

COMPARATIVE NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE SHORT STORY AND FILM ADAPTATION *DRIVE MY CAR*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the narrative structures in both the short story *Drive My Car* (*Doraibu maikā*) by Haruki Murakami and its film adaptation directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, within the framework of Literary Structuralism. The research focuses on identifying the narrative structure in the short story and the film, as well as examining their similarities and differences. This qualitative study employs descriptive analysis, with primary data taken from Murakami's short story in *Onna no Inai Otoko Tachi* (in Japanese and Indonesian translation) and the film *Drive My Car*. Supporting data were obtained from journals, books, and online sources. The findings show that the narrative structures of the short story and the film differ in several stages. Furthermore, similarities and differences in intrinsic elements are revealed, particularly in plot, setting, and characterization, demonstrating how adaptation reshapes narrative while preserving thematic depth.

Keywords: short story, film, structuralism, adaptation, narrative comparison

Introduction

The adaptation of literary works into films is a frequent phenomenon, in line with the growing public interest in literary texts, both novels and short stories. This adaptation process often introduces significant differences between the original work and the resulting film, in terms of plot, setting, and characterization. Such changes may enrich the audience's experience but also raise debates regarding the film's fidelity to its source text (Shaikh, 2024).

One notable work worth examining is Haruki Murakami's short story *Drive My Car*, published in the 2014 anthology *Onna no Inai Otoko Tachi* (Men Without Women). The anthology was translated into English in 2017 and into Indonesian in 2022. The popularity of this short story

increased after its adaptation into a film of the same title by director Ryusuke Hamaguchi in 2021. The film won several international awards, including Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival, Best Film by the National Society of Film Critics (NSFC), and Best Foreign Language Film at the 2022 Golden Globes (Chuo University, 2022; Kwon, 2021).

As a contemporary Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami has been internationally recognized through various prestigious awards, such as the Yomiuri Literary Prize (Rubin, 2002; The Franz Kafka Society, n.d.; "Yomiuri Literary Prize Winners," 1995)

However, in the context of this study, the focus is placed on *Drive My Car* and its transformation into the medium of film. This adaptation demonstrates how

Murakami's narrative text, with its introspective nuances, can be translated into a cinematic form that emphasizes dialogue, silence, and symbolism (Hamaguchi, 2021).

Comparisons of narrative structures between literary texts and their film adaptations have been the subject of numerous studies both in Indonesia and abroad. Contemporary scholarship underscores the importance of structural analysis in understanding how films modify plot, characters, and settings from their source texts (Gupta, 2023). However, specific studies on *Drive My Car* remain scarce. This can be understood given that the short story was only adapted into film in 2021 and became available in Indonesian translation in 2022.

Based on this background, the present study aims to describe the narrative structures of the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, and to analyze their similarities and differences. Through a literary structuralist approach, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of literary adaptation into film and its implications for audience reception among readers and viewers alike.

Literature Review

1. Comparative Studies on Literature and Film

The adaptation of literary works into films has long been a major focus within comparative literature studies. Adaptation is not merely the transfer of content from text to screen, but also a creative transformation that involves narrative restructuring, shifts in storytelling modes, and even ideological reinterpretation (Shaikh, 2024). (Nurgiyantoro, 2018; Stanton, 2007)emphasize the importance

of intrinsic elements such as plot, character, and setting in comparative analysis between literature and film. In Indonesia, several studies have revealed similar findings: Naufan (2017)demonstrated that the adaptation of *Norwei no Mori (Norwegian Wood)* involved both condensation and expansion of the narrative, while Syahrir (2017) found significant differences in the narrative structure of *One Litre of Tears*. These studies affirm that adaptation necessarily entails transformation sometimes reinforcing, but at other times reshaping, the meaning of the original text.

