

Cognitive Approach to Children's Adaptations: Accepting Pinocchio

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ABSTRACT: Following the contemporary trend of live-action remakes of classic children's films, the study offers a cognitive approach to children's adaptations at the intersection of adaptation studies and the cognitive branch of non-radical constructivism. After a brief theoretical-methodological introduction an interpretation of two film versions of Pinocchio from 2022 is presented.

The article will demonstrate how the latest adaptations *Pinocchio* by Robert Zemeckis and *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio* by Guillermo del Toro and Mark Gustafson, offer children the opposite direction of experience in the theme of accepting their own identity. This will be evident despite their very similar departure from the traditional paradigm of Pinocchio stories.

KEYWORDS:

cognitive adaptation studies, experient, children's adaptations, Pinocchio, revision

INTRODUCTION

The presented study offers a cognitive approach to children's adaptations¹ (in a broader sense, which includes revisions, remakes, reboots...) compatible with the synthesis of adaptation studies and the cognitive branch of non-radical constructivism that we introduced in our previous work.² Research on children's adaptations is necessarily also research on (specific) audience, which requires also an experience-oriented methodology such as reception aesthetics, phenomenology or cognitive science. Cognitive approach produces at least comparably sustainable interpretations of the adaptation process as non-cognitive methods, but at the same time, it responds more flexibly to recent empirical knowledge about the processes of the human mind and its development. It is therefore also useful in the analysis of specific children's experiences with art.³

Our research on new film adaptations of the Pinocchio story points to crucial challenges in the adaptation and revision of children's literature and films in the current media environment, which is increasingly influenced by the contemporary trend of live-action⁴ remakes of successful animated films (particularly evident in the recent production of Walt Disney Pictures⁵). Despite the effort to reach the young audience with successful stories in a new form, the creators do not always manage to avoid an aetionormative position that devalues the child viewer and his experience as a derivative of the "normal" experience of an adult.

The research sample of the study consists of several adaptations of the story of *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi⁶ (Carlo Lorenzini), which appeared in a magazine dated back to 1881 and was published in a book in 1883. The reach of the story of Pinocchio and its iterations is immense and in some cases, thanks to the cooperation of different media, it can also be perceived as a transmedia phenomenon. It is the second most translated children's book in the world, whose story is also expanding in the areas of

1 The concept of children's adaptations doesn't only refer to final media products. It also concerns the adaptation process, in which sources aimed at children are to some extent shifted towards the interest of adults and vice versa. Among other things, the term captures the current interest in adaptation studies, in which researchers focus on adaptations for children and also by children. To be consistent with this type of research, we keep its form despite the fact that in this study we do not focus on production by children. See HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *Children's Film and Television: Contexts and New Directions*. In HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 9.

2 GETLÍK, P. *Pohyb ku kognitívnym adaptačným štúdiám: adaptácia ako hra* [Moving towards Cognitive Adaptation Studies: Adaptation as Play]. Košice : Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2022, p. 6.

3 Using examples from children's literature, Iveta Gal Drzewiecka presents clear methodological guidelines for the use of cognitive methods in reader-oriented interpretations. DRZEWIECKA, I. G. 2022. *Čitateľ a vizualizácia literárneho naratívu* [The Reader and Visualisation of Literary Narrative]. Prešov : Pedagogická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, 2022.

4 This division is currently more stylistic than technological, as even live-action remakes include CGI animation.

5 Of the existing 21 films of this type from Disney, 10 were released only in the last 5 years. In 2023, two more films of this category, *Peter Pan & Wendy* and *The Little Mermaid*, were released, and another nine films are waiting for their new versions. See GROOT92. *Disney Live-Action Remakes*. IMDb.com 24 July 2023. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls083312980/>. LOWERY, D. *Peter Pan & Wendy*, 2023. [Film]; MARSHALL, R. *The Little Mermaid*, 2023. [Film].

6 COLLODI, C. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. [trans.] M. A. Murray. New York : Grosset & Dunlap, [1881-83] 1965.

