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METATEXTUALITY AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN STEPHEN SONDHEIM'S *INTO THE WOODS* ON STAGE AND SCREEN**

This paper focuses on the transmedial relationship between Stephen Sondheim's 1987 Broadway musical *Into the Woods* and its 2014 film adaptation directed by Rob Marshall and produced by Disney Studios. It places emphasis on the various medium-specific narrative devices the two texts employ in order to bring forth the story's central motif of storytelling. The metatextual motif of storytelling is deconstructed against Stephen Sondheim's postmodernist ideology as he challenges the closed system within which fairy-tales traditionally figure, drawing attention to the artificiality of the inherited notions of good and evil, and by extension, the fallibility of prescribed narratives. Finally, this paper offers a detailed analysis of narrative layers and narratorial figures in *Into the Woods* on stage and screen, ultimately concluding that, due to its lack of an omniscient narrative voice to be questioned, the story's transposition onto the screen fails to reiterate the significance of metatextuality of the central motif that has proven fundamental to Sondheim's play.

Keywords: Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, metatextuality, narrative techniques, film adaptation

1. Introduction

Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (1970) and *Follies* (1971) mark a breakaway from the musical drama as established three decades earlier by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. While traditional musicals rely on familiar tropes and clearly outlined plots, ensuring a decidedly patriotic conclusion for their archetypal protagonists, Sondheim's signature form – loosely labelled *concept musical* – arises as a response to the social upheavals of the previous decade. It foregoes linear plots in favour of an overarching idea embodied by all production aspects, fostering a disposition to comment rather than to narrate. It is thus on the account of an experimental structure and defiance of dramatic conventions that, despite his reputation and an extensive oeuvre, Sondheim's musicals are seldom adapted for film. In fact, as of now, only four³ of his plays have been transferred

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3 Given that the practice commands ascribing musicals to composers, rather than lyricists or librettists,

onto the screen – *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962, adapted in 1966), *A Little Night Music* (1973, adapted in 1977), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979, adapted in 2007) and *Into the Woods* (1987, adapted in 2014) – all of which, while thematically subversive, are underpinned by a clearly outlined plot and progressive action.

The focus of this paper is the metatextuality of *Into the Woods*, particularly the way it is reflected in the transmedial relationship between the stage play and Rob Marshall's film adaptation. The paper considers the problem of narration and medium-specific devices the two texts employ in order to highlight the metatextual aspects. The original Broadway production opened in 1987, marking the second collaboration of the prolific partnership between Sondheim and librettist James Lapine. The story focuses on the interplay between "Little Red Riding Hood", "Jack and the Beanstalk", "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel", placing the four fairy-tales in the same universe alongside the original story of the Baker and his wife whose wish to have a child instigates the action. Sondheim's postmodernist approach to classic fairy-tales shifts the focus onto the fallibility of the ever-after. As a result, *Into the Woods* does away with didacticism, inviting instead for the questioning of the morals said fairy-tales traditionally impart. The show deconstructs the inherited notions of heroism and villainy, portraying both categories ambiguously and ultimately denying the audience the traditional battle bound to result in the triumph of the good. Moreover, drawing from Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, *Into the Woods* abounds in Freudian subtexts, death, and violence, bringing the musical closer to the traditional variations of the tales.

In 2014, *Into the Woods* was adapted for film by Disney Studios. Notwithstanding, in contemporary American culture, 'Disneyfication' has "obfuscated the names of Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Carlo Collodi" (ZIPES 1995: 21). In that respect, by eschewing a happy ending, the stage production upends the trope that the Disney tradition is built on. It therefore comes as no surprise that Marshall's adaptation cuts down on violence significantly, and even omits characters and musical numbers, consequently altering several plotlines. Nonetheless, the film does retain the original story's postmodernist scepticism, as it exploits cultural potential of fairy-tales, offering alternative, open-ended stories for familiar characters. The metatextual aspect of the source material, however, is greatly undermined due to Marshall's choice of filmic narrative devices. Imbued with cautionary overtones enveloped in the central motif which warns the storytellers that "children will listen", *Into the Woods* draws attention to the process of sto-

West Side Story (1957) and *Gypsy* (1959), although adapted for film, are not classified as Sondheim's musicals in this paper, as he is only credited for the lyrics. It is, however, worth noting that both musicals, like *Forum*, *Night Music*, *Sweeney*, and *Woods*, are exceedingly narrative in structure. It should also be acknowledged that an adaptation of Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), which famously subverts the play's temporal unity by presenting the events backwardly, chronicling the lives of a group of friends from middle age to young adulthood, is currently in pre-production; the movie is set to be filmed over the course of twenty years and is to be directed by Peter Linklater, who has previously undertaken a similar challenge with the film *Boyhood* (2012). Furthermore, after numerous plans for adapting *Follies* fell through, in 2019 it was confirmed that an adaptation is in pre-production, set to be directed by Dominic Cooke. The sudden surge in interest in adapting Sondheim's concept shows thus begs the question as to whether it is because cinema lacked stylistic and narrative devices to accommodate the concept shows' transposition onto the screen, or owing to Sondheim's now firmly established reputation as the most significant contributor to musical theatre which in turn warrants the attention of major film studios.

rytelling as well as the responsibility of storytellers to question the tradition rather than to reiterate it. In the film, the absence of a heterodiegetic narratorial figure compromises the significance of the central motif as it fails to filter the story through an objective perspective, thus downplaying the impact of the traditional meta-narratives on the nature of storytelling.

