

Uncanny Resemblances: Studying Dracula's Likeness across Literary and Film Adaptations

Niezwykłe podobieństwa: analiza wizerunku Draculi w powieści i jej adaptacjach filmowych

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* have frequently referred to his animalistic qualities, focusing on his appearance in the novel with sharp teeth, hairy body and a predatory disposition. While such studies have critically examined the construction of the vampiric monster and its physical form, they have often overlooked the resemblance of the Count both in the novel and in film adaptations to actual living personages. Adnan Qiblawi, for example, observes how the portrait of a young Dracula on the wall, in the 1992 film version, is a replica of a German Renaissance art piece by Albrecht Dürer called *Self-Portrait at Twenty-Eight*. This paper will try to identify these resemblances of the Count to actual human figures in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). I will also look at the way in which the physical appearance of characters, and their resemblance to other faces are used within the text to create narrative tensions. By doing so, I will establish the centrality of these uncanny resemblances both to faces within the text, and to human figures in the real world, in an attempt to understand the monstrosity of the vampire in terms of the difference in appearance through the movie. In this paper, I will argue that the different appearances of Dracula in the film are based on creating, altering, or erasing the resemblance of the Count to other portrayals within the film or to the face of the actor. However, the realisation that the same face and the same Count underlie all of the different portrayals of Dracula within the film show how such uncanny resemblances, or lack thereof, are manufactured through prosthetics, lighting, makeup, and other technological tools.

Keywords: Dracula; Bram Stoker; resemblance; similitude; portraiture

ABSTRAKT

Badania poświęcone *Draculi* Brama Stokera często zwracają uwagę na jego zwierzęce cechy, koncentrując się na opisie jego wyglądu w powieści – ostrych zębach, owłosionym ciele oraz drapieżnym usposobieniu. Choć opracowania te wnikliwie analizują konstrukcję wampirycznego potwora i jego fizyczną postać, zazwyczaj pomijają podobieństwo hrabiego – zarówno w powieści, jak i w adaptacjach filmowych – do rzeczywistych postaci historycznych lub żyjących osób. Adnan Qiblawi zauważa na przykład, że portret młodego Draculi widoczny na ścianie w filmowej adaptacji z 1992 roku stanowi kopię renesansowego dzieła niemieckiego malarza Albrechta Dürera zatytułowanego *Autoportret w wieku dwudziestu ośmiu lat* (*Self-Portrait at Twenty-Eight*). W artykule podjęto próbę zidentyfikowania podobieństw hrabiego do rzeczywistych postaci ludzkich zarówno w powieści *Dracula* Brama Stokera, jak i w filmie Francisa Forda Coppoli *Dracula* (1992). Zanalizowano również sposób, w jaki fizyczny wygląd bohaterów oraz ich podobieństwo do innych twarzy zostają wykorzystane w tekście do budowania napięcia narracyjnych. W ten sposób ukazano, że te niezwykle podobieństwa – zarówno między twarzami pojawiającymi się w obrębie utworu, jak i między postaciami fikcyjnymi a rzeczywistymi ludźmi – odgrywają kluczową rolę w rozumieniu potworności wampira jako zjawiska związanego z różnicą i zmiennością wyglądu w filmie. Autor argumentuje, że różnorodne wcielenia Draculi w filmie opierają się na tworzeniu, modyfikowaniu lub zacieraniu podobieństwa hrabiego do innych przedstawień tej postaci obecnych w filmie bądź do twarzy odtwarzającego go aktora. Jednocześnie uświadomienie sobie, że za wszystkimi tymi odmiennymi wizerunkami Draculi kryje się ta sama twarz i ten sam bohater, pokazuje, iż niezwykle podobieństwa – lub ich celowy brak – są wytwarzane za pomocą charakterystyki protetycznej, oświetlenia, makijażu oraz innych środków technologicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: Dracula; Bram Stoker; podobieństwo; podobizna; portretowanie