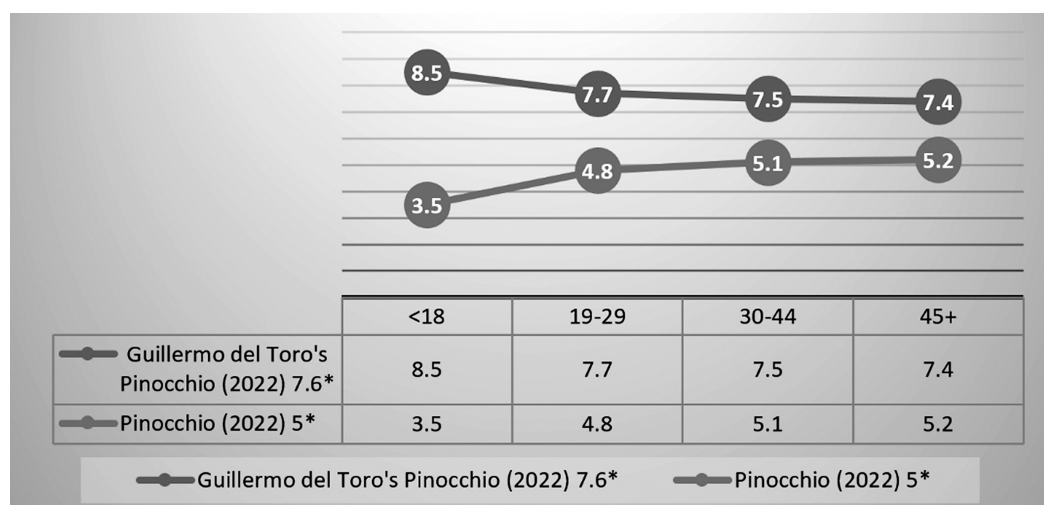


Figure 1 Ratings of Pinocchio films from IMDb by age

film and television, (especially puppet) theatre, video games, board games, amusement park rides, escape rooms, toys, and merchandise.

Pinocchio is interesting in itself for research on children's adaptations, as the previous introduction suggests. However, the main impetus for targeting our research was the recently reinforced paradigm shift in popular Pinocchio screen adaptations. The new branch of the stories presents Pinocchio first as a "substitute" for Geppetto's deceased son, and no longer aims to further transform the puppet into a boy, but accepts his form with all the original contradictions. The current significance of the combination of these motifs can be indicated by the fact that their merger was manifested in both the latest film versions from 2022, i.e. in Robert Zemeckis' film called *Pinocchio*,⁷ which he prepared for Disney, but also in the next film incarnation of *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*⁸ from Netflix, which puts forward its creator's distinctive handwriting in the title.

If we look at these films through the lens of rating (structured by demographic data) on IMDb,⁹ it is interesting to note that despite their thematic similarities, the wide reception of the films is not homogeneous.

In the offered graph, we visualize a continuous decrease in the rating¹⁰ of del

⁷ ZEMECKIS, R. *Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁸ del TORO, G. – GUSTAFSON, M. *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁹ Information about the rating from the IMDb page cannot be considered as an indicator of the quality of the work, but it can be used as a useful source of data or as an initial impulse for further cognitive media research. See CUTTING, J. E. Evolution of the Depiction of Telephone Calls in Popular Movies. In *Projections*, 2022, Vol. 16, Issue 2, p. 6.

¹⁰ It is no longer easy to get other similar data, since at the end of March 2023, IMDb gradually disabled access to full demographics. At the time of our research, these ratings (by age) could only be displayed on mobile devices. As of March 29, 2023, we are considering 92,137 entries – see *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio: Ratings*. IMDb.com 29 March 2023. Available at: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1488589/ratings/?ref_=tt_ov_rt. – And 37,691 entries – see *Pinocchio: Ratings*. IMDb.com 29 March 2023. Available at: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4593060/ratings/?ref_=tt_ov_rt.

Toro's Pinocchio and a gradual increase in the rating of Zemeckis' film in older audience. Regardless of the overall rating, in which the audience prefers del Toro's adaptation (7.6*) to Zemeckis's (5*), we can notice the biggest "jump" in ratings occurs in moving from the category under 18 to the following group 19-29. This is precisely the demographic "border" that qualitatively differs the most from the others and divides the group that is at the centre of cognitive interest in children's adaptations. After briefly summarizing the basic theoretical-methodological foundations of research on children's adaptations, we will try to offer an interpretation and comparison of these films that can clarify the indicated difference in the interest of younger viewers in these adaptations.

RESEARCH ON CHILDREN'S ADAPTATIONS AS RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCE

The problem of insufficient theoretical-methodological understanding of children's adaptations is most clearly manifested in the analysis of the adaptation of child protagonists in borderline life situations¹¹ (such as war or physical and psychological abuse). What we normally consider to be children's themes and children's stories often come into significant tension with what children experience in the real world. The resulting challenges in adaptation studies are pointed out by several researchers – for example, Ian Wojcik-Andrews and Hyun-Joo Yoo¹² – in *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television* edited by Casie Hermansson and Janet Zepernick, where the first section¹³ of the book is dedicated to children's adaptations. Robyn McCallum, who has already covered the issue of children's adaptations in a monograph,¹⁴ in the previously mentioned anthology aptly draws attention to the fact that despite the extensive and high-quality selection of works on adaptations "[o]nly a small number include more than a token chapter on children's films."¹⁵