2. Adaptation Studies on *Drive My Car*

Haruki Murakami's works, including *Drive My Car*, have frequently been examined in adaptation studies due to their introspective themes and narrative ambiguity. Gupta (2023)introduced the concept of *narrative alignment* to describe how film reconstructs literary texts through visual and auditory strategies while maintaining central thematic motifs. This process is evident in Ryusuke Hamaguchi's film adaptation, which emphasizes silence, dialogue, and theatrical symbolism to extend Murakami's story into a cinematic meditation on grief and human connection (Chuo University, 2022; Hamaguchi, 2021).Moreover observes that Hamaguchi's adaptation transcends national boundaries through multilingual performances and multicultural characters, elements absent from the original short story. These creative choices expand the narrative from a personal account of loss into a universal reflection on communication, intimacy, and resilience.

Research Methods

The method employed in analyzing the comparison between the short story and

the film *Drive My Car* is the descriptive-analytical method, which focuses on examining narrative structures and identifying similarities and differences without reducing the complexity of each medium (Tulgar, 2023). The data collection methods used are library research and documentation.

The objects of this study consist of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from the short story *Drive My Car*, included in Haruki Murakami's anthology *Onna no Inai Otoko Tachi (Men Without Women)*, consisting of the original Japanese text alongside its Indonesian translation titled *Lelaki-lelaki tanpa Perempuan*, translated by Ribeka Ota. In addition, another primary data source is the film *Drive My Car*, directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi and produced by C&I Entertainment in 2021.

The secondary data consist of literature reviews, including theses, books, and journal articles related to adaptation studies and narrative structures. These include comparative approaches to literature-to-film adaptation (Hamid, 2024; Mauliddiyah, 2023), interdisciplinary perspectives on literary narrative and visual storytelling (Alqadi, 2023; Bruhn, 2022), and translation-oriented adaptation studies that view adaptation as intersemiotic communication (Dunai, 2022).

A structuralist approach is applied to describe the narrative structures in both the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, analyzing their similarities and differences at the levels of plot, character, setting, and theme. This method is limited to the literary works themselves, independent of the author and the readers, aligning with the principles of structuralist criticism that prioritize the internal coherence of texts (Hamid et al., 2024; Perdikaki, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The authors identified several differences between the short story and the film, not only in terms of duration but also in the intrinsic elements that build the narrative. Based on this, the analysis aims to outline the narrative structures of both the short story and the film.

4.1 Narrative Structure of the Short Story and Film *Drive My Car*

4.1.1 Narrative Structure of the Short Story

The narrative structure of Haruki Murakami's short story *Drive My Car* consists of several stages as follows:

1) Abstract

The abstract in the short story *Drive My Car* appears at the very beginning of the narrative. This part contains the initial narration of the story. At this stage, the story does not yet focus on introducing the characters, but rather on Kafuku's perspective on female drivers. As illustrated in the quotation below:

Quotation 1

これまで女性が運転する車に何度も乗ったが、家福の目からすれば、彼女たちの運転ぶりはおおむね二種類に分けられた。いささか乱暴すぎるか、いささか慎重すぎるか、どちらかだ。後者の方が前者より我々はそのことに感謝すべきなのだろうずっと多かった。一般的に言えば、女性ドライバーたちは男性よりも丁寧な、慎重な運転をする。もちろん丁寧で慎重な運転に苦情を申し立てる筋合いはない。それでもその運転ぶりは時として、周囲のドライバーを苛立たせるかもしれない。(村上春樹, 2014: 18)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0
He had often ridden in cars driven by women, and from Kafuku's perspective, their driving styles generally fell into two categories: either somewhat too reckless or somewhat too cautious. The latter was far more common than the former, and for that, one should be grateful. Generally speaking, women drivers tended to drive more carefully and attentively than men. Of course, there was no reason to complain about careful and attentive driving. Even so, such a style of driving could at times irritate the other drivers around them.