Horror fiction relies heavily on the unseen, the hidden, and the object in the shadow. The dominant visual mode used in horror fiction to capture the object of fear is one of imperceptibility or the lack of a clear visual focus. Despite this predominance of blurred visions in such narratives, the most compelling moment of horror fiction involves the monster's face coming into focus out of the shadows and into the visual range of the human characters. The appearance of the monster's face is defined by the visual intensity of the moment (be it on the page or on the screen). However, such an appearance is already preceded by other descriptive, textual, audio and visual cues that establish the image of monstrosity in the mind of the readers/audience. These constant suggestions sent by the text signalling the upcoming appearance of the monster implies that the reader/audience will already have developed an image of monstrosity before it becomes visible. Therefore, the *human* resemblance of the monster to actual living characters (if any) or the

resemblance to other prototypes of human social figures are often ignored. This paper will try to identify these resemblances of the Count to actual human figures in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. I will also look at the way in which the physical appearance of characters, and their resemblance to other faces within the textual world of *Dracula* are used to create narrative tensions. By doing so, I will establish the centrality of these uncanny resemblances both to faces within the novel, and to human figures in the real world, in the narrative of Stoker's *Dracula* and its adaptations.

One of the significant motifs tied to the role of resemblance in generating fear is the motif of the doppelgänger which is frequently used in horror fiction. The Gothic Double who shares an exact face with the character they are mirroring, brings out the inner psychological turmoil comprising violence, trauma, jealousy, anger and other repressed emotional states of the protagonist. Analysing *Dracula* as a doppelgänger narrative, Whitney S. May observes that Harker and the Count enter into a "doubled conflict," with the vampire assuming Jonathan's identity and growing stronger while Jonathan continues to become weaker day by day.¹ May, however, frames the relationship of Dracula and Harker as the relationship of the subject with its doppelgänger within a temporal structure where the pre-modern past interacts with the modernist future. This temporal fracture between the subject and its doppelgänger is recreated through the narrative, leading to a fragmentation of identity that is caused as a result of a vampiric attack. This is particularly evident in case of Lucy, who returns as the vampiric "Bloofer lady" after being bitten by Dracula and dying. The resemblance of the vampiric Lucy to her former self fools Arthur Holmwood who is initially reluctant to dig up her coffin and destroy the body. He asks Van Helsing, "Is this really Lucy's body, or only a demon in her shape?"² This frightful similarity, or rather sameness, of the vampiric Lucy's face to her human self indicates the fractured nature of this resemblance where two different personalities carry the same appearance. While the Lucy that Holmwood knew belongs to the modernist future, the undead Lucy belongs to the pre-modern past and is created only after Dracula attacks her. Despite the similitude of appearance, the two cannot exist simultaneously. The vampiric doppelgänger is only created once the human Lucy dies; similarly, the vampiric Lucy must be killed for the human subject to return to its original form. The similarity of appearance between the two, therefore, does not imply that they are one and the same. Recognition, in this case, does not lead to a sense of familiarity and security but to a sudden shock. When the members of the Crew of Light see her vampiric form, they "recognized the

¹ Whitney S. May, "'Powers of Their Own Which Mere 'Modernity' Cannot Kill': The Doppelgänger and Temporal Modernist Terror in *Dracula*," *Gothic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021): 63, <https://doi.org/10.3366/gothic.2021.0078>.

² Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1897, reprint 1997), 190.

features of Lucy Westenra. Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed.”³ The similarity of vampire Lucy's face to her human self only accentuates the monstrosity of her undead form. Moreover, the undead Lucy seems to have a more perfect resemblance to Lucy's usual face than the real person herself. The marks of suffering and illness which could be seen on her face in her final days is totally absent once she enters the undead state. The resemblance of the vampiric Lucy thus becomes “truer” to Lucy than her original self. The undead resemblance, therefore, is based on an imagined constant, an image that does not change over time. Unlike the real face of Lucy that is subject to the biological rhythms of her body, and changes constantly (growing pale or gaunt due to the loss of blood), the face of the undead Lucy is mapped onto this idealised image. This hollow mirroring of the image without any basis in physical reality creates a perfect simulacrum that is ironically lacking in the other qualities associated with that face. Once Lucy enters her deathless state,

Lucy is no longer Lucy, nor was she ever Lucy, for in her new potentially permanent form she transcends history. All the effects and memories of her ego, of the formation of her subjectivity, have been entirely stripped away, as has the gesture that stripped them away: Dracula's bite.⁴