As Thomas Leitch indicated in his list of less and more promising paths for *Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads*,¹⁶ there is great potential in researching the meta-characteristics¹⁷ of adaptations. When opening up the issue of children's adaptations, it is, therefore, meaningful to find out how adaptations for children "understand

11 ANDRIČÍKOVÁ, M. – GETLÍK, P. „Veľký zošit“ Agoty Kristof a jeho filmová adaptácia: svedectvo o (ne)dobrovoľnej anestézii [“The Notebook” by Ágota Kristóf and its film adaptation: testimony of (in)voluntary anaesthesia]. In *World Literature Studies*, 2019, Vol. 11, Issue 3, p. 96.

12 WOJCIK-ANDREWS, I. – YOO, H.-J. Revisiting Comfort Women History and Representing Trauma in South Korean Films Never Ending Story and Herstory. In HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, p. 94.

13 HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, pp. 37–146.

14 MCCALLUM, R. *Screen Adaptations and the Politics of Childhood: Transforming Children's Literature into Film*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

15 MCCALLUM, R. Adaptations for Young Audiences: Critical Challenges, Future Directions. In HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, p. 41.

16 LEITCH, T. Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads. In *Adaptation*, 2008, Vol. 1, Issue 1, p. 67.

17 In relation to the concepts of metadaptation – see VOIGTS-VIRCHOW, E. Metadaptation: Adaptation and Intermediality Cock and Bull. In *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, 2009, Vol. 2, Issue 2 – or meta-revision – see GETLÍK, P. – ANDRIČÍKOVÁ, M. Meta-Revision: The New Paradigm of Faustian Stories. In *Communication Today*, 2021, Vol. 12, Issue 1.

themselves" and how they process other children's metafiction, which is a problem that also interested Casie Hermansson in *Filming the Children's Book: Adapting Metafiction*.¹⁸ Through the problems of participation with the media and the progressive convergence of the media,¹⁹ the children as an experient²⁰ are coming to the attention of adaptation studies in the connection of *Adaptation and Interactivity* by Kyle Meikle²¹ in 2017.

In the same period, Meikle calls for phenomenological approaches in adaptations in the study *A Theory of Adaptation Audiences*²² but it is important to reflect also the generation of cognitive media research²³ interested (apart from "rational" processes) in a wide range of phenomena, including "emotions, affects and all other components of the human mind such as perception, attention, memory, language, imagery, creativity, intuition, problem-solving, consciousness, unconsciousness, etc."²⁴ A detailed summary of the intersections of adaptation studies with phenomenology and cognitive science can be found elsewhere,²⁵ but the unifying element in these areas is the tendency to accept some form of embodied mind/cognition hypothesis, in which mind "reflects correlations in experience"²⁶ due to the properties of the body and its interaction with the environment. Since the Pinocchio stories largely thematize the relationship between the body and the mind, the upcoming interpretation makes significant use of the knowledge of cognitive sciences, which try to study this problem from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives.

ACCEPTING PINOCCHIO FROM THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Our interpretation of the stories about Pinocchio, concerning the extensive pinocchiological²⁷ discourse, avoids generalizations about Collodi's intentions, but the image of the marionette has a conceptual background that cannot be overlooked from a cognitive point of view. Through the transformation of a marionette into a "real" boy, it is possible to illustrate several changes in the child's development. We

18 HERMANSSON, Casie E. *Filming the Children's Book: Adapting Metafiction*. Edinburg : Edinburgh UP, 2019.

19 JENKINS, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York – London : New York UP, 2006.

20 In the cognitive approach to adaptations, it makes sense to prefer the term experient, in which an intersection can arise between the creator and the percipient of the work due to the comparability of the mental simulation of adaptation – see TIKKA, P. Enactive Authorship: Second-Order Simulation of the Viewer Experience—A Neurocinematic Approach. In *Projections*, 2022, Vol. 16, Issue 1, p. 56. The advantages of the term are particularly evident in the analysis of experiences with different degrees of interaction (especially in the playful experience of children).

21 MEIKLE, K. *Adaptation and Interactivity*. In LEITCH, T. *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*. New York : Oxford UP, 2017, p. 550.

22 MEIKLE, K. *A Theory of Adaptation Audiences*. In *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 2017, Vol. 45, Issue 4.

