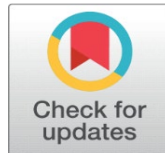
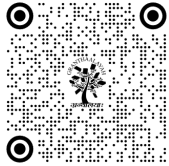


# VISUAL AND AESTHETIC CONSISTENCY IN TRANSMEDIA ADAPTATIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN GRIMM BROTHER'S AND DISNEY

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## ABSTRACT

This research delves into the multifaceted Visual and aesthetic consistency in Transmedia adaptations: a comparative analysis in Grimm brother's and Disney. This study aims to unravel the diverse layers of moral messages embedded in these timeless tales, shedding light on how they influence and shape the moral compass of young readers. Drawing on classic works such as "Grimm's Fairy Tales" by the Grimm Brothers and Disney adaptations like "Cinderella" and "Snow White," the research navigates through the distinct narrative approaches employed by each tradition. It scrutinizes the moral landscapes presented in these stories, examining the characters, plot developments, and underlying themes that contribute to the moral fabric of each narrative. By dissecting the tales, the study seeks to identify potential variations and evolutions moral perspectives between the original Grimm versions and the adapted Disney renditions. The analysis not only explores overt moral lessons but also delves into subtle nuances, exploring the cultural and societal contexts that may have influenced the moral choices made in these narratives. Furthermore, the research addresses the implications of these moral layers on the development of ethical understanding in children. It considers the potential impact of contrasting moral frameworks presented in Grimm and Disney stories, raising questions about the role of literature in shaping young minds and instilling values. In conclusion, "Fairy tales Unmasked" offers a nuanced exploration of the intricate moral tapestry woven into children's literature, unravelling the distinct moral landscapes in Grimm vs Disney stories.

**Keywords:** Transmedia Adaptation, Variations, Evolutions, Ethical Understanding, Narrative Approaches, Morality In Children's Literature



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transmedia adaptations play a pivotal role in transforming literary narratives into visual and interactive experiences across various platforms. In the context of Grimm Brothers' fairy tales and Disney's adaptations, the exploration of visual and aesthetic consistency becomes particularly intriguing. This comparative analysis delves into how these narratives, rooted in traditional folklore, have been interpreted and reimagined across different media formats, with a specific focus on visual elements and aesthetic choices. By examining the evolution of these stories from their original textual forms to contemporary cinematic interpretations, this study aims to highlight the importance of maintaining thematic and stylistic

coherence while transitioning between mediums. Understanding the nuances of visual and aesthetic consistency in transmedia adaptations not only enriches our appreciation of storytelling but also offers insights into the transformative power of adaptation in contemporary media landscapes.

Children's literature encompasses all published books intended for children who either lack interest in adult literature or have not yet developed reading skills, a comprehensive understanding, or extensive knowledge. According to Kimberley Reynolds, the origin of children's literature lies in oral traditions, consisting of fables, fairy tales, and folktales, which were eventually transcribed into books read by both children and adults for different audiences. Reynolds defines children's literature as materials created for both children and young people. Peter Hunt affirms that the development of children's literature was gradual in earlier periods, emerging later than general literature due to its oral transmission through generations.

The twentieth century has witnessed significant transformations in the realm of children's literature, marked by a notable shift away from traditional text tales and classic bedtime stories to embracing animation. According to Jessica Tiffin in Haase's book "Folk Tales and Fairy Tales" (2015), the universal prevalence of animating renowned folktales is a remarkable change, making it the predominant medium for children worldwide. Walt Disney's Company, widely acknowledged as a leading moral educator, distinguishes itself from its competitors. Through selecting popular fairy tales from diverse oral traditions and adapting them into new versions that cater to children's preferences via influential multimedia, Disney's Company has earned a commendable reputation among children worldwide. Disney's dominance stems from the strong correlation between animation and fairy tales:

The relationship between animation and fairy tales is also intriguing because animation shadows the fairy tale's problematic association with children. The generally childlike concerns of many animated works, together with the influence of Disney's clean-cut family values, echo the Victorian tendency to relegate folkloric, magical narratives to the nursery. (Tiffin, qtd. in Hasse et al 43)

Walt Disney persistently advanced technological capabilities, ultimately reaching a pinnacle with the integration of three-dimensional digital technologies (Tiffin 45). For instance, in animal-centric tales like "Beauty and the Beast" (1991) or "The Princess and the Frog" (2009), the transformation of an animal into a human is challenging to fully convey or explicitly comprehend for children through traditional fairy tale texts alone. However, by employing animation to anthropomorphize characters, the intended virtual reality is effectively portrayed. Additionally, the artistic process of characterization plays a crucial role in depicting principal characters and their actions through animation.