In her “perfect” bodily state without the marks of her illness, or the marks of Dracula's bite, Lucy has stopped being herself, despite the exact resemblance to her former self. The manufacturing of the resemblance of the undead Lucy to her original self requires that her biological vulnerabilities be erased. This “new” image of her that does not contain the marks of her illness subverts the reality of her suffering, and her physical and psychological trauma, substituting accuracy of facial features for authenticity of her biological experience. Therefore, despite the vampire Lucy's similarity of appearance to her human self, Dr. Seward observes that he feels a strong sense of hate and loathing towards her, and could kill her with “savage delight.”⁵ Similarity or even the sameness of faces does not generate the same affective states in the characters or in the readers of *Dracula*.

As opposed to Lucy, Dracula's face in Stoker's novel and in different adaptations often feature multiple changes. These changes are either associated with a renewed vitality and youthfulness that often accompanies his acts of blood-drinking, or they are associated with his transformations into the bestial form depicting his animality. The first set of changes which leads to a reduction of Dracula's age enables him to blend in with the human society without being noticed and to locate his victims

³ Stoker, *Dracula*, 187.

⁴ Macy Todd, “What Bram Stoker's *Dracula* Reveals about Violence,” *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 58, no. 3 (2015): 376.

⁵ Stoker, *Dracula*, 188.

easily. On the other hand, his transformation into a creature with a bestial appearance serves the contradictory role of helping him stand out as a violent predator and establishing his domination over others. In both these cases, therefore, Dracula tries to hide his resemblance with his original appearance in his castle in front of Harker. Unlike doppelgangers in horror fiction who use similarity of appearance to deceive and dupe the protagonists, the Count strives to transform his looks in ways that would not make him easily detectable. One of the important narrative points of any Dracula text, therefore, is to track the resemblance of characters one encounters with that of the Count. For example, when Harker reaches the castle and is greeted by the Count, he observes, “[t]he strength of the handshake was so much akin to that which I had noticed in the driver, whose face I had not seen, that for a moment I doubted if it were not the same person to whom I was speaking.”⁶ This first encounter itself shows how Dracula had purposefully hidden his face when he drove him to the castle to avoid being recognised as the Count. Had Harker been able to see his face and detect the resemblance, the horrific plans of the Count would probably have been cut short. However, after experiencing the horrors in the castle when Harker returns back to London, barely making it out alive, he is quick to recognise the resemblance of a man he sees in Hyde Park to Count Dracula, even though he has turned young after feeding on the blood of his victims. The entire narrative of *Dracula*, therefore, is based on this detective work of identifying facial similitudes between the characters, trying to guess if it is the Count or not.

Dracula’s dislike of mirrors can be attributed to this constant shifting of his physical form to avoid being identified. The fact that vampires do not cast a reflection in the mirror is part of the East European vampire folklore. However, as Carol A. Senf argues, Stoker uses this superstition that creatures without souls do not have a reflection, into a metaphor for the lack of a moral vision of other characters.⁷ Harker’s failure to see Dracula’s reflection indicates his moral blindness towards him. The way he develops a contemptuous attitude towards Dracula, and the culture he belongs to, even before knowing that he is a vampire, and the violence with which he attacks the Count when he is sleeping, all contribute to the metaphor of Harker’s inability to see Dracula’s reflection. While Senf’s analysis of the absence of Dracula’s reflection in the mirror treats the superstition as a metaphor for moral blindness, it is also important to understand the formation of the physical image of the Count in terms of the appearance of the monstrous body. The image on the mirror is based on the way the light from the object reflects and bounces off the surface of the mirror. The resemblance of the image to the person standing in front

⁶ Stoker, *Dracula*, 22.

⁷ Carol A. Senf, “Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror,” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 9, no. 3 (Fall, 1979): 164.

of the mirror thus depends on the existence of the object in the first place. However, since Dracula lacks a stable physical form, any attempt to create a reflection of an image that can resemble him fails. He casts no reflection in the mirror and is thus dismissive of it since he is constantly trying to move as far away from any resemblance to his former self as possible. Keri O'Shea refers to the horror genre itself as "that great distorting mirror" and observes how the genre frequently uses the mirror to create an "uneasy, same-different space."⁸ The mirror, O'Shea observes, creates a world that has the "illusion of depth and distance" but is beyond our reach. Dracula, similarly, changes his physical form constantly so much so that even when he appears to exist in the same space as the other characters is located on a different plane altogether. There is no mirror image of Dracula because his physical form itself is elusive, and forever recedes into the past whenever someone tries to catch him.

