



Kriminalita v "Chyt' mě, jestli to dokážeš": Komparativní analýza Abegnalovy autobiografie a její filmová adaptace

Bakalářská práce

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Criminality in "Catch Me if You Can": A Comparative Analysis of Abagnale's Autobiography and its Film Adaptation

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Záměrem této práce je analyzovat dílo Franka Abagnala "Chyt' mě, jestli to dokážeš" (1980) a jeho filmovou adaptaci (2002) režírovanou Stevenem Spielbergem.

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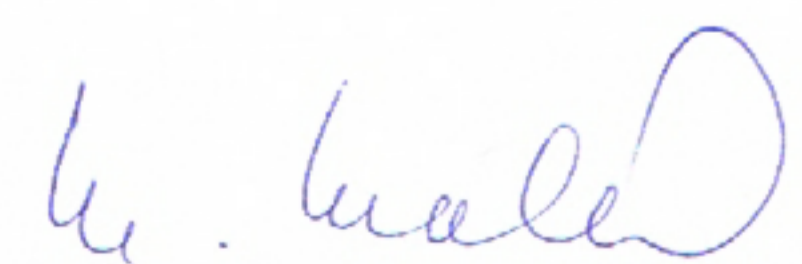
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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce porovnává Abagnalovu autobiografii *Catch Me If You Can* s její stejnojmennou filmovou verzí, natočenou Stevenem Spielbergem. Práce se zaměřuje na kriminální aktivitu Franka Abagnala a zkoumá, jaké změny byly provedeny u hlavních postav. Změny v případě hlavních postav a podvodů jsou následně odůvodněny.

Klíčová slova

Frank Abagnale, Steven Spielberg, kriminalita, podvod, FBI agent, policie, porovnání, peníze, film, kniha

Annotation

The bachelor thesis compares Abagnale's autobiography *Catch Me If You Can* with its film version of the same name, directed by Steven Spielberg. It focuses on Frank Abagnale's criminal activity and examines changes made in the case of the main characters. Changes of characters and frauds are subsequently explained.

Key Words

Frank Abagnale, Steven Spielberg, criminality, fraud, FBI agent, police, comparison, money, film, book

Content

1	Introduction	10
2	Frank Abagnale.....	13
2.1	Life.....	13
2.2	Work.....	15
3	Catch Me If You Can – the book.....	17
3.1	Autobiography	17
3.2	Ghostwriting or co-authoring.....	18
3.2.1	Stan Redding	19
3.3	Formal aspects	19
3.4	Language	20
4	Catch Me If You Can – the film.....	21
4.1	The adaptation	21
4.2	From paper to screen.....	21
4.3	Spielberg’s filming.....	24
4.3.1	Typical protagonists and their role	24
4.3.2	A part of Spielberg in <i>Catch Me If You Can</i>	25
4.4	Based on the real events.....	26
4.5	Criticism.....	27
4.6	Awards.....	28
5	The comparison of crime in the book and film adaptation	29
5.1	The plot	29
5.1.1	Before the divorce.....	29
5.1.2	Beginnings of forgery	30
5.1.3	Posing as a pilot.....	31
5.1.4	Doctor Abagnale.....	32
5.1.5	Career of an attorney.....	33

5.1.6	Sociology professor	34
5.1.7	Return to aviation	34
5.1.8	Fraud in Europe	35
5.1.9	Apprehension and detention	36
5.1.10	The second chance	38
5.2	The main characters.....	39
5.2.1	Frank Abagnale.....	39
5.2.2	The FBI detective.....	40
6	Conclusion.....	42
7	List of References	44

1 Introduction

We can see that even the author of the book *Catch Me If You Can*, is amazed by the popularity of his autobiography, saying: “When *Catch Me If You Can* was published back in 1980, I never dreamed that it would become a bestseller, much less a major motion picture and now a big Broadway musical. What's amazing about the book is that it has never gone out of print.”(Broadway Buzz 2012)

Not only that he wrote a great autobiography in the form of a book, but a high rated movie was also made depicting his life audio-visually. Because the form of a film is a much more comfortable way to enjoy the story for the majority of people, his biography reached a very wide audience.

Albeit at the first sight it could seem that a reader and a viewer are immersed in the same story, with the same acts and characters, the situation is somewhat different. The main object of the thesis is to analyze the book as well as the movie focussing on the crimes committed by Abagnale in both versions, and to prove that the film transforms the main character’s personality into a significantly less responsible character.

The storyline in both the book and the film tries to stick to the actual story of Abagnale, but both the director of the movie and the writer of the book proclaimed that they were not filming or writing Abagnale’s biography, but his story(Spielberg 2002, 03:05)(Abagnale and Redding 2016, 8). I focus on the crime acts and the main character’s behaviour, because describing all the differences would need more extensive work.

The book describes all the crimes committed by Abagnale, in a much more detailed way and sticks closer to his life story, proclaimed by Abagnale himself to be the actual story of how it happened, presented in his speeches. The movie is recorded in the way so that it attracts spectators for the whole time, without lengthy descriptive parts and repetitive crimes.

Spielberg changes the personality of the main character considerably, primarily due to the fact that he often uses the theme of the missing parent in his films. One or both of the parents are frequently absent in his films either because of a divorce or an untimely death. As Tzanelli et al. (2005, 106) observes, his own family background of divorced parents appears in many of his films such as *Artificial Intelligence* (2001), *Jurassic Park* (2001), *ET The Extraterrestrial* (1982) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1997). He also uses this theme in *The Terminal* (2004), where the main character Viktor Navorski’s father has died.

Changes of the character of the FBI agent (O'Riley in the book, Hanratty in the film) can be explained, among other reasons, by Spielberg's extensive cooperation with Tom Hanks. Spielberg directed or produced multiple movies and series with him, which could cause the adaptation of the role exactly for Hanks. Right in the next Spielberg movie *The Terminal*, Tom Hanks plays a character who at the beginning seems to be confused and clumsy, contending with bad luck. Viktor Navorski is in a desperate situation during most of the film, but likewise as Hanratty in *Catch Me If You Can*, doggedly pursues his goals and finds solutions for all problems which destiny prepares for him.

These two factors and also the acceptable length of the movie have urged Spielberg to decide to skip, exaggerate or change some events influencing the spectator's point-of-view on Abagnale's personality, who at the end seems as an insatiable childish thief without redemption. However, in the book, his character is evolving, wishing to get education and live a peaceful life.

The first part of the thesis deals with the knowledge necessary for the research of the topic. It includes the life and further work of Frank Abagnale, which is described very briefly in the book. It is important to better understand his life story and compare the autobiography and the movie. I also describe the background features of the movie and the book, focussing on the language part of the book. The common issues of adaptation and their relationship to the original are also explained.

The second part concentrates on the comparison of the book and its movie adaptation. One part is dedicated to the plot differences and omissions of the story in the book and the movie. It primarily describes the criminality of the main character in the film version, because some of the details were changed to create a more dramatic narrative, which makes the main character look worse than he was in the original.

The subsequent part deals with the two main characters and their appearance, because their roles were considerably changed. These two characters presented in the movie are compared to their book versions, which should be more corresponding to what is proclaimed to be the real story by Abagnale.

The thesis will demonstrate that besides basic necessary alterations that come from producing a piece in the genre of popular Hollywood films, the most important reasons of changing the story derive from Spielberg's personal directing style. Most importantly, Spielberg's own psychological issues with his family, most importantly

with the missing father, which he experienced as a young child, have considerable effects on the adapted story.

2 Frank Abagnale

As the Abagnale's web page says, Abagnale is the man who is not only throughout the world well recognized as a conman, but also the man who has now been associated with the FBI for over four decades. (Frank W. Abagnale 2016) He is helping people to reveal all kinds of financial frauds and even prevent them from happening.

