

# Film Adaptations of The Cat in the Hat

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

**MATEA BEŠENIĆ  
DIPLOMSKI RAD**

**FILM ADAPTATIONS OF *THE CAT IN  
THE HAT***

**Zagreb, rujan 2018.**

**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE  
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## Filmske adaptacije slikovnice *The Cat in the Hat*

### Sažetak

Cilj je rada pokazati kako je slikovnica *The Cat in the Hat* [Mačak s klobukom] američkoga autora poznatoga pod pseudonimom Dr. Seuss (Geisel, 1957/2007) adaptirana, pod istim naslovom, u crtani film (Pratt, 1971) i u igrani film (Welch, 2003). Adaptacija je proces izmjene umjetničke forme iz jednoga medija u drugi (Hutcheon, 2006). Tijekom toga procesa dogode se mnoge izmijene i prilagodbe novomu mediju. Dr. Seuss bio je jedan od najpoznatijih Američkih dječjih pisaca. Njegov je utjecaj na dječju književnost velik. Slikovnica *Mačak s klobukom* smatra se njegovim remek djelom. Crtani film *Mačak s klobukom* primjer je adaptacije slikovnice u kojoj je očuvan integritet izvorne priče. Filmska je adaptacija odstupila od slikovnice tako što su napravljene izmijene u radnji priče dodavanjem likova, sukoba, događaja, referencija, itd. Izmijenjena je i sama poruka priče i njezin glavni smisao, što nije naišlo na odobravanje ni filmskih kritičara ni gledatelja. Pri adaptiranju poznatih književnih dijela autori bi trebali poštovati original, ali u isto vrijeme stvoriti novo i jedinstveno umjetničko djelo. Analiza je pokazala da je analizirani crtani film u tome uspio, dok je igrani film iznevjerio izvornik i ponudio novo, ali ne osobito uspješno djelo.

Ključne riječi: *Mačak s klobukom*, adaptacija, slikovnica, crtani film, igrani film

## **Film Adaptations of *The Cat in the Hat***

### Summary

The aim of this thesis is to describe how the picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* (1957) by Dr. Seuss was adapted into an animated movie (Pratt, 1971) and into a feature film (Welch, 2003) of the same title. An adaptation is a process of moving a story from one medium into another, where many changes occur, including those dependent on the expressive means of the new medium. Dr. Seuss was one of the greatest American children's authors. His picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* is considered to be a masterpiece. The animated film adaptation of *The Cat in the Hat* is an example of a successful adaptation which preserves the integrity of the original story. The feature film adaptation changes the original story of the picturebook by adding new characters, conflicts, events, references, etc. The general meaning and the message of the original is also changed, which has been strongly criticized by the film critics and the general audience. Generally speaking, while adapting a literary work, the authors are expected to respect the original, and, at the same time, to create a new and unique work of art. The analysis of two film adaptations of *The Cat in the Hat* has shown that the animated film succeeded in meeting these contradictory requirements, while the feature film betrayed the original, and provided a new, but not a very successful piece.

Keywords: *The Cat in the Hat*, adaptation, picturebook, cartoon, film

# 1. Introduction

“The entertainment industry is just that: an industry” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 88). If the entertainment industry is just an industry, what would that industry do to a popular picturebook? The aim of this thesis is to establish how a picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* (Dr. Seuss, 1957) is adapted into a cartoon (Hawley Pratt, 1971) and a film (Bo Welch, 2003).

In adaptation studies, according to Maria Nikolajeva’s multimedial approach (Nikolajeva, 2005), adaptation is a synonym of transmediation. Linda Hutcheon developed the theory of adaptation and describes adaptation through three perspectives: a formal entity of product, a process of creation and a process of reception (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6). The process of adaptation goes through certain stages, from the initial idea to the end product. Hutcheon states that the changes have to be announced and they have to preserve the original story, but in the end the audience’s experience and acceptance show the success of an adaptation. On the other hand, Diana Buttholph focuses on innovation, as a term used for adaptation, to emphasize that adaptation is a process of creating new work of art (Buttholph, 1992). Furthermore, Nikolajeva addresses two more aspects in her multimedial approach; translation and illustration (Nikolajeva, 2005). When explaining illustration, Smiljana Narančić Kovač clarifies how visual and verbal discourses establish a dialogue in picturebooks and that they need to be viewed as separate aspects of the narrative (Narančić Kovač, 2015).

After a theoretical and methodological overview, *The Cat in the Hat* is summarized in its three appearances in different media to demonstrate how the plot develops as the medium changes. The next chapter elaborates the changes which occur in the narrative meanings and aspects of these adaptations and compares them with the original. The major areas of change are characters, the sequencing of events and the settings, but also cultural elements and humour. The differences are expected to be found in the ways in which the characters are developed and in which aspects they differ from the original. The second issue is the sequencing of the main events: do they appear in the same order as in the original picturebook, how does the plot broaden and change? Thirdly, how do the authors of each version envision the setting of the story? Finally, how are the cultural elements and humour incorporated? The last two chapters

offer a discussion of the results which leads to the conclusions about the status of the analysed adaptations in comparison to the original.



## **2. Dr. Seuss and the picturebook *The Cat in the Hat***

Theodor Geisel, widely known as Dr. Seuss, was an American writer and illustrator. His greatest impact was in the field of children's literature. Generations of children and adults worldwide have been influenced by his work. This chapter briefly presents how the picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* was made and why it is considered a masterpiece.

### **2.1 The Making of *The Cat in the Hat***

According to John H. Saunders (2017), the idea for the book came to Theodor Geisel when John Hersey published an article in *Time* magazine challenging writers to write a book which would depart from the reading schemes, such as *Dick and Jane*. "Dr. Seuss took up the call and gathered vocabulary lists of simple words to create such a book" (Saunders, 2017, p. 39). Saunders states that from 223 words, after a year and a half of writing, Dr Seuss created a picturebook called *The Cat in the Hat*, which had its first edition in 1957. Soon after publication the picturebook found its way to the hearts of the readers and until today it remains a beloved children's book.