Quotation 1 reflects Kafuku's perspective on women's driving styles, derived from his experiences as their passenger. He classifies these driving behaviors into two distinct categories. The first consists of women who drive with a high level of confidence, sometimes bordering on aggressiveness, as they are unafraid to take risks and often drive at higher speeds. The second, which represents the majority, consists of women who demonstrate heightened caution. Their driving is marked by carefulness and deliberation, often resulting in slower decision-making on the road. This dichotomy not only reveals Kafuku's subjective observation but also situates gendered assumptions within everyday practices such as driving, thereby offering insight into broader cultural perceptions of women.

2) Orientation

The short story *Drive My Car* by Haruki Murakami opens with the introduction of its central character, Kafuku, a theater actor in search of a personal driver. At this stage, another key figure, Oba, is also introduced. As Kafuku's longtime friend and the owner of an auto repair shop, Oba plays an important narrative role by

recommending Misaki, a female driver, to Kafuku. This moment establishes the initial connection between Kafuku and Misaki, setting the stage for the subsequent development of their relationship and the unfolding of the story's central conflicts.

Quotation 2

「でもね、家福さん、この子の運転の腕は確かですよ。そいつは私が間違いなく保証します。よかったら会うだけでも一度会ってやってくれませんか？」

「いいよ。あなたがそう言うなら」と家福は言った。彼は一日でも早く運転手を必要としていたし、大場は倍頼のできる男だった。もう十五年のつきあいになる。針金のような硬い髪をした、小鬼を思わせる風貌の男だが、こと車に関しては彼の意見に従ってまず間違いはない。(村上、2014 : 21)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

“But listen, Kafuku, this girl's driving skills are reliable. I can guarantee that without a doubt. If you don't mind, would you at least meet her once?” “All right. If you say so,” replied Kafuku. He was in urgent need of a driver, and Oba was a man he could rely on. They had been friends for fifteen years. With his wiry hair and impish appearance, Oba resembled a little goblin, yet when it came to cars, his judgment was always trustworthy.

Quotation 2 illustrates that Oba, Kafuku's longtime friend, recommends a driver named Misaki to work for Kafuku, who is no longer able to drive himself. Oba is confident that the driver he recommends is highly skilled and reliable. Kafuku agrees

to meet the driver and places his trust in Oba's suggestion.

3) Climax

The climax of the short story *Drive My Car* is reached when Kafuku confides in Misaki about Takatsuki, his late wife's lover, whom he had encountered some time earlier. In this moment of disclosure, Kafuku articulates the depth of his anguish and even entertains the idea of taking revenge against Takatsuki, although he ultimately refrains from acting upon it. Their dialogue further extends to a broader reflection on the emotional vulnerabilities that women may experience, which, according to Kafuku, can lead to seemingly irrational behaviors. This exchange constitutes the height of narrative tension, as it foregrounds Kafuku's profound internal struggle and moral dilemma, situating the climax not in external action but in the psychological and ethical conflict within the protagonist.

Quotation 3

「暗いですね」

「ああ、暗い話だよ」

「その人が家福さんの奥さんと寝ていたから、仕返しをすること？」

「仕返しというのとは少し違う」と家福は言った。「でも僕はどうしてもそのことが忘れられなかった。忘れてしまおうとずいぶん努力はした。でも駄目だった。うちの奥さんがほかの男の腕に抱かれている情景が頭を離れなかった。いつもそれが、蘇ってくるんだ。まるで行き場のない魂が天井の隅っこにずっと張りついて、こちらを見守っているみたいに。妻が死んで時間が経てば、そんなものはやがて消えてなくなるだろうと思っていた。でも消えなかった。むしろ前よりもっと気配が強くなったくらいだ。僕としてはそれをど

こかにやってしまう必要があった。そのためには、自分の中にある怒りのようなものを解消しなくてはならなかった」

北海道上十二滝町からやってきた自分の娘くらいの年の女を相手に、どうしてこんな話をしちているのだろうと家福は思った。しかしいったん語り始めたことを、彼は止められなくなっていた。

「だからその人を懲らしめようと思った」と娘は言った。

「そう」

「でも実際には何もしなかったんですね？」

「ああ、しなかったよ」と家福は言った。

みさきはそれを聞いて少し安心したようだった。小さく短く息をつき火のついた煙草をそのまま窓の外に弾いて捨てた。たぶん上十二滝町ではみんなが普通にやっていることなのだろう。(村上、2014: 80-81)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

“Dark, isn't it?”