Reading about his life, one can be amazed by his sixth sense, in other words Abagnale's gift, which is "his uncanny ability to look at a (fraud) situation and say, 'Well, this is how a person did it and this is what I'd do to make sure nothing like it happens again', mentions FBI agent Phillip Desing. (Baker 2003) Even though he is getting business people worried, he is actually helping them to protect themselves against forgery, identity theft, embezzlement and bogus checks.

It is of great importance to know that mister Abagnale is not proud of his past and since he was given a second chance, and he has been trying to repay the world for what he had done as an immature man. This is the reason why it is very important to understand his life. His situation before, during and after the renowned story may be different than what the audience of the movie really thinks.

2.1 Life

One could think that recounting Frank Abagnale's life is superfluous, while writing about his autobiography. However, I find it important and necessary to know his life, for better understanding of the piece of work, because his autobiography got through some changes during being co-written by Stan Redding. Mr Abagnale himself says that Stan Redding reminded him that he was telling his story, not writing his biography. (Frank W. Abagnale 2016)

Frank Abagnale, by his full name Frank William Abagnale Jr., was born on the 27th April 1948 in Bronxville, New York. Abagnale was the third of four children born to parents Paulette Abagnale and Frank Abagnale Sr. The couple met in Algiers during World War II, while Frank Sr. was stationed in Oran (Algeria). Paulette was still only in her teens when they wed. After the war, the two moved to New York, where Frank started his own business (The Biography.com website 2016).

Frank was educated there by Christian brothers of Ireland at a private Catholic school called Iona. By the time he reached the age of 16 and the 10th grade at school, his parents decided to get divorced. After he found out about the divorce, he ran away

from his parents, psychically devastated by the news. He did not meet his mother until seven years later since the divorce proceedings in 1964 and he never met, nor spoke to his father again. Frank started in the centre of New York as a delivery boy. Deceptions, which were going to continue during his life, started right there.

As he was 16 years old, he was not allowed to work more than a couple of hours a day, which was the reason that he was not earning enough money for the living. Thanks to his appearance (he was more than 180cm tall and had a little grey hair) it was easy for him to commit the first fraud by altering one digit on his driver's licence, which made him ten years older. Even though he was given more money, it was difficult for him to make ends meet, so he started to use his chequebook. Despite the fact his account was soon overdrawn, Frank continued writing cheques. Shortly, the bank started to demand the money and so the police began looking for him. Due to the fact, Frank was forced to leave the city to evade being caught.

That time on the run, Frank, walking through the streets of New York, saw a flight crew stepping out of a hotel. It was the moment when he realized that posing as a pilot could provide him countless benefits in the matter of cashing cheques and also travelling around the world. Abagnale called Pan American Airlines' headquarters and told them that he had lost his uniform while travelling. HQ told him where to go to pick up a new one, which he did—and charged it to the company using a fake employee ID (The Biography.com website 2016). Not long after, Frank forged also his own pilot's identification card and started flying for free. Pan American airlines estimated that between 16 and 18 Abagnale flew by more than 250 commercial aircraft flights, to more than 25 countries by deadheading. However, he had never used a plane of Pan American aircraft. Since Frank continued using cheques to get money from hotels, which were paid by Pan Am Company, the FBI started to investigate him. Because police did not know his real name and age (searching for his alias Jon Doe, probably 30 years old), Abagnale decided to change his name again, and moved to Atlanta, Georgia.

In Atlanta, he could not pose as a pilot, so he started to pretend that he was a doctor – paediatrician. He also changed his name to Frank Williams. Unfortunately for him, a chief resident paediatrician moved in to the same house where Abagnale lived. Because of that, Frank had to make a bigger effort pretending he was a doctor. He was asked to work in a hospital as an administrative capacity for fourteen days during the absence of the local doctor. To be able to do the job, Frank was granted a temporary

certificate by the medical review board. When the real doctor came back, Frank left the hospital.

Since impersonating a doctor was not an option anymore, Frank decided to make himself a lawyer. He passed the exam in Louisiana and worked as a legal assistant (Hammerand 2012) at the Louisiana state court. After one year without being revealed, he resigned.

Frank came up with a new method of getting money. He forged forms in a bank, so that all the people who used them, sent money to his account. There was also a theft at the Logan airport in Boston, where he pretended to be a bank guard. He was collecting money from all the people, who wanted to use night box of the bank, which he marked as “out of order”.

At the age of 21, Frank Abagnale was arrested in the French town called Montpelier. He was apprehended on the basis of Interpol warrant, which was issued by the Swedish police, for forgery. Later he was also convicted of frauds all over France and sent to a French prison, where he did his time in very bad conditions. Then he was extradited to Sweden, where he also served his time. After being released from the Swedish penitentiary, he was returned to the United States, where he was sentenced to twelve years in federal prison. After four years, he was offered to be released, if he would work for the agency of federal government for the rest of the time he should be in prison.

2.2 Work

Since then, he has worked more than forty years for the FBI. As he writes on his page:

He lectures extensively at the FBI Academy and for the field offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He is a faculty member at the National Advocacy Center (NAC) which is operated by the Department of Justice, Executive Office for United States Attorneys. More than 14,000 financial institutions, corporations and law enforcement agencies use his fraud prevention programs. In 1998, he was selected as a distinguished member of “Pinnacle 400” by CNN Financial News - a select group of 400 people chosen on the basis of great accomplishment and success in their fields. In 2004 Mr. Abagnale was selected as the spokesperson for the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) and the National Cyber Security Alli-

ance (NCSA). He has also written numerous articles and books including *The Art of the Steal*, *The Real U* guide to identity Theft and *Stealing Your Life*.

Mr. Abagnale refuses to accept payment for any of his government work. Today, the majority of his income is derived from consulting with major corporate clients such as LexisNexis, Intuit, AARP, and Experian and his public speaking engagements. Mr. Abagnale has conducted over 3,000 seminars on identity theft, cyber crime and fraud worldwide. Mr. Abagnale works as an advisor to a number of print and technology companies around the world. He spent 20 years as an advisor to the Standard Register Company, creating security features for negotiable instruments, car titles, etc. He spent 10 years as an advisor to the 41st Parameter which developed fraud detection technology, now used in 80 countries around the world and recently purchased by Experian. Today, Mr. Abagnale is an advisor to Tru-sona (www.trusona.com) in developing the world's first and only insured authentication platform. (Frank W. Abagnale 2016)

3 Catch Me If You Can – the book

First impulse for writing the book was actually risen by the spectators of The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson in 1978. (Wikipedia 2016) Frank Abagnale was invited as one of the guests, to share his life story with other people. Since the audience was amazed by the story so much, the office of Johnny Carson received many phone calls asking for the book. By that time, there was no book written yet, so Johnny Carson contacted Mr Abagnale and even though he only was in his late twenties, he decided to share his real-life story. (Keppler Speakers, 2016)

3.1 Autobiography

Lejeune in his book *The Autobiographical Pact* defines the genre of autobiography as: “Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality. (Lejeune 1975, 4) In the case of *Catch Me If You Can*, the story was narrated by Abagnale to Stan Redding, who has been given credit as a co-writer of the book.

For explaining of the authorship of the book *Catch Me If You Can*, I use a lay definition of the famous writer Roald Dahl, who once written in his book *Boy* that “An autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life. It is usually full of all sorts of boring details. This is not an autobiography.” (BBC, 2016)

If the definition of Roald Dahl was recognised and used at schools to define this subgenre of biography, then Frank Abagnale’s story definitely would not fit into this category for multiple reasons.