## **2. CHILDREN LITERATURE**

The clarity of "children's literature" is rooted in its fundamental purpose: to be a category of literature intricately tied to its presumed audience-children. This purpose underscores a deliberate and explicit connection between writers and their readership: children. The critical question arises: is the literature created by children or intended for them? What drives its existence?

The primary aim of children's literature is to delineate and identify books that are most suitable for children, even when the distinction of which books specifically

target children remains ambiguous. Consequently, children's literature is broadly defined as anything that aligns with the interests and well-being of children. It particularly emphasizes content that motivates and resonates with the emotional and moral values of each child.

The developmental stages of children's literature have evolved over the past five hundred years. Initially, children's books were scarce or virtually non-existent, primarily confined to educational disciplines such as behavioural and school education. The emergence of children's literature can be attributed to factors such as children's admiration for adult books and religious influences, fostering moral development through adherence to religious principles. This development gradually progressed with the advent of modern technology, transforming literature into audio and visual recordings in sync with societal, educational, and economic changes.

The thematic landscape of children's literature has expanded widely, evolving from traditional themes rooted in explaining natural phenomena and legends featuring heroes, charismatic characters, supernatural elements, and myths (Townsend 1996). As this genre developed, titles became ingrained in societal concerns and fears, with each country contributing its own traditional narratives to the rich tapestry of children's literature.

### **3. THE BACKGROUND TO GRIMM BROTHERS**

Wilhelm recorded Dortchen Wild's oral version of the tale in 1810, when the Grimm brothers first encountered it (Zipes, Happily Ever After). While the source of Wild's tale remains unknown, oral transmission of folktales, akin to folk songs, was common during that era. Wilhelm extensively recorded and revised the tale, incorporating elements of German and personal history, religious beliefs, and parenting advice. For the Brothers, Hansel and Grethel became a narrative that intertwined economic, gender, religious, and personal aspects.

Wilhelm seemed cognizant of the plight of peasants during times of famine, incorporating ideas about social conditions and family dynamics into Hansel and Grethel. The narrative reflects how desperate circumstances during the nineteenth-century famines could drive families to unconventional actions. Similar to their approach in analysing Little Red Riding Hood, Wilhelm highlighted the drastic measures people were willing to take during this period by contrasting the normal behaviours of families at the time. This is evident when comparing Shalamith Shahar's observations about the self-sacrificing acts of mothers during famines to the events in the tale, revealing a stark contrast in behaviours (Shahar).

Napoleon Bonaparte's formation of the Rhine Confederation in 1806 catalyzed the emergence of German nationalism, which marked the origin of Grimm's Fairy Tales in the early nineteenth century. This geopolitical shift sparked a surge of interest among German intellectuals, including the Brothers Grimm, in researching folk literature and songs that are prevalent among the German populace. The Brothers Grimm initiated the collection of fairy tales and stories passed down orally through generations.

In due course, the Brothers Grimm published the initial edition of Grimm's Fairy Tales, also known as Children and Family Fairy Tales, against the backdrop of this cultural and political awakening (Chen and Wang, 2019: p. 63–67).

Oral sharing of fairy tales in courts for entertainment and social interaction gave them significant prominence within society. Over time, their narratives took on various forms, including

The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of plays, books, pamphlets, and essays. Furthermore, with the advent of new media such as cartoons, comics, radio, cinema, and advertising, fairy tales underwent a transformation in their dissemination, becoming an integral part of early twentieth-century media landscapes. (Chen and Wang, 2019).

#### **4. THE MORALITY IN GRIMM VS DISNEY STORIES FOR CHILDREN LITERATURE**

##### **Grimm's Fairy Tales:**

##### **Morality and Consequences:**

Harsher Consequences: Grimm's tales tend to feature harsher consequences for characters' actions. Moral lessons often involve the repercussions of disobedience, deceit, or moral transgressions.

Realism and Life Lessons: These stories lean towards realism, reflecting the challenges and dangers of the real world. The intent is often to impart cautionary life lessons.

##### **Dark and Complex Themes:**

Dark Undertones: Grimm's tales can have darker undertones, exploring themes of death, betrayal, and morality in a more explicit and sometimes gruesome manner.

Moral Ambiguity: Morality in Grimm's stories can be more ambiguous, with characters facing morally complex choices, and outcomes may not always align with conventional expectations of justice.

##### **Disney Stories**

##### **Optimistic Morality:**

Happy Endings: Disney stories typically feature optimistic and uplifting morals, often culminating in happy endings. Characters who display virtuous qualities are usually rewarded. Simplified Morality: Morality in Disney narratives is often simplified, emphasizing clear distinctions between good and evil. Characters are usually portrayed in morally straightforward terms.

##### **Adaptation and Commercial Appeal:**

Adaptation for Audiences: Disney tends to adapt fairy tales to suit family-friendly and commercial appeal. This may involve toning down darker elements and focusing on themes that resonate with a broader, younger audience.

