

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

Ústav cizích jazyků

Bakalářská práce

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Subverting gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimm's fairy tales

Olomouc 2023

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I would like to thank Mgr. Ivan Čipkár, Ph.D. for his helpful approach, beneficial advice, and professional guidance during the writing of my bachelor thesis.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma „Subverting gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimm’s fairy tales” vypracovala samostatně pod dohledem vedoucího bakalářské práce a uvedla jsem všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 20. 4. 2022

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ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the subversion of gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimm's fairy tales. The aim of this project was to compare the depiction of gender in the four selected movie adaptations of Grimms' fairy tales with the gender stereotypes portrayed in the original fairy tales. To investigate this, secondary data were analysed and further compared. Differences were found in the portrayal of female and male characters in the Grimm's fairy tales and in the movie adaptations.

INTRODUCTION

In general, the term gender is being discussed increasingly these days, together with gender stereotypes or gender roles in society. Society has many various ideas and images of what a man looks like and what a woman looks like and what features they have. Based on this, certain stereotypes can be created.

This bachelor thesis deals with the topic of subverting gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimms' fairy tales. Traditional fairy tales portray typical features of men and women and do not put them in equal position. On the other hand, some modern movies have different view on gender roles and reverse those stereotypes. With the arise of feminism, many things have changed, together with portrayal of female and male roles in literature or movies. In this thesis, important concepts such as gender, stereotype, and feminism are discussed and placed in the context of fairy tales. Gender stereotypes are not only in fairy tales, so there is a brief mention of more contemporary artists, namely Angela Carter and the children's author Roald Dahl's works and their treatment of gender stereotypes. Their versions of fairy tales bring out different view on gender, as they subvert the traditional views on female and male characters. Furthermore, I am comparing Grimms' version of Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Hansel and Gretel with their movie adaptations. The thesis aim is to compare the treatment of gender in the movie adaptations of Grimms' fairy tales with the stereotypes in the original fairy tales. Thus, it explores how the movie adaptations subvert the gender stereotypes from the original fairy tales.

Although the society is evolving, creating assumptions and stereotypes on the base of the gender remains a problem. When children read traditional and old fairy tales, the depictions of men and women are imposed on them. However, modern movie adaptations of those stories bring a new perspective on the tired tropes.

1. GENDER, STEREOTYPE AND FEMINISM

In this chapter, the different views on gender are discussed together with defining the term stereotype and examples of stereotyping. This is followed by a brief look at feminism and the feminist film theory. Also, within the given topics, the description of gender stereotyping and sexism is mentioned.

1.1. Gender

People have begun to use the term gender in 1970s, mainly to differentiate between physical sex characteristics and competencies that are supposedly typical of either men or women. The main reason for the distinction was that biological differences caused men to be perceived as more powerful and women as someone, who is supposed to be at home and take care of the family (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2017, p. 57). Pilcher and Whelehan (Ibid, p. 58) mention another view, namely that of the radical feminist Firestone, who argued that patriarchy, or male rule, “exploits women’s biological capacity to reproduce as their essential weakness.”

Nowadays, gender can be understood from social or biological view. Social gender refers to cultural and social differences between men and women that are changing over time, whereas the biological view indicates the biological sex (Český statistický úřad, 2016). This term can also be understood as society’s view of how women and men should look and behave. It can vary, as every society has a different view of how a person should act based on a gender (Planned Parenthood, 2023). Sociologists have a similar opinion, as they take more into account the social viewpoint than the biological viewpoint when it comes to gender. People distinguish each other into men and women based on features that are typical of their gender. This process is called gender attribution and it is considered as “an inescapable but typically unremarkable hallmark of everyday social interaction.” (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014, p. 35) On the other hand, some authors go much deeper in their understanding of gender. For instance, Sullima (2021, p.3) perceives a certain connection between gender and gender identity. In the context of gender studies, gender is not isolated but connected to other factors, such as sexuality, race, class, or religion (Zaborskis, 2018). Thus, it is obvious that gender can be understood in a much more complex way.

As mentioned before, gender division plays important part of everyday life and surrounds us everywhere. However, gender not only divides people into men and women, but it also creates certain social roles in society that, according to many authors, make the male group more privileged than the female group. “Gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in

modern society which makes the masculine half of the equation positive and the feminine negative.” (Cranny et al., 2003, pp. 1-2) Nevertheless, the view of the gender division may differ. For instance, Paul Broca held an opinion that man and woman are placed in opposite positions, with the man taking precedence over the woman (Ibid).

1.2. Stereotype

According to Cranny et al. (2003, pp. 140-141), a stereotype refers to certain characteristics that are supposedly typical of a certain kind of people who are recognizable by them. Having a stereotype could also mean creating generalizations, for example “all coloured people can sing.” (Beeghly, 2015, pp. 675-691) Nevertheless, stereotypes tend to be way too universal and include large group of people, which can lead to the creation of false ones (Simon, 2011, p. 49).

Stereotyping is not only a process of differentiation of one sort of people from another, but also it makes a difference between normal and abnormal. “Stereotypes exclude or reject everything which falls out of its definitions. People use stereotypes to determine who should naturally belong to one group or another.” (Cranny et al., 2003, p. 141) In other words, as Simon (2011, pp. 49-50) describes, people use stereotypes for anticipation of how people would act.

Cranny et al. (2003, pp. 140-141) use as an example of a stereotype the icons in the bathroom. Society has certain learned assumptions about what men and women should look like, so when people go to the bathroom, they know where to go by the specific symbol.

1.3. Gender stereotype

One subcategory of stereotype is stereotyping on the base of gender. Swann, Langlois and Gilbert (1999, p. 76) define gender stereotype from different point of views. One of the approaches describes it as having assumptions about the personal characteristics of men and women. Another view mentioned by those authors includes in the gender stereotypes also assumptions about physical appearance or behaviour of male and female. However, having such stereotypes can have a negative impact on both men or women if it limits or harms them in some way or if it violates their rights (United Nations, 2022). Stereotypes about gender can cause unequal and unfair treatment because of a person’s gender. Closely related to the concept of gender stereotype are gender roles, which express society’s expectations of behaviour, speech or dress based on whether one is male or female. Those expectations are different in each society and change over the time (Planned Parenthood, 2023).

1.4. Gender stereotypes in fairy tales

In this thesis, the focus is on gender stereotypes portrayed in fairy tales and their movie adaptations. Fairy tales or children's books are full of cultural elements, and reading such literature helps children at an early age to understand society's different view of men and women and the theme of gender roles (Taylor, 2003, pp. 300-311). Nonetheless, as Cranny et. al (2003, pp. 244-245) describe:

The dichotomies and associated connotations of (active) masculinity and (passive) femininity, (good) beauty and (evil) ugliness, and (pure) whiteness and (corrupt, contaminated) blackness recur as potent archetypes within a range of favourite children's stories. As such, they become inscribed on developing psyches as heavily encoded and covert signifiers of societal values, and from the point of view of gender, race and class analysis, they are far from egalitarian.

They add that the claim that fairy tales are suitable for children is quite disturbing.

Furthermore, female characters in fairy tales are usually portrayed as those who stay at home and are submissive and subservient to men. As Zipes further describes: "To be good, they must be obedient and industrious." (Zipes, 2012, p. 80)

What male and female roles are portrayed in fairy tales is perceived by children and influences them in their formation, because "identities are created by interacting with sociocultural ideas, artifacts and activities." (FisherKeller, 1997, 467 – 492) On the contrary, fairy tales help shape children's ideas about relationships between people or about family life. The depiction of a typical woman or man can arouse a child's sympathy for the protagonist of the story (Erum, 2009, pp. 1-2).