First, Dahl says that an autobiography is written by the person who lived the story himself. Although *Catch Me If You Can* is determined as an autobiography, the whole book was written by a ghost writer, also mentioned as a co-writer, Stan Redding. Even though ghost writing is commonly recognised as a form of autobiography, I agree with Ernest R. May (May 1953, 462) who criticises the autobiography being written by a ghost writer. The main problem here is that the storyline and speeches can differ from the reality and so the book cannot be taken as a reliable source in the historical point of view. This problematic also bears on the autobiography of Frank Abagnale, who himself states that some parts and details of the book were over dramatized or exaggerated. (Frank W. Abagnale, 2002)

Lejeune has written about the issues of autobiography and even expressed his opinion about ghost-writing. Jonson writes about it in an article, saying: “His point is that the autobiographical subject resides neither in a mimetic transcription of the model's life, nor in the ghostwriter's script, but through a process of intimate exchange between memory, oral text, and generic form that becomes translated into subjectivity through a contract with the reader. This allows us to interpret the book about Abagnale’s life as on an autobiography.

Secondly, an autobiography should contain “boring details” of a subject’s life. Either Stan Redding is a brilliant writer, or Abagnale’s life was one never ending adventure, the book contains details of his life, which however are never boring. It should also be added that all this is squeezed into 270 pages, while it is only 5-6 years of his life as a criminal.

As a conclusion for the autobiography problematic, I feel that it needs to be said that sharing Abagnale’s life in the form of the autobiography was excellent idea, however, as Ernest R. May says co-written autobiographies are only lifeless and dull histories, written as a patchwork quilt of a people. In this lies the disadvantage of not knowing, how much one can attach weight to his autobiography as a decisive source about his life.

3.2 Ghostwriting or co-authoring

Ghostwriting must have been projected in books and various works throughout the history without a doubt. Not just in the past, but also nowadays, in the time of the internet, where one can easily find a ghostwriter for diverse purposes. It reaches through medicine, law, prose or poetry to academic field, which is a kind of additional work for professors, because it is needed to check the cases of plagiarism more than in the past.

This type of writing is “the practice of hiring a writer (or writers) to produce a piece of work that follows a predefined style, and none of the original writing credit is attributed to the ghostwriter” according to (Singh et al. 2016, 2). There are of course more types of ghostwriting, because as it is in the case of Abagnale’s book, the ghost writer Stan Redding is mentioned as a co-writer of the book.

Impulse for having someone to write a person’s own autobiography can proceed from deficiency of the skill for writing such a work or simply just from lack of time. These are very often cases of presidents, politicians, celebrities or other high-level peo-

ple. The prize for the book can differ very much. It can be also set that ghost writer will obtain a percentage of the resulting sale price of the book.

Most importantly, the technique of using a ghost writer is often blamed for losing credibility and, as May says, “a ghost-written diary, letter, speech or autobiography is a second-hand testimony, the ghost writer’s interpretation of what his employer said or thought.” (May 1953, 459)

3.2.1 Stan Redding

Stan Redding, in terms of prose, is almost a real ghostwriter in the sense that if there was not Abagnale’s life, which was given a literary form, one would not be able to find any information about him.

He was a police reporter and an editor for Houston Chronicle periodic, who also worked on the case of assassination of the American former president, John F. Kennedy. Databazeknih.cz also states that he was also writing for the Texas magazine and that he was a nominee for the Pulitzer Prize twice. (Databazeknih.cz 2016)

His past as a fiction writer is quite uncertain, but the Canberra Times consider him also a writer of so called Zane Grey westerns, (Cerabona 2016) whereas his name is barely impossible to be found connected with this literature.

3.3 Formal aspects

First print of the book was released in 1980 by the publisher Grosset & Dunlap. Not only Grosset & Dunlap, but also the Broadway Books and the Pocket publisher took the chance to publish the book on Abagnale’s life adventures. This was during the period 1980 – 1990. One could easily expect a comeback of the book, when the movie was released at the end of the year 2002. The Broadway Books started publishing the book with Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks, portraying the main characters of the book on the front cover of the book.

The book is segmented to ten chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter represents a part of his life, where a chapter is one of his deceptions, and, of course, his life before and after all the frauds happened.

3.4 Language

The story is written in both formal and informal language, although the majority of the text is written in informal language. This depends on the situation, in which character is at the moment.

In the book, there is also used the aviation jargon very often. This is especially in the parts, where Frank communicates with pilots and stewardesses. As Frank Abagnale speaks with a pilot: “Oh, I just deadheaded in from Frisco on the first flight I could catch,” I replied. “I’ll catch a chopper to Kennedy.” “What kind of equipment you on?” he asked, biting into his roll.” Here we can see the example of the jargon, where the word equipment is to be understood as a plane. Also the word “deadhead”, which in other words is: A passenger or member of an audience with a free ticket. (Oxford Dictionaries – British & World English dictionary 2016)

The whole story is written in the first person point of view (except epilogue, which is narrated by Redding), which differs from the movie, where also FBI agent Carl Hanratty (in the movie)/ Sean O’Reilly (in the book) has his own plot line. The book is written in dual perspective. One perspective is older and wiser version of Frank, who is narrating the story, the other perspective is young Frank, the criminal.

There are also various descriptions in the book. Since there are a lot of frauds in the economics sector, there are descriptions of cheques, licenses, cards and also the procedure of creating them. I find it necessary to use descriptions of this kind in this type of a book, because it adds trustworthiness to the genius of Abagnale’s crimes and skill nowadays. We can also find a lot of descriptions of people, because of Frank’s partiality for women, even though these descriptions are not very detailed.

4 Catch Me If You Can – the film

In this part of the thesis, various topics of the movie will be discussed. I briefly explain the issues of adaptation and the process of transforming the original book to a feature film. Since the work occupies of changes of the plot and characters in the movie, I describe some parts of Spielberg's life and connect them to the changes made in the movie.

4.1 The adaptation

Abagnale proclaims that he sold the movie rights at the same year when the book was released. (Frank W. Abagnale, 2016) This means that the movie version was being discussed since the year 1980. It lasted 22 years before the movie was released. During the time, the movie was being sold from one film studio to another, when finally, by December 1997, Barry Kemp brought the rights to DreamWorks film production. Jeff Nathanson is announced to be the writer of the future hit. (Cox 1997) In 2001, first surmises about Steven Spielberg directing the movie appeared, which were correct after all. Very interesting is the fact, Spielberg offered directing of the movie to the Czech director Miloš Forman, but he declined the offer and let it to Spielberg. (Fleming 2001) Because of all we know about Spielberg and his filmography, I dare to say, that if Forman had accepted the offer, we would have been witnessing a different story from which we know now.

After all, Spielberg probably reconsidered directing of the film and as he said in the bonus materials of the DVD *Catch Me If You Can*: “He (Abagnale) happened to act out in the way that was so original, that was worth making movie about”. (Barry Peterson 2014, 14:05)

4.2 From paper to screen

In the present, when a director decides to adapt a literary work, he is undergoing a great risk and responsibility. That happens, because once there was set a certain type of high standard, and filmmakers or scriptwriters have to surmount or draw the same level of the previous piece of work.

This opinion is even supported by Marciniak as she writes that literary originals were always prioritized over their film versions and that “adaptations were seen by most critics as inferior to the adapted texts, as “minor”, “subsidiary”, “derivative” or “secon-

dary” products, lacking the symbolic richness of the books and missing their “spirit”. (Marciniak 2007, 59) Marciniak also says that “Critics could not forgive what was seen as the major fault of adaptations: the impoverishment of the book’s content due to necessary omissions in the plot and the inability of the filmmakers to read out and represent the deeper meanings of the text.” (Marciniak 2007, 59) I think that this is the main reason of majority of ordinary people (not just film critics), why they would prioritize a book, when comparing a literary work and its adaptation.