23 GRODAL, T. *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture and Film*. Oxford – New York : Oxford UP, 2009.

24 Translated by the author from KUZMÍKOVÁ, J. *Kognitívna literárna veda: Teória, experimenty, analýzy* [Cognitive Literary Studies: Theory, Experiments, Analyses]. Bratislava : VEDA, 2021, p. 40.

25 GETLÍK, P. *Pohyb ku kognitívnym adaptačným štúdiám: adaptácia ako hra* [Moving towards Cognitive Adaptation Studies: Adaptation as Play]. Košice : Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2022, p. 23–26.

26 EVANS, V. Introduction. In EVANS, V. – BERGEN, B. K. – ZINKEN, J. *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader*. London – Oakville : Equinox, 2007, p. 676.

27 STONE, J. Pinocchio and Pinocchiology. In *American Imago*, 1994, Vol. 51, Issue 3.

can start with the transition to more fluid motor activity and end with more “controlled” primary affective circuits²⁸ – SEEKING, PLAY, FEAR, RAGE, LUST, CARE, and PANIC/GRIEF – which without other inhibitory cognitive mechanisms, figuratively speaking, always pulls the doll by a different thread.

The image of a puppet that turns into a boy is also an image of the maturation of the embodied mind, which manifests itself in the transformation of the body²⁹ in initiation into adulthood. At the very end, the artwork offers a self-reflective³⁰ moment of Pinocchio, who looks at his past form and finds it funny that he was once only a puppet.³¹ The prerequisite for the functionality of such an image in Pinocchio's stories is the difference between the mind of a child and an adult. It is most evident in the ratio between seemingly separate tendencies towards rationality and emotionality. By default, we consider rational decisions to be our own, but we often conceptualize emotional ones as something foreign, even though such a notion is empirically untenable. Emotional drives come from our embodied mind just like thoughtful decisions.

The body can be conceptualized through image schemas as OBJECT and CONTAINER. Since prototypical objects can be moved,³² it is not uncommon to project that some entity influences our movement and behaviour from within (e.g. the soul) or from without (Cupid, the muse). The experience of losing control over behaviour during a strong emotional involvement (compared to an emotionally balanced state) allows the child to be projected as a puppet, which seems to have not yet made up its own mind. In the story of Pinocchio, the inability to control the body manifests itself most prominently in the motif of lying, often easily seen³³ in the child.

Although the influence of primary affective systems on an individual's behaviour can be more effectively inhibited by higher (tertiary) cognitive processes with age,³⁴ their presence in consciousness does not disappear. This can be seen, for example,

28 PANKSEPP, J. – BIVEN, L. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*. New York – London : Norton, 2012, p. 2.

29 According to Nicoleta Călina and Cristiana Călina, the motif of transformation within the initiation is already essential in the origin of the story about Pinocchio and it can be traced back to the second century after Christ when in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* the Egyptian goddess Isis helps a character transformed into a donkey. See CĂLINA, N. – CĂLINA, C. The long life of Carlo Collodi's puppet between literature and cinema. Pinocchio: short excursus through screen adaptations and performances. In *AVANCA / CINEMA*, 2022, p. 251 (15).

30 A similar problem of identity and self-reflexive change of perspective (not only) of the child can be compared also in other cognitively focused interpretations of children's stories. See PROCHÁSKA, Lukáš. 2014. Konceptuálne metafory mysle a Alicy v krajine zázrakov [Conceptual Metaphors in Mind and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland]. In KUZMÍKOVÁ, Jana. *Literatúra v kognitívnych súvislostiach* [Literature in Cognitive Circumstances]. Bratislava : Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV, 2014, p. 57.

31 COLLODI, C. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. [trans.] M. A. Murray. New York : Grosset & Dunlap, [1881-83] 1965, p. 192.

32 TURNER, M. *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*. New York – Oxford : Oxford UP, [1996] 1998, p. 21.

33 The artistically captured gestures of rubbing the nose have their cultural justification, and that, in turn, has a biological basis in the so-called Pinocchio effect. It can be empirically documented by research on nasal temperature changes during lying – see RIHAN, B. – ALQUDAH, Y. A. On the Development of a Tool to Detect Pinocchio Effect Using Facial Heat Distribution. In *SoutheastCon*. Raleigh (NC), 2020.

34 PANKSEPP, J. – BIVEN, L. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*. New York – London : Norton, 2012, p. 16.

in panic attacks³⁵ as manifestations of the PANIC/GRIEF circuit. Therefore, an adult individual is by no means exempt from his own internal contradictions, but compared to a child, he can have a wide range of tools to deal with them. Through meta-cognitive and metaemotional processes,³⁶ in which we reflect on our own emotions and states of mind – for example, anger at one's own jealousy or shame at affection –, internal conflicts can be unified but also accentuated. One of the main signs of an individual's maturity is the ability to process or accept these paradoxes, which Pinocchio also tries to do. In this regard, some children can even be considered much more mature than adults. In the same way, one can attribute "maturity" to some adaptations for children, but also "infantileness" to adaptations for adults.