However, recent authors are rewriting the original stories and distorting the stereotypical portrayal of men and women, which is related to a certain discrimination that is often portrayed in the stories (Bonner, 2006).

1.5. Feminism and sexism

The word feminism is one of the most discussed political terms and it can differ in its meaning depending on who is using it (Easton, 2012). According to the Cambridge Dictionary definition (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022), feminism is the opinion that women and men should be equal and that women should be treated the same as men. Each definition varies, for example Brunell & Burkett (Britannica, 2022) define feminism as: “the belief in the social, economic and political equality of the sexes.” Bell hooks (2000, pp. viii - 1) explains this term simply as: “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” She adds that she chose this definition because it does not put men into hostile position. However, many early feminists were acting strongly against the population of men. Hooks also reports that most people she has met commonly believe that feminism is about women wanting to be as men, but they do not know that feminism is about equal rights (Hooks, 2000, pp. 1 – 3). All those definitions point to a certain inequality between men and women in society.

As Hooks suggested, feminism has to do with sexism. Sexism is described as the creation of stereotypes or assumptions about the female gender. This term is related to sexist language, which is the use of, for example, the generic pronoun “he” when referring to both genders, nouns that are different for men and women (e.g. “landlord” and “landlady”), or derogatory terms that are obviously different for women and men (Mills, 2008, p. 10).

Swann, Langlois and Gilbert (1999, p. 211) distinguish hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is defined as: “unfavourable attitudes toward women that justify men’s higher status.” Benevolent sexism refers to the desire of men to protect and care for women and the feeling that women are the “better half” of men. Authors consider those type of behaviour sexist because they include the traditional assumptions about females, for instance that they are “the weaker sex” etc.

Feminism has been evolving in several waves, which have shaped it into its current form. In the second wave, the phenomenon of feminist film theory started to raise. This theory is focused on the stereotypical portrayal of women and expression of their needs on the movie screens. Women were often shown as sexual objects, so feminists were trying to change this (Smelik, 2016). However, feminism has many different meanings and different approaches.

The arise of feminism in 1960s is considered one of the reasons why many authors started to subvert traditional fairy tales and make them collide with traditional stories. Furthermore, Zipes distinguishes two ways of how authors re-write the tales. I am particularly interested in the first

one called “remaking and re-creating classic tales,” because this tendency concerns those fairy tales I would like to analyse further. “Given the sexist disposition of most of these popular tales, the artists who use them explicitly as their subject matter tend to embody a startling critique of the stories in images that urge, if not drive, viewers to rethink what they know about the tales.” (Zipes, 2012, pp. 136-137)

The traditional fairy tales usually portray stereotypical view of women or men, which leads to an unequal position between these two genders. However, the new feminist versions of fairy tales may have a different depiction of men and women roles (Retzl, 2001, p. 182). The feminist tales change and subvert some traditional features of fairy tales. For example, old fairy tales usually emphasize there is a good and evil side, which may relate to appearance (Erum, 2009, p.8). Nonetheless, in feminist tales “can generally be observed that beauty is not necessarily equated with “universal goodness,” which seems to embrace more or less Christian male ethics (and ugliness is not equated with evilness either).” (Retzl, 2001, p. 196) Society is constantly developing, and gender roles should be reversing with it, even fairy tales (Erum, 2009, p. 16).

2. SUBVERTING FAIRY-TALE GENDER STEREOTYPES IN FICTION: ANGELA CARTER AND ROALD DAHL

The gender stereotypes are included not only in fairy tales, but also in fiction. Furthermore, contemporary new interpretations of Grimms' fairy tales subvert the gender roles and put the female characters back into superior positions (Dascal, 2012, p. 132). I am particularly interested in the work of Angela Carter because she re-wrote original Grimms' fairy tales. In this chapter, there is a mention of portrayal of gender roles and subversion of those roles in Carter's work. Within this topic, Roald Dahl and his portrayal of gender stereotypes in chosen fairy tale is briefly discussed.

2.1. Angela Carter's fiction stories – *The Bloody Chamber*

“What Angela Carter did with fairy tales was to take the stories that we all know like Bluebeard or Beauty and the Beast and turn them inside out. Take the components that were familiar and make them into something that gave women back the power.” (BBC, 2018) This is how Jeanette Winterson describes Angela Carter's work. As it can be understood from the statement, Carter was well known for her feminist conception of classic tales. Additionally, Carter explores gender and sexual politics in her stories.

The traditional fairy tales show specific gender roles of women and men and portray women unequal to men (Retzl, 2001, p. 182). However, Carter saw women as being trapped and she claimed that they should stand up for themselves to change the view of women in society (Makinen, 1992, pp. 2-3), so she was reversing those stereotypes in her works.

For instance, the wolf tales in *The Bloody Chamber* – even though each of the tales tells different story, they always portray a strong girl, who can take care of herself, unlike the traditional tale of Little Red Riding Hood, where young, innocent girl is fearing wolf and must be saved by a male character.

Carter managed to re-write traditional stories and add elements of feminism, as well as ensuring that the protagonists are not punished for being curious (Makinen, 1992, pp. 4). Moreover, her interpretations proved that women are strong enough and that change must happen in the case of men, not women (Marshall, 2016, p.38).

2.2. Roald Dahl's version of *Little Red Riding Hood*

Roald Dahl's version of the traditional fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood is called Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and it is a part of his storybook *Revolting Rhymes*. The word "revolting" in the title of the book may mean that those stories are defying the rules (Valle, 1999, p. 229). Dahl came with his interpretation a few years after Carter and unlike her version, he turned this traditional fairy tale into a parody (Dascal, 2012, pp. 129-130).

Aside from the genre, there is another difference from the original story, and that is that the grandmother is not saved in the end, which may indicate that society doesn't need old people because a younger group of citizens is more important (Ibid).

As far as the portrayal of the main character is concerned, here, unlike in brothers Grimm's Little Red Riding Hood, she is depicted as "brave, active, modern girl who, as if acquainted with the potential evils of today's society, takes safety measures by carrying a gun with her." The author considers this as an unusual view for the readers, because female characters were portrayed in many cases as weak human beings (Valle, 1999, p. 234).

Another difference from the original tale is that Dahl did not have Little Red Riding Hood rescued by a hunter, instead she saved herself from the wolf. "She needs no brave young man or prince to save her from her foe. She becomes the heroine of the piece." (Ibid) The author further states that Dahl's portrayal of the main characters is at odds with how heroines have usually been portrayed. Women characters were usually not able to fight for themselves but had to wait for a man to rescue them. However, in this story, the Little Red Riding Hood was behaving as a strong woman (Ibid, pp. 234-235).

In a conclusion, modern authors like Roald Dahl are changing the traditional stories and showing us a new and different angle on these tales (Ibid, p. 248-249).

3. COMPARING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN GRIMM'S VERSION OF *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* WITH ITS MOVIE ADAPTATION (2011)

Nowadays, the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* exists in many different interpretations and the story is widely known all over the world. People were telling this fairy tale to children and by word of mouth it reached the writer Charles Perrault (Antonelli, 2015, p. 107), who created the first written European version of this story in 1697 (Johnson and Carroll, 1992, p. 71). Many years later, the Grimm brothers came up with their own variation of this fairy tale “with its very interesting and well-known happy ending.” (Antonelli, 2015, p. 108)

The Grimm's story of *Little Red Riding Hood* was called *Little Red Cap* and it is considered as the source for children's books in the USA (Johnson and Carroll, 1992, p. 71).