However, Brian McFarlane comes with the opinion that for a better understanding of the movie, it is required to pay attention to three fundamental narrative categories. The first is called *mise-en-scène*, which is all the visibility in the frame at the particular moment. The other one is editing and how the movie was shot and last but not least music, which always makes a huge part of the movie and the atmosphere in it. (Cartmell et al. 2007, 16) This basically tells us that watching a movie may not be as easy as it seems and right in the beginning of the book, the authors tells us that such opinions that a movie “is not good as the book” is caused by imperfect knowledge of the adaptation and the original. (Cartmell et al. 2007, 3)

Other opinion appears in (Cristian and Dragon 2008, 24), which is that “Film, with its special language of moving images, is an artistic instrument that is used to record other arts. The comparison between the cinema and other arts grants the legitimacy of the medium and suggests that cinema should be ‘judged in its own terms’ and ‘in relation to its own potentials and aesthetics.’ (Stam 34)” which is also said not to be happening even today.

On the other hand, demand for movies is huge and most of the topics have already been used or are being recycled, which often causes the typical Hollywood story clichés. Literature is a great source to get interesting stories from and as Corrigan says “literature provided an abundance of ready-made materials that could be transposed to film”. (Corrigan 1999, 17)

Marciniak says that „In the last decade of research there has been a significant shift toward this dehierarchizing attitude“(Marciniak 2007, 60). She further explains that the values for comparing a movie with its original has changed and basically “it has to remain a work of art (...) it has to remain faithful to the internal logic created by the new vision of the adapted work” (Marciniak 2007, 61).

This opinion seems like the best solution, when one is evaluating a movie. Cristian and Dragon agreeing with Marciniak and saying: “Adapting literary works to film is, without a doubt, a creative undertaking [...] the task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability to recreate and sustain an established mood (McFarlane 7)”. However, most of the critics base their arguments on what is called “fidelity criticism,” even nowadays. (Cristian and Dragon 2008, 35)

According to Dudley Andrew, there are three categories used for classifying adaptation. The first is borrowing, where the idea is “borrowed” from the older and successful work of art. The second is intersecting, where the author preserves the uniqueness of the art work in the way that it remains a feature or part of the adaptation. The third is described by Andrew as: “Unquestionably the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation [...] concerns fidelity and transformation,” (Cristian and Dragon 2008, 36). Fidelity can be further separated to the fidelity to the letter and fidelity to the spirit of the original. (Cristian and Dragon 2008, 36) I am using the technique of the fidelity, even though it is very often criticized; it makes the best use for comparing of the crimes committed by Frank Abagnale.

Not only film critics are the ones who filmmakers are worried of. There still is the audience, which very often waits for the movie adaptation just because they have been amazed by a book. When a person reads a book, he has unlimited creativity of imagining the characters, world in the book and all the actions happening there. (Cristian and Dragon 2008, 34) describe the expectation of spectators with words: “the cinema-goer would like to see on the screen exactly what he or she read in the book.” Then it basically depends on few people, who are creating the movie, to satisfy all the readers who come to see the adaptation. But even if we once were disappointed by an adaptation of our beloved book and its story, we yearn for watching another one, because it fills the gaps in the story and sometimes, thanks to the creators’ skills and art capabilities, even surpass our own imagination.

What should not be forgotten are the actors which provide their bodies and look to characters of books. Of course it should be mentioned that huge part of how we like the final visualisation of a character is based on the skill of an actor and how plausibly he can play the part of a role.

As a conclusion I find it very difficult to transform an original piece of art to the movie. In the case of *Catch Me If You Can*, it is even more difficult, because it is based

on a real man's life a so it is not only the audience and the movie critics to be pleased by the transformation, but also the protagonist himself. In the case of the book and the film about his life, he even praises the movie over the book with words: "Basically, I felt the movie was more accurate than the book, but in the final analysis only I really know". (Baker 2002) Especially in the part of his childhood, in BBC Hard talk, he highlighted the performance of actors, who played his parents, which demonstrates that performance and look of the actors portraying somebody is very important for movies. (Languide 2011)

4.3 Spielberg's filming

In the previous chapter, there are discussed matters of adaptation rather in general. In this part however, the aim is focused on the director, who can be considered the most important person responsible for making the film. I will describe here Spielberg's life experiences, reasons and typical themes in his films, which will help us understand why and how certain characters and elements of the plotline were changed.

4.3.1 Typical protagonists and their role

As McBride in Spielberg's biography states: "He (Spielberg) describes his favoured protagonist as 'Mr. Everyday Regular Fella.'" (McBride 2010, 17). This theory of archetypal figure in Spielberg's movies is supported and explained in more detailed way by Tzanelli et al. (2005, 109-110), who focuses on *Catch Me If You Can*. The FBI agent Hanratty does not represent just a regular policeman, who is pursuing thieves, but also "American father" – analogous to firm principles and honesty, but benevolent.

Hanratty is depicted by Tzanelli as "Mr. Average America". Even though he is initially shown as a clumsy agent, wearing glasses and a cheap suit, his commitment coincides with the American way of life: do your job, love those who matter to you, avoid hurting others unnecessarily, strive to do well within your chosen field. This is what makes his character special for the movie. Referring to the archetype of the "everyday man," Spielberg's biography also states that this is "one of the keys to Spielberg's unprecedented level of success with the mass audience" (McBride 2010, 17).

This explains that the role of the FBI agent was changed so that it fit for Spielberg's often used archetype of the ordinary American man, which according to the biography is one of the keys for Spielberg's success with the audience.

4.3.2 A part of Spielberg in *Catch Me If You Can*

Furthermore, as observed in Spielberg's biography, "Spielberg's protagonist typically is either a child whose troubled life has caused him to evolve into a precocious maturity, or a childlike adult whose attempts to escape a grown-up's responsibilities are viewed by the director with deep ambivalence" (McBride 2010, 17). This description fits for the main character of the movie. Abagnale is compelled by the circumstances in his family to leave home and to live independently. Nonetheless, his character is not undergoing such an evolution as in the book. The way of his life changes, but his behaviour stays the same until the end of the movie – childish.

It is also very possible that Spielberg not only projected his own post-divorce depression, but even other aspects of his own life. His parents divorced when he was nineteen years old and, as it was stated in an interview for *Business Insider*, "his parents got divorced after his mother fell in love with one of his father's best friends" (Author, Year). This appeared in the movie, although the divorce in the book is not caused by this problem. Spielberg's mother is also described as flighty and childlike, who never wanted to become an adult (McBride 2010, 42).

As I previously mentioned Abagnale's childish behaviour in the movie, it probably is a projection of the director himself, who admitted that "It has been very hard for me to grow up...I'm a victim of the Peter Pan Syndrome" (McBride 2010, 42). This all might be a picture of Steven Spielberg, portraying himself as a traumatised child by his parents' divorce, experiencing adventures all over the world and never getting mature.

Spielberg's films are usually dominated by a latent anxiety (McBride 2010, 42). Tzanelli provides us with a proof for this phenomenon also in *Catch Me If You Can*, writing that "[Spielberg] dwelled upon the idea of 'extending the reality' ... of the con-man's life by imagining a young Frank who 'every night [would] be in a hotel room in the middle of the country ... lie in bed with tears in his eyes, thinking about his dad who he loved dearly' and 'fantasising' that his parents would 'someday come back together again' (2003)." (Tzanelli et al. 2005, 106)

As a boy from a Jewish family, the question of Judaism has played a serious role in Spielberg's life. Even though, there is no space for a direct projection of his religious roots in the movie, an indirect insertion is added in the form of Abagnale's anxiety during every Christmas. In director's biography, his childhood friend states that: "It was

not one of his more positive times.” (McBride 2010, 54) The movie shows the two main protagonists calling or meeting on Christmas, even though it never happened in the book, proving once again that it might be another insertion of the director’s life into the movie.

Last but not least, we can find continuous substitution of Abagnale’s father throughout the movie, when in the end, the father’s role of Frank Abagnale Sr. is substituted by the FBI agent Hanratty. This event is also presented only in the movie and is probably reflected from Spielberg’s life, where the figure of the father was replaced too. Nevertheless, in the director’s case it was not by another person, but television (McBride 2010, 63) Tzanelli sees this also as a reason why Abagnale could become an adult and stop with his criminal life. In his words: “agent Hanratty fulfils the duties of Frank’s father better than his real father, since he becomes a form of abstract Law, from which Frank initially tries to escape, but eventually embraces.” (Tzanelli et al. 2005, 108)

4.4 Based on the real events

Both the original and the adaptation claim to be based on the real events, however with a deeper look one can reveal the problematic of stories which are considered to be the truth.