The drastic change of the physical form of the Count to remove any traces of likeness thus forms the technical core of creating the monster in film versions as well. To demonstrate this deliberate transformation of Dracula to remove any likeness to his former self/selves, I have chosen the different appearances of the character in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.⁹ In this film, there are five significant portrayals of the Count at three different narrative stages. The first time we see Dracula, he appears as a young warrior, who has not yet been turned into a vampire. He is clad in his battle armour and is about to go to war. In the next appearance of the Count, however, there has been an important change in his appearance and demeanour. At this stage, he has already turned into a blood-thirsty vampire who has lost all the likeness to his former warrior self, indicating a corruption both of the body as well as the soul. In this second portrayal of Dracula, he appears as an old man in front of Harker with an elaborate hairdo, visibly pale or white face, and long nails. At this stage, his appearance, despite being human, is over-bearing, strange and alienating. The predator-like qualities of his form intermingle subtly with his graciousness as a host.

In this first appearance of Dracula as a vampire, the manufacturing of resemblance in Coppola's film can also be understood in terms of the visual props used in the film to construct the narrative trajectory of the Count. As Harker sits down for dinner in the castle of Dracula, he notes a portrait of the latter which has a striking family resemblance to the Count. Despite this resemblance, Harker fails to realise that the portrait is that of a young Dracula before he was turned into a vampire.

⁸ Keri O'Shea, "Reflecting Terror: The Mirror, Culture and the Horror Genre," *Warped Perspective*, August 20, 2014, <https://warped-perspective.com/2014/08/reflecting-terror-mirror-culture-and-the-horror-genre/?srsltid=AfmBOoqka4pahv8dfejEV7sHAWnqg3v6RrPy1IudCBWn0rkUu7P-HA-1>.

⁹ Francis Ford Coppola, dir. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 1992), DVD.

The aging factor influences the detection of similarity or sameness between the current appearance of Dracula and his younger self. Understanding the resemblance between the two proves to be a crucial factor in uncovering vital narrative information in the film. More importantly, the portrait of a younger version of the Count is in reality a replica of a portrait titled *Self-Portrait at Twenty-Eight* painted by the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer in 1500. The portrait used in Coppola's film is not an exact replica of Dürer's portrait. Instead, the face of the actor playing Dracula has been imposed upon Dürer's face to an extent that the painting remains recognisable as that created by Dürer, with the exception of the facial features which resemble that of the actor. The creation of selective resemblance thus aims to import the essence of Dürer's portrayal of himself, while maintaining narrative and visual consistency to the portrayal of Dracula in the film. The use of a resemblance to Dürer's portrait for the painting of Dracula reveals important details about the framing of the history of the character in the film. This is because the way Dürer chose to depict himself in the painting has deeper spiritual connotations, which at a first glance, may appear to be ill-placed with respect to an evil, blood-thirsty monster. Adnan Qiblawi observes how a frontal pose for a portrait was considered "aberrant for a secular portrait" during the 15th and 16th centuries.¹⁰ With his hands depicted in the middle of his chest as if giving a blessing, Dürer was trying to portray himself as Christ. The portrait used in Coppola's *Dracula* recreates the picture of the Count in the same posture. By placing his own image in the posture of Christ, Dracula deliberately parodies the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Alison Milbank observes how Lucy's return as a vampire in Stoker is a kind of "anti-resurrection" with Van Helsing quoting the words of Christ to Thomas in John 20:29, when Thomas is doubting Christ after His resurrection.¹¹ Coppola visually translates this motif of "anti-resurrection" through the portrait of a young Dracula with a Christ-like pose. Moreover, the reason of using this resemblance also has to do with Dracula's role as a warrior in the beginning of the film, where he launches a religious crusade against the Ottomans from which he returns victorious. This is because at the beginning of the film, Dracula is presented as a warrior defending the Christendom against the Ottomans. Louise Child argues that Coppola continuously juxtaposes Christianity with Dracula's monstrous rage, blurring the line between the sacred and the sacrilegious.¹² The use of Dürer's portrait thus becomes a striking

¹⁰ Adnan Qiblawi, "As Seen on 'Bram Stoker's Dracula': A Vampire's Self-Portrait in the Style of Dürer," *Artnet*, May 3, 2024, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/as-seen-on-dracula-francis-ford-coppola-2448135>.