There are said to be many differences between Perrault's original tale and the version interpreted by the Brothers Grimm. For example, Perrault included eroticism in his tale, but Grimm's version is much more innocent and tries to educate the youth (Ibid). In fact, Grimms “completely eliminated sex.” (Marshall, 2016, p. 38) Modern adaptations of the original Brothers Grimm story have also changed in many ways, for example, illuminating social messages or reducing violence (Johnson and Carroll, 1992, p. 71). However, most versions of this story carry the same main idea - children should be careful when they are in an unfamiliar place (Antonelli, 2015, p. 109).

Nevertheless, this chapter is focused on comparing the gender stereotypes in Grimm's version of *Little Red Riding Hood* with the movie adaptation from 2011, directed by Catherine Hardwick. In the first subchapter, there is an analysis of *Little Red Cap* by the Brothers Grimm. As this bachelor project deals with gender stereotypes, the gender roles and stereotypical behaviour, included in this tale, are being discussed. The second subchapter deals with the analysis of the aforementioned film adaptation of this fairy tale and its depiction of female and male characters, and possibly how this depiction differs from the original story.

3.1. Analysis of *Little Red Riding Hood* by brothers Grimm

The character of Little Red Riding Hood is portrayed in different stories the same, as “pretty and lovely, but too gullible and naïve.” (Zipes, 1993, p. 17) The Grimms have described her the exact way and Zipes argues that “the Grimms were responsible for making Little Red Riding Hood definitely into a disobedient, helpless little girl.” (Ibid, p.79) Moreover, her character acts as an example of what can happen, especially to young girls, when they do not listen to the rules. Zipes adds that this story has a happy ending for Little Red Cap only because of the rescue of the male hunter.

Unlike Perrault’s Little Red Riding Hood, Grimms’ Little Red Cap “is transformed even more into the naive, helpless, pretty little girl who must be punished for her transgression.” (Ibid, pp. 17-33) Antonelli (2015, p. 109) in his case study mentions some people who have drawn on psychoanalysis to interpret this tale, such as Sigmund Freud, Otto Rank, and Erich Fromm. Although these interpretations may differ on many things, they do agree on one thing, namely that Little Red Riding Hood is not exactly decent.

At the beginning of this story, Little Red Cap is sent to her grandmother’s house to bring her some food and drinks. Her mother emphasizes the importance of this action, and that the girl has to be obedient and follow the path without stopping anywhere else. Anew, how Molyviati (2017, pp. 27-28) suggests in his diploma thesis, she will be punished. Furthermore, the author argues that this shows the then society’s regulations, which meant that especially young girls could not do what they wanted, otherwise, they were scourged (Ibid). Erum (2009, p. 16) suggests that Little Red Cap represents a punishment for not acting in a “right feminine” way.

In general, in Grimms fairy tales, women are portrayed as submissive and as someone, who must obey the rules. In other words, Little Red Cap should be “a good girl,” innocent, gentle and obedient. However, in this story, she breaks the rules. Little Red Cap does not behave as she should, so she is going to be punished and eventually, must be saved by a man hunter (Erum, 2009, p. 3-4). The hunter represents the power of men, as he saves Little Red Cap and her grandmother (Marshall, 2016, p.36). She later admits making a mistake. Through this, young girl readers can learn, that they should obey the rules and be subordinate in order to live safely (Erum, 2009, p. 3-4). Tatar (1999, p.5), on the other hand, argues that the Grimms wanted all children, and not only girls, to learn a lesson and also acquire good manners.

However, Zipes (1993, pp. 9-11) claims that there are many interpretations that argue that if Little Red Cap had gone straight to her grandmother’s house, she would never have experienced

this situation, so it makes her responsible for this event. Similarly, Marshall (2016, p. 37) points out that the brothers Grimm had female characters saved by man to show the importance of masculine power. “In addition to women having to submit to the male patriarchy, children also were targeted by the Grimm brothers to learn lessons of discipline, piety, and obedience.” (Ibid) From a feminist perspective, the stereotypical images of female characters are criticized because they make girls believe that they should have certain characteristics.

...subconsciously, women may transfer from fairy tales into real life cultural norms which exalt passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a female’s cardinal virtues. In short, fairy tales perpetuate the patriarchal status quo by making female subordination seem a romantically desirable, indeed an inescapable fate. (Rowe, 2009, p. 342)

The usual portrayal of women’s features, behaviour and roles in the stories influences the readers of these stories (Erum, 2009, p. 3). Moreover, the Grimms wanted women and children in particular to learn that men were the ones to obey, since they were in a position of authority (Marshall, 2016, p. 37).

The character of the wolf represents danger, punishment and the “evil.” The “evil” stands in the opposite position of the “good” in many fairy tales. In most of the cases, the good characters of the story win over the evil ones, which is, as Erum (2009, p.8) explains, idealistic. However, this opposite sides are not the only one included in fairy tales. There is also a depiction of the “strong” and the “weak”, whereas women are usually put into the “weak” position and men into the “strong.” (Molyviati, 2017, p. 18)

3.2. Analysis of the movie *Red Riding Hood* by Catherine Hardwick

Despite being a new modern adaptation, the director claims to have kept many elements from the original tale (Antonelli, 2015, p. 115). However, the filmmakers have added some new characters that the traditional Grimm Brothers fairy tale does not include. Even Little Red Riding Hood is in fact named Valerie (Cheng, 2015, p.93). Thus, people may still consider this adaptation to be a story that only matches the original fairy tale in name, not in story (Antonelli, 2015, p. 115).

As described in previous subchapter, the fairy tale *Little Red Cap* written by brothers Grimm depicted a helpless little girl, who had to be saved to survive. However, this movie adaptation brings a subversion. The filmmakers changed the story and did not make Little Red Riding Hood someone who is a victim and needs to be saved (Cheng, 2015, pp. 51-52). Hardwick decided to put woman character into the position, where she can protect herself from “a beastly father’s shadow and break free from domestic limitations even when she becomes a wife and a mother.” (Ibid, p.3)

The main character of this story, Valerie, is portrayed as adventurous and courageous young woman. She is not afraid to go into the woods, even when there is a dangerous wolf. Furthermore, she sees the forest as a place to go wherever she wants to take a break from her tiresome life (Cheng, 2015, p. 95). “As a child adventuring in the woods, she once killed an animal as the outcome to a hunting game.” (Ibid) Moreover, the mother keeps telling Valerie to obey the rules and be the good girl. Nevertheless, she behaves adventurous and “rebellious since she was a child.” (Ibid)

As Neikirk (2012, p. 38) suggests, in most cases the main heroines of fairy tales are usually women who are beautiful, which is said to be their most essential characteristic. In this case, the main character Valerie is using her attractiveness to her own advantage, which makes her powerful. There is a further mention of her being investigative, because she is trying to find out who is the wolf. At one point, she suspects even her lover from being the killer. However, when she finally faces the killer, she waits for a man to come and save her. They managed to kill him together, but still, she chose to not to kill him on her own, so there is a resemblance to the original version of the tale (Cheng, 2015, pp. 95-97). The movie “presents her passivity as a choice.” (Ibid, p. 98) However, Dascal (2012, p. 131) suggests that someone must have helped her kill the wolf because it was her father, and the man who kills him will eventually replace

his position in Valerie's life. Cheng (2015, p. 98) further argues that she uses her "heterosexual desirability" to get help from two men who are close to her in order to stay safe.