Character Development: Disney stories often emphasize character development and growth, with protagonists learning moral lessons through their journeys.

##### **Entertainment and Fantasy:**

Entertainment Focus: Disney places a strong emphasis on entertainment, incorporating musical elements, humour, and fantastical elements to engage and captivate young audiences.

Fantasy Elements: While still conveying moral messages, Disney stories may include more fantastical and magical elements, creating a sense of wonder and enchantment.

Nevertheless, Disney films contribute to the cognitive development of a child by fostering awareness, imagination, and the ability to discern between various cultural principles depicted in movies. Additionally, these movies play a role in linguistic development. Children gain practical experience in distinguishing between moral concepts, enhancing their linguistic proficiency, which is directly linked to their cultural and educational achievements (Al Kilani, 1991).

Furthermore, Disney animated movies play a crucial role in a child's upbringing, equipping them with advanced cognitive abilities. Scholars argue that when audio-visual information is presented to a child simultaneously, it significantly increases their retention level regarding educational content, potentially reaching up to 50% or more. The child engages with the television using three senses touch, sight, and hearing. This multifaceted interaction contributes to memorization, impacting overall behaviour, fostering creativity, and improving social skills (Al Rimawi, 1998).

## **5. BROTHERS GRIMM VS THE DISNEY: SNOW WHITE**

The Brothers became part of a literary movement that incorporated the seven deadly sins, associating them with specific colors such as red, black, green, yellow, and white. Evagrius of Pontus and later John of Cassius, rather than the Bible, traced the origin of these sins back to the fourth century (Thurman xi). St. Thomas Aquinas and Western Churchmen later narrowed down the initially more numerous capital sins to seven, a classification that has remained unchanged since then (Wilson xiii). The seven deadly sins, ranked in order of increasing severity as pride/vanity, greed/covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth, are considered the root of all sins due to their perceived role in leading to other sins.

The initial tales crafted by the Grimm Brothers aim to convey significant life ethics, akin to the Disney adaptations familiar from our childhood. However, these narratives also convey prevalent themes regarding familial and societal structures. In scrutinising how these themes unfold in Grimm stories, I examined the German versions of Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, and Hansel and Gretel. Through my comparative analysis, I concluded that there is a notable emphasis on family dynamics and society's aspiration for social advancement. Exaggerated depictions of beauty, violence, poverty, and wealth primarily depict these issues.

A recurring theme in each story revolves around family structures. Often, stories portray mothers, stepmothers, and women in general as greedy, willing to commit heinous acts to attain wealth and beauty. On the contrary, fathers, despite their good intentions for their families, appear vulnerable and submissive, leading to mistakes with serious consequences. The ensuing conflicts involving the caregivers inevitably result in the children suffering. Despite facing perilous and tumultuous situations, the children often emerge successful in either self rescue or rescue by a benevolent ruler. Many narratives begin with themes of starvation and poverty, evolving towards a triumphant conclusion of wealth and elevated social status, typically through marriage.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of transmedia adaptations of Grimm Brothers' fairy tales by Disney reveals intriguing insights into the importance of visual and aesthetic consistency across different storytelling mediums. Through examining how these narratives have evolved from text to screen, we see the



challenges and opportunities of maintaining thematic and stylistic coherence. Disney's interpretations often emphasize vibrant visuals and a romanticized aesthetic, while Grimm's original tales convey darker and more complex themes. Despite these differences, successful transmedia adaptations strike a balance between fidelity to the source material and innovation in storytelling, enhancing our understanding of timeless narratives while adapting them for contemporary audiences and media platforms.

Children are profoundly impacted by imaginative elements, especially within fairy tales, as they evoke emotions ranging from fear and anxiety to intense emotional engagement. The struggles depicted in these tales, particularly those related to family relationships and deprivation, resonate deeply with young minds. Fairy tales, often characterized by exaggeration and themes that may not be directly aligned with a child's best interests, convey messages subtly, making them challenging for children to grasp at an early age. Themes involving terror, injustice, bloodshed, and cruelty leave an indelible mark on the child's psyche.

As children's literature evolves, it transcends the written form, becoming both audible and visible through mediums such as cartoons and animation. Disney movies, in particular, have emerged as a dominant influence on a child's psychology over the past decade. These films significantly impact a child's enjoyment and admiration for elements like colours, music, and story themes. The diverse range of Disney films has expanded children's horizons, fostering new imaginations and sowing the seeds of social and creative intelligence, addressing themes of self-confidence, responsibility, and courage.

Today, children not only watch movies but actively engage in creating their own stories and characters. This shift underscores the profound impact of fairy tales, especially Disney narratives, on children's cognitive and creative development.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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