Adaptations of Pinocchio aimed exclusively at adult³⁷ audiences are rare, but the joint experience of a child and an adult in works with multi-layered thematic underpinnings for different age groups is more than expected.³⁸ The PG rating of the two film adaptations of Pinocchio story from 2022 – *Pinocchio* by Rober Zemeckis and *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio* – also indicates the presence of more serious themes in these versions. The aspect of darkness (effectively balanced with humour) can be attributed mainly to del Toro's incarnation of Pinocchio, where the fantastic fictional world is historicizing³⁹ to the period of Fascist Italy. Zemeckis' work also attempts to bring a more serious tone to the film than its famous predecessor from 1940.⁴⁰ This effort is in conflict with other (didactic) ambitions of the new adaptation, which cannot be summed up only by general commercial interest in the criticism typical of "Disney bashing."⁴¹ The examined pair of films differ from Collodi's story and many other adaptations in the two fundamental framing motifs. In both adaptations, Pinocchio comes to life after the death of Geppetto's son, and in the end, Pinocchio's puppet form is accepted without the external transformation into a "real" boy.⁴²

The creation of Pinocchio is usually integrated through two processes, namely the production of the puppet and the animation of the wood, while the log is not always

35 PANKSEPP, J. – BIVEN, L. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*. New York – London : Norton, 2012, p. 314–315.

36 OLIVER, M. B. Exploring the Paradox of the Enjoyment of Sad Films. In *Human Communication Research*, 1993, Vol. 19, Issue 3.

37 Concerning our research sample, we can mention the erotic comedy *Pinocchio*, in which the lonely Geppettina creates her lover – see ALLEN, C. *Pinocchio*, 1971. [Film].

38 Efforts to mechanically identify the addressee in terms of age can even reduce the interpretive potential of the work. See ANDRIČÍKOVÁ, M. 2013. *V znamení premeny (Interpretačné štúdie o autorskej rozprávke)* [In the Sign of Transformation: Interpretational Studies on Authorial Tales]. Levoča : Modrý Peter, 2013, p. 11–12.

39 HUTCHEON, L. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York – London : Routledge, 2006, p. 158.

40 SHARPSTEEN, B. – LUSKE, H. *Pinocchio*, 1940. [Film].

41 McCALLUM, R. Adaptations for Young Audiences: Critical Challenges, Future Directions. In HERMANSSON, C. – ZEPERNICK, J. *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, p. 42.

42 Exceptionally, Pinocchio characters do not change into boys if their anthropomorphic form is not significantly problematized, as is the case in the film *The Adventures of Buratino*, which adapts Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy's version of the story – see IVANOV-VANO, I. – BABICHENKO, D. *Priklyucheniya Buratino*, 1959. [Film]. See also TOLSTOJ, A. *Zlatý klúčik alebo Buratinove príhody*. [trans.] Z. Jesenská. Bratislava : Mladé letá, [1936] 1999.

explicitly animated by the magical Fairy. The carving of the puppet is sometimes justified by Geppetto's attempt to earn money⁴³ or to return to childhood,⁴⁴ but the most common reason is simply Geppetto's loneliness and desire for a child. Either a puppet is made from living or increasingly vital wood, as in the original book,⁴⁵ or Pinocchio comes to life only after the puppet is carved, as in the Disney classic. In the course of its development, the child is relatively sensitive to the question of justifying its own existence in relation to the parents' intentions. Regardless of the level of planned parenthood, one can argue about the neutrality of the child as a "coincidence" or "surprise" but it is difficult to question the positive dimension of the child as a "miracle" and the negative view of the child as an "error" or "mistake".

The possibilities of contradictory cognitive integration⁴⁶ of the child's own self-evaluation and the story of Pinocchio increase in the narrative, where Pinocchio comes to life already as a formed puppet. It is a consequence of the main character not participating in the creation of his own body through growth or interaction with the environment. The potential for the non-fulfilment of previously formed parental ideas is highlighted because the child has no way of correcting them in the process of creation. In the case of an already living log, Pinocchio's shape is influenced by his (im)patience or his own preferences – maybe he does not want his nose shortened.⁴⁷ Geppetto's frequent disappointment with Pinocchio's behaviour can be fully expressed in adaptations, where the puppet comes to life as a "ready-made" vision of the parent that Pinocchio does not represent in his behaviour – it seems that the CONTAINER is not "properly filled". If, in addition, the model is not only a generic "ideal" boy, but a comparison with a dead sibling is possible, the comparative principle in a potential experience grows. In terms of the plot, a similar motivation for creating the Pinocchio character is also manifested in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*⁴⁸ in temporarily replacing a terminally ill sibling.