Supposedly, according to Dascal (Ibid) Valerie is the only one who subverts these gender stereotypes. Valerie is a young woman who represents both the male and female world. On the one hand, as mentioned, she is adventurous and rebellious and does activities that are considered "for men," such as hunting. On the other hand, she also performs "feminine" activities, such as helping in the household. "Growing up, Valerie proves to be a determined and conventionally rebellious teenager, by disobeying her parents and planning to run away with the man she loves." (Ibid) Thus, both Grimms and Hardwick depict Little Red Riding Hood as disobedient, but this may be the only one similarity.

Another characteristic of Little Red Riding Hood is her independence, which is evident when she chooses to live alone in the forest, which also shows her courage and adventurous way of life (Cheng, 2015, p.99). However, in the end, Valerie becomes mother and wife, but at the same time, she has this rebellious life. McRobbie (2007, p. 732) explains that the main character simply "has it all", which means that on the one hand she takes care of the household and occupies the position of a wife or mother, but on the other hand she also has an adventurous life. "The film conveys a postfeminist message that being brave, smart and beautiful, then a woman's choice to remain dependent on men and the preference for family life as a wife and mother needs not be understood as oppression as some second-wave feminists like Betty Friedan may argue for." (Cheng, 2015, p. 101)

Unlike the original Brothers Grimm fairy tale, this film adaptation portrays Little Red Riding Hood as a clever, courageous woman who, although passive in certain situations, can take care of herself. Valerie is also portrayed in this film as an independent woman who bends the rules. In the original *Little Red Riding Hood* tale, however, we see a girl who is also disobedient, yet unable to help herself, and the emphasis at the end is on her learning a lesson from the situation, which this film does not capture.

4. COMPARING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN GRIMMS' VERSION OF *CINDERELLA* WITH ITS MOVIE ADAPTATION (2015)

As *Little Red Riding Hood*, also *Cinderella* has many different versions and adaptations. The most famous ones were written, same as the previous fairy tale, by Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm, but also by Gianbattista Basile, who wrote it before Perrault and Grimms (Dundes, 1982, pp. 3-4). Although Perrault's and Grimm's versions are the most well-known around the world, they vary from the traditional *Cinderella*, which was spread by word of mouth. Grimms named this fairy tale *Aschenputtel* and, they published few different versions of this tale. With every new publication, they managed to tell the story more clearly (Ibid, pp.22-23). However, Perrault's *Cinderella* had a greater impact in society as he portrayed women in a more subtle way (Boren, 2017, p. 13).

Grimms' or Perrault's versions of fairy tales are customarily thought of as original tales because of their widespread popularity in Western culture. This tendency disguises the fact that fairy tales were told and retold in many cultures before they were written down and that they have subsequently been written and rewritten by many authors for many reasons. Quite simply, there is no genuine or authentic version of a fairy tale. (Parsons, 2004, p. 138)

As mentioned above, the fairy tale *Cinderella* has several versions and has been rewritten or reinterpreted several times. Thus, this story has evolved and with the new versions of this story, the different portrayal of gender roles may be seen. The next two subchapters first deal with an analysis of the brothers Grimm's version of *Cinderella* called *Aschenputtel*. It focuses on the portrayal of the female and male roles. It then goes on to analyse the 2015 film adaptation of *Cinderella*, also together with a focus on gender stereotypes.

4.1. Analysis of *Cinderella* by brothers Grimm

The protagonist of many fairy tales is usually a woman, who obey the rules and wait for her future husband to change her life. Beauty is the most essential feature of any women, and as Neikirk (2012, p. 38) describes, readers can easily tell how a character will behave by how they look. In this case, Cinderella is portrayed as beautiful, while her half-sisters are not described as being as attractive, which may be the authors' way of showing how beauty can cause conflict between women (Ibid). This conflict is evident in the situation where the stepsisters do not want Cinderella to go to the ball because they are afraid that the prince will like the Cinderella and not them. According to Fisher and Silber (2000, p. 121), traditional fairy tales usually depict this conflict, which may have experienced women in their real lives. The author further adds that beauty is a quality which makes women to be more feminine (Erum, 2009, pp. 4-5). As for beauty in male characters, they are usually portrayed as beautiful as women, but it is not as important a quality as courage (Neikirk, 2012, pp. 38-39).

However, this story also shows, among other things, the conflict between “good” and “evil.” Cinderella is a good girl who “is challenged and questioned all the time: how should she handle evil when it has inseparable social ties to her or crosses her life?” (Erum, 2009, p.8) The evil side in this story is represented by her stepmother and stepsisters, who are making Cinderella's life more challenging.

As in the *Little Red Riding Hood*, also *Cinderella* tale depicts a girl, who must be obedient and act in a good, proper, and decent way. Stepmother and stepsisters give her demands, and she must obey them and follows their rules (Ibid, p.4). Eventually, she is rescued by the prince from this hard-working life. This may suggest that woman must earn her happy life. In the case of Cinderella, it is evident that she has had bad experiences with her stepfamily, however, at the end of the story she is saved by the prince as she did not resist, but passively waited. The author further claims that Cinderella is portrayed in a positive way, as she is kind, helps other people and obey the rules. However, this portrayal may have been done on purpose, because the audience tend to sympathize with the character, especially a woman who is modest, decent, and not treated appropriately by other people (Veselá, 2014, pp. 27-28).

According to the author, people have certain assumptions about what qualities women should possess. The main character of this fairy tale, Cinderella, acts according to these assumptions because, as mentioned, she follows the rules, behaves politely, and does not complain. Overall, she behaves like a good girl, which means she will not be punished like someone who acts

badly. Further, she takes care about the household, which is said to be an activity for females (Erum, 2009, pp. 5-6). Although she is doing a tough work, it seems that she would not be able to complete it without the help of someone else, which in this case are pigeons, who are doing the work instead of her. Furthermore, she is depicted as a girl, who is dependent on “supernatural power,” because otherwise, she would not be able to leave the house and go to the ball. “She is dependent on the supernatural things that will make her happier, which is also connected to her characteristics, she seems to be feckless as she is not able to handle with the problems herself, she always needs some assistance or advice.” (Veselá, 2014, p. 30) Thus, women characters in fairy tales are usually portrayed as someone who is helpless (Erum, 2009, p.12).

While men naturally rise to a position of leadership in fairy tales, women must establish their position only through manipulation or deception. “These fairy-tale women defraud and betray children’s trust in their quest to appeal to men.” (Fisher and Silber, 2000, p.127) In this tale, it is the case of a stepmother who lies to the prince that one of her daughters is the one he is looking for to become part of the royal family (Ibid).

Cinderella is, according to Erum (2009, p. 3), an example of the claim that women should remain passive, whereas the men are in the active and leading position. Grimms Cinderella meets a prince at the ball, but after that, he is looking for her and she is just waiting for him to come for her. In other words, it is a stereotype that implies that if a woman is pretty, she should do nothing but wait for a man to come for her (Ibid). Attractiveness seems to be an important feature of any woman, but more important may be what clothes she is wearing and also how she is groomed overall. Otherwise, she is unlikely to impress a man, in this case a prince (Veselá, 2014, p. 31).