“Yes, a dark story.”

“You mean, Mr. Kafuku, you wanted revenge because that man once slept with your wife?”

“It's a little different from revenge,” said Kafuku. “But I couldn't forget it no matter what I did. I tried as hard as I could to forget, but it was impossible. The image of my wife being held in another man's arms never left my mind. It kept coming back, again and again. Like a wandering spirit stuck in the corner of the ceiling, watching over me. I thought it would eventually fade away after enough time had passed since her death. But it didn't disappear. If anything, the presence grew even stronger. I needed to drive it out

somehow. To do that, I had to resolve this kind of anger within me.” Why am I telling this sort of thing to a girl from Kamijunitaki-cho, Hokkaido, who could easily be my daughter’s age? Kafuku wondered. Yet once he began to speak, he found he could not stop. “So that’s why you thought about punishing that man,” the young woman said. “Yes.”

“But in the end, you didn’t do anything, right?”
 “No, I didn’t do anything,” said Kafuku. Misaki seemed somewhat relieved by his answer. She let out a short breath and flicked her still-burning cigarette out the window. Perhaps that was something people normally did in Kamijunitaki-cho. (Murakami, 2022)

Quotation 3 demonstrates how the pain of betrayal can exert a lingering influence on an individual, persisting even years after the event. For Kafuku, the anguish is so overwhelming that he remains unable to forget it, even following the death of his wife. He perceives himself as trapped in a cycle of anger and grief, with no clear means of resolution. Despite being considerably younger, Misaki appears to recognize and empathize with his suffering. Her attentive and non-judgmental listening does not provide a direct solution but creates a space in which Kafuku can articulate his emotions. This dynamic underscores the narrative’s emphasis on psychological confrontation, highlighting the climax as a moment of both vulnerability and catharsis.

4) Evaluation

This stage occurs after Kafuku shares his story about Takatsuki with Misaki. At this point, the search for a resolution to the conflict begins. In the evaluation stage, Kafuku starts to reflect on the events that

have taken place, attempting to understand his late wife’s actions as well as the reasons why Takatsuki engaged in an affair with her.

Quotation 4

「うまく説明できないんだけど、あるとき急にいろんなことがどうでもよくなってしまったんだ。憑きものがすとんと落ちたみたい」と家福は言った。「もう怒りも感じなくなっていた。あるいはそれは本当は怒りではなく、何か別のものだったのかもしれない」
 「でも、それは家福さんにとって間違いなく良いことだったと思います。どのようなかたちにせよ、人を傷つけたりしなかったことは」

「僕もそう思う」

「しかし奥さんがどうしてその人とセックスをしたのか、どうしてその人でなくてはならなかったのか、家福さんにはそれがまだつかめないんですね？」

「ああ、つかめていないと思う。そいつはまだ僕の中に疑問符つきで残っている。その男は裏のない、感じの良いやつだった。うちの奥さんのことが本気で好きだったらしい。単なる遊びで彼女と寝ていたわけじゃなかった。彼女が死んだことで、心からショックを受けていた。死ぬ前に見舞いに来ようとして断られたことも傷になって残っていた。僕は彼に好意を感じないわけにはいかなかったし、本当に友だちになってもいいと思ったくらいだった」 (村上、2014 : 82)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

“It’s hard to explain properly, but at some point I suddenly became indifferent to many things. It was as if I had been freed from a kind

of possession,” said Kafuku. “I no longer felt anger. Or perhaps it had never really been anger, but something else entirely.”

“But in any case, I think that was certainly for the best, Mr. Kafuku. After all, you did not end up hurting anyone in any way.” “I agree.”