Through the relationship of an identifiable older sibling and his puppet imitation, the relationships between the previous work and the adaptation can also be projected. Del Toro's Pinocchio creates such a metadaptive connection with the literary work through the explicit presence of the little boy Carlo. He dies in a dramatic scene after a bomb explodes in a church. Zemeckis doesn't include any scenes with Geppetto's son. We don't even know his name, only his likeness from the photograph. In the latter case, a more pronounced metadaptive potential is manifested rather in connection with the earlier Disney version. The body of the new Pinocchio seemingly

43 GARRONE, M. *Pinocchio*, 2019. [Film].

44 D'ALÒ, E. *Pinocchio*, 2012. [Film].

45 The original order, where life precedes the parental creation of the puppet, is maintained, for example, by the Italian versions, in which Roberto Benigni first acts as *Pinocchio* – see BENIGNI, R. *Pinocchio*. 2002. [Film] – and later he portrays Geppetto – see GARRONE, M. *Pinocchio*, 2019. [Film].

46 FAUCONNIER, G. – TURNER, M. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002, p. 11–15.

47 D'ALÒ, E. *Pinocchio*, 2012. [Film].

48 SPIELBERG, S. *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, 2001. [Film].

“expands” with CGI to a third dimension compared to the original Disney animation, but apart from that it is a faithful copy.

A purely text-centric approach to adaptations could leave out a large part of the issue of metafiction from the research on children’s adaptations since children do not always have to think about the ontology of the presented world. However, from a cognitive perspective, metafiction – whether in the form⁴⁹ of metanarrative (mostly using analogy), metalepsis⁵⁰ (awareness, communication, or movement between worlds) or disnarration⁵¹ (denial or alternation of previous narratives) – is not primarily about thematizing the fictionality of the work, but highlighting the characteristics of the embodied mind during the experience of art.⁵² For example, a child can experience a metafictional effect through the immediate contrast between the simulated and physical world, the contrast between the fictional worlds of the previous work and the adaptation, or through the *mise en abyme* technique.

In the older Disney version,⁵³ Geppetto’s cuckoo clock offers the looping of micro-narratives that naturally contrast the motifs of birth and death with the addition of alcoholism and physical punishment of children. A viewer familiar with Collo-di’s work may remember Pinocchio’s first contact with harsh childhood reality in the opening chapter of the book. The alcoholic Master Cherry beats him mercilessly against the wall when he hears a voice from a log – it does not want to be cut.⁵⁴ However, the metafictional effect of the metanarrative type can also arise in a child thanks to the parable between this micro-narrative of a classic animated film, his own life experience, and Geppetto’s kind behaviour towards Pinocchio. Zemekis used allusions (in a comparable scene in the remake) to other Disney-owned characters. Sheriff Woody Pride, Donald Duck, and his nephews, Roger Rabbit and Jessica Rabbit or Maleficent will climb out of cuckoo clocks in the new version. Instead of the previous emphasis on the “didactic” dimension of the story, the new version emphasized its commercial aspect as another Disney product.

As we already mentioned, revisions of previous sources can be seen as siblings of their older versions. They are also looking for their own path and want to be accepted

49 MACRAE, A. *Discourse Deixis in Metafiction: The Language of Metanarration, Metalepsis and Disnarration*. New York – London : Routledge, 2019.

50 Both films manage to induce a metaleptic effect mainly thanks to the cricket narrator, who is aware that he is part of the story and in Zemeckis’ film even argues with his past self about the rhetorical problems of the tale.

51 There is great potential for disnarrative effect when watching revisions of such a famous story as Pinocchio. It is most evident in the recent Russian adaptation – ROVENSKIY, V. *Pinocchio: A True Story*, 2021. [Film]. –, which even explicitly points out that it will finally separate the previous fiction from the real Pinocchio story and thus rhetorically devalues the status of previous versions through allusions to them.

52 The relationship between adaptation and metafiction from a cognitive point of view is discussed in detail elsewhere, but at this point, it is necessary to at least draw attention to the importance of the metafictional effect that arises when the mind processes and verifies the relationships between multiple levels of perceived reality. See GETLÍK, P. *Pohyb ku kognitívnym adaptačným štúdiám: adaptácia ako hra* [Moving towards Cognitive Adaptation Studies: Adaptation as Play], p. 171.