The book on its cover presents itself to be the real story, however on the first pages it says otherwise: “To protect the rights of those whose paths have crossed the author’s, all of the characters and some of the events have been altered, and all names, dates, and places have been changed.” So is this the autobiography telling us the truth about Abagnale’s life? I understand that when the book was written, not much time passed since the crimes happened, so at that time, Abagnale could be afraid about revealing all his crimes. The other factor is that the autobiography was written by a ghostwriter or co-author, who did not know all the facts and also said he was writing Abagnale’s story, not his biography. (Frank W. Abagnale 2016)

The movie on its cover also says about itself, it is the true story of the real fake, however in the opening titles it is written, to be based on the Abagnale’s book, and later on also inspired by a true story. (Steven Spielberg 2002)

This problematic is discussed by Tomas Leitch in *Film Adaptations & its discontents*. He emphasizes that “the claim to be based on a true story is always strategic or

generic rather than historical or existential” (Leitch 2007 ,282) Leitch explains that labelling a movie as a true story has predominantly financial and marketing reasons, as it is usually possible to attract a wider audience this way. It explains why both artworks occupying Abagnale’s life can differ even though they present themselves as true stories.

I find it positive that both put disclaimer about not being absolutely accurate, but for the first look it may not look like this. That is also why the article on Wikipedia.org should not be trusted as a reliable source for Abagnale’s life, since the book is used there as a reliable source.

That is also the reason why Leitch says: “Hollywood adaptations of best sellers are marketed in ways that seek to trade on the authority of their progenitor texts” (Leitch 2007, 285). This is probably the reason both the film and the book emphasize such facts, since the attractiveness of the story is more tangible when the audience think it is based on an autobiography, and so the events really happened.

4.5 Criticism

One would expect that film recorded on the basis of a book would not have positive reaction of movie critics, but it was not the case of *Catch Me If You Can*. New York Times stated that: “‘Catch Me’ is the most charming of Mr. Spielberg's mature films, because is it so relaxed.” (Holden 2002) The same opinions hold BBC Movie reviews, where they point out performances of actors, but especially of Leonardo DiCaprio and Christopher Walken. They evaluated DiCaprio’s performance as: “Leonardo DiCaprio is a perfect fit for the role of callow, charismatic grifter Frank Abagnale Jr...”, not forgetting on Mr Walken (Abagnale’s dad) and Mrs Adams (Abagnale’s mother) : “Christopher Walken gives an electrifying performance as Abagnale's pitiable dad, while Amy Adams is touching as his naïve fiancée.” (BBC 2003). Positive words can be also found for example on Spanish movie review site (Cinestrenos.com 2016), such as elegant and nicely presenting time of the sixties and the American dream.

However the page BBC found some cons for the movie, claiming that: “Ditch the faux-therapy and the movie would be shorter, and better – saved from its somewhat listless denouement. (BBC 2003)

From my point of view the movie was filmed well and, of course, needless to say played excellently by the world renowned actors. I would not find the ending listless,

because the final redemption and the reconciliation between the two main characters were based on the true story. If one would want a more exciting denouement, Spielberg would have needed to change the story or Abagnale should have lived his life differently.

4.6 Awards

In total, the movie was nominated 52 times for various prizes and of all the nominations won 11 times.

The most important were nominations for Oscars for best actor in a supporting role – Christopher Walken and the best music by John Williams. The soundtrack was also nominated for the Grammy prize in 2004. Leonardo DiCaprio was nominated for the best actor in Golden Globes.

Christopher Walken's performance was so good that he won for his supporting role prizes from BAFTA, Screen Actor Guild Awards, and National Society of Film Critics' Awards. He was also nominated to many other prizes.

Leonardo DiCaprio was awarded the best movie liar on Teen Choice Awards.

John Williams was nominated to many prizes for his original music and won Awards Circuit Community Awards, BMI Film & TV Awards, Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards and Online Film & Television Association.

This all proves that whole the movie was not only awarded for its story, but also for the magnificent portraying of characters in it and original music. We should not forget on the great director, Steven Spielberg, who also won Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for the best director. (IMDB 2016)

5 The comparison of crime in the book and film adaptation

This chapter of the thesis focuses on the comparison of the differences between the book and the movie, concentrating on crime acts, which Frank Abagnale committed. I decided to split this part into two sections.

The first part is describing the differences in the plots. It is structured to the periods of his life, so that it is clear to the reader. It starts with Abagnale's youth and ends with his life after he was released from prison, just like it was in the book.

The second part is focused on the main characters, which are Frank Abagnale and the FBI detective, investigating his crimes. I consider it important in the view of the fact that the whole story is basically based on the actions of these two characters.

The main goal is to compare criminality of the main character and how it was depicted in the book and in the movie. For the comparison I use dialogs and descriptions from the book and the movie, and interviews with Abagnale himself.

5.1 The plot

This section is divided into parts, which are very similar to the chapters in the book. I have slightly changed it according to Abagnale's life stages for better orientation, when comparing the book to the film.

5.1.1 Before the divorce

In terms of the beginning of the book and the movie, the criminal activity of Frank Abagnale differs very much. In the book, Abagnale's financial frauds had begun even before he got to financial need. In his speeches, he stated many times that he had started to swindle just because of survival and women. (Languide 2011) Speaking of the book, it focuses on the version, where he is obsessed by women. Among the first crimes, one can easily put juvenile crimes as stealing sweets in shops, or going to the cinema without paying. More serious crimes come when Frank's friends steal a car and he is arrested with them riding in it. First financial fraud appears, when his father gives him a credit card. He drives around the city and buys tyres in gas stations. The trick resides in "buying" tyres with his credit card, but leaves them to the shop assistant. The shop assistant gives him less money than is the real value of the tyres and basically gets paid twice for the same thing. Later in the story Frank's father is forced to pay the debt.

The movie commences with the different version of Abagnale, which seems to be more accurate to his real life, as he said in BBC Hardtalk interview that “I was basically in a room watching my youth be re-played in front of me on a big screen.” (BBC NEWS 2003). There are not any of the crimes, which are in the book. However, there are other tricks, which he did according to the movie. It depicts Frank’s first pose, which is a substitute French teacher. As his mother was basically French, he could speak the language pretty well. Nobody from the school knew him, because they had just moved in. He is shown to be teaching French for the whole week, planning a field trip for the entire class. In this part, there is no more criminal activity, but the movie intends to introduce Frank’s genius. Frank is waiting for his parents, who are discussing the problem of substituting a French teacher with a director of the school, and meanwhile, he helps a girl with a false written excuse. He explains her details of how to fold the paper containing the excuse and how it is recognised as a counterfeit, which already shows his talent for tricking people and the sense for perfect work with paper.

5.1.2 Beginnings of forgery

At this point, the movie sticks to the story of the book quite well, although few details have been altered. When Frank ran away from home, in the book, it is described that he started working in New York. He did his first forgery because he could not survive from the money he was getting. He altered digits on his driver’s licence, to make himself older, because his employees would pay him more money and let him work longer, thanks to that he was an adult. However, he still was not getting enough money to survive, so he started to supply his income from his credit card. Frank had some money on his credit card, so at the beginning, the cheques he used were valid. When he exhausted all his money on his bank account he continued writing cheques.

In contrast, the movie provides us only the view on the criminal right away, when he left home. It starts in a hotel, when an owner of a cheap hotel is dismissing Frank, because as he said, his cheques “bounced”. Immediately after this, we can see how Frank is altering his name to Frank Taylor and changing the year of his birth from 1948 to 1938. Then he is shown as a desperate person, who is trying various cheap tricks, to get even a little money in which he is failing.