### **2.2 A Masterpiece**

*The Cat in the Hat* has 223 words and spreads on 61 pages. Saunders points out that this picturebook appears simple, but it has skilfully incorporated literary devices (for example, meter, alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, etc.), intentionally used space in unconventional places to create a feeling of chaos; further, the relationship between words and illustrations in it is established by artistic devices (such as line and colour) and "richly drawn images using only basic lines and hues of red and blue" (Saunders, 2017, p. 39). This evaluation indicates that the picturebook in question is a masterpiece, in its combination and treatment of both verbal and visual media.

### **3. Theoretical background and methodology**

Maria Nikolajeva developed an approach to multimodality which includes three aspects: illustration, translation and transmediation (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 223). This chapter will explain all three aspects but focus mostly on the transmediation as Nikolajeva understands it (transformation from one medium to another), and also explain how picturebooks generally get adapted, how the film industry influences such processes and how the Disney Company adapts literary classics.

#### **3.1 Illustrations**

In picturebooks there are two media, words and pictures. Meaning is created through these two media by their interaction in the reading process (Narančić Kovač, 2015). Narančić Kovač explains that in picturebooks there are two discourses, the verbal discourse and the visual discourse, and each of them narrates the same story (Narančić Kovač, 2015, p. 144). Moreover, both discourses function in collaboration. The narration in picturebooks functions in such a way that images usually include features traditionally ascribed to the medium of language and the narration in words adopts and incorporates aspects typical of visual storytelling (Narančić Kovač, 2015, p. 222). Picturebooks, as a genre very close to children's literature, are a unique blend of words and pictures, according to Balić-Šimrak and Narančić Kovač, and the two media should be viewed separately, but also together in a unique narrative form (Balić-Šimrak & Narančić Kovač, 2011, p. 10). The authors also state that "illustrations in picturebooks stimulate and deepen the child's sense of aesthetic and contribute to the development of children's artistic creativity" (ibid).

#### **3.2 Translation and Adaptations**

According to Maria Nikolajeva, a translation is viewed as an adaptation, because a text crosses from language to language and adapts to the linguistic features of the target language. Some of the strategies used in translation are simplification, rewording, modernization, harmonization and establishment (Nikolajeva, 2005, pp. 238-239). Linda Hutcheon says that gains and losses are an expected consequence of every adaptation, even in those that are performed in the same medium. The alternative

to translation can be paraphrasing, when the author's words are not strictly followed, but the main idea is conveyed (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 16). Lawrence Venuti states that translators need "to render the source text without any deletions and with only such additions as might be necessary to make that text intelligible in the translating language and culture" (Venuti, 2007, p. 29). He separates translation and adaptation, because adaptation can depart from the original material and translation "can only inscribe an interpretation that inevitably varies the form and meaning of that text" (ibid).

### **3.3 Transmediation**

Nikolajeva calls the process of transferring a written word into a film transmediation or transmodalisation (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 229). These terms are usually used as synonymous to of adaptation. The difference is that, transmediation is a term that emphasizes the crossing from one medium to another while adaptation can be used when transforming a text within the same medium. Types of transmediation include plays, radio plays, musicals, operas, ballets, films, television series, and computer games based on written stories (ibid). Lawrence Sipe (1998) uses the term "transmediation" in a different way, to describe the semiotic process which happens in the repetitive reading as typical of the process of the immediate reception of picturebooks. The reason for this is „because we interpret the text in terms of the pictures and the pictures in terms of the text in a potentially never-ending sequence" (Sipe 1998, p. 102).

Linda Hutcheon defined adaptation by means of three perspectives: a formal entity of the product, a process of creation and a process of reception (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6). The original medium has its own identity and the changes being made to fit the new medium have to be announced. Also, according to Hutcheon, an author of an adaptation is called an adapter and in the stage of the second aspect given above, the creative process, he/she has to make changes and modifications to preserve the story and make it more relatable for the targeted audience. It is a process of (re-)interpretation and afterwards the (re-)creation. Furthermore, in the process of reception an adaptation is experienced through the knowledge the audience has, the connections and relationships between various literary texts, films, popular culture, and other references. This phenomenon is called intertextuality and it is an essential part of an adaptation (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 6-7). None of the perspectives can exist on their own

or be skipped. They complement each other and demonstrate how the process of adaptation progresses.

Diane Buttholph used the term innovation when referring to adaptation. Her study focuses on the individual recipient as an active agent who makes decisions on how to interpret the innovation. If the main idea of the innovation is well-defined, there is less chance of multiple interpretations, but the audience still link their previous knowledge to the new information and create a whole meaning (Buttholph, 1992, p. 464).

However, according to Lawrence Venuti, studies of film adaptation lack methodology. He states that the reason for this is that literary texts are valued more than the “second-order creations like adaptations” (Venuti, 2007, p. 26). He notes that in film studies the critical practice and the communicative model are mostly used, but that appropriate tools are missing because adaptation is a form of intertextuality “and therefore demands analytical tools designed specifically to describe and assess the significance of the transformations” (ibid). The film adaptation shares certain aspects with the materials it adapts, but it does not share an identity, and due to that it should be treated autonomously (Venuti, 2007, p. 27).

### **3.3.1 Film adaptations of picturebooks**

Erica Hateley explains how picturebooks are adapted. In picturebooks words and illustrations come together best “when writers and illustrators use different qualities of their different arts to communicate different information” (Hateley, 2013, p. 1). While adapting a picturebook into a film the authors meet a range of problems. Hateley begins by pointing out that it is impossible to translate, or rather convey into a film, the children’s private experience of reading a picturebook or having it read aloud. Also, it is hard to fit voices to characters without speaking roles in the original. Lines of drawings can be difficult to adapt into animated cartoons and the three-dimensional space of the film (Hateley, 2013, p. 2).

### **3.3.2 Film industry**

“The entertainment industry is just that: an industry” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 88). Adapters in the film industry, as Hutcheon refers to authors of adaptations, are screenwriters, directors, actors, producers, editors, and all people who work on the film. All of them have to be synchronised to create a new work from an already existing idea. To make money is usually the goal of most film productions, but especially adaptations of well-known books (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 114). For instance, the audience would come and pay to see a film adaptation of a book they like. The acceptance of the new content would vary, because, while reading, each reader makes visual images of their own, and the adapters cannot meet every expectation (ibid).