53 SHARPSTEEN, B. – LUSKE, H. *Pinocchio*, 1940. [Film].

54 COLLODI, C. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. [trans.] M. A. Murray. New York : Grosset & Dunlap, [1881-83] 1965, pp. 10–11.

as they are. In both analysed films, Geppetto comes to terms with Pinocchio's new form at the end, and the metadaptive reading naturally offers an acceptance of infidelity to the original. At the same time, if the significant effect of accepting the contradictions (of a deep internal change without its explicit external manifestation) is to be truly felt, this conflict must first be emphasized. Even though Zemeckis' Geppetto, played by Tom Hanks, verbalizes at the end of the film that he loves Pinocchio as he is, Geppetto's internal conflict is not thematized at all during the course of the film. It appears almost unmotivated at the end. Del Toro, on the other hand, gives Geppetto plenty of opportunities to express his disappointment. He multiplies the same theme in a subplot where Pinocchio's friend Candlewick deals with a complicated relationship with his father, a Nazi officer who wants to make perfect "puppet soldiers" out of his son and his peers.

For adapter, there is a counterintuitive way to not strengthen the concept of creation as a mistake/error in a child's perception. It is possible to establish only the subjective perception of Geppetto, who considers his child a failure. At the same time, it is crucial to weaken the objective representation of the child-mistake, which would present Pinocchio's creation as a questionable or unnatural phenomenon. This is exactly what del Toro does when he uses clear Frankensteinian⁵⁵ allusions in Pinocchio's creation (e.g. the horror stylization of Pinocchio's production during a night full of lightning) and Geppetto's own imperfections. In a drunken state, Geppetto desperately decides to make a new Carlo out of pine. Pinocchio's asymmetrical form and all his "imperfections" arise due to Geppetto's hasty efforts and alcohol. Midway through the process, he gives up with the words "I will finish you tomorrow."⁵⁶ The exact opposite will be seen in Zemeckis' direction. As in other adaptations in which Pinocchio only comes to life after the puppet is completely finished, Zemeckis presents Geppetto's meticulous work.

In the supernatural (objective) perspective of the story, Pinocchio's position as a mistake is reversed. Del Toro's Fairy does bring an unfinished puppet to life, but there is no indication of any wrongdoing in the supernatural act itself. The creation of Pinocchio is simply a miracle. Del Toro offers a dual manifestation of the Fairy in the form of Life (Sprite) and her extension "sister" Death (Sphinx). There is a lot of religious and mythological imagery in del Toro's films and these beings are strikingly similar to the depiction of angels in the Bible (Ezekiel 10:12),⁵⁷ in which at least two fundamental attributes are conceptually integrated. The potential of the omnipresent and omniscient God is manifested in them.

Omnipresence is evident, for example, in the multiplication of their wings, which point in different directions, and the all-seeing aspect is manifested in the fact that their entire body (and wings) are covered with eyes. The certainty of bringing

⁵⁵ Frankensteinian motifs and the problematization of the parent-child relationship are common in Guillermo del Toro's work. Unsurprisingly, he's also currently working on a standalone adaptation called *Frankenstein*.

⁵⁶ del TORO, G. – GUSTAFSON, M. *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁵⁷ The Angel of Death is similarly depicted in his other work – see del TORO, G. *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, 2008. [Film].

Pinocchio to life through the blend of omnisight and omnipresence is highlighted tactilely when Sprite touches the wooden chest. Contrary, Zemeckis's Fairy is giving life from a distance with a beam of light that first aims at a photo of a dead boy. The frame moves and the beam ends up on a wooden puppet. Subsequently, the Fairy descends to Earth and the experient perceives a series of indications (verbal and visual) that a mistake has been made. With the help of the MIND IS A MACHINE metaphor, the scene resembles the claim of an electronic device that the Fairy "restarts" by touching it again when Pinocchio does not behave as requested. Instead of his own motor activity, he only mirrors the movements and words he sees. Del Toro, on the other hand, does not present the child's need to imitate as something to be mechanically corrected. Although this is a parental challenge for del Toro's Geppetto, it is a natural part of Pinocchio's development, which is thematized with a funny musical piece.

Sprite in del Toro's Pinocchio does not have to justify, explain or correct the existence of the puppet at the beginning, but Geppetto must learn to accept him, which he tries to do throughout the film. Tom Hanks plays the ideal father in Zemeckis' film. He quickly accepts the wooden child despite originally wishing for his dead son. He accepts the mistake of supernatural powers from the start. We do not deny the possibility of an alternative interpretation, nor do we claim that this is the director's intention, but we perceive that while Zemeckis shows how to love children even if they are a mistake, del Toro shows that a child is never really a mistake even if a parent may think so.

