

Title:

Lost and Found In Adaptation: "Fate/Stay Night"

Word Count:

655

Summary:

Adapting something from the literary world, whether a traditional novel or a Japanese visual novel, can often be difficult. There is usually a large amount of detail that must be removed for the adaptation to work, with some attempts cutting too much of the original material. For less hardcore fans of the source material, the anime adaptation of "Fate/Stay Night" presents a workable balance, though still missing some arguably essential details.

Keywords:

stress and anxiety, stress, mental health, depression, relationships

Article Body:

Whenever adapting material from one medium to another, there is always the danger of losing something in the adaptation. This usually happens if the original material was in the literary form, such as a novel or a comic book. Another cause might be the additional stress and anxiety on the director of the adaptation because the original material most likely had a sizable fan-base, which is liable to riot if anything too drastic occurs during the change.

More often than not, the core strategy for dealing with this sort of problem is to remove what could be considered "filler" material, leaving only what needs to be present for integrity of the plot. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" series and several Japan-to-Hollywood conversions, such as "Godzilla" and "Ultraman" are victims of this. However, judging from the stress of the animators and the backlash from the hardcore fans, even the Japan-exclusive game genre known as the visual novel is hard to translate. Take, for example, "Fate/Stay Night," based on the visual novel of the same name.

TYPE-MOON, the company that made the source material, upheld their reputation for heavily detailed, highly artistic characters and plots in "Fate/Stay Night," which was among the most awaited games for its genre in decades. The game itself had multiple endings, carried out through three possible scenarios, each one with a plot that develops in distinctly different ways from the others, albeit having roughly the same major players in the cast. The success of the game and the relatively warm reception to the adaptation of a previous TYPE-MOON work,

"Tsukihime," exerted enough pressure and stress on companies to grab the rights for an anime version of F/SN. The finished product, however, wavers.

It is difficult to judge just how well the extensive material covered by the original visual novel translates to animated form. The core of the plot is intact, if only because the anime takes only one of the possible scenarios and runs with it, only inserting elements from the two other scenarios (such as hints of one of the character's fractured mental health) of the visual novel in certain episodes. The self-doubt and the skirting with depression that comes with the main character's personal burdens failures are apparent, but the show tended to skim over the background details of the other pieces to the puzzle.

For example, the real nature of the relationship between Rin and Sakura (two of the female leads) is only hinted upon vaguely in the show, whereas the original material goes into extensive detail not only on their shared background as sisters, but also on Sakura's depression and feelings of abandonment by her original family. The show also drops several important elements to the personalities and relationships between Sakura, her brother Shinji, and the creature known as "Rider."

The show does, however, have some good points. The plot is coherent and strong, owing largely to the quality of work that went into the original plot by TYPE-MOON. The characters that are focused on have some of the most developed personalities seen in this sort of anime, which match perfectly with the top-notch visual quality of the show. Several of the scenes echo some of the more beloved scenes from the visual novel, though some had to be edited due to the nature of their content.

Ultimately, "Fate/Stay Night" is an example of both what can be done right and wrong about translating stories from one medium to another. Due to the extensive and expansive written material present in the original game, as well as the vast number of possible decisions a player can make that have an effect on the outcome, it would be impossible to get everything to fit into the context of a 24-episode show. However, like good adaptations, enough elements from the source material were retained to make it both recognizable by fans and interesting enough to attract non-fans.