¹¹ Alison Milbank, *God & the Gothic: Religion, Romance, & Reality in the English Literary Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 240–241.

¹² Louise Child, *Dreams, Vampires and Ghosts: Anthropological Perspectives on the Sacred and Psychology in Film and Television* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 164.

visual reminder of the fall of the Count from a Christian warrior to a blood-thirsty evil vampire who has renounced his religion and everything that is holy.

The next portrayal of Dracula completely changes his appearance, with the Count appearing as a completely human figure and as a young man before Mina Murray. Thus, there is no resemblance between the old, predator-like Dracula in the castle and the suave, young gentleman who appears before Mina in London. This lack of resemblance to his old self in the castle is highlighted in the movie when the newspaper boy announcing the news about the wolf who escaped from the zoo hands the paper to Dracula himself, unaware that this disturbance was caused by the presence of the animalistic Count in London. Thus, the change of his appearance breaks any visual connection between his animality and the agitation of the animals in London. The fourth significant portrayal of Dracula is the depiction of the Count as an ultimate monster, with no recognisable human features whatsoever. This form of the Count can be seen in his fight with the Crew of Light when he assumes the form of a bat-like, winged monster. Bruce Scivally observes how the transformation of Dracula into this bat-like figure formed one of the concerns of Coppola:

In the previous films, Dracula had changed into mist, into a wolf, and into a literal, tiny bat. Coppola asked scriptwriter James V. Hart if they could have him turn into a bat. Hart felt modern audiences would laugh at such a clichéd transformation. So, Coppola asked: What if he's a big bat? The result was Dracula as a human-sized creature, half bat and half man, trapped somewhere in-between.¹³

Coppola's *Dracula* thus makes a significant shift in the tone of the character through the change of appearance. When Dracula had appeared as a tiny bat in other iterations of the character, the transformation from human to a non-human mammal was complete. By capturing Dracula mid-way between the human and the non-human, Coppola makes the vampire figure monstrous and grotesque. The corresponding increase in the size of the bat-like figure further adds to the monstrosity of the vampire by making it seem disproportionate both to the size of a human and to the size of a bat. Moreover, by retaining the semblance of a face, however remote that may be to a human one, Coppola invites the comparison of the Dracula as this non-human monster with his more human appearances in the film.

The final and the fifth portrayal of Dracula depicts him in the form in which he appeared in the castle but visibly weaker and with sunken cheeks as he lays dying after being injured by the Crew of Light. All these portrayals, therefore, alter his

¹³ Bruce Scivally, *Dracula FAQ: All That's Left to Know About the Count from Transylvania* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Dracula_FAQ/TZDqCgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=coppola+dracula+greg+cannom&pg=PT200&printsec=frontcover.

appearance in significant ways making him unrecognisable and removing any trace of resemblance to a “true” or “original” form. More importantly, each of these portrayals, including his most human appearance, seem decidedly different from the appearance of the actor Gary Oldman who played this role. The use of prosthetics and makeup to remove the resemblance of the different faces of Dracula to the actor’s face and to each other determines the narrative progression of Coppola’s film. Coppola’s Dracula can thus be referred to as what Larrie Dudenhoefferin in her analysis of the Dracula in the *Blade: Trinity* calls “ecto-prosthetic villain.”¹⁴ While Coppola’s Dracula may not shape-shift as much as Blade’s Dracula, the use of prosthetics to change his appearance and to remove traces of his resemblance to his human self, highlights the malleability of his external features as a vital component of his character. The lack of resemblance between these individual portrayals of Dracula indicates that technically the film tries to create and shift between his different forms to generate separate aesthetic and narrative effects. The absence of resemblance is thus manufactured using different technical means to shift from the vast array of qualities from the human to the animal, and everything in between.