Del Toro's conflicted Geppetto, who himself sometimes allows to be pulled by anger and alcohol, also relativizes the naive and idealized child's idea of an adult parent as a "finished" person. He points to the importance of continuous personality development. Geppetto is as full of asymmetries as his son, and yet they both deal with them. Therefore, no further physical transformation of the puppet into a "real" boy is required. The motif of transformation is maintained when Pinocchio, after several moves between the worlds of the living and the dead, eventually loses his immortality to save his father. His body, however, remains outwardly unchanged.

On the meta-level, we can perceive the same difference in the form of these adaptations. In the spirit of the current trend of live-action Disney remakes, Zemeckis will present, in addition to the ideal Geppetto, an attempt at an ideal fusion of cartoon style and photorealism, but the overall look of the film is bland. At a time when Zemeckis insists on live-action revitalization with a lot of CGI characters, del Toro opts for traditional stop-motion animation. It will thus ensure the consistency of the appearance of both reality and animation in del Toro's film. In the short documentary,⁵⁸ which is released alongside the film, the creators admit to many deliberately animated small flaws and asymmetries. We can see many "unmotivated" gestures that help to animate the puppet world. In this way, the fulfilment of the principle of mise

58 [no credits] *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio: Handcarved Cinema*, 2022. [Film].

en abyme, in which real puppets play a puppet show, is also amplified on the meta-fictional level.⁵⁹

Zemeckis' film ends with the traditional cliché of literary adaptations⁶⁰ by closing a large Italian leather-bound book with the inscription "Pinocchio", thus demonstrating the adaptation's ability to rewrite its predecessors. The Italian text of the last page copies the last words of the talking cricket in the film: "In his heart, Pinocchio is as real as any real boy could ever be."⁶¹ Del Toro's story ends with a montage of Geppetto and Pinocchio's happy life and finally, naturally, Geppetto's death. Before the closing credits, del Toro's Sebastian J. Cricket's last words refer to the possibility that Pinocchio will die one day "and maybe that makes him a real boy. What happens, happens. And then, we are gone."⁶²

Del Toro's darker but funny story (not only) for children can create an experience as if he were talking to an adult about "adult things" and letting the children listen. Children can choose for themselves in what proportion they will perceive the serious and laughable nature of this world and especially their parents, who are not flawless. Zemeckis's *Pinocchio* explicitly encourages children to accept themselves and to live a moral life but does not draw attention to similar challenges in the parents standing behind them.

CONCLUSION

In our study, we tried to present a cognitive approach to children's adaptations as part of the project of cognitive adaptation studies. We offered an interpretation of the films *Pinocchio*⁶³ by Robert Zemeckis and *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*⁶⁴ by Guillermo del Toro and Mark Gustafson. We were interested in the paradigm shift of *Pinocchio* adaptations on the screen in 2022, in which *Pinocchio* is a replacement for the dead son and his puppet form is accepted. Despite these revisions, the two comparable adaptations show a surprisingly significant difference in experiential potential, as indicated by the audience ratings of the films, which differ depending on the age of experients.

We followed a contemporary trend of live-action remakes of children's films and an alternative revisionist approach to children's adaptation. Our analysis sheds light on a phenomenon in which seemingly child-oriented adaptation manifests itself in greater synchronization of the adult experience and vice versa. Zemeckis's adaptation explicitly encourages the effort to accept oneself, but

⁵⁹ Through the cognitive effects of push and pop – see STOCKWELL, P. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, [2002] 2005, p. 47. –, the deictic shift is also realized during *Pinocchio*'s repeated deaths and returns to the world of the living.

⁶⁰ LEITCH, T. *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2007, p. 158.

⁶¹ ZEMECKIS, R. *Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁶² del TORO, Guillermo – GUSTAFSON, Mark. *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁶³ ZEMECKIS, R. *Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

⁶⁴ del TORO, G. – GUSTAFSON, M. *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*, 2022. [Film].

minimizes the internal contradiction of the characters and does not give more space for the experience of self-acceptance. Del Toro's adaptation does not avoid the contradictions of the embodied mind in children and adults and accepts them with humour, bringing the adult and the child closer together. The most significant limitation of our approach remains the fact that without the additional use of experimental methods, its value in describing the real experience is limited, but the conclusions of our interpretation are not inconsistent with empirical data, which (among other things) show a much wider range of ratings (by age) for Ze-meckis' film (1.7) than del Toro's adaptation (1.1).

The study is an output of the project APVV-19-0244 Methodological Procedures in Literary-Scholarship Research with an Impact on the Media Environment.

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