

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the concluding remarks of the study, drawing together the findings from the comparative analysis of Roald Dahl's novel *The Witches* (1983) and its 2020 film adaptation directed by Robert Zemeckis. The purpose of this research was to examine how character, plot, setting, and theme are constructed in each medium and to identify how these elements are preserved, altered, or reinterpreted in the process of adaptation. Through close reading of the novel and detailed observation of the film, this study demonstrates that adaptation is not a matter of simple transfer, but a creative and contextual reworking shaped by medium, audience, and cultural moment.

Overall, the findings show that while the novel and the film share the same narrative foundation, they differ significantly in narrative emphasis, emotional tone, and ideological direction. Roald Dahl's *The Witches* presents a dark, yet intimate children's story rooted in European settings, understated emotional expression, and moral clarity. In contrast, the 2020 film expands the narrative into a visually expressive and culturally specific reinterpretation that reflects contemporary concerns, particularly those related to identity, race, and collective empowerment. These differences highlight how adaptation functions as reinterpretation rather than reproduction.

In terms of character, both versions center on the boy, his grandmother, and the Grand High Witch, yet their portrayals reflect the strengths and limitations of each medium. In the novel, the unnamed boy functions as an every-child figure whose inner resilience is conveyed through narration and thought. His transformation into a mouse emphasizes acceptance and emotional endurance rather than physical restoration. The grandmother in the novel serves as a moral anchor, combining affection, wisdom, and realism, while the Grand High Witch is presented as pure, exaggerated evil with no

redeeming qualities. Dahl's character construction relies heavily on language, imagination, and the child narrator's perspective, allowing readers to engage deeply with internal states and moral lessons.

The film adaptation reconfigures these characters through visual performance and cultural recontextualization. By giving the Boy a clear racial and historical identity as an African-American child in 1960s America, the film adds emotional depth and socio-historical meaning to his journey. His development is more action-oriented, transforming him into a strategic leader rather than a figure of quiet acceptance. The grandmother's role is also expanded; she evolves from caretaker into organizer and leader, representing inherited wisdom and active resistance. Meanwhile, the Grand High Witch is reimagined as a theatrical, authoritarian figure whose power relies on spectacle and intimidation. This shift makes the conflict more dynamic and visually dramatic, while also emphasizing the dangers of unchecked dominance and arrogance.

Regarding plot, both versions follow a broadly similar structure, beginning with the boy's loss, progressing through the discovery of witches, and culminating in the defeat of the Grand High Witch. However, the narrative rhythm and resolution differ. The novel maintains a linear structure with a restrained climax and a bittersweet ending that stresses acceptance over victory. The boy remains a mouse, and the conclusion emphasizes love, companionship, and moral courage rather than triumph. This ending reflects Dahl's distinctive style, which often resists conventional happy endings in favor of emotional honesty.

In contrast, the film reshapes the plot to create a stronger sense of spectacle and closure. The climax is heightened through visual confrontation, and the resolution extends beyond the immediate conflict to suggest an ongoing mission against witches. By introducing an older version of the protagonist leading a collective effort, the film transforms the personal struggle of the novel

into a broader narrative of empowerment and activism. This alteration reflects cinematic storytelling conventions, which often prioritize resolution, continuity, and audience satisfaction.

The differences in setting further reinforce these shifts in meaning. Dahl's novel uses Norway and England to create a contrast between safety and danger, familiarity and threat. The seaside hotel, while seemingly ordinary, becomes a space where evil hides in plain sight, reinforcing the theme that danger often disguises itself as normality. The setting functions primarily as an atmospheric backdrop that supports the narrative's cautionary tone.

The film's relocation of the story to the United States, particularly to Alabama and the Grand Orleans Imperial Island Hotel, introduces new cultural and symbolic dimensions. Grandma's Southern home is portrayed as a place of healing, memory, and resilience, while the hotel becomes a symbol of luxury masking predatory behaviour. Through production design and visual symbolism, the film turns setting into an active narrative force that reflects power structures, social boundaries, and moral contrasts. This transformation demonstrates how settings in film can carry ideological meaning beyond their narrative function.

Thematically, both versions uphold the fundamental opposition between good and evil, as well as the importance of bravery and loyalty. However, the way these themes are communicated differs. In the novel, courage is internal and moral; it lies in acceptance, cleverness, and love in the face of irreversible change. Evil is absolute and must be resisted but not always defeated completely. The message is quiet yet powerful, teaching readers that dignity and identity persist even under loss.

The film expands these themes by emphasizing transformation as empowerment rather than limitation. Acceptance is no longer linked to resignation but to action and leadership. Bravery becomes collective rather

than individual, and goodness is portrayed as something that grows through community and shared purpose. By doing so, the film adapts Dahl's moral universe to contemporary values, presenting resistance, solidarity, and inherited strength as central responses to injustice.

In conclusion, this study confirms that *The Witches* (2020) is not merely a retelling of Roald Dahl's novel, but a reinterpretation shaped by cinematic language and modern cultural context. The adaptation preserves the core narrative and moral foundation of the original while transforming its characters, plot, setting, and themes to resonate with contemporary audiences. These changes do not diminish the value of the novel; rather, they demonstrate the flexibility of literary texts and their capacity to create new meanings across time and media.

This research contributes to adaptation studies by illustrating how a children's story can evolve through medium-specific expression and cultural relocation. Future studies may further explore audience reception, ideological implications, or visual symbolism in adaptations of Roald Dahl's works. Understanding adaptation as a creative dialogue between texts, readers, and viewers can help us more fully appreciate both the originality of the source material and the interpretive possibilities of film.