In order to prove this change of appearance, I have used three online face recognition tools, mentioned in the footnote below.¹⁵ For the first set of data, I have used an image of the actor Gary Oldman from the time the movie was shot and released. I have compared this image of the actor with the five portrayals of Dracula mentioned above. Each of the portrayals have yielded different results, showing differing degrees of similarities to the actor’s face, as is evident from the table below.

Interestingly, as the data will show, even in the portrayals in which he is completely human or appears to be in a completely human form, there is no 100% match with the actor’s face. Almost all of the resemblances are below 80% which indicates that noticeable changes have been made to the actor’s appearance to reduce any likeness to the actor and to create a specific image of Dracula. After making these comparisons between the different portrayals of Dracula in Coppola’s film and the actor Gary Oldman, I tried to formulate a theory based on the data obtained. As per the narrative I designed, the data was supposed to show that the further we shifted away from the likeness of the human, the percentage of match with the actor’s face would decrease. Moreover, the comparison was supposed to yield stable results where all appearances of Dracula as a human character was supposed to show a greater percentage of match

¹⁴ Larrie Dudenhoefferin, *Anatomy of the Superhero Film* (Springer International Publishing, 2017), 33.

¹⁵ https://facecomparison.toolpie.com/#google_vignette, <https://profacefinder.com/face-comparison/>, <https://face-comparison-app.com/>. These online face recognition algorithms are not 100% accurate. The data gained from them provides an approximate understanding of the changes made to the actor’s face to create different physical versions of the Count, which share minimal or zero likeness to each other.

Table 1. Comparison of different appearances of Dracula in Coppola’s film to Gary Oldman’s face

Dracula’s appearance in Coppola’s film	ProFaceFinder	ToolPie	Face Comparison App
First appearance of Dracula as a human being	92.5% / 100% / 12.2%	59%	54.6%
First appearance of Dracula as a vampire in the castle	40.4%	66%	64%
Appearance of Dracula in London	48.2%	74%	77.1%
Appearance of Dracula as a monstrous bat figure	face / embedding missing	9%	0%
Appearance of Dracula as a dying vampire with sunken cheeks	29%	16%	51.6%

Source: Author’s own study.

when compared with the bestial forms of Dracula. This would imply that there was a narrative progression from Dracula as a warrior to that of a blood-thirsty creature, to a vampire pretending to be a human, to a beast and then to his final form during his death. These narrative progressions would have been defined by the degree of their resemblance to (or lack thereof) the actor’s original face and to each other. However, when I studied the results produced by these face comparison sites, the output was significantly different from what I had imagined. While some results justified my theory by showing a greater percentage of resemblance of the humanised Dracula to the actor’s face and a lower percentage of resemblance to the animalistic Dracula, these results were not always consistent. One of the primary anomalies I noted was that in one case the percentage of resemblance of Dracula’s face – as it appears in the castle the first time he meets Harker – to Gary Oldman’s face is greater than the resemblance of the warrior Dracula’s face to the actor. This seems baffling given that Dracula’s face as a warrior is extremely human and thus should show a higher percentage of resemblance than the pale-white, old face of Dracula with a lot of makeup and prosthetics. The second such anomaly was noted in the case of the warrior Dracula’s face being compared to that of the actor through the site ProFaceFinder. Surprisingly, the site turns up different results at different times for this comparison.

These varying results turned up by the sites disproved the narrative I had designed for the appearance of Count Dracula in his various forms. Therefore, instead of trying to fit the results within a pre-designed narrative, I proceeded to study these errors in the data and what caused them. Firstly, these readings that the sites produced were not random numbers spewed out by the machine. Rather, they form a coherent pattern that can be observed, analysed and used to understand the mechanism of resemblance used in the horror narrative. Even in the case of the site ProFaceFinder which produced different results at different times, there were three

constant results out of which one would turn up. For the comparison between the actor's face and warrior Dracula's face the site displayed a similarity percentage of 12.2, 92.5, and 100. What caused such a vast difference between the data sets obtained from the same photo in the same site? The answer lies in the way the particular algorithm extracts, processes and draws conclusions from the images provided by the user. For example, the site ProFaceFinder fails to recognise the face in the bat-like monstrous form of Dracula displaying an error message "face/embedding missing." This image is successfully processed by the other two sites, one of which – the Face Comparison App – records the similarity percentage as 0%. While both results indicate that the bat-like image is so far removed from human appearance that the algorithm cannot locate any similarity between the two, there is a subtle difference between returning an actual number 0 and not being able to process the data at all. Moreover, the site Face Comparison App shows 9% of similarity between the actor's face and the monster's face indicating that there are still some aspects of sameness with respect to the two images.