With its critical approach to the literary genre it appropriates, *Into the Woods* focalizes its central theme of storytelling through a metatextual lens, placing emphasis on the narratorial figures. While the stage musical relies on the physical presence of the narrator who relates the events of the story to the audience by means of Brechtian distancing thus mimicking the ancient tradition of oral storytelling (and whose status of a mediator is changed to that of an active participant in the story), the film employs voice-over narration by the Baker who, apart from his intradiegetic role, doubles as the disembodied voice of the narrator. Drawing upon Gerard Genette's narratological model, this paper aims to deconstruct narrative layers in both texts in order to determine the medium-specific devices they employ in order to reinforce the metafictional nature of storytelling which lies at *Into the Woods's* core, relating it to Sondheim's original objective to challenge the fallibility of prescribed narratives.

2. Beyond the Ever-After: Themes, Characters, Intertextuality

Into the Woods borrows characters, plots, and motifs from four traditional fairy-tales, which essentially makes it, in the widest sense of the word, an intertext. The tales are connected by means of the ingredients – a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, a slipper as pure as gold and hair as yellow as corn – necessary to create a potion to restore the youth and beauty of the Witch, and ultimately break the curse of barrenness she placed on the Baker's house. The show opens with a musical "Prologue" in which the characters express their wishes, all of which come true by the end of the first act, "and as it came to pass, all that was wrong was now right, the kingdoms were filled with joy, and those who deserved to were certain to live a long and happy life" (SONDHEIM & LAPINE 2014: 96); Cinderella's kind-heartedness is rewarded with a royal future, Jack and his mother live comfortably off of the giants' wealth, Little Red relishes her new cape made of the Wolf's coat, and the Baker's wife bears a son, while the apparent villains, the Witch and Cinderella's stepfamily, are punished for their wrongdoings.

However, the 'ever-after' endings to the tales are cut short once the consequences of the characters' wishes begin to affect their newly found happiness. In Sondheim's own words, "*wishing* is the key character" (original emphasis, qtd. in HOROWITZ 2010: 83); their wishes prompt the characters to venture into the woods, out of which none come unscathed by their transgressive desires. The second act is permeated with tragedy as the Giantess comes down from the sky to avenge her husband who was previously slain by Jack. The Giantess is presented as a communal threat as she proves willing to destroy the entire kingdom to get to Jack, and has been interpreted as numerous social malaises of the time, including the AIDS crisis, nuclear proliferation and Reaganomics (GORDON 1990: 311). Having said that, by looking at the ways in which *Into the Woods* undermines the closed system of fairy-tales in its exploration of the magical world beyond the ever-after, we are poised to reconsider our inherited understanding of good and evil that fairy-tales

offer in order to ensure moral lessons.

Once their wishes have come true, the characters grow greedy and continue to wish for more, bringing into question their supposedly innate goodness; Cinderella now wishes to sponsor a festival, the Baker and his wife wish for a bigger house to accommodate their growing family, and Jack returns to the Giants' kingdom to steal the golden harp. Likewise, the villains are not portrayed as innately evil. To evade the clichéd didacticism behind making incautious wishes, Sondheim and Lapine give the Giantess strong motivation for seeking revenge, thus challenging both Jack's heroism and her villainy. By victimizing the supposed villain, *Into the Woods* challenges the audience's inclination to side with the hero even though the tradition portrays Jack as such. While Jack may prompt sympathy for stealing from the Giants' kingdom in order to feed his mother, his subsequent returns to the sky to steal the hen and the harp, as well as the slaying of the Giant, only consolidate the Giantess as the victim of Jack's greed rather than portraying her as an unambiguous villain.

The Witch too is portrayed ambiguously. Similarly to the Giantess, she is a victim of the Baker's father's greed, who, while robbing her garden, unknowingly took the magic beans, leading the Witch's mother to punish her with the curse of ugliness. In that respect, her imprisonment of Rapunzel, the Baker's younger sister, is a consequence of the hero's transgression and therefore a subversion of the archetypal characterization of witches and crones as inherently evil. On the other hand, unlike the Giantess, who indeed has a largely symbolic role, the Witch is the most complex character in the play and ultimately the one who overtly problematizes the nature of didacticism in traditional fairy-tales. At the end of the first act, the Witch's youth and beauty are restored but at the unforeseen cost of her magic powers, and she is forced to join the others in the battle against the Giantess. However, unlike the others who naively hope to compromise with the Giantess, the Witch is willing to sacrifice Jack believing that he should be punished for his actions the same way she was punished for hers. The Witch's sense of justice is further highlighted in her exchange with Little Red:

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: This is terrible. We just saw three people die!

WITCH (*Bitter*): Since when are you so squeamish? How many wolves have you carved up?

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: A wolf's not the same.

WITCH: Ask a wolf's mother! (2014