### **3.3.3 Disneyfication**

According to Alan Bryman (Bryman, 2004), the main strategy of the Disney Company while adapting a well-known novel, story, fairy tale, comic, etc. is simplification, but also cleansing from any unpleasantness. Disney format has its specific features, such as a happy ending, learning a valuable moral and life lessons, becoming the best version of oneself and good overcoming evil. “With the aggressive marketing of the Disney merchandise, these oversimplified versions often become better known than the originals” (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 234). Well recognizable product, but with little artistic value, is why Disney is criticized by many scholars, for example Bryman (Bryman, 2004), Nikolajeva (Nikolajeva, 2005) and Philip Nel (Nel, 2005). Nel also points out that by simplifying the thought-provoking content becomes non-existent. For instance, the picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* (1957) went through the process of Disneyfication by Dream Works Pictures in 2003. It caused Dr. Seuss’ wife, who has the copyright to his work, to forbid any other film adaptations of her late husband’s work (Internet Movie Data Base, 2018). Regardless of all the negative reviews, the feature film got “it grossed over \$US40 million, earning it the No 1 movie in its first weekend” (Mallan, 2005, p. 1). The description of this and the other adaptation and their comparison with the original is the topic of the following chapters.

## **4. The original and the adaptations**

This chapter summarises three versions of *The Cat in the Hat*, the original picturebook from the 1957 and the adaptations, the animated cartoon from 1971 and the feature film from 2003. The summaries are compared, and the differences are thoroughly explained in the fifth chapter.

### **4.1 The picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* (1957)**

Two children, Sally and the narrator (“I), were home alone on a rainy day. They had nothing to do except “sit, sit, sit and sit” (Geisel T. , 1957/2007, p. 3). Suddenly, something went “BUMP”! A strangely-looking cat with a white and red striped hat walked into the house and said: “I know it is wet. And the sun is not sunny. But we can have lots of good fun that is funny” (Geisel T. , 1957/2007, p. 3). He guaranteed that the mother would not mind his games and tricks. The children were interested in what the Cat was offering, but their pet fish was appalled and firmly protested. The first game they played was called ‘UP-UP-UP with the fish’ and the fish did not like it. Everything came tumbling down and the Cat made a big mess in the house. The fish reproached the Cat, but he was persistent in his intent to make the rainy day bright again. For the next game, he brought a big red box from which two creatures jumped out, the Thing One and the Thing Two. They started running around the house, flew kites, bumped and hit everything in their way. The mother’s nightgown got stuck in one of the kites, but it did not stop them. The mess they made was even bigger than before. The panic started when the fish noticed that the mother was coming home. The narrator (the boy) took a net, ran after the Things, caught them and demanded the Cat to pack up and leave. The Cat did as he was asked, leaving the children in a messy house to wait for their mother. Children started to despair, but the Cat came back with a red machine which cleaned everything up and put everything back in place. With a tip of a hat the Cat was gone, as if nothing had even happened on that wet, rainy day.

#### **4.2 The cartoon *The Cat in the Hat* (1971)**

The first adaptation of *The Cat in the Hat* was an animated cartoon released in 1971. It was directed by Howley Pratt and produced by Chuck Jones and Ted Geisel (Dr. Seuss). A not so lengthy picturebook was adapted into a 30 minutes long cartoon.

Two children were sitting by the window on a rainy day. Their mother had just left, and they had nothing to do. All of a sudden, they heard a bump. The door flew open and a Cat in a hat came into the house. After he introduced himself, he showed the children some of his tricks and games. The fish, Karlos K. Krinklebein, was aggravated and insisted the intruder should leave. The children agreed with their pet and with a heavy heart the Cat left the house. A few moments later, he barged back in and accused the fish of stealing his Moss-Covered Three-Handled Family Credenza. As the search started, so did the Cat's sorrowful song about his loss. To help in the search, the Cat brought his helpers, the Thing One and the Thing Two. They came out of a small purple box. The house was very messy and the fish very angry. Karlos started to doubt that the Cat was even a real cat. To prove the fish wrong the Cat started to sing a song in various languages about him being a real cat. The children joined the song and in the end the fish started to sing along. The fun was abruptly stopped when the fish spotted the mother coming home. The Cat gathered his things, thanked his hosts and left as fast as he could. The children were left alone in a messy house to wait for their mother. All of a sudden, the Cat came back in a red vehicle. He cleaned up the mess and put everything back in place, even the children were back by the window where their mother had left them. After the mother came into the house she told her children she had seen a cat in a hat riding a Moss-Covered Three-Handled Family Credenza.

#### **4.3 The film *The Cat in the Hat* (2003)**

*The Cat in the Hat* film adaptation was directed by Bo Welch and starred some of Hollywood best actors, Alec Baldwin, Mike Myers, Dakota Fanning and Spencer Breslin.

In a picturesque town of Anville there lived two children, Sally and Conrad, and their mother Joan. Joan was a real-estate agent, a single mother. Her boyfriend Lawrence lived next-door. He hated her children.

One day Joan had to organize a party in her house for her boss. Her house was spotless, and she instructed her children that it had to remain that way. When she was called back to the office, the children were left alone with their nanny Mrs. Kwan, who fell asleep as soon as she arrived. When it started to rain, the children had nothing to do. Suddenly a strange sound (a bump) came out of the closet. They peeked in and there was nothing. But, when they turned away, a giant Cat with a striped hat was standing behind them. The children at first panicked and ran away, but when they collected themselves, the Cat introduced himself and informed them about his intentions: he wanted the children to have fun. The pet fish got the power to speak and objected to everything the Cat said and did. The children ignored the fish and signed a contract with the Cat so they could have a lot of fun. They wrecked the living room first, then baked cupcakes in the kitchen, just as in TV commercials, and when they attempted to clean up the mess, they ruined their mother's dress for the party. The Cat had an idea for the messy situation. He brought a red box, from which two things came out, the Thing One and the Thing Two. The Things were special, because they did the opposite of what they were told to do. The mysterious box had to be locked with a special lock, because it was a portal to the Cat's world. As the Things started making the house even messier, the special padlock for the box got lost and the children had to go and find it. On their mission, Lawrence tried to stop them, but they managed to retrieve the lock and get back to the house before their mother. When they entered the house, the box was opened and a whole new dimension developed in the house. The children found the box, locked it and everything returned to normal, except for the house, which was still very dirty and ruined, and in the end it collapsed. The children were furious at the Cat and the situation he got them in so he was asked to leave. In the moment of absolute defeat, the Cat returned with a machine called D.I.R.T. (Dynamic Industrial Renovating Tractormajigger), cleaned up the house and just as Joan was opening the door, the Cat left. When the mother came in she was very pleased with her children and the cleanliness of the house. On the other hand, Lawrence tried to explain to Joan what was happening in the house during her absence, but she did not believe him and they broke up. In the end, everything was perfectly back to normal.