This difference of results with respect to a face created through prosthetics and visual effects highlights the fact that the way these images are processed by each of the algorithms are different. The face comparison models created by developers understand resemblance in terms of a variety of factors. It does not compare an overall image with another but rather breaks down the individual aspects of that image which affects the comparison. Face comparison apps, therefore, extract features from each image including the shape of the face, the size of the eyes, the position of the nose and other such physical features, and calculate the similarity based on these factors.¹⁶ If we look at the different portrayals of the Count in Coppola's movie it is evident that the lack of resemblance between the different forms is created by changing these physical features. While most changes like the monstrous features of the bat-like figure produce drastic changes, even in his human form, there are changes made to the face of the actor to reduce likeness to his appearance, as evidenced from the comparison results. For example, the forehead of the Count as a human figure seems to have been made significantly wider, thus affecting the similarity score when compared with the actor's face. However, resemblance, or its absence thereof, is manufactured in Coppola's *Dracula* through the use of other techniques as well. While discussing about the factors affecting the face comparison algorithm, Nupura Ughade observes that aging, facial expressions, nature of illumination, angle from which the face has been captured, obstructions like facial hair, masks and sunglasses also influence the accuracy levels of the comparison.¹⁷

¹⁶ Fabio Chiusano, "A Practical Intro to Face Comparison," *Medium*, July 26, 2022, <https://medium.com/brainbotapi/a-practical-intro-to-face-comparison-cf43f38f2812>.

¹⁷ Nupura Ughade, "How Accurate is AI Face Recognition Technology?" *Hyperverge*, February 9, 2026, <https://hyperverge.co/blog/ai-face-recognition/>.

If we look at the different portrayals of Dracula in Coppola, we find that in some he has an elaborate hairdo, while in some he is wearing sunglasses and a hat, while at other times, the lighting or the angle from which his face can be seen by the viewers is completely different. The inconsistency in the data sets obtained through the face comparison apps may be attributed to these factors. The higher percentage of resemblance between Dracula's first appearance as a vampire in the castle and the actor's face, as compared to the resemblance between Dracula's appearance as a human warrior and the actor's face, can be attributed to a closer similarity of facial expressions between the first set. The smile of Dracula in the first appearance as a vampire bears a lot of similarity to the smile on the actor's face in reality, thus, resulting in a greater percentage of similarity. However, we should not believe that the influence these factors have on the appearance of Dracula form uncontrolled variables. Rather, we should see them as deliberate tools used by the filmmaker to trick the audience into seeing a lack of resemblance for the sake of the narrative. As Jeffrey A. Weinstock argues, the cinematic vampire is in itself a "celluloid entity" that is produced through editing, special effects and other technologies and techniques used to create cinema.¹⁸ Factors like the lighting of the face or the angle from which the shots are captured or the obstructions that guard Dracula's face in the film, affect the human eye as much as it affects the face comparison apps, and influence the way we perceive the vampire. The vampire's body, as we have already observed, is an elusive one that constantly changes itself. With the advent of the cinematic medium, the vampiric body is further diffused, scattering across the film reel and breaking down into its component parts the moment we try to capture and analyse it.

The vampire's body, therefore, must be seen only as an amalgamation of cinematic techniques that constantly work to sustain its appearance. The algorithm of resemblance (or lack thereof) is deliberately manufactured through a combination of factors. The audience is invited to play this tricky, deceptive game of searching for similarities and dissimilarities between the different forms of the Count. We are supposed to be intrigued by the idea of the changes in the character's intentions, motivations and passions through the narrative, while being conscious that it is the trajectory of one single character, played by the same actor, that we are following through the film.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema* (Wallflower, 2012), 57.

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