5.1.3 Posing as a pilot

The part of Abagnale's life, when he becomes a pilot differs mainly in little details, which were omitted in the movie, or simply could not be included because of the movie length.

In the book, when Frank decided to become a pilot he pretended to be Robert Black to get the pilot uniform. He let the Pan Am company pay the expenses, because he provided a false pilot ID to the supplying company. Then there is described how he had to obtain badges from highly guarded hangar, but because he was deceived as a pilot, it happened without any problems. Next, Frank changed his name once again, to Frank Williams. Under this alias, he falsified the pilot identification card and made a bank account. First cheques he got cashed were valid, but "the others had all the value of bubble-gum wrapper" (Abagnale and Redding 2003, 53). As he pretended to be an editor from school news, he learnt all about flying and using the jargon. This preparation let him make his first illegal flights as a deadhead. Thanks to that he discovered the possibility of staying in hotels for free, because airline companies and hotels had a deal, thanks to which pilots could stay there and the air companies would pay it later. This way, Frank continues to live for next two years, until he gets arrested. According to the book, Frank was detained in a plane, because he was investigated for posing as a pilot and cashing invalid cheques. Abagnale used his acting skills at the police station and is released by police officers on the basis of agreement of other pilots, he knows, confirming that he is a real pilot. At this point Frank knew the police were very close to catching him and under a new alias, Tom Lombardy, bought a passenger ticket to Atlanta and decided to quit his "pilot career" for some time.

The movie shows the events in the different order, starting with pretending to be a school newspaper editor and then getting the uniform and withdrawing money. The difference comes with forging the payroll cheques. He learnt about the payroll cheques from a hotel receptionist, and since he can get more money for them, than for personal cheques, he started forging them. So that he is not just forging the real cheques from banks, but also he is creating cheques on his own. At this moment the movie overtakes the book, because there is described the method of forging cheques. It is explained by the FBI agent investigating Abagnale's crimes. He is showing how alteration of MICR ink routing numbers works, calling it "the float", which is said to be invented by Frank Abagnale himself. The major difference comes with the meeting of our two main pro-

tagonists – Abagnale and FBI agent Henratty. At the moment, when Henratty comes to arrest the conman, the imposter pretends to be a secret service agent investigating crimes of Frank Abagnale. A very similar scene can be found in the book too, but at the end and slightly different. Another story alteration comes with the scene of Abagnale meeting a model Cheryl. Since she is demanding money for staying over the night with him, he easily solved the situation with writing her an illegal cheque and even getting 400 dollars from her in return. This situation also appears in the book, but later.

The next event which is specially tailored for the movie, happens on Christmas Eve. A desperate Abagnale is shown alone in a hotel room, calling to the office of the FBI. In the movie, this happens every Christmas, although in the book, this kind of teasing of the police never happened and nor in Abagnale’s real life. For *USA Today*, Abagnale said that he did not want the police to know where he was and that there is no reason why he would do that. (Seiler 2002). The Christmas scenes are purely Spielberg’s creation or reflections from his own, not very happily experienced Christmastime.

The movie estimates that he had stolen around 1.3 million dollars when he was 17 years old. The problem is that he committed all the crime between the age 16 and 21 and given the fact that he stole 2.5 million dollars in total, I consider the amount of 1.3 million too high just one year after he had started stealing, with four more years to continue before he got arrested. (Frank W. Abagnale 2016) Nevertheless the sum of stolen money is not exaggerated just in this moment, but also later and throughout the movie. Of course, making the audience familiar with the worth of values involved in the crimes considering the inflation may also be a reason why Spielberg has changed the amounts.

5.1.4 Doctor Abagnale

The period of time when Frank pretends to be a doctor is very similar in the book and the film; however, there are things which change the picture of Mr Abagnale.

In both book and the movie this period of time begins with the conman coming to Atlanta and checking in to River Band apartments. Because he had all his phoney identification cards with the name Frank Williams, in the book, he kept this alias. He changed his occupation to a medic, more specifically paediatrician. In the original, he met another paediatrician at River Band and so he had to come with the idea, where he had studied. He said to have studied University of Colombia in New York with practise in Los Angeles children hospital. Later on the doctor he met, offered him to work at the

local hospital as a supervisor during the night shift. The book states that Abagnale left hospital because he had trouble with examining patients and also had a problem with taking care of a baby with cyanosis. The book states that he worked there over 2 months as a doctor; however, in reality Abagnale said to have worked there only for about 10 days, working just as an administrative capacity. (Languide 2011)

The film continues likewise. Frank ran away to Atlanta, but he did not meet the doctor at the apartments. He went to the hospital himself, and also proposed himself to be the doctor there. At this point the movie shows Frank quite differently than the book, demonstrating him as someone who does not know the consequences of what he could do. There has also been changed his education. He says that he studied at Harvard medical school and had practised in southern California children hospital. Doctor Frank Connors, as he is called in the movie, is said to have worked almost a year as a supervisor of the emergency room.

5.1.5 Career of an attorney

After leaving the hospital, Abagnale continues his conman life as an attorney. In the book version, at this point the FBI agent is transferred to investigate only Abagnale. It also states that he was not aware of his existence. Abagnale changes his name again to Robert F. Conrad and pretends to be a lawyer. He proclaims to have studied on Harvard with final evaluation average 1.2. Then he falsifies the Harvard diploma and studies for the bar examination, so that he could practise law. In the book it is said that he had studied for over sixteen weeks for passing the exam. Then he illegally works as an attorney assistant in the field of corporate law. During the time, when he was posing as a doctor and a lawyer, he was not using falsified cheques. Later, when an actual former student of Harvard started searching for proofs of Abagnale studying Harvard, he is forced to change his name to Frank Adams and leave. Later on he also falsified identification cards for piloting for Frank Williams.

However, the film version is slightly different. The first thing is that he says to be the graduate of Berkeley law school instead of Harvard. What is important is that at this time it is estimated that he had stolen almost four million Dollars. However he proclaims not only on his website, that: "The actual amount was \$2.5 million" (Frank W. Abagnale 2016), but also in his book „I was a millionaire twice over and half again before I was twenty-one" (Abagnale and Redding 2003, 10). There is also shown that he

was almost arrested in the house of Brenda's parents, where the police were just few meters far from him, which is different from the written original. He escapes by a window and later, he tries to meet Brenda, who he loves. However Brenda tricked him and is waiting for him at the airport, with the police in the back. This part is also glamorizing the character, by saying that he studied only two weeks for passing the bar examination.

5.1.6 Sociology professor

This part of his life differs considerably. The reason is that Abagnale's impersonating a sociology teacher is omitted in the movie. In my point of view, the reason is the length of the movie.

Just to describe his crimes briefly, he posed as a sociology professor, called Frank Adams. He claims that he studied at the Colombian University in New York and also taught in City College in New York for two years. He falsified study transcript and evidence about writing the diploma thesis on the topics: *The Sociological Impact of Aviation on the Rural Populations of North America*. He also forged two recommendation letters.

5.1.7 Return to aviation

This part begins with a quote, which the book proclaims to be of the former police chief in Houston saying: "Frank Abagnale could write a check on toilet paper, drawn on the Confederate States Treasury, sign it 'U.R. Hooked' and cash it at any bank in town, using a Hong Kong driver's license for identification." (Abagnale and Redding 2003) This prompts that this part of his life describes mainly the bank fraud. The first part of his story in this segment is also omitted in the movie.

It consists of changing names, such as Frank Williams, Bill Davis, Peter Morelli, Frank Adams and Jason Parker, and cashing fraudulent cheques all over the United States and Mexico. In the book, it is estimated that in the year 1967 he stole nearly 500 000 Dollars, which differs significantly from what is said in the movie. On Christmas Eve, before Frank's engagement party with Brenda, the FBI agent Hanratty estimated the amount at almost four million dollars.