As mentioned, this fairy tale has many different versions and they may differ in some elements, such as the mention of Cinderella’s parents. In the brothers Grimm tale, the mother is mentioned only briefly because she dies at the beginning, but the father does not play a significant role in this tale either. Although not directly related to gender stereotypes, this may indicate that the father figure is not as important to the daughter as the prince. “Older men are not suitable for the fairy tales because their presence is very limited or they are not portrayed as the strong ones who help others to fulfil their dreams or survive difficulties connected to the main character’s life, which seems to be left to the prince.” (Ibid, pp. 35-36)

In addition, Cinderella's dying mother promises at the beginning to help and protect her, which is done through the hazel bush and the pigeons. However, when Cinderella is found by the prince and they begin to live together, she throws away the magical object from the hazel bush and "she fully enters the patriarchal world, thus satisfying the conventions of women's proper role." (Fisher and Silber, 2000, p. 122)

The character of the prince, as mentioned above, is significant in the part of finding the Cinderella, in order to live a happy life with her. Veselá (2014, p. 38) in her diploma thesis explains, that there is a mention of prince having a lot of money, which may suggest that women should be looking for man who is not poor so he can take care of her and the family. The prince, on the other hand, is described as not very clever because he cannot find Cinderella among all the women and therefore needs help.

Since this thesis deals with gender stereotypes along with feminism, it should be mentioned that this fairy tale is described by feminists as anti-feminist. According to feminists, the *Cinderella* fairy tale depicts that women must be submissive and dependent on men, which can make young readers, especially girls, feel that they should not try to be autonomous in a world where men rule (Erum, 2009, p. 12).

As mentioned above, female characters tend to be portrayed in traditional fairy tales as someone who must wait for a man, in this case a prince, to rescue them. They are unable to help themselves and as Parsons (2004, p. 138) mentions, they are alone and, in this case, Cinderella does not receive help from her sisters or mother, which further emphasizes her helplessness. Further, the author mentions that women not helping enough each other makes the men population even more powerful.

4.2. Analysis of the movie *Cinderella* by Kenneth Branagh

Although this movie adaptation does not draw directly from the traditional fairy tales about Cinderella, the plot does not differentiate much from the original story. The movie was made in 2015 and it is a new version of the original Disney *Cinderella* movie from 1950. The differences between the two films are said to be vast (Vágnerová, 2018, 20). This new adaptation, together with other ones, are retelling the story of Cinderella and furthermore, they are portraying the “empowered” main heroine (Sibielski, 2019, p. 585).

Just as in the brothers Grimm fairy tale, in this version Cinderella’s mother dies. In the movie it is obvious that the mother wants her to be brave and act in a proper way (Vágnerová, 2018, p. 20), which may suggest that Cinderella should obey her stepmother and stepsisters. Thus, the similarity with the traditional fairy tale can be seen (Sibielski, 2019, p. 596). In fact, this movie adaptation “encourages girls to be courageous and act up on their courage.” (Vágnerová, 2018, p. 32) However, as the author further states, Cinderella does not have many chances to show her courage and strength because the filmmakers wanted to keep a certain similarity with the original fairy tale in the form of the prince’s rescue of Cinderella (Ibid).

Moreover, in both stories, the stepfamily is in the position of “evil” and the main character Cinderella is in the position of “good.” If the protagonist in the traditional fairy tale is portrayed as attractive with positive features, then, according to Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003, p.711 – 726), their enemies usually have opposite features, both in character and appearance. However, this film portrays Cinderella’s stepmother and stepsisters, who represents the “evil” side, as attractive women (Vágnerová, 2018, pp. 22-23).

In addition, it may be stated that the stepmother is not portrayed as evil as in the tale by Grimms. Her economic situation is not favourable, so the audience can sympathise and understand her much more. Also, she is portrayed as stronger character. She wants her daughters to get married and to achieve this, she is not afraid even to “blackmail the most powerful man in the kingdom.” (Ibid, p.30) Moreover, this film depicts that men treat women as equals and further that women are not put in an inferior or submissive position. This may be evident, for example, when the prince takes advice from Cinderella or when the Grand Duke treats the stepmother as an equally positioned when doing business (Ibid p. 32). In traditional fairy tales, however, men were usually the ones who were portrayed as dominant and in a more powerful position, while women were portrayed as submissive without a strong position in the society (Parsons, 2004, p.137).

As stated before, women are usually portrayed as passive in traditional stories. As Vágnerová (2018, p. 28) argues in her diploma thesis, Cinderella acts more actively and powerfully in this film adaptation than in the original fairy tale, for example at the end when she argues with her stepmother and says: “I was not able to protect my father from you but I will protect the Prince and the kingdom, no matter what becomes of me.” (Cinderella, 2015) Moreover, her bravery is depicted as she argues with her stepmother or rides a horse. Nevertheless, Cinderella is not able to protect herself, as in the original tale by Grimms, and must be saved by the prince. “In the crucial moments of the story, she still remains passive and is dependent on an external help, be it the Fairy godmother, her animal friends or her rescuer – the Prince.” (Vágnerová, 2018, p. 30) The author further argues that it was necessary to portray the main protagonist as not that powerful to make this story resemble the original fairy tale (Ibid, pp. 30-31).

In this film, the prince meets Cinderella before the ball, whereas in the original fairy tale they meet at the ball. When they meet for the first time in this film adaptation, Cinderella is not dressed as nicely as, for example, at the ball in the original version. In fact, she is dressed as a maid. As Vágnerová (2018, p. 27) further states, the story does not emphasize the importance of being elegantly dressed to impress men, as the original tale. According to Sibielski (2019, p. 603), the ball in the traditional versions of those stories was criticized by feminists, as the prince was choosing his future wife from women without “regard for her wishes or consent.” In this case, it is the prince who organized this ball to meet with Cinderella again.

This bachelor thesis deals with the topic of gender stereotypes, which is connected to the issue of gender equality. However, as Vágnerová (2018, p. 31) argues in her work, this movie does not depict only the raise of women and male equality, but also concept of racial equality, as there is an African American actor.

This film thus reverses gender stereotypes about the main character Cinderella, who is portrayed as much more active, strong, and courageous than in the original fairy tale. Heroines who represent the “evil side” are no longer portrayed as unattractive, but rather as attractive. In addition, men’s attitudes towards women are also changing, and female characters are no longer placed in an inferior position. What remains the same is that Cinderella is still in some way dependent on the help of others.

5. COMPARING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN GRIMMS' VERSION OF *SLEEPING BEAUTY* WITH ITS MOVIE ADAPTATION *MALEFICENT* (2014)

As previously mentioned Grimms fairy tales, also *Sleeping Beauty* has several different versions, written for instance by Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault or the Grimms. Brothers Grimm version is named *Briar Rose* (Erum, 2009, p. 1). "Out of all popular fairy tales today, the story of Sleeping Beauty is still one of the most well-known and most beloved. Since it was first published in written form in 1697 by Charles Perrault, the story has been repeatedly adapted by writers across different centuries." (Tanusy and Tanto, 2023, p. 32) Although this fairy tales has been retold in several different versions and film adaptations, supposedly not many features have changed, for instance the main message that good will triumph over evil remains the same. Even the plot of the story doesn't change much in all those versions of the story (Ibid), which is that the main heroine is sleeping for many years and must be saved, to be more precise, waked up, by the male character. From the feminist or psychoanalytic point of view, the sleeping of the princess is described as metaphor, and it may suggest the female protagonist's "isolation in the society." (Lee, 2016, p. 11) As far as feminism is concerned, it must be said that the character of Sleeping Beauty has been described by feminists as "the most passive and repulsive fairy tale heroine of all time." (Tatar, 2014, p. 142)

The Sleeping Beauty's long sleep represents significant part of nowadays versions of this fairy tale. "The heroine's sleep often addresses modern societal concerns of sexuality, love, universality, and the realization of self." (Lee, 2016, p. 18)

This fairy tale portrays the presence of gender stereotypes, gender roles, but also the ideals of patriarchy (Neikirk, 2012, p. 40). Moreover, as Tanusy and Tanto (2023, p. 40) argues in the analysis of this tale, gender stereotypes or assumptions about gender roles have arguably existed in the old versions as well as in the contemporary ones.

