

From Page to Screen: A Multi-Medium Exploration of *Half Bad* and Its Media Adaptation

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Abstract:

The adaptation of the *Half Bad* trilogy from novels to films highlights the symbiotic relationship between literature and cinema. While distinct in presentation, both mediums contribute to the enduring legacy of the wizarding world. This research paper delves into a comprehensive comparison between the *Half Bad* trilogy, written by Sally Green, and its media adaptation by Joe Barton. The study focuses on three key aspects: characterization, plot changes, and visual representation. By examining these elements, it aims to understand the nuances of the adaptation process and the impacts it has on the narrative and audience engagement. This exploration delves into how the trilogy's thematic depth and character nuances are translated into the visual storytelling of the series. Of particular interest is the portrayal of characters, with emphasis on protagonist Nathan Byrn's inner turmoil and the series' ability to convey these emotions through visual cues. The study scrutinizes instances of plot modifications, omissions, and additions in the adaptation. The goal is to evaluate whether these alterations align with the trilogy's core narrative while acknowledging the constraints of the visual medium.

Keywords: Novel, Film, Comparative Study, Media, Audience, Readers, Adaptatio

The age-old debate surrounding books and their media adaptations is a testament to the diverse ways stories can be experienced. Literature and film/television hold distinct realms in storytelling, each offering unique strengths and challenges. The realms of fantasy literature have birthed iconic sagas that continue to captivate audiences worldwide. Among these, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy stand as towering examples. Following these popular books, yet another epoch-making novel is Sally Green's *Half Bad* trilogy. Transcending the boundaries of print, the novel ventured into the cinematic world, leaving an indelible mark on pop culture. This article delves into the intricacies of how *Half Bad* fared as book-to-movie adaptations, exploring their successes, challenges, and differences.

The *Half Bad* Trilogy, consisting of *Half Bad*, *Half Wild*, and *Half Lost*, presents a compelling world of witches, discrimination, and the struggle for identity. This paper explores how the trilogy's themes and characters translate into the visual medium of a series, and whether plot changes enhance or detract from the original narrative. Additionally, the paper examines how the series captures the enchanting settings, distinctive magical abilities, and visual aspects of characters, employing costumes, makeup, special effects, and set design to immerse the audience.

Sally Green's *Half Bad* is adapted into a series titled *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* by Joe Barton. Barton created the series with writers Joe Barton, Emer Kenny, Helen Kingston, and Ryan J. Brown. The series is directed by Colm McCarthy, Debs Paterson, and Rachna Suri, with Jay Lycurgo playing the lead role as Nathan Bryn. Netflix released the series in eight parts on October 28, 2022.

Books have an innate ability to engage readers' imaginations in a deeply personal and interactive manner. Words on a page serve as a canvas upon which readers paint worlds, characters, and scenes, fostering a unique connection. Readers are encouraged to visualize characters' appearances, settings, and emotions, resulting in a deeply immersive experience. Novels also provide ample space for introspection, allowing readers to explore characters' thoughts and motivations, fostering empathy and understanding. On the other hand, Media adaptations, whether in the form of films or television series, leverage the power of visuals and sound to craft immersive worlds. Through cinematic techniques, adaptations bring characters and settings to life, providing a sensory experience that captures the essence of the story. Visual effects, music, and performances by actors breathe new dimensions into beloved narratives, offering a shared experience that can resonate with a broader audience.

Books often excel in offering intricate character development. In print, *Half Bad*, Sally Green has brought out the internal conflicts through monologues, nuanced emotions, and personal growth of characters. This allows readers to delve into the minds of characters, understanding their motivations and struggles on a profound level. Characterization is a fundamental element of storytelling that enables readers to connect with the fictional world and its inhabitants. In Sally Green's *Half Bad* trilogy, the author masterfully employs characterization to create a rich and immersive narrative. Through complex, multifaceted characters, Green explores themes of identity, morality, and the consequences of one's choices. One of the most striking aspects of Sally Green's characterization in the *Half Bad* trilogy is the creation of multifaceted characters.