Another important event mentioned in the book is how he fell in love and wanted to quit his criminal life. He confessed to his love, called Rosalie, because he wanted her to know who he really is, and also wanted to marry her. However, Rosalie went home

and reported him to the police. Frank saw the police car in front of the house and left. This situation was changed in the movie and probably transferred to the relationship with Brenda, the nurse.

Abagnale was also in love with her and she wanted to marry him. Here we can see how this part was modified and shifted to the other part of the story in the movie. Not only this, but there is also the different stance of Abagnale to the confession. Very important fact is that in the book, he voluntarily wants to quit his fraudster life and live “happily ever after”, working in a stationary store. However, he is betrayed by his girlfriend, thus not able to follow his dream life.

In contrast, the movie shows him confessing like this to Brenda’s father, but only because he thinks that his deception has been revealed. Fortunately for Frank, he is not taking his confession seriously, which makes an opportunity for him to continue living as a fraudster. This plan, however, is thwarted by the FBI agent, who is almost catching him when Abagnale is escaping the house. At this point of view, the film is showing Abagnale’s attitude at the completely opposite way, more negative way.

In the movie, he also recruits eight stewardesses, just to escape from the United States of America, because there are one hundred agents waiting to catch him at the airport. He uses them as a camouflage, when he is going through the airport, absolutely unconcerned. The policemen arrest only a taxi driver, who is paid to be wearing the Pan Am uniform. After unsuccessful arrest, the story skips seven months forward in the movie.

5.1.8 Fraud in Europe

The majority of the frauds which were committed in Europe, is also omitted in the movie, edited or has been shifted to the other parts of the story.

The book starts in France, where Abagnale girlfriend’s family lives. Her father is a printer and so the imposter takes advantage of it. He asks him to print him cheques, saying that these are for the Pan Am Company. The cheques are perfect, unrecognisable from the original ones. Next, he is cashing cheques all over the France and returns back to the United States, where he is arrested at the airport in Boston. Unfortunately for the police, he convinces a policeman to release him. After the paying of five hundred Dollars bail bond, he is free again.

Frank continues in his crime career at an airport, where is stealing around sixty thousand dollars from a bank deposit vault, pretending to be a bank security guard. At this moment, we can notice that Frank has a guilty conscience. Mr Frank Abagnale proclaims that he never wanted to steal from ordinary people, just from big companies, because it makes them no harm. He pays five thousand dollars to Mr Bailey, who is said to be the director of the airport. This is another proof of that Frank is not a cool-blooded thief.

In this part, he also cheats Cheryl, the model, which in the move is moved to the part, when he is posing as a pilot for the first time. The value of the cheque and money he took from her does not differ.

Then comes the trick with the stewardesses, but it is slightly for different purpose. He feels it necessary to have a crew, because at the airports and hotels, there is a chance to be asked, where his crew is. This swindle is, however, described in more detailed way, saying how he obtained all the necessary things for basically employing eight stewardesses. He also says it is for the public relations purposes, but his plan is not just escaping to Europe, but also for stealing money from many countries all over the continent.

There is also described how he uses three different forms of cheques – cashier cheques, expense cheques and paycheques. These all are forged by himself or printed from Mr Lavalier. He also has the got reimbursement authorization forms, stolen from the Pan Am, using for funding his travels over Europe.

Another of Abagnale’s “sympathy crimes” happens in France. At an airport, he overhears talking a bank director with his employee in an arrogant way. Only because of the sympathy, he stole seven and half thousand Dollars from his bank. After this, he wants to leave his crime career, and live in France, Montpellier, from the money he stole.

5.1.9 Apprehension and detention

The book describes him as a calm adult, who visits his relatives in Spain and also a person who wants to live a normal life. He is friendly with his neighbours in Montpellier and wants to grow wine. However, he is arrested in a local shop by four Interpol agents, denying being Frank Abagnale, presenting himself as Robert Monjo.

The film, however, skips right to France, the small town of Monrillard. He is arrested there by the FBI agent Carl Hanratty himself. In the apprehension scene, Abagnale seems to be absolutely deranged, running between the Heidelberg printers, when printing thousands of cheques. He does not seem to be planning quitting his criminal life, because he is collecting forged cheques all over the place and wants to escape once again. Frank has not escaped just because of a piece of advice of the FBI agent, who told him about the French police, which is coming for him and is willing to shoot.

Henratty then hands Abagnale over to French police, claiming that he left himself to be arrested on his accord. Even if that is not true, it shows the “friendship bond” between these two, emerged during the case.

After detention, both the book and the movie follow the same plot line as Abagnale is proclaiming to be the right one. The fraudster is imprisoned in France, Perpignan. From showing us half a year in that prison looks like “the hell on earth”. It is presented as a small dark room, with no bed or anything. For Canberra Times, Abagnale described the place as: "the French prison was not a nice place to be, it was not as bad" as the hellhole it was depicted as being in the book. (Cerabona 2016) He served there half a year and then was extradited to Sweden, where the conditions were much better than in France. However, his extradition to Sweden is not shown in the movie. The book describes in details, how he stayed six months in Sweden and then a Swedish judge helped him to get to the United States. He wanted it himself, because he cannot be extradited from the United States to other countries. His apprehension demanded countries like Italy, Denmark, Norway, Egypt, Cyprus, Spain, Turkey, Germany, England, Switzerland and Greece, where the conditions were worse than in Sweden.

In the movie, he travels to his home country with the FBI agent, but in the book, Frank is escorted by the Swedish police. Even though he was under control of the police, he managed to escape from the plane. In both the film and the book he escapes through the toilet in plane, which is different from what he says to be the truth.

At this point of the movie the plot differs again, because in the motion picture, he is shown as a kid missing his parents (Frank is very affected by his father’s death) and runs home. He is witnessing a peaceful family life; however, his mother is the wife of another man, not his father. Disappointed, Abagnale surrenders to the police and is arrested again. In the book, he tries to come up with a new plan, but is arrested at the Montreal airport.

During his first stay in an American prison, he pretends to have diabetes and is transferred to the prison hospital, where the conditions are much better. Later, he is transferred to a prison in Atlanta. He manages to escape once again, because he pretends to be a prison inspector and thanks to an easy trick with his girlfriend. However, police immediately go after him, and surround him in a motel. He pretends again, to be an FBI agent Davis, which is probably shifted in the movie and replaced with the scene, where he pretends to be a secret service agent. Even though he manages to escape, later, he is recognized by two policemen and convinced from all he did. In April 1971 he pleaded to be guilty and is sentenced to ten years plus two years from the prison escape.

However, he is released four years later. In book, he is conditionally discharged and moved to Houston with a supervisor. In the movie he directly goes to work for the FBI.

5.1.10 The second chance

The book describes his life in the way that he had to fight for his current position, whereas the movie showed him only getting the job at the FBI directly from the prison.

In the original, Abagnale is said to have worked as a waiter, a cook, an accountant in a pizzeria. He worked there with a lot of money, but during six months of working there, he had no problems. However, he was fired, when they recognized his criminal past. Later he worked as a projectionist in a cinema. Because this was not good life for him, he proposed to his curator that he could work at banks, giving lectures about financial fraud.

After the first lecture in a bank, many others demanded this service and this job started his new carrier at the financial sector, however, on the legal side. The lectures were later given also to hotel companies, airlines and he is said to have worked over twenty-five years for the FBI, giving lectures at the FBI academies.

The movie shows him working directly at the FBI under the agent Hanratty's custody. He is also shown as he is trying to escape again, and getting back to illegal form of life. The movie shows that Hanratty is appealing to Frank not to escape again, which he later does not do and gets back to the office. The movie says that Frank and Hanratty are friends till the presence.