“Still, you cannot yet understand why your wife had a sexual relationship with that man, why it had to be him, can you?”

“No, I still don’t think I can understand. That question lingers within me, unresolved. He was an open, kind-hearted man, without any hidden ill will. It seems he truly loved my wife. Sleeping with her was not just a game for him. He was genuinely devastated by her death. Even being refused when he tried to visit her before she died left a scar on him. I could not help but feel a kind of sympathy toward him so much so that I even thought we might truly have become friends.”

Quotation 4 illustrates Kafuku’s emotional state following his wife’s death. He continues to experience profound grief and a deep sense of loss, with her passing leaving a lasting wound in his heart. Yet, amidst this sorrow, Kafuku surprisingly discovers an ability to release his anger and resentment. No longer consumed by feelings of vengeance or hatred, he experiences a measure of emotional relief. Nonetheless, he remains haunted by unanswered questions about his wife’s infidelity. He cannot comprehend why she betrayed him or why she chose Takatsuki in particular, leaving him still in search of closure.

5) Resolution

The resolution takes place at the end of the story, when Kafuku has recounted his past

with his late wife as well as his encounter with Takatsuki. At this stage, Kafuku resolves the central conflict of the narrative by coming to terms with everything that has happened, including his wife’s death and her infidelity with Takatsuki.

Quotation 5

「そういうのって、病のようなものなんです、家福さん。考えてどうなるものでもありません。私の父が私たちを捨てていったのも、母親が私をとことん痛めつけたのも、みんな病がやったことです。頭で考えても仕方ありません。こちらでやりくりして、呑み込んで、ただやっていくしかないんです」

「そして僕らはみんな演技をする」と家福は言った。

「そういうことだと思います。多かれ少なかれ」（村上、2014 : 85）

English translation by CHATGPT 5.0

“That could be considered a kind of illness, Mr. Kafuku. There’s no point in thinking it over and over. My father abandoned us and left, and my mother abused me relentlessly—those too were caused by illness. Thinking about it rationally makes no difference. The only option is to find a way to accept it, swallow it, and just keep living.” “And we all act,” said Kafuku. “That’s right, I think. More or less.”

Quotation 5 shows Misaki offering advice to Kafuku regarding the problems he faces. Misaki suggests that there is no point in overthinking life’s difficulties; the only option is to accept them and move on. She also shares her own past, recalling how her father abandoned her and her mother

abused her when she was a child. She tried to process the pain and trauma she experienced, but she realized that doing so brought no benefit. For Misaki, the best way to cope was to accept her circumstances and continue living. Through this exchange, Kafuku comes to understand that sometimes one must accept life as it is and move forward, rather than remain trapped in a cycle of suffering. This scene resolves the central conflict of the story, marking its final stage.

6) Coda

The coda in the short story *Drive My Car* appears at the very end of the narrative, consisting of the final narration or dialogue that closes the story. As illustrated in the following quotation.

Quotation 6

少し眠ろうと家福は思った。ひとしきり深く眠って、目覚める。十分か十五分、そんなものだ。そしてまた舞台に立って演技をする。照明を浴び、決められた台詞を口にす。拍手を受け、幕が下りる。いったん自己を離れ、また自己に戻る。しかし戻ったところは正確には前と同じ場所ではない。「少し眠るよ」と家福は言った。みさきは返事をしなかった。そのまま黙って運転を続けた。家福はその沈黙に感謝した。(村上、2014: 85)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

Sleep for a while, thought Kafuku. Sleep deeply for a short time, then wake up. Ten or fifteen minutes at most. Then he would return to the stage to perform. Bathed in the spotlight, reciting his assigned lines. Receiving applause, and then the curtain would fall. For a moment he would leave himself, only to

return to himself again. Yet the place to which he returned was not exactly the same as where he had been before.

“I’ll sleep for a bit,” said Kafuku.



Misaki did not respond. She remained silent and kept driving. Kafuku was grateful for that silence.

