's was watching H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* as keenly and closely as he must have been, on the evidence of this marvelous book. Beck's work is more than just a book about a book: it's about the ways in which a story becomes a modern myth and about how H. G. Wells made himself into a writer. Scrupulously and widely researched, this is a wonderful 150th birthday present for the founding father of British science fiction.” – ***Simon James, Professor of English Literature, Durham University, Editor, The Wellsian; author of Maps of Utopia: H.G. Wells, Modernity and the End of Culture.***

“This book takes a 'broadbrow' approach to its subject in the open-minded spirit of the word coined by Wells himself. Beck has written an immensely readable account of the impact and multi-media afterlives of Wells's narrative of alien invasion: from radio, to film, to rock show and beyond. It will appeal equally to scholars and to fans, as the most comprehensive mapping yet of *The War of the Worlds*' ever-mutating cultural DNA.” – ***Keith Williams, author of H.G. Wells, Modernity and the Movies.***

“This substantial study ... should certainly now be the first port of call for anyone wanting to understand the context of the novel's creation. Beck's is very much an historian's analysis, the product of exhaustive and fruitful

research into many abstruse archival sources far beyond the scope of the standard literary study ... Professor Beck should be highly commended for this major, readable, and always interesting addition to Wellsian scholarship.” – *Science Fiction Studies*.

8. The un/faithfulness Debate

The mutual influence between literature and cinema resulted in the emergence of a new art form called "Film Adaptations". When it comes to adaptations, issues or question of in/fidelity or un/faithfulness are overtly discussed or debated. Hence, the present paper attempts to shed light on the question of fidelity as it relates to the adaptation of H.G Well's *The War of the Worlds* (1898). It aims at analyzing the changes that had undergone in the process of adaptation according to the critics' cinematic assumptions and to the novel's main themes, motifs, characters, desires, and conflicts. It mainly seeks to pinpoint what new scenes were added and what scenes were deleted.

Critics and scholars cease to reflect on a precise procedure or framework by which adaptations could be judged as successful or not. The question originates from plenty of sources and tries to address a variety of inquiries: Does a film owe the novel anything? How can a film remain faithful to its source? Is a film dependent on the novel or is it an independent work of art? Who is the responsible author for the work? Which text is given priority: the novel or the film? These set of questions represent a major part of the core of adaptation studies.

In order to resolve this everlasting debate of In/Fidelity, this study strives to prove that within this sphere of "adapting novels into films" the desired result shouldn't be revolving only about the scope of being faithful to the source text or not, but rather addressing to denote some political and cultural connotations of the period. In other words, it sought to prove that the degree of fidelity should not be the main concern in judging the quality of film adaptations, but that there are other factors that the researcher should pay attention to than that of fidelity.

From the very beginning of adaptation criticism, scholars have criticized the idea that faithfulness is the most interesting and productive instrument with which to confront adaptations. Critics argued that the evaluation of the

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fidelity of the source text is both difficult and problematic. In view of that, adaptation studies based on fidelity have traditionally been demystified, and most current research considers fidelity discourse as no longer viable.

Based on his larger systematization of intermediality studies and media theory, Lars Elleström offers a new approach to the question of fidelity by creating a nomenclature of adaptation as stated in part one of his *Adaptation and Intermediality* (2017), 'Rethinking the Core Questions',

Another way of avoiding the inherent normatively so often found in fidelity discourses which state that literature is richer, deeper or more complex than film is to focus once again on the medium specificity, which more often than not puts emphasis on the distinctions between the two entities.

Modern science-fiction in many ways begins with H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, the 1898 novel about the planet Earth being invaded by Martian. Wells' book has engendered numerous film adaptations, most notable among them being the 1953 version produced by George Pal and the 2005 version directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Cruise.

"HG Wells' influential novel has been adapted for the screen several times. Regarding the question of fidelity, Writer Peter Harness stated: "The version of *The War of the Worlds* that I wanted to make is one that's faithful to the tone and the spirit of the book, but which also feels contemporary, surprising and full of shocks: a collision of sci-fi, period drama and horror. As far as the 2005 version is concerned, it was a television miniseries which mainly consists of two parts that was probably the most faithful version of the classic story, named appropriately enough the "Classic War of the Worlds". This version is set in Victorian England and much closer to the original story.

Remarkably, the most culturally impactful version of *War of the Worlds* was not a film adaptation but the radio play done by Orson Wells ⁽⁶⁾ in 1938 and overstated with fake news reports of an alien invasion of New Jersey that had some listeners thinking the planet was beyond doubt under attack. Subsequently, the latter confirms the idea of putting the question of believability among the highest priorities.

The adaptations of *The War of the Worlds* mentioned above all had one interesting thing in common. All were set in America and took place in a time coincident with the adaptation. A newly planned TV version of Wells' novel assumes to take us back to the book's original setting and time period. With regard to the period, it was the turn of the 20th century, as for the place it was Surrey, England thus making it potentially the most faithful-ever adaptation.

Wells' novel is a first-person narrative about an unnamed man experiencing the arrival of the Martians, witnessing the futility of humanity's efforts to fight the invaders and scrambling to survive as the aliens rest thrown away to the English countryside. Famously, the story ends when the aliens are killed by viruses which human beings have long-since become resistant to, but to which the invaders have no immunity. *The War of the Worlds* could be seen as an influential work in multiple genres that have become important in the modern-day film (Kranz, 24).