From the very beginning, Green challenges simplistic notions of good and evil, particularly with the protagonist, Nathan Bryn. As a Half Code, born to a White witch mother

and a Black witch father, Nathan embodies the tension between light and dark, good and evil, which runs throughout the series. Nathan's character is defined by his internal conflict as he grapples with his identity and his place in a world that is quick to judge him based on his lineage. This internal struggle is what makes him such a compelling character. Green skillfully portrays his inner turmoil, creating a character who is neither entirely good nor entirely bad, but a complex blend of both. .

While Nathan takes center stage, Sally Green's *Half Bad* trilogy is replete with a diverse array of supporting characters who add depth and tone to the narrative. Characters such as Marcus, Gabriel, Annalise, Celia, and Soul are essential in highlighting the interconnectedness of the magical world and its myriad perspectives on morality. The adaptation's portrayal of these characters is a pivotal aspect of comparison. The challenge for the film adaptation was to capture this complexity within the constraints of screen time. For instance, the novels provide in-depth insights into Nathan's inner conflicts he faced during his confinement by the Council of White Witches, whereas the visual medium of the series failed to bring out his inner struggles on screen. Since the book is mostly written in the point of view of Nathan, the readers get to understand his ordeals, confusions, and afflictions.

In Contrast, the film disappointed the audience by skipping important monologues of Nathan. Thus, in turn, it simplified the emotional depth. This can also be seen in the widely held *Harry Potter* by J.K.Rowling and its adaptation as a series. In the books, Hermione Granger is portrayed as a highly intelligent and resourceful character that undergoes significant personal growth. The films, while capturing her intelligence, occasionally downplay her character's emotional depth. For example, her relationship with Ron Weasley is more nuanced in the books,

with various ups and downs, whereas the films simplify it. Similarly, in *Half Bad*, the relationship between Nathan and Gabriel is downplayed immensely

Adapting a lengthy book series into a film series requires condensation and simplification of the plot. However, this can sometimes lead to significant deviations from the source material. While adaptations often require alterations for various reasons, it is crucial to assess whether these changes uphold the essence of the original plot. The success of *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* lies in their ability to translate the magic and camaraderie of the books onto the screen. The series introduced a new generation to the wizarding world and brought beloved characters to life. However, the series faced the challenge of maintaining consistency in tone as the story matured, occasionally resulting in tonal shifts between films.

Adapting a literary work for a different medium poses a crucial challenge: capturing the essence of the source material while accommodating the constraints and opportunities of the new format. In the case of *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* series, the adaptation generally adheres to the primary plot and character arcs. However, some differences and omissions are inevitable due to time limitations and the transition from written to visual storytelling.

One notable departure from the source material is the absence of Arran Bryn, Nathan's brother, in the media adaptation. In the original novel, Arran served as a vital bridge between the White and Black witch communities and played a significant mentoring role for Nathan. Sally Green's portrayal beautifully depicted Arran's character. His omission in the film simplifies the narrative but also evokes a sense of loss among the audience.

The movie adaptation introduces significant additions to the story. Joe Barton skillfully delves into Soul's past, providing a clearer understanding of his deep-seated hatred towards

Marcus. Soul is portrayed as a character seeking vengeance for his troubled history. The altered relationship status of Annalise and Soul, now portrayed as father and daughter, adds another layer of emotional impact to the narrative.

The central theme of both the novel and the film remains the prophecy. In the book, the prophecy takes the form of a vision, predicting that Marcus will be killed by Nathan, leading to the subsequent separation and tribulations between father and son. In Mary's words, "You (Nathan) are the second weapon" (Green, *Half Bad* 131). This came true when Marcus himself said, "You have to fulfill the prophecy. This is what I saw in the vision" (Green, *Half Wild* 393). In contrast, the film alters the prophecy to state that the wolf's own blood will kill him. This change proves to be a significant and positive departure. Throughout the series, Marcus is referred to as the wolf, and this modified prophecy motivates Soul to manipulate Nathan into killing Marcus. However, the twist in the film is that Soul meets his demise at the hands of his own daughter, Annalise.