The next subchapters deal with the gender stereotypes portrayed in *Sleeping Beauty* and in the movie adaptation *Maleficent*.

5.1. Analysis of *Sleeping Beauty* by brothers Grimm

Similarly, to the characters Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella, also Sleeping Beauty was depicted as a passive girl, since passivity was expected of female characters. She was waiting for a man to rescue her from her sleep, since “waiting is the privilege of female.” (Erum, 2009, p.3) As mentioned above, the main protagonist’s sleeping is described as a metaphor, which Zipes (1986, p. 21) agreed with. Zipes (Ibid) further states that the main character, Sleeping Beauty, does not want to be part of the conflict in the society regarding gender roles, which is what this metaphor stands for. The gender differences may be obvious as the roles are divided – there is a prince, who is courageous and saves the princess who is isolated from the world, because she is sleeping (Tatar, 2014, p.144). Through this, “male activeness” and “female passiveness” is portrayed (Erum, 2009, p.3).

As Tatar (2014, p.147) argues, the Sleeping Beauty’s name indicates her beautiful appearance, but at the same time, it suggests “stasis rather than the potential for action.” As stated before, her passivity is obvious together with her helplessness, as she is dependent on the help and rescue of the male character (Tanusy and Tanto 2023, p. 39). The physical appearance, as stated before, is significant feature of the female character. According to Erum (2009, p. 5), beauty operates in favor of women, because it is the way for men to notice them. Further, the fact that the fairies wished Sleeping Beauty “ethereal beauty,” or “angelic wit” may suggest that physical appearance is an important quality of a woman (Das, 2005, p. 3).

Moreover, this fairy tale tends to portray the princess as not that sensible and practical as male characters, for example, the king, who, as Tanusy and Tanto (2023, p. 39) explains, had all possible spindles removed from the castle so that the princess could not get hurt. In addition, the princess is being described as a person who is guided more by her feelings and her heart.

As Tanusy and Tanto (Ibid., p. 40) further state, another possible gender stereotype can be seen in the case of the Queen, who is only referred to together with the King, which may suggest that “she had no personal identity.”

As Erum states (2009, p. 6), women, who find a partner and marry, are expected to bear children. In fact, motherhood is depicted “as the essence of life for a woman.” This fairy tale portrays the King and the Queen who waited a long time for a child, and once they have them, their life seems to be fulfilled (Ibid). Furthermore, Sleeping Beauty gets married at the end of the story, which is, according to the author (Ibid, p.15), a significant part of their “live happily ever after.”

Just like the prince in *Cinderella*, the prince in this fairy tale is portrayed as a strong character and rescuer of the princess, who could not do without his help (Ibid, p.7). Further, courage is very significant feature of the male character (Neikirk, 2012, p.39). However, this again demonstrates the positions of superiority or inferiority between the genders (Erum, 2009, p. 7). “The fact that they need the assistance and strength of men to save themselves from an undesirable situation makes them less than equal.” (Das, 2005, p. 4) Women must respect the traditional roles expected of them (Ibid, p.6).

In addition, the prince is considered as someone, who completes the femininity of the princess.

The Sleeping Beauty

...becomes emblematically associated with the bloom-ing flowers of the thorn hedge which herald the end of the curse and the entrance of the Prince. Traditionally the rose is symbolic of youth and passion (c.f. “Gather yerosebuds while ye may”), identifying the Prince with the bringer of love and manhood to complement the womanhood of the Princess. (Andersons, 1969, p.565)

Sleeping Beauty is portrayed as the good woman, however, in fairy tales, there is also “evil” standing against “good,” which is in this case represented by one of the wise women. According to Das (Ibid, p.9), this may suggest that female characters are portrayed as strong only when they are evil as well. However, the other wise woman, who is good, tries to help the princess, and so eases the curse that the evil wise woman has pronounced. As Erum (2009, p. 7) suggests, the good wise women tend to be depicted as the ones who are supportive and protective. With the help of these fairies, the female main characters are happy with their prince at the end of the story, having first been portrayed as characters who are weaker.

5.2. Analysis of the movie *Maleficent* by Robert Stromberg

The movie *Maleficent* was made in 2014 and directed by Robert Stromberg. It distorts and reinterprets the traditional tale and the movie adaptation *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), whereas the story is told from the point of view of the antagonist, who is Maleficent (Priyanka, 2016, p. 39). “Maleficent begins with the narration, “Let us tell an old story anew. And we will see how well you know it”, claiming the essence of re-visioning.” (David, 2020, p. 1242) Moreover, as Vágnerová (2018, p.43) argues in her diploma thesis, the character of Maleficent is only briefly mentioned in the original movie from 1959, so through this movie adaptation, they managed to tell her story to show more strong female characters. Also, this movie conveys a story that predates the current events in the original tale (Priyanka, 2016, p.39).

The *Sleeping Beauty*, as the main heroine, is named in this movie princess Aurora. According to Vágnerová (2018, p. 44), the creators of this film probably wanted to strengthen the female characters, however, the main character Princess Aurora is not portrayed as a very active protagonist and is still unable to control her own life, but rather is guided by others. On the other hand, there is a moment that puts female characters in more powerful position, as Cinderella is saved by Maleficent, not the prince or that Cinderella does not marry the prince but becomes queen of the kingdom herself (Ibid).

Since the princess is not saved by a male figure, there is a shift of power to the side of women. “The film deconstructs true love’s kiss, redefining love not only in terms of romance, but also through the portrayal of strong female bond.” (David, 2020, p. 1243) As stated, Maleficent and Aurora formed a strong bond, which is the reason for Maleficent’s rescue of Aurora. This, as David (Ibid) argues, has undermined the claim that a female heroine must be saved by a male character. Further, the princess’s rescuing by Maleficent represents the maternal love (Vágnerová, 2018, p. 47).

Also, there can be seen the princess’s desire to live on her own and not to be dependent on other people, specifically on “society and men,” (Vágnerová, 2018, p. 45) whereas in traditional popular fairy tales, including *Sleeping Beauty*, female characters tend to be portrayed as someone who is unable to achieve independence, career, or self-fulfilment. In the words of the author, they are “excluded” from these listed things (Das, 2005, p. 6).

Further, the prince thinks about kissing the princess to wake her from her sleep but claims: “I wouldn’t feel right about it. I barely know her. We’ve only met once.” (Ibid) The author implies that the film was trying to make the point that it is not appropriate to kiss a girl without her

permission (Ibid). However, their relationship is not given much space and there is no mention of further progress between the two of them. Vágnerová argues (2008, p. 46) that it is obvious that the creators of this movie wanted to provide more attention to Maleficent and Aurora's relationship. Moreover, in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*, the princess needs the prince's help to be rescued, but in the film, the prince is portrayed as the one who needs help because the princess guides him to the castle (Priyanka, 2016, p.40). Neikirk (2012, p. 39) claim that the male character is usually the rescuer of the woman, whereas in this movie adaptation, as stated above, the prince is not the one who saves the princess. Although the princess is not rescued by a male character, thus failing to meet certain assumptions, according to Priyanka (2016, p. 42), this film adaptation still tends to portray "the values of patriarchal ideology," for instance by portraying men in leading position, as they are more rational.