## 5. A Comparison

“Filmmakers naturally strive to make the most of the medium they are working with, which includes visual and acoustic aspects; yet in the process some sacrifices are inevitably made” (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 231). The changes are necessarily made, the form and the content of the original are necessarily affected, but with the purpose to adapt it to a new medium. This chapter focuses on showing how the characters, the sequence of events, the settings, culture-related items and humorous elements from *The Cat in the Hat* had been adapted in the adaptations under consideration.

### 5.1 Characters

Characters can be added or removed. The most frequent intervention when adapting is the one in the protagonist. “The convention of film media generally demands that positive characters are good-looking” (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 234). Does it apply to *The Cat in the Hat*?

The picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* has seven characters, two children and their pet fish, the Cat in the Hat, accompanied by the Thing One and the Thing Two, and the mother. These characters remain the same in adaptations, they have the same, or similar roles, but have different names, and characteristics and also differ in their behaviour. Table 1. shows characters from all three versions of *The Cat in the Hat*. It is visible from the table that the film adaptation has the most characters, but also it lasts the longest. All the characters are compared, and their main features emphasized.

Two children, a brother and a sister, are the main characters. The story develops because of their boredom. In the picturebook, the boy is the narrator; he mentions his sister Sally. Sally has no lines and she is only present in the visual discourse. The children only observe what the Cat is doing, and it entertains them, until the very end when they are left in a pile of rubbish and the house is in a mess. In the cartoon, Sally speaks and is an equally important participant as her brother. The boy is not the narrator any longer and he remains nameless. They participate in the Cat’s games and tricks, and they help out the Cat to find the lost vehicle. They are aware that the Cat should not be in the house and ask him to leave just after his arrival, which does not happen in any other version of the story. In the film, the children are named Sally and Conrad. Sally is poised, controlling and organized, and Conrad is the complete

opposite. They do not get along until the very end when their love and willingness to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the other saves them and gets them out of trouble. They discover the true meaning of family and the bond that connects them. This is a typical happy ending where the good wins, the evil are punished and everyone learns a valuable lesson.

*Table 1. The list of characters in the original narrative and in its adaptations*

	<b>The picturebook (1957)</b>	<b>The cartoon (1971)</b>	<b>The film (2003)</b>
<b>The boy</b>	no name, narrator	no name, not a narrator	Conrad, irresponsible child
<b>Sally</b>	a passive participant, no lines	an active participant, has lines	an active participant, behaves as an adult
<b>The Cat</b>	unpredictable, easy-going, plays tricks and games	witty, unpredictable, sings, dances, plays tricks and games	sarcastic, ironic, rude, inappropriate humour, plays tricks and games
<b>The fish</b>	no name, responsible, determined	Karlos K. Krinklebein, responsible, determined	no name, responsible, determined; at first an ordinary fish; later changes into a cartoon fish and starts talking
<b>The mother</b>	only appears in the end	appears in the beginning and in the end	participates in different scenes throughout the narrative, named Joan, a real-estate agent, a single mother, good-looking, naïve
<b>Thing One and Thing Two</b>	playful, carefree, unaccountable nonhuman creatures	playful, carefree, unaccountable nonhuman creatures	do opposite of what they are said to do, playful, carefree, unaccountable nonhuman creatures
<b>Lawrence</b>	-	-	Joan's boyfriend, hates children
<b>Mrs. Kwan</b>	-	-	nanny, sleeps through the action
<b>Nevis</b>	-	-	family dog, stays canine

A tall-talking cat with white-and-red-striped hat is one of the main characters, his name is the Cat in the Hat. In the original and in the adaptations the Cat is quirky and unpredictable. The picturebook Cat is fun and easy going. He teases the fish, plays games and tricks around the house. The cartoon version Cat is a bit different. He does tricks and games, but he also sings, dances and has witty comeback comments, especially in discussions with the fish. For example, the Cat has a scientific method called "Calculatus Eliminatus" which he learned at Cat Tech. It helps you find something by eliminating where it is not. He explains the method through a song. One

of the lines goes: “When you mislaid a certain something, keep your cool and don’t get hot. Calculatus Eliminator is the best friend that you got. Calculatus Eliminator always helps an awful lot. The way to find missing something is to find out where it’s not” (Jones & Geisel, 1971). The feature film version of the Cat bears only slight similarities with previous versions. He is a completely formed character with a background story. He comes from a different world; a new dimension of time and space and the red box represents a portal to that world. This is a fantasy element added to make the film more interesting and to explain the mysterious red box which appears out of thin air. Further, the Cat is sarcastic and makes a lot of comedian-like comments on the current affairs and popular culture. For example, corporate capitalist system is made fun off through the scene where the children are surrounded by lawyers and asked to sign contracts for them to have fun with the Cat. Also, the Cat seemed very much interested in Paris Hilton (famous socialite of the time) when he spotted her in a club. At the end of the cartoon and at the end of the feature film, the Cat announces that he would be back, making an opportunity for the filmmakers to make a sequel.

In the original and in the adaptations the fish represents a voice of reason. It argues with the Cat, reminds the children of the rules and has a firm stand in all the situations the children and the Cat encounter. In the film, the fish is a realistic-looking goldfish, until the Cat comes. It then becomes a cartoonish-looking talking fish. In all three versions, the fish has the same role and it is really determined to make the Cat leave. The only difference between the picturebook and the adaptations is that in the cartoon and in the film, it appears in more scenes and has more lines than in the original picturebook.