Quotation 6 illustrates Kafuku’s desire to rest briefly so that he might return with a clearer mind. He envisions himself back on stage, performing under the spotlight. For Kafuku, sleep becomes a means of processing the pain he has endured and shielding himself from that suffering. In this moment, Misaki does not respond and simply continues driving, while Kafuku expresses gratitude for her silence. Within that silence, both Kafuku and Misaki begin to accept the realities of their past and focus instead on moving forward toward a better future.

4.1.2 Narrative Structure of the Film *Drive My Car*

The narrative structure of *Drive My Car*, directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, is organized into three acts that parallel the conventions of classical dramaturgy while simultaneously introducing distinctive cinematic elements.

1) Act (Set-up/Beginning)

The opening act introduces the protagonist, Yusuke, who is portrayed not only as a seasoned theater actor but also as a director deeply committed to his craft. The

film begins by situating Yusuke within the intimacy of his domestic sphere, particularly his relationship with his wife, Oto. These early scenes present an outwardly harmonious marriage, underscoring the emotional closeness and apparent happiness the couple shares. The portrayal of this domestic harmony is significant, as it establishes the emotional stakes of the narrative and foreshadows the dissonance that emerges once the hidden complexities of Oto's inner life are revealed.

Figure 1. Yusuke and Oto in the early stage of the story

Source: *Drive My Car* film, minute 00:07:20

In this set-up stage, the central conflict of the story is also introduced, namely Yusuke's relationship with Oto. Oto is engaged in an affair with an actor named Koji Takatsuki. Yusuke discovers this affair some time before Oto's death. He feels anger and betrayal at Oto's actions. This conflict continues to unfold and grows increasingly complex throughout the narrative.

2) Act 2 (Confrontation/Middle)



Figure 2. Conversation between Yusuke and Takatsuki in a bar

Source: *Drive My Car* film, minute 01:58:00

The confrontation phase of the film begins with Yusuke's arrival in Hiroshima, marking a pivotal shift in the narrative. In this new setting, Yusuke encounters Misaki Watari, a young female driver assigned to escort him to and from the theater rehearsals. Misaki's introduction

not only advances the plot but also establishes the foundation for the film's central relationship, through which Yusuke's unresolved grief and internal conflicts gradually come to the surface.

The main conflict of the story also begins to unfold at this stage. As shown in Figure 2, Yusuke has a conversation with Koji Takatsuki, the man who had an affair with his late wife. Takatsuki invites Yusuke to meet after a theater rehearsal, during which they talk about Yusuke's late wife. Through this exchange, Yusuke gradually begins to accept Oto's affair with Takatsuki. He comes to realize that Oto was a complex and mysterious woman, one he could never completely understand.

3) Act 3 (Resolution/End)

The resolution begins when Yusuke and Misaki travel to Hokkaido, visiting Misaki's hometown. During the journey, they share their personal struggles. Through these conversations, both Yusuke and Misaki come to realize the most important lesson in life: that one must move forward and stop being trapped in the shadows of the past.



Figure 3. Yusuke and Misaki on their journey to Hokkaido

Source: *Drive My Car* film, minute 02:39:04

At this stage, the main conflict of the story has been resolved. Yusuke has come to terms with Oto's death and has learned to accept his past. Following their journey, he and Misaki return to Hiroshima to continue with the *Uncle Vanya* theater project.

4.2 Comparison of the Narrative Structure in the Short Story and Film *Drive My Car*

In both the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, the discussion focuses on the plot, setting, and characters in order to analyze their structural similarities and differences.

1) Comparison of Plot

An essential element in plot development includes the stages of introduction, conflict, climax, and resolution. There are several similarities between the short story and the film version of *Drive My Car* in terms of plot. One example is the scene in which Kafuku and Misaki converse inside the car. In both the short story and the film, their dialogue revolves around personal matters, and this scene occurs from the introductory stage of the story through to the climax.

