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Abstract of the presentation during the conference The Child and the Book Conference: Interdisciplinary Links Between Children’s Literature and Arts organized by the University of Valencia, March 30 – April 1, 2017

How to Change a World with a Song. Influences of the American Film Musical on Walt Disney Studios Animations

Many examples of children’s popular culture prove that it indeed can be a great mixture of literature, art, music, etc. I see those pieces in Walt Disney Studio animations, mainly in those based on the literature. But what I want to focus on during my presentation is the influence of the American film musical in animations “based” on the children’s literature, myths and fairy tales produced by Walt Disney Studios in the so called Disney Renaissance era.

Musical evolved in many different directions, mainly thanks to the development of the movies, with new technics arriving, stars that made plots come to life, scenography that made them iconic. But what connected them all was music that is still moving billions of people all around the world, not only those who come to see the Broadway show, but also viewers watching Disney movies.

What I want to achieve is to firstly - show the development of the Disney musical animation in the statement of the development of the American film musical. Secondly I want to present how the new formula of a story changed the meaning of the “original,” literary one, and how do those changes influence the young readers perception.

Examples to be presented are as follows:

Beauty and the Beast - songs “Belle” and “Be Our Guest” in the context of early 30. musicals and Busby Berkley choreography;

The Little Mermaid - the song “Part of your world” - in the context of the feminist movement in the USA;

Hercules - and the convention of the gospel song in the context of passing racism on the Broadway stage;

Those and few more are just the examples to be presented, in order to show which elements from the American film musical infiltrated the stories re-told by Disney and what kind of influence those have on the well-know plots. I do not wish to analyze the history of the Disney musical, but to highlight the most visible elements that constitute this twisted genre, that linked the children’s literature (or myths/fairy tales treated like one) and the art of music.

My presentation will be mainly supported by Raffaele Cutolo’s thesis contained in *Into the Woods of Wicked Wonderland. Musicals Revise Fairy Tales*, as well as by two terms: “disneyfication” and “broadwayfication” used inter alia by Christen Marie Mandracchia.



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