At the beginning of this movie, the Maleficent can be seen in her childhood years. She was portrayed as "innocent, fun loving and powerful fairy Maleficent." (David, 2020, p. 1242) There is also shown how her loved one hurts her (literally cuts off her wings), which leads to her traumatization. However, she decides to take revenge for this act (Priyanka, 2016, p. 39). Maleficent is described as both "heroine and villain" in the film, thus changing the fact that good and evil are always pitted against each other in fairy tales (David, 2020, p. 1243). According to Erum (2009, p. 8), fairy tales usually have a character who represents the "evil" side and the "good" side, but Maleficent represents both at the same time. Maleficent, however, succeeded in establishing peace between the two kingdoms, suggesting a disruption of gender roles, as this was usually done in traditional fairy tales by male characters (David, 2020, 1243).

As David (Ibid) further states, traditional fairy tales were usually portraying female characters less powerful than male characters and in a more passive manner. Further, the author argues that the film *Maleficent* managed to disrupt this traditional portrayal of gender roles. However, Priyanka (2016, p. 42) argues that the typical portrayal of gender roles in fairy tales has improved, but despite this, this film confirms them. In comparison with the traditional fairy tale, this movie adaptation tends to depict women more powerfully, as Cinderella is not saved by the prince like in the original tale.

6. COMPARING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN GRIMMS' VERSION OF *HANSEL AND GRETEL* WITH ITS MOVIE ADAPTATION *HANSEL AND GRETEL: WITCH HUNTERS* (2013)

The fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* was first published by Grimms in 1812 under the title *Little Brother and Little Sister* and it is known for features of “child abuse and survival.” (Mollegaard and Oliver, 2020, p. 44) As Mollegaard and Oliver (Ibid) further mention: “parental abandonment, starvation, and exposure to predators are well-known motifs in the Brothers Grimm’s *Hansel and Gretel* (1812).” (Ibid, p. 42) In some previous versions of this tale, the kids were left behind by their biological parents. However, the Grimms did not want the biological mother to be portrayed as brutal and evil; they added a stepmother to the story who represents the evil and leadership side, while the biological father is portrayed as good, yet weak (Ibid, p. 45). Some readers appreciate this tale, but some find the story upsetting (Harshbarger, 2013, p. 490), since it may raise fears in young children (Mollegaard and Oliver, 2020, p. 44). However, according to Harsbarger (2013, p. 490), the tale of *Hansel and Gretel* is described as very impactful. This fairy tale is said to show life’s barriers, as mentioned above abusing of children and their suffering. Moreover, at the same time, the story emphasizes bravery and strength of the characters (Mollegaard and Oliver, 2020, p. 54).

As in the previous chapters, also the further subchapters deal with the portrayal of gender stereotypes in the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* by brothers Grimm and in the film adaptation of this fairy tale, which is called *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*.

6.1. Analysis of *Hansel and Gretel* by brothers Grimm

As the previous fairy tales, also *Hansel and Gretel* include characters who are representing the “evil” and “good”. In this case, the “evil” is represented by the stepmother and the witch (Erum, 2009, p. 8). Traditionally, witches in fairy tales were usually depicted as older women and people associated old age with sorcery, which is also seen in this story, when Hansel and Gretel meet an old woman in the forest and immediately consider her a witch (Das, 2012, p. 9). “The question arises why Grimm Brothers do deliberately employ a woman for such hideous role. Thus, the story consist such female stereotypical images.” (Dhungana, 2014)

Further, the stepmothers tend to be depicted as vicious characters and as someone who can easily make their husbands to do whatever they want, even hurt their own children (Das, 2012, p. 9). Whether a female character is portrayed as good or evil depends on the expression of motherly impulses, which are said to be stereotypical (Tong, 2009, p. 193). In addition, according to Dhungana (2014), traditional fairy tales usually portray women as vicious, and on the other hand, men are appreciated, which can be seen when the children return home and the father is glad, while the stepmother is not.

Barathi (2016) claims in one analysis that Gretel is being depicted as inferior towards her brother Hansel, as male characters are usually shown as more powerful (Neikirk, 2012, p. 39). “Gretel is shown to be clever and strong here, yet she only takes control when the male, Hansel, is caged and hence, physically under restraint.” (Das, 2012, p. 5)

On the contrary, according to Erum (2009, p. 10), both Hansel and Gretel are cooperating, and the dominance of the male character, which is usually portrayed in the fairy tales, is disrupted. However, Das (2012, p. 10) further argues that although Gretel is only in command when her brother is in danger, power is divided between both, because they must fight together in a challenging situation.

Nonetheless, it is said that Gretel did not kill the witch purposely, as the witch died in the furnace by her own mistake, having tried to explain to Gretel the way to get there. This act can therefore be considered an unfortunate accident, not a heroic deed (Dhungana, 2014).

Character of Hansel is further described as being responsible since he is always taking care of Gretel. On the other hand, Gretel is depicted as innocent girl who is very emotional, however, she cares about her brother too. Further, her cleverness is evident in many cases (Dhungana, 2014), for example when Hansel is saved by her and thanks to her intelligence, they can kill the

witch. As already mentioned, the male characters were usually the ones who had a stronger position than the female characters, but in this case the power is balanced (Erum, 2009, p. 10). On the other hand, as Das (2012, p.5) claims: “Gretel’s rare role as a strong female character in fairy tales is undercut by the restrictions that surround it.”

The manner of speaking of female characters is suggesting their limited strength, as they “have nothing very important to say.” (Das, 2012, p. 8) In this case, Gretel was crying a lot and Hansel was comforting her, which suggests the irrelevance of female expression. Male characters, especially the affluent princes, are usually the powerful ones whose speech is important (Ibid). Further, this shows Gretel’s sensitivity and fragility, as she is crying, and Hansel’s comforting proves his fortitude (Dhungana, 2014).

There is a lesson to be learned from this story, for it shows that evil will be penalized, and clever children will be rewarded. This story further reverses the traditional gender stereotype because usually it is the male characters that save the female ones, but in this fairy tale, it is Gretel who is the rescuer. This shows that women can also be strong, and they do not need “physical strength” to save someone, but “mental ability” is enough. “Opposite to the traditional gender roles, it is the female (Gretel) who saves the male (Hansel).” (Erum, 2009, p.14)

In a conclusion, it is claimed that this story emphasizes that male gender is stronger than the female one, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal mindset in society (Dhungana, 2014).

6.2. Analysis of the movie *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* by Tommy Wirkola

This movie adaptation changes and extends the traditional fairy tale of *Hansel and Gretel* by brothers Grimm. It is considered more of a fantasy horror (Greenhill and Kohm, 2020, p. 13). It portrays Hansel and Gretel as two survivors of “abandonment, abduction, and trauma.” (D’Amore, 2017, p.387) D’Amore (Ibid) further mentions that Gretel becomes powerful and self-confident and together with Hansel, they start to kill witches. Gretel is much stronger, as may be evident from her fighting anyone who can cause her any damage.

In the original tale, Gretel’s killing of the witch was argued as an accident rather than a “heroic act,” (Dhungana, 2014) but in this adaptation Gretel’s strength is evident (D’Amore, 2017, p. 396). This adaptation, according to D’Amore (Ibid), depicts how women are protected from potential violence and further, the justice for the possible rapist is established.

In the original fairy tale by Grimms, the children were abandoned by their parents, and eventually, captured by the witch. However, in this movie, Hansel and Gretel are not children, but adults, who are asked to search for children who have been taken by the witch.

Further, the tale is said to contain “reflected female rivalry and also a historical poverty,” because in the past it was these two factors that forced the poor to do certain things, such as letting their offspring die (Schubart, 2019, p. 16).