In the picturebook, the mother is absent from the very beginning. It is said that she is not at home. In the very last image, her leg is visible, and she asks her children about their day. Here the narrator asks the reader what they would do, whether they would tell their mother about the unusual day. In the cartoon, the mother appears in the beginning, then she leaves and says goodbye to her children. She returns in the end and tells the children that she has seen a cat, actually a cat in a hat riding a Moss-Covered Three-Handled Family Credenza. In the film, the mother is named Joan and she is a real-estate agent. She is a young and attractive fair-haired lady who tries to provide for her children as a single mother. She is portrayed as honest and hardworking, but at the same time very timid and coy. The whole background story is constructed for the mother to fit into the story.

In all three versions, Thing One and Thing Two are present. They are playful, carefree, unaccountable nonhuman creatures which come out of a box. In the picturebook it is a big red box, which the Cat carries into the house on his back. The film version also presents a big red box, which is, however, pushed into the house by the Cat. Only, the cartoon introduces some changes. The Cat takes out a small purple box out of his hat, it gets bigger, and the Things come out of it. In all three versions they have the only purpose to help clean up the mess the Cat has made. When they come, they make the mess even bigger, but in the end, they help to clean it up. In the film, there is one feature added to the characters of the Things. They do the opposite of what they are asked to do. Conrad takes advantage of that to slow his mother's arrival home. The Things speak English in the picturebook, they do not speak in the cartoon, and they have their special language in the film. In the end, they return into the box and leave with the Cat.

In the cartoon adaptation no new characters are added, but in the film, there are new characters. For instance, Lawrence is the neighbour and the mother's boyfriend. He hates the siblings and he is the main villain in the plot. When the children trick and defeat him, it serves as a moment of epiphany for the mother. She sees him for what he really is, a sleazy and arrogant man. The mother is pretty and nice, but Lawrence is not, he is vain and malicious, although he pretends to be nice and handsome. For instance, he wears a corset to look fit. This supports the above-mentioned theory that in cartoons and films good-looking people are perceived by the viewer as positive characters. The nanny, Mrs. Kwan, is also a new addition to the story. She is old and indifferent towards her job. She falls asleep and she functions as a mere marionette in the plot (e.g. she is the heavy object put on the lid of the box so that the content does not get out). One more added character is the family dog, Nevis. It does not get human abilities when the Cat comes, it remains in the realistic canine form. Nevis likes to run away from the house when someone opens the door. For the sake of the plot, the lock from the box ends up on Nevis's collar and it runs away with it, so that the children and the Cat have to go on a quest to find the runaway dog.

## **5.2 Events**

Nikolajeva says that in adaptation the original can be followed, and the plot will be faithfully adapted (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 231). This is, in fact, usually

impossible, so the filmmakers use a strategy of adapting the length of the plot by cutting out or adding episodes. In this way, they complicate or simplify the plot (ibid). Intervention into the original can make changes to the plot so that it affects the message and makes a completely opposite impact on the audience (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 232).

In *The Cat in the Hat* adaptations, new episodes are added, but the main events and the sequencing of them remain as in the original. In the film adaptation, more episodes are added, because if a piece is to be considered a feature film, it has to last at least 40 minutes. The cartoon adaptation has fewer new episodes added, but the advantages of the medium are used by adding songs and dance numbers. Table 2. compares the sequencing of events in all three versions of *The Cat in the Hat* by highlighting the main events and comparing them.

*Table 2. Sequencing of the events*

<b>The picturebook (1957)</b>	<b>The cartoon (1971)</b>	<b>The film (2003)</b>
- children are home alone on a rainy day	- the mother leaves and the children are home alone on a rainy day	- Conrad, Sally and Joan live in Anville - Joan has to leave for work and the house must remain clean - the children are home with the nanny when it starts to rain
- with a BUMP! a Cat in the Hat walks in	- with a BUMP! a Cat in the Hat walks in, but after one game he is asked to leave - the Cat comes back, accusing the fish of stealing	- children hear sounds from the closet and a Cat in the Hat appears behind them - the Cat sings, performs tricks, makes jokes and plays games
- the Cat shows the children some tricks and games	- children help the Cat search and make a mess in the house	- the children sign a contract with the Cat that nothing bad would happen - the Cat starts his programme for children to have fun and makes a big mess
- the Thing One and the Thing Two “help” to make a really big mess in the house	- the Thing One and the Thing Two come to help search the lock(?) or help tidy up? - the Cat sings about his hat	- the Thing One and the Thing Two come to help clean up, but they only do the opposite of what they are asked to do - the lock from the box has gone missing and the portal to the Cat’s world cannot be closed - the children go to search for the lock, while another world in a new dimension appears in their living room - they come back home with the lost lock and they close the portal

- children are left alone in a messy house and their mother is about to walk in	- the Cat leaves and the children are standing in a messy house	- the children are left in a messy and ruined house waiting for their mother to return
- the Cat returns, cleans the house and leaves	- the Cat comes back on his stolen item and cleans up - just before the mother comes, he leaves - the mother greets her children and says that she saw a cat in a hat going down the street with a Moss-Covered Three-Handled Family Credenza.	- the Cat and the Things come back and repair the house - the mother comes back and she is proud of her children for not messing up the place

The analysis of the picturebook, the cartoon and the film reveal some similarities in the sequencing of the main events. In the picturebook and the cartoon everything starts with two bored children on a rainy day. In the film, the audience is first introduced to the setting, the characters and their personalities.

In all three versions, problems occur when a funny-looking cat arrives and starts playing tricks and games around the house. There is a conflict between the fish and the Cat in all three versions, and it is a crucial part of the story. In the picturebook, it is only a verbal conflict, but in the cartoon, it is extended to physical contact, when the fish plucks the Cat's whisker as a punishment. In the film, the relationship between the Cat and the fish is more complex and is based on several sarcastic conversations. Also, the major parallel conflict in the film is that between Conrad and mother's boyfriend, Lawrence.