Prior adaptations of Wells' book have tended to see the narrative in terms of the politics of their own day. Wells' book was itself seen by many as a commentary on late-Victorian British imperialism⁽⁷⁾. George Pal's 1953 version became a somewhat-typical vehicle for Eisenhower-era nuclear paranoia, while Spielberg's 2005 film rather deliberately called up post-9/11 anxiety via images directly inspired by the terrorist attacks on New York City. Peter Harness evidently will not shy away from tackling Brexit-era⁽⁸⁾ political issues in his adaptation of Wells' durable classic.

9. Historical, Cultural and Political Connotations

Apart from being faithful or unfaithful to the original text, George pal's film adaptation has responded to many historical, cultural and political connotations.

At the time the novel was written, there was a widespread fear that Great Britain had let its military power decay. Therefore, H.G Wells's idea which stemmed from the fact that peace is impossible was in itself an urgent call for Britain to revisit its military power especially as the isles were subject to vulnerable invasion by the old European foes, the French and the Germans.

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According to many commentators, the film was viewed as an analogy of the importance of defending one's culture vigorously against outside forces. Culture must always be weeded, watered, and watched.

The novel has been a criticism of Britain policy of that time. It has been interpreted as a commentary on British imperialism. Wells who named the novel "A comment on British imperialism" said that the plot came up from a conversation with his brother Frank about the catastrophic effect of the British on indigenous Tasmanians. Walking one day he wondered, what would happen if Martians did to Britain what the British had done to the Tasmanians. While walking through the Surrey countryside with his brother Frank, he said: "Suppose some beings from another planet were to drop out of the sky suddenly," said he, "and begin laying about them here!" Perhaps we had been talking of the discovery of Tasmania by the Europeans – a very frightful disaster for the native Tasmanians! I forget. But that was the point of departure.

It is obvious then that the novel was a harsh criticism on British greed and self-satisfaction of man which is according to Wells the first stumble towards his fall. In this vein, H. G. Wells himself called *The War of the Worlds* an "assault on human self-satisfaction".

As Robert Silverberg puts it in his introduction to *Fresh Perspectives on the H.G. Wells Classic The War of the Worlds*: "[o]f all the remarkable novels and stories that came pouring from him during the spectacular ten years when he essentially created modern science fiction, . . . *The War of the Worlds* [has had] the greatest impact on our culture" (Silverberg 6).

In the same context and in the address of the 42n session of the United Nations general Assembly-New York 1987, President Reagan stated that, *"In our obsession with antagonisms of the moment, we often forget how much unites all the members of humanity. Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to make us recognize this common bond. I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world."* - Ronald Reagan.

Since science fiction often aims to forecast the future, or provide insight in new developments in the present, by building on old or new inventions, or

exploring fantastic scenarios, creating something that rises above the mundane present to show glimpses of hitherto unimagined possibilities.

“War of the Worlds is infused with fear of terrorism, distrust of strangers, and a bleak picture of humanity, while the aliens are hidden amongst humanity, becoming active only as outside threats come in action. Another fear explored in Wells’ novel is the fear of epidemics; these have been around for centuries, among these cholera epidemics in the nineteenth century, flu epidemics throughout the twentieth century, and malaria.

Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.” - H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*-1998.

4. Conclusion

This paper attempted to investigate the reasons behind the transformational changes that occurred when adapting a novel into the screen. It was based on proposing to conduct a thorough analysis of the 1953 film adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* as a case study to elucidate the obscurity of the transformation process from text to screen. Its mere focus was based on the supposition that filmmakers tend to deviate from the source only to stick on to the historical, cultural and political patterns imposed on the industry.

To this end, filmmakers took advantage of Wells' works to create marvelous science-fiction films that were to be remembered in the legacy of cinema. And while some adapters transformed Wells' thoughts and ideologies, the others focused on obtaining the story and the visual quality of Wells thinking into the screen.

Furthermore, apart from being creative and guarantying itself in the legacy of the 1950s horror movies with its fascinating special effects, plot structure and its cast members, the adapters of Wells' novel tried to appeal to the author of the original text by demonstrating most of Wells' important philosophies in the novel. Thus, the study proved that changes took place in the film adaptation not only for creating a real success in American cinema but also denoting and enhancing some political and cultural connotations of

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the period. Simply put, it attempted to demonstrate that the degree of faithfulness should not be the main concern in judging the quality of film adaptations and that other factors may interfere such as the historical context of the production of the film adaptation, its cultural circumstances, and its political scenery which the researchers should accord priority to than that of fidelity.

Finally, regardless of the common stated assumptions about adaptation studies rotating only around un/faithfulness, the present paper rather proved that *The War of the world's* film adaptation of 1953 has adapted itself to its target audience and its current political and cultural situations.

5. Endnotes:

1- Adaptation | Definition Of Adaptation In English By Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2018.Web. 12 Mar. 2018.

2-George Bluestone, pioneer in cinema studies, well-known for his "mysterious alchemy".

3-George pal (1908-1980) is a Hungarian-American animator, film director and producer, principally associated with the fantasy and science-fiction genres.

4-Progressive Rock (also known as progrock, or simply prog) is a musical genre that was initially developed in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s and had its golden age in the first half of the 1970s.

5-*The war of the worlds* by H.G. Wells, illustrated by Edward Gorey p260, 2005.

6-Orson Welles (1915-1985) was an American actor, director, writer and producer.

7- Political connotations in cinema.

8- British referendum on withdrawal from the European Union.

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