Another notable alteration in the series is the renaming of certain characters and groups. In the book, the witch community is categorized into White witches and Black witches. In the film adaptation, these groups are entirely renamed as Fairborn witches and Blood witches. This change may have been implemented to prevent potential controversies or misunderstandings among the audience. Interestingly, these alterations assist the audience in distinguishing between the two clans and gaining a better understanding of their dynamics. The writers and directors of *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* series has successfully maintained the core essence of the source material while introducing significant enhancements and alterations that enrich the storytelling experience for the audience.

The novels' intricate descriptions of the magical world and characters' appearances are brought to life through visual representation in the series. Evaluating how the series captures the enchanting settings, distinctive magical abilities, and the visual impact of characters contributes to understanding the adaptation's fidelity to the source material. Sally Green has used certain terms to describe the characters' magical abilities. To illustrate, Green has employed a term 'Cut' through which the witches travel from one place to another. While the concept of 'cut' is difficult to apprehend for the readers, the movie has captured it astonishingly well. Particularly, in the scene where Nathan and Gabriel travel to the cottage of Mercury, the scene shifts from an abandoned factory to a snow filled landscape. Another magnificent scene is in episode two, where the trio fall down from a building at London and land on France. (Barton, *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself*15:40). The visual depiction of this transportation is the success of visual medium.

The adaptation's use of costumes, makeup, special effects, and set design plays a pivotal role in immersing the audience in the magical world. In addition to these visual elements, the witches in the series possess extraordinary powers, referred to as 'Gifts' in the novel. These Gifts include the ability to control the weather, shape-shift into animals or other humans, achieve invisibility, and even halt time.

Gabriel's power in the book is the gift of transformation, but in the movie adaptation, he takes on the role of an alchemist, manipulating potions and powders. Similarly, Annalise's power, which allows her to become invisible in the book, undergoes a transformation in the film adaptation, becoming known as "Decimation or the undoing (Barton, *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* 30:29)". Annalise's Gift in the movie enables her to gruesomely and instantly turn

a person inside out at will, a power she despises. The depiction of her power in the film is a remarkable achievement.

One standout scene in the film occurs in episode three, when Annalise accidentally kills a guard in the council building. The gruesomeness of this moment is portrayed with incredible detail. The directors and editors deserve commendation for their ability to execute this scene, wherein the audience witnesses every bone, muscle, and vein as the guard's body explodes. The sheer creativity behind this particular scene is truly praiseworthy.

These adaptations and alterations in the film serve the purpose of streamlining the story to cater to the visual audience while maintaining a sense of awe and wonder. The combination of visual effects and the reimagining of the characters' Gifts contribute significantly to the film's immersive experience and its ability to captivate the audience. Despite being deviated so much from the book, the movie adaptation stands tall on its own with its huge success.

In conclusion, the *Half Bad* novel and its movie adaptation each have distinct strengths. While the novels provide in-depth exploration and intricate world-building, the movies offer a visual spectacle that brings the wizarding world to life. While there may be differences between the two mediums, both versions contribute to the enduring legacy of the *Half Bad* series, offering fans multiple avenues to engage with the enchanting narrative. The debate between books and their media adaptations is not a matter of choosing one over the other. Rather, it's a celebration of the diverse ways stories can be told and experienced. Books offer an intimate connection to characters and worlds, fostering personal interpretation. Adaptations, on the other hand, provide a visual and auditory spectacle that can ignite collective excitement. In an ideal scenario, books and adaptations complement each other, expanding the narrative universe while respecting the

essence of the original work. Whether enjoyed through words on paper or images on a screen, stories have the remarkable ability to transcend their medium, leaving an ineffaceable mark on hearts and minds.

Work Cited

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