Quotation 7

みさきは何の問題もなく、予定通りに彼をあちこの場所に送り届け、家福も彼女の運転するサブの助手席に座っていることに慣れていった。時には深く眠り込むことさえあった。(村上、2014:37)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

Misaki always picked him up and dropped him off at various places according to schedule without causing any problems, while Kafuku gradually became accustomed to sitting in the passenger seat of the Saab she drove. At times, he even fell soundly asleep in the passenger seat.

Excerpt 7 illustrates Misaki's routine after officially assuming the role of Kafuku's personal driver, consistently escorting him to and from various destinations as required. The passage also specifies

Kafuku's habitual seating position in the passenger seat of the Saab driven by Misaki. This seemingly minor detail is faithfully preserved in the film adaptation, underscoring the director's effort to maintain narrative fidelity while highlighting the symbolic intimacy and dependency embedded in their shared car journeys.

Figure 4. Misaki Driving Kafuku

Source: *Drive My Car* film, minute 00:49:30

The differences in plot between the short story and the film *Drive My Car* are striking, beginning from the opening scenes. In the short story, the narrative opens with Kafuku searching for a personal driver and visiting Oba's garage. In contrast, the film begins with the depiction of Kafuku's wife still alive. Beyond this initial divergence, there are also structural differences in narrative organization. The short story relies heavily on flashbacks, such as when Kafuku recounts memories of his late wife, whereas the film presents its events in a largely linear fashion.

2) Comparison in Terms of Setting

Setting plays a crucial role in shaping and influencing characterization within a literary work. In both the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, significant differences in setting can be observed. These divergences are largely the result of differences in duration between the short story and the film, as well as the addition of new settings in the cinematic adaptation. One notable distinction concerns temporal setting, which emerges from the very beginning. In the short story, all events unfold exclusively during the summer, with a duration of only two months from the time Misaki first becomes Kafuku's



driver.

Quotation 8

気候が暖かくなると、みさきはヘリンボーンの男物のジャケットを脱いで、薄手の夏物のジャケットに替えた。運転するときには、彼女は常に必ずどちらかのジャケットを着用した。たぶん運転手の制服のかわりなのだろう。梅雨の季節になり、車の屋根が閉められることが多くなってきた。(村上、2014:38)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

When the weather grew warmer, Misaki took off her men's herringbone jacket and replaced it with a lighter summer jacket. Whenever she drove, she always wore one of her jackets, perhaps considering it a kind of chauffeur's uniform. As the rainy season arrived, the car roof increasingly had to be kept closed.

In the short story, the temporal setting is depicted exclusively in summer, lasting for approximately two months. In contrast, the film presents a much longer time span. In the opening scenes of the film, Kafuku's wife is still alive, indicating that the timeframe is set before he meets Misaki. Early sequences also show hot weather conditions when Kafuku arrives in Hiroshima. Toward the end of the film, however, snowy weather is depicted during Kafuku and Misaki's journey to Hokkaido.



Figure 5. Snowy weather conditions in a scene near the end of the story

Source: Film *Drive My Car*, timestamp 02:36:07

Throughout the events in both the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, several differences emerge. One such difference can be seen in the scenes where Kafuku and Misaki drive around together. In the short story, these scenes take place mostly inside the car, with their journeys limited to the streets of Tokyo.

Quotation 9

それ以外の仕事が入ることもある。テレビの連続ドラマの収録のために、週に一度は都内のテレビ局に出向かなくてはならなかった。平凡な刑事物のドラマだが、視聴率は高かったし、ギャラもよかった。(村上、2014:37)

English translation by CHATGpt 5.0

Occasionally, he took on other work. Once a week, he had to go to a television station in Tokyo to shoot a drama series. Although it was just an ordinary detective drama, it was popular with viewers, and the pay was quite good.

In contrast to the short story, the setting of the film is located in Hiroshima. The streets and important sites in Hiroshima serve as the primary backdrop for the narrative. The scenes of Kafuku meeting Misaki, the rehearsal process, and the

performance of the play *Uncle Vanya* all take place in Hiroshima.