This film adaptation changes the story of the original fairy tale, for example in the position of Gretel, who is stronger, as mentioned above. Gretel also replaces Hansel in the position of leader as she leads him in the woods. As for her actions, Gretel is as powerful as her brother Hansel and her way of battling is said to be “brutal.” Her strength is evident in the situation when five men are trying to fight her, but find it difficult (D’Amore, 2017, p. 396). Through her actions and behaviour, it is evident that this movie adaptation reverses the stereotype that women are incapable of forceful and aggressive behaviour (de Welde, 2012, p.24).

As Walker (2001, p. 131) mentions, women are usually told to not to fight back when they are under attack by men, however, Gretel represents a strong character who tries to protect herself and others. Nevertheless, Praet and Kérchy (2019, p.230) argue that Gretel represents the cleverness and Hansel the physical strength, whereas Hansel is further referred to as “stronger than most men.” (D’Amore, 2017, p. 396)

Furthermore, the movie shows how abandonment and abuse took a heavy toll on Gretel when she and Hansel were left in the woods as children. “This version of physical vigilante feminism empowers girls and women, because it offers an equality that allows women to wield the forces of power and violence that have always been accessible to men.” (D’Amore, 2017, p. 398) The author as well mentions that the film portrays the stronger position of women (Ibid).

However, according to Schubart (2019, p. 17), Gretel’s strong actions cannot be considered feminist if the term feminism is understood as a way of fighting against sexism. Schubart (Ibid) further claims that Gretel was not interested in solving the problem regarding the burning of a young woman who was considered a witch, so the author further describes that she “sells her services to a patriarchy.” From Schubart’s point of view (Ibid, p. 19), the feminist of this story is the Great Witch Muriel, who tries to protect her kind. Gretel is considered a helper of the male part of society.

The “evil” side is represented by witches, who are portrayed as both beasts and renegades of society. The witches are subjected to various attacks and violence, which, according to Schubart (Ibid, p. 18), seemingly does not bother Gretel, whereas when violence is inflicted on her, she strikes back. The author claims that the film does not depict a heroic deed at the end, when Hansel kills all the witches, but rather a “femicide.” (Ibid)

As mentioned above, older women were usually depicted as witches. However, this movie portrays witches who are not only old, but also young. Further, some of them were referred to as beautiful. The “evil witches” were, however, depicted as “ugly with human faces masking witch faces that are angry...” (Ibid) This film therefore undermines the stereotype that only elderly women must be witches.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis aimed to compare the portrayal of gender stereotypes in the selected Grimm's fairy tales with their movie adaptations, together with answering the question of how the movies subvert those stereotypes from original fairy tales. In the first part of this thesis, the terms gender, stereotypes, gender stereotypes, feminism, and sexism were discussed in the context of fairy tales. Gender is described from different point of views since each author approaches to it with different manner. In general, it is discussed from biological and social view. As the gender is closely related to the gender stereotypes or stereotypes in general, it is stated that those gender stereotypes are people's assumptions about women and men. Further, there is a mention of statements of some authors which claims that men have more privileged role in the society than women. However, the focus is on gender stereotypes portrayed in fairy tales. The chapter regarding gender stereotypes in fairy tales is arguing that female characters tend to be depicted as less powerful than male characters. Also, women must obey men and be submissive towards them, which put men into more powerful position. Nevertheless, those stereotypes are being distorted in new movie adaptations by depicting the gender roles differently, which has certain connection to the feminism movement. Feminism stresses the need for equality between the female and male gender. Together with feminism, there was a necessity to mention sexism, which refers to creating stereotypes about females. Further this bachelor thesis mentions Angela Carter and Roald Dahl's versions of the fairy tales *Little Red Riding Hood*, as they distort the traditional portrayal of gender roles by making the female protagonist more powerful. The next part of this thesis dealt with the analysis of the traditional fairy tales of the brothers Grimm, their film adaptations, and their comparison. The first comparison was between *Little Red Riding Hood* and its film version, which changes the status of Little Red Riding Hood from a weak innocent girl to a strong and courageous one. Little Red Riding Hood in both versions of the story is supposed to behave obediently, however, in the movie it is more evident that Little Red Riding Hood reverses the rules and is more of a rebel. Secondly, the fairy tale *Cinderella* and its movie adaptation were analyzed and then compared. The film adaptation of the traditional fairy tale has also been found to empower women, no longer relegating them to an inferior position. Cinderella is also more courageous, but she does not have many opportunities to demonstrate this quality. Next, the fairy tale of *Sleeping Beauty* was examined and compared to its film adaptation, which tells the story from the point of view of the story's antagonist and not the protagonist, like the original fairy tale. Another difference is the ending of the story, where in the film version the princess is saved not by the prince but

by the fairy *Maleficent*. The film adaptation also portrays women in a more empowered position, same as the previous ones. The last discussed fairy tale was *Hansel and Gretel*, whereas the most analyzed character in the movie adaptation was Gretel, as her roles has significantly changed from the original story. Therefore, it has been argued that the film portrays her as a strong character, but also a violent one, whereas in the traditional Grimm story, it was said that her brother Hansel had to take care of her because she was weak and sensitive.

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RESUMÉ

Bakalářská práce je zaměřena na to, jak filmové adaptace vybraných pohádek bratří Grimmů převrací rodové stereotypy z původních pohádek. Na základě literatury byly definovány pojmy jako gender, genderový stereotyp či feminismus. Dále byla vybrána díla od Angely Carter a Roalda Dahla v rámci srovnání, jak jejich verze pohádek bratří Grimmů vyobrazují rodové stereotypy. V další části práce byly analyzovány vybrané pohádky od bratrů Grimmových, konkrétně – Červená Karkulka, Popelka, Šípková Růženka a Jeníček a Mařenka. Následně byla provedena analýza vybraných filmových adaptací – Červená Karkulka, Popelka, Zloba a Jeníček a Mařenka: Lovci čarodějnic. V rámci analýzy sekundárních dat bylo zjištěno, že všechny filmové adaptace převrací alespoň některé genderové stereotypy, které jsou ztvárněny v původních pohádkách. Ženské postavy bývají v těchto zfilmovaných adaptacích spíše odvážné, silné a ve více vůdčí pozici. Na rozdíl od tradičních pohádek v těchto filmech ženy nemusí být nutně zachráněny mužskými postavami a muži tak nejsou v tolik dominantní pozici. Dále bylo zjištěno, že v tradičních pohádkách je nehezky vzhled spojen většinou se staršími ženami, které bývají zlé. Filmové adaptace nutně tyto dva atributy nespojují.

ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení:	Adéla Valouchová
Katedra nebo ústav:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ivan Čipkár, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	Subverting gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimm's fairy tales
Název práce v angličtině:	Subverting gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of Grimm's fairy tales
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce se zabývá rozvrácením rodových stereotypů ve filmových adaptacích vybraných pohádek bratří Grimmů. Za pomoci zdrojů byly definovány důležité pojmy jako gender, genderový stereotyp a feminismus. Následně byla provedena analýza původních pohádek bratří Grimmů a jejich filmových adaptací s následným porovnáním toho, jak jsou zde zobrazeny ženské a mužské role.
Klíčová slova:	Pohlaví, stereotyp, pohádka, bratří Grimmové, filmová adaptace, rozvrácení
Anotace práce v angličtině	The bachelor thesis deals with the subversion of gender stereotypes in movie adaptations of selected Brothers Grimm fairy tales. With the help of sources, important concepts such as gender, gender stereotype and feminism have been defined. Subsequently, an analysis of the original Brothers Grimm fairy tales and their film adaptations was conducted, followed by a comparison of how female and male roles are portrayed.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Gender, stereotype, fairy tale, Brothers Grimm, movie adaptation, subversion
Přílohy vázané v práci:	
Rozsah práce:	35 s
Jazyk práce:	AJ