5.2 The main characters

This part focuses on the two main characters – Frank Abagnale and the FBI agent Carl Hanratty (in the movie) / Sean O’Riley (in the book). I have decided to write about these two characters because they have got a very important role in the plot.

They play a different role in the movie than in the book, which makes the audience having a different opinion about them.

5.2.1 Frank Abagnale

The character of Mr Abagnale is portrayed by Leonardo DiCaprio. He rose to the occasion very well, which added more quality to the movie.

Very important part for the whole movie is the divorce of Frank’s parents. In both the film and the book he ends devastated by the divorce and thus runs away from home. The movie shows degeneration of Abagnale parent’s relationship. It slowly develops from the perfect family life, where the father is rich, important person, loving his wife enormously, to the point where he is prosecuted for tax frauds and working as a postal clerk. He witnesses his mother cheating on his father and later, she divorces him.

When talking about the movie, from Abagnale’s perspective everything was perfect when his father was rich, he may be awarding the disintegration of his parents’ relationship to the bad financial state which later in his family occurred. Frank and his father, Frank Abagnale Sr., have a very good relationship, showing them as not quitters. They try hard in every situation, until they get themselves out of any trouble. With this we can connect the short fable, they are saying in the movie – about two mice. In other words the plot is: Two mice fell into milk. One of them quickly gives up and drowns. However, the other one is swimming so long, until it churns the milk and escapes.

This fable can be showing Frank Jr. as the stronger mouse, which is trying to set everything right again, by getting a lot of money and thus his family together again. This reason however, makes his parent’s divorce the problem causing his criminal life, which is not true in the book, or in his real life interpretation.

The book shows his beginning of the crime, as a way to survive without any help of his parents. The movie however, focuses more on the bad financial situation of his father and Frank, who wants to solve this problem by money. Another proof is that, in the movie, Frank buys a car to his father, and wants him to pick up his mother, so that they could get together again.

Another important difference is behaviour of his character. In both versions, he starts as a kid. The dissimilarity is that in the movie he does not seem to be evolving. The book starts with Frank, who is stealing money, when it is possible and ends with his adult form, when he does not want to be a forger anymore and wants to get back to the normal life.

It is shown for example, when he is posing as a doctor. In the book, he is forced by the situation to work at the hospital, while in the movie, it is his idea to work as a doctor. Other situation is with his girlfriend, Abagnale loved. In the book, he confesses to her voluntarily, while in the movie the circumstances force him to tell her. He is also described as proud of himself that he does not have to use any forged cheques during his carrier of the doctor, the attorney and the teacher.

In this way, the movie changes Abagnale's personality to a childish unscrupulous thief, where he ends up in France, printing thousands of cheques, presenting himself in an insane way. There is not any reference at the end that he would eventually leave his criminal life, which is very dissimilar from the book.

There is also an interesting fact that Frank Abagnale Jr. was presenting himself older than he really was, because his look allowed him to do so; however, Leonardo DiCaprio portraying this man, is actually older than the character, which he is playing, in the movie.

5.2.2 The FBI detective

The person of the FBI agent plays a very different role in the movie than in the book. The first, very obvious difference is his name. In the book, the detective is called Sean O'Riley whereas in the movie, his name is Carl Hanratty. His real life name was different from both of the interpretations, because of the protection of rights, as it is stated at the beginning of the book, and also because he was still working for the FBI and thus needed to work undercover for safety.

The major difference is in the appearance of the character. In the book, the agent is rarely mentioned during reading the book. He is on the case and investigating Abagnale, but does not meet him personally up to the time when Frank is extradited back to the USA.

However, in the movie, the character of the investigator is present since the very beginning of the movie. The agent has multiple significances during the story.

The first is explaining of the issues concerning forgery and crime. He serves as a tool for a spectator, to introduce him methods, which were used by Abagnale, during his criminal life. There is a scene about the system of forging cheques, characteristics of the conman and smooth introduction of the other main character during the movie.

The other one is substitution of Frank's father. During the narrative, we can see slow disappearance of Frank Abagnale Sr. Since Frank is a kid, he still needs parents to be there for him, however, he cannot have his own parents. He is trying to substitute them with women, but these are not the thing he is looking for. He is shown to have sex with them, which is one of the main reasons why he started his criminal life in the book, but also meeting their families. What he really tries to do is to make contact with the agent, who is investigating him. He is shown to be alone during Christmas Eve, calling to Hanratty just to talk to him or try to stop persuading him. This all leads to the scene, where the conman is arrested, when he trusts him so much that he does not even try to escape.

There is another thing which is making this thing mutual for both main characters. In the movie, the detective is shown as a divorced man, who is not reconciled with his past. Hanratty may be putting Abagnale to the role of his own son, thus making a bond between them two. At the end of the film, he tries to protect him, get him out of the prison, find him a job and trusts him so much that he even let him fly away again. In the final scene, we can see them discussing a crime case at one table as if there were a son with his father.

The last role of Carl Hanratty may also be the stronger mouse from the fable. We can see him struggling during the movie, where he appears at the point, when his superior basically tells him to quit. Even though he is dissatisfied with his colleagues, and he is unsuccessful in capturing Frank, he is working hard his way up, ending with apprehension of one of the most famous forgers in the world.

The FBI detective is indisputably very important for the film, whereas he was not appearing so often in the book. He was probably given so much space, to create a very interesting and dramatic plot and also serves as an agent for a smooth development of the story. Through his figure, a spectator can learn a lot of things, which are written as descriptions in the book.

6 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to compare the criminal life of Frank Abagnale Jr. in his autobiography *Catch Me If You Can* with its film adaptation, with the same name, directed by Steven Spielberg. It is focused on the actions of Abagnale himself, behaviour and development of the main characters and changed or omitted segments in the film version and its similarity to the original with addition of the story, which he proclaims to be the actual story of how it happened.

In the introductory part Abagnale's life was presented as he proclaims it in his speeches, to be his real-life story. I find it necessary for the comparative part, to know his life, because for reader, who is not familiar with the story, the rest of the work would be confusing.

Another part is focused on the background of the book and the movie. The theoretical part about the book aims to describe the issues about autobiography, because in the case of Abagnale's book it is rather complicated than a simple autobiography, as a co-author or ghostwriter was also involved in the writing process. Then there are explained formal aspects of the book and the language matters.

The next part has been dealing with the film itself. It explains problems of adaptation and how one should look on adaptations, when comparing them. Further, the background features of the movie are mentioned for better introduction of the movie.

The analytical part was dedicated to the comparison itself. It describes and compares crimes committed by Abagnale himself, and how it is depicted in the book and the film. It has also been revealed that some parts are missing or have been shifted to another part of the movie. At the end of this segment, it focuses on the main characters, whose presentation was not the same in the two pieces of work.

The criminal acts in the adaptation stayed nearly the same as in the book; however, there were many parts omitted, edited or moved to the other part of the movie. The stories are similar at the crucial moments, but because of shifting or omitting some passages and details, the movie casts a different shadow on the person of Frank Abagnale Jr. His crimes were exaggerated, altered or even added, so in conclusion his personality does not end up as an adult conscious of his mistakes, but as a child not willing to abandon his criminal life until the last moments.

There is also a different relationship between the two main characters in the book and the movie. In the movie, they are shown more connected than in the book, where they actually have not met until the extradition of Abagnale to the United States.

The reason for all the differences can be explained most probably by the director, who, in a way similar to other distinguished directors, left traces of himself in this artwork. His life experiences and strong emotional moments are projected into the storyline of the movie and the main characters. Not only he projected his own traumatic emotions after his parents' divorce, but also reflected issues with his workaholic father, who was nearly absent for him during his youth. Spielberg's archetype figure was also used in the film, which influenced the portrayal of the FBI agent Hanratty and gave him very different appearance in the movie than in the book.

Even though the film is different from the book in many aspects, it does not detract any quality from the movie, which thanks to a very good acting and interpretation of the director is an excellent piece of art.

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