Figure 6. Yusuke traveling to Hiroshima
 Source: *Drive My Car* (Film), timestamp 00:41:22

The difference in setting between the short story and the film *Drive My Car* is not merely aesthetic, but also serves narrative and symbolic purposes. The film seeks to present the story in a more visual and realistic manner, while also providing new layers of meaning. Naturally, this divergence in setting between the short story and the film results in different modes of visualization and reality within the narrative.

3) Comparison in Terms of Characters and Characterization

In both the short story and the film *Drive My Car*, similarities and differences can be observed in terms of the number of characters as well as their functions within the narrative. The comparison of characters in the short story and the film *Drive My Car* can be seen in the following table.

Table. Comparison of Characters and Characterization in the Short Story and Film *Drive My Car*

No.	Short Story		Film	
	Character	Characterization	Character	Characterization
1.	Kafuku	Theater actor	Kafuku Yusuke	Theater actor, theater director
2.	Misaki	Kafuku's	Misaki	Kafuku's

	Watari	driver, recommended by Oba	Watari	driver, recommended by the theater project management
3.	Oba	Kafuku's acquaintance, a garage owner	Not depicted in the film	
4.	Takatsuki	Kafuku's wife's lover	Takatsuki Koji	Oto's (Yusuke's wife) lover; formerly a theater actor, cast as Uncle Vanya
5.	Kafuku's wife (unnamed)	Portrayed as deceased in the story	Kafuku Oto	Yusuke's wife; shown alive in the film before her death
6.	Not mentioned in the short story		Gong Yoon-so	Theater project manager of <i>Uncle Vanya</i> in Hiroshima
7.	Not mentioned in the short story		Janice Chang	Theater actress from Taiwan
8.	Not mentioned in the short story		Lee Yoon-na	Deaf theater actress from Korea, wife of Gong Yoon-so
9.	Not mentioned in the short story		Yuhara	Theater project manager of <i>Uncle Vanya</i> in Hiroshima
10.	Not mentioned in the short story		Several minor theater characters	Unnamed supporting characters from various countries such as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Korea

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the short story and film *Drive My Car* demonstrates significant structural differences shaped by the distinct narrative forms of literature and cinema. Murakami's short story unfolds through stages of introduction, climax, evaluation, and resolution, while Hamaguchi's film adaptation adheres to a three-act structure consisting of set-up, confrontation, and resolution. Despite these differences, both works maintain

certain parallels, particularly in the recurring scenes inside Kafuku's Saab, where conversations between Kafuku and Misaki reveal personal struggles and become pivotal to the narrative. However, the divergence is more striking in the opening sequences where the short story begins with Kafuku searching for a driver, while the film foregrounds Oto's presence as well as in the use of flashbacks in the short story contrasted with the linear narrative of the film.

In terms of setting, similarities are minimal, limited to the interior of Kafuku's car. The short story situates its events during a summer in Tokyo over the course of two months, whereas the film expands its temporal and spatial scope, shifting the primary location to Hiroshima and extending the narrative across multiple seasons. This shift is not merely aesthetic but also carries narrative and symbolic functions, reinforcing the film's more visual and realistic approach. Characterization likewise reveals both continuities and changes: while key figures such as Kafuku, Misaki, and Takatsuki remain central in both versions, the film introduces additional characters from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby broadening the thematic and representational dimensions of the narrative.

Ultimately, both the short story and the film effectively establish orientation by presenting the main characters and their backgrounds, and both provide closure by resolving the central conflict, offering emotional resonance to readers and viewers alike. Yet, their approaches to storytelling diverge. The short story affords readers time to gradually engage with the psychological depth of the characters before confronting the central conflict, while the film emphasizes surprise and dramatic revelation through

scene-by-scene progression. These differences highlight not only the transformation of narrative strategies in adaptation but also the capacity of each medium to produce distinct yet complementary modes of meaning-making.

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