The climax is reached in all three versions when the Thing One and the Thing Two appear and everything spins out of control. In the picturebook, the Things make a big mess. In the cartoon, they appear to help out in the search, participate in the song and, while singing and dancing, make a mess. In the film they make a mess in the house and do whatever they want. But in the scene where Joan, the children's mother, is on her way home, the Things help out. They pretend to be the police officers and keep Joan occupied while the children try to tidy up the house.

In all three versions of *The Cat in the Hat*, after the climax is reached, the children are left alone in the racked house, devastated and with no solution to their problems. They are preparing themselves for the consequences they will face when the mother comes home. But, the resolution to the problem comes. Just as the Cat comes at the beginning of the story, he also comes in the end, cleans the house with his special vehicle and leaves as if nothing peculiar has happened that day. Everything is *status*

*quo ante*. Mother comes home, children look just as she left them and the Cat is nowhere to be seen.

The cartoon and the film adaptation follow the sequence of events as they are set in the picturebook. The main events also remain the same. However, some events are added. They do not change the overall meaning, but they do influence the story. The cartoon adaptation lasts less than 30 minutes and the adapters did not digress from the original. Still, they added songs and the episode when the Cat searches for his vehicle. The film adaptation lasts 82 minutes and the main events are not changed, but a developed background story is added. Children have personalities, the mother is an active participant from the beginning until the end, children are left at home with a nanny, the viewers are told that the Cat is from a different world, the characters search for the lock to lock the red box, the mother's boyfriend is children's enemy, etc. All those events make the story more interesting, fill in the time and build up expectations around the main events.

### **5.3 The Setting**

“Dynamic visual details, especially accompanied by music or song, make . . . descriptions enjoyable, which is a good example of adaptation to the specific medium” (Nikolajeva, 2005, pp. 231-232). The setting is an important part of many stories, from books to films. It sets the characters at a specific place and time and gives the reader/viewer the sense of familiarity and something they can relate to. In adaptations, if the original is lacking descriptions of the setting, the filmmakers are free to intervene and create what they think fits the plot.

In the picturebook *The Cat in the Hat* and in the cartoon adaptation, the setting is very similar. The location of both stories is in the interior of a house. The reader/viewer is not made aware of the exact place or time, and there is no direct cultural connection of the setting to any specific country. Both plots happen during a rainy day, and the atmosphere is gloomy and sad, but everything changes when the Cat arrives. In the picturebook, the story lasts as long as the reader reads, there is no time limitation. On the other hand, the cartoon adaptation lasts approximately 30 minutes, and that is the duration of the story. The only time marker given in the animated cartoon is the time when the mother would be coming back home and it is 3.30 p.m., so that the viewer knows the exact time when the story ends.

In the film adaptation, the setting is added and worked out into detail to give the viewer the sense of something familiar. The town where the film is set is called Anville, an image of a perfect American small town. In the first scene, the audience sees an idyllic setting, a town surrounded by meadows and mountains. The weather is perfect, bright and sunny, until it starts to rain. As the scenes unfold, the rain is nowhere to be seen. It has probably been only a light shower, characteristic for the spring and summer seasons. One more scene points out that the film is set in the USA. The Cat makes a comment when it sees a Rhode Island license plate, saying that they (the licence plates of Rhode Island) can rarely be seen in the street. It is a clear placing of the story into the USA and a joke about the size of the small state of Rhode Island.

#### 5.4 Cultural elements

The picturebook and the cartoon are very similar, from the drawings to the plot, yet there are two major cultural differences. In the picturebook, only two colours are used in illustrations, red and blue combined with white, which are the colours of the American flag. “One reason Seuss has been so successful in the United States has do with the fact that his works so strongly reflect values typically considered ‘American’, such as an ambitious drive, eagerness to participate in society and a dislike of racism or discrimination” (Angles, 2014, p. 165). The colours of the USA flag are very subtly incorporated so it is left to each individual to interpret them and infer the meaning. On the other hand, a variety of different colours has been used in the cartoon. Also, a major cultural element introduced by the creators is a song sang in various languages. The lyrics go: “In English, cat, hat. In French, *chat, chapeau...*”. The Cat sings this while wearing a French beret and the Thing One and the Thing Two dance the Cancan in dresses. It continues in Spanish “*el gato in a sombrero*”, while the image shows the Cat using the hat as a *matador* would deal with a bull. In German a cat is a *Katze* and a hat is a *Hut*. The song continues to the Eskimo language and says: “I’m a *gwunka* in a *bunka-kwunk* in Eskimo.” The last language mentioned is Russian and the Thing One and the Thing Two dance a traditional Russian folk dance while singing: “I’m a *shapka* in a *shylapah*.” The song has a merry melody followed by the entertaining and interesting lyrics which are accompanied by various dance numbers. The song is repetitive, which makes it easy to remember and the viewer can learn some



new words from different languages and see traditional elements which derived from the cultures the languages represent.

In the feature film many cultural references are also included. The first and the most obvious one is the image of a typical American small town, which the authors named Anville. The layout of the town is rows of identical houses with picketed white fences, everything in bright pastel colours, the grass is perfectly mowed, residents drive Ford cars and look unnaturally happy. All these things are considered as stereotypical representation of the American way of living. One more scene in the film indicates a modern cultural element, and it is when the Cat stages a cooking show which also resembles a commercial. It is a reference to the modern-day TV-obsessed culture of everyday living and to frequent cooking shows which air daily on TV. While hosting the show, the Cat cuts off its tail by accident and curses, but at that moment the show is temporarily stopped. This is a standard occurrence on TV, to censure foul language and too violent content. Furthermore, the children and the Cat come across a birthday party while searching for the dog. All Sally's friends are there, and she realizes she has not been invited. Peer rejection and being left out is a burning topic in many school communities and it is a big problem in many countries around the world. At that same party, the Cat becomes a *piñata*, a shaped container filled with candy. The children hit the container with a stick until the candy starts falling out. This festive tradition originates from Mexico and it is very popular in the USA.

### **5.5 Elements of humour**

In the picturebook the humour is in word play and in how the text rhymes. The characters, the setting and the events are playful and see like a product of children's imagination.

In the cartoon, humour is based on word play and rhymes, but also songs and funny names. The fish is called Karlos K. Krinklebine, and the Cat's car is named a "Moss-Covered Three-Handled Family Credenza". Also, there are elements of humour in the games that the children play with the Cat and in the songs they sing. The way the nonsensical lyrics make sense is entertaining and comical. For instance, the Cat expresses his emotions through the songs and when he is sad because he made a mess in the house trying to find his lost car, he sings (Jones C. & Geisel, *The Cat in the Hat*, 1971):

Very well. I'm a punk. A crotunculous shnunk. Nobody loves me, not one tiny hunk. I agree; I'm a gripulous, gropulous groo. I'm a shmoozler, a shmingler, and a foo-pobler too! I'm a horrendous object, which nobody loves. I'm untouchable, unless you wear anti-sceptical gloves. So what? I'm a punk! A crotunculous shnunk. Nobody loves me, not one tiny hunk. I'm a punk.

While the Cat sings his melancholy away, his words are followed by a series of movements and actions in which he tries to hide himself and show how worthless he is. Moreover, the manner in which the fish becomes angry when the Cat speaks to him or makes up a new game or a trick, also has humorous effects. The humour in the cartoon resembles the picturebook in the same mischievous, but comical and witty way.

The film starts with the scene of Conrad sliding down the staircase while his mother is not at home. It is normal for children to try doing what is forbidden, but the comical effect in this scene was to be achieved by Conrad acting responsible and protecting himself by putting a loaf of bread down his pants before sliding down the stairs. One more attempt of humour is when the mother is leaving the house and she gives Sally instructions not to chew tobacco. A child with a nicotine addiction rather causes the feelings of outrage, than humour. The Cat is meant to be the funniest character, just as he is in the picturebook and in the animated cartoon. But, the problem with the Cat's humour is in the inappropriate sexual comments. For example, when he sees a picture of the siblings' mother, he expresses his (male) interest. Furthermore, the children have to sign a contract with the Cat, and the Cat brings in a group of lawyers who come back again when the Cat cuts off his tail. The joke here is about corporate America and companies protecting themselves with contracts. The humour of this scene is indeed evident, but it may be confusing, obscure and irrelevant for children. One of many inappropriate and presumptuous jokes is the one about car mechanics. The Cat fixes the couch just as he would fix a car and his pants fall down. Along with inappropriate jokes, there is a bit of wordplay present and it is mostly in anagrams. For instance, S.L.O.W. stands for "Super Luxurious Omnidirectional Whatchamajigger" and the cleaning machine is called D.I.R.T (Dynamic Industrial Renovating Tractormajigger). The Cat does not speak in rhymes or use puns, he even

says that he is not good at rhyming, and those are some of the most highly appreciated elements of the original picturebook.

It can be concluded that the humour in the picturebook and in the cartoon is appropriate for children. It is mainly based on the elements of language, on puns, playful games, tricks, songs and dance. In the feature film the humour, especially in places, is motivated by the intention to make a statement, rather than to make children laugh.

## 6. Discussion

In this thesis, two adaptations of *The Cat in the Hat* are analysed, the cartoon (Hawley Pratt, 1971) and the film (Bo Welch, 2003). This chapter further explains the results of the comparison from the previous chapter and their implications for the meanings of the story and for their reception (audiences).

As previously stated, adaptation is a process of transferring a written word or another medium, such as a picturebook, into a film or yet another medium and many changes occur in the process. New events, elements, characters, dialogues, setting, etc. can be added to make the story suitable for the new medium. Regarding the original picturebook *The Cat in the Hat*, new content has been added in its adaptations into the animated cartoon, and especially into the feature film.

The cartoon is more similar to the original than the film. The first reason for that is because Dr. Seuss wrote the script, so the plots bare many similarities. The dialogues are written in a style which resembles that of the picturebook. The language used is simple and abounds in rhymes, word play and puns. For instance, when the Cat enters the house in the cartoon he says (Jones C. & Geisel, *The Cat in the Hat*, 1971):

Why do you sit there like that? I know it is wet and the sun is not sunny. I know it is damp and the sidewalks are runny. But what I can't see is why you sit there like that. I know some good games we can play.

In the picturebook, while entering, the Cat pronounces a text in a similar fashion (Geisel T. , 1957/2007):

Why do you sit there like that? I know it is wet and the sun is not sunny. But we can have lots of good fun that is funny.

The scene from the original is adapted into the cartoon so that the meaning remains almost intact, which can be seen from the example above. Dialogues are alike, but one novelty in the cartoon are songs and dance numbers. Humorous lyrics, cheerful melody and the playful tone of the speaking Cat makes the gloomy atmosphere of the rainy day disappear. In the cartoon, the slight semantic shift is made by his appearance and behaviour so that everything becomes more active and lively. The characters are

changed, in some aspects, but they do not differ from the picturebook too much. The first major change is in Sally's character. She becomes an active participant in the cartoon. The second modification is in the character of the boy, who remains nameless, but he is not the narrator anymore. The third change is that the fish has a name, Karlos K. Krinklebein, but it has the same role of the voice of reason as in the original. The Cat remains the same, except for the singing and the dancing, but he still likes to play games and tricks. Furthermore, the setting in the cartoon is drawn similarly as in the picturebook. One difference is in the colours, as the original has only two, blue and red in combination with white, and the cartoon has a range of different colours. On the whole, the biggest difference between the picturebook and the cartoon adaptation is in the medium, but the story was not altered in its meanings and they stayed faithful to the original ones.

When comparing the picturebook and the feature film, the first obvious difference is the length. The duration of the film is 82 minutes, which indicates that a lot of new content must have been added. The setting of the film is fictional and not supported by the picturebook setting. The idyllic town of Anville is created by the filmmakers so that the (American) viewer may have a sense of familiarity, or (a foreign viewer) of recognition (of the settings in many American movies and series). The atmosphere is cheerful and perfect. The next notable change is in the characterisation. The main characters remain the same, but they are "upgraded". The siblings, Sally and Conrad, are not two innocent children left at home alone on a rainy day. They have a disharmonious relationship characterised by conflict and disagreement. While they are completely opposite in their behaviour, in the end they show that they can overcome their differences. The person that the children love is their mother, Joan. In the picturebook, the mother has no particular role, except that children fear her reaction, and when she comes back home it means that the whimsical day is over. The film character Joan, on the other hand, is an active participant in the story. She is a single mother who encounters demanding situations, from raising two children and doing a demanding job with a rigorous boss, to coping with her manipulative boyfriend Lawrence. The boyfriend is an added character who is the villain in the film, a person who the children need to defeat. Joan's naivety towards Lawrence and his behaviour is exaggerated and she is characterised as a gullible woman. The next important character is the Cat. The Cat is entertaining and unpredictable, as he is in the picturebook. But, unlike the original character, the film Cat is perhaps too funny and

too unpredictable. His humour has no connection with that in the previous versions of this story, especially the picturebook. For instance, the rhymes and witty lines are used by the film narrator (voice-over), while the Cat does not use puns or any other language-related jokes. The language and jokes he uses are often inappropriate for the intended audience, children. It is best seen in the scene where Sally and Conrad start their first conversation with the Cat:

*Sally:* Who are you?

*The Cat in the Hat:* Who? Me? Why, I'm the Cat in the Hat. There's no doubt about that. I'm a "super-fun-diferous" feline...who's here to make sure that you're... Meeline? Key lime? Turpentine? I got nothin'. I'm not so good with the rhyming. Not really, no. Look, I'm a cat that can talk. That should be enough for you people!

*Sally:* Where did you come from?

*The Cat in the Hat:* Hmm, how do I put this? When a mommy cat and a daddy cat love each other very much, they decide that...

*Conrad:* Oh, no, no, no, no. Where did you *come* from?

*The Cat in the Hat:* My place! Where do you think?

*Conrad:* No, how did you get here?

*The Cat in the Hat:* I drove! Look, I've been here two whole minutes, and no one has offered me a drink. Harumph!

*Sally:* Sorry, Mr. Cat. Would you like some milk?

*The Cat in the Hat:* Milk? Ecch! No! Lactose intolerant. Gums up the works. *Oy.*

(Grazer, 2003)

The Cat does not know how to rhyme, he makes an unsuitable joke about where he comes from and he is lactose intolerant, so he obviously asks for alcohol. This set of jokes is just an example of the way the Cat speaks throughout the film and how he interacts with children. The children in the film do not respond to these jokes, because they may not be funny, and they, as children, expect adults to be serious and logical. On the other hand, the fish is the voice of reason. It tries to stop the children from playing with the Cat and it says a few lines which are similar to those in the picturebook. The fish participates in the film from the beginning until the very end and is consistent in the attempt to make the Cat leave. All the changes made in the characters, events and the settings, and all the added elements of tasteless humour and

sarcasm, function as a mockery of modern American society and make a political statement against the stereotypical American way of life.

The idea to make an adaptation of a picturebook like *The Cat in the Hat*, which is recognizable worldwide and beloved by many, can seem to be a guaranteed success. As it has been presented and explained above, the success of an adaptation has nothing to do with the original. The authors of an adaptation create a new work of art, which needs to be founded in the original, but does not have to follow it faithfully. They tell the story in their own way, with their own voice. An adequate example of a successful adaptation is the animated cartoon *The Cat in the Hat*. On the other hand, the feature film, with the same name and based on the same story, did not achieve the same success. The reason may be that the filmmakers tried too hard to turn the story into something that it is not and is not appropriate for; into a political satire. By trying to send a meaningful message they did not create a children's film, but a film with a doubtful artistic value and undetermined intended audience. In comparison to the animated film, which has a well-constructed plot, developed characters and worthwhile dialogues mixed with songs and dance numbers, the film lacks consistence and substance.

## 7. Conclusion

To adapt literature is risky, regardless of how good or bad it is done. This thesis provides an analysis of the three versions of *The Cat in the Hat*, in order to reveal the changes of the narrative world in the adaptations and their implications for the narrative meanings.

When widely known books are in question, the audience often has previous expectations and already formed opinions of how they would like it to be adapted. The positive side of this practice is that film adaptations promote literature, or picturebooks in this case, as forms of entertainment and source of knowledge and boost book sales. On the other hand, the adaptors create a new work as they have the creative freedom to interpret the original in the way they consider appropriate.

Dr. Seuss wrote *The Cat in the Hat* by using only 223 words and two colours, blue and red in combination with white. The real value of the picturebook is the simplicity and novelty it represents, and the achieved appeal of the created narrative in spite of the simple and seemingly limited resources.

In 1971 the picturebook was adapted into a cartoon and the authors of the adaptation took advantage of what this animated visual and audio medium has to offer. Dr. Seuss was involved in the process as one of the writers and producers. Therefore, they managed to stay true to the original in many aspects. Furthermore, some changes have been made, as the story in the picturebook is rather simple and short, and the authors of the cartoon adaptation extended the plot and increased the duration of the animated film by adding songs, music and extra dialogues, they changed the original selection of colours and developed the original characters so that they all became active participants in the plot. In result, the cartoon adaptation is very similar to the picturebook and preserves the main idea and the meanings of the original narrative.

The second adaptation of the picturebook is the film adaptation from 2003. The adaptors decided to make an 82 minutes long motion picture which automatically required more scenes and elements to be added. The story is set in a fictional American small town of Anville. All the characters have background stories, developed personalities, and distinguishable patterns of behaviour. The way they portrayed Sally, as a child who acts like an adult, and chews tobacco, is certainly exaggerated. On the other hand, Conrad is more childish than the boy narrator of the picturebook. The characters in the film all frown upon his behaviour, which does not fit the implicated



idyllic society. It seems that the Cat is supposed to be funny and witty, but he just comes across as inappropriate, rude and bad-mannered. In the film which mainly targets young audience, sexual remarks, foul language and unsuitable jokes, should at least be better blended in and not so obvious. The authors of the adaptation only made a mockery of a beloved picturebook by trying to make political statements and criticise the American society.

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### **Izjava o samostalnoj izradi rada**

Ja, Matea Bešenić, studentica Učiteljskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, izjavljujem da sam ovaj rad izradila samostalno uz uporabu navedene literature i uz konzultacije s mentoricom.

U Zagrebu, 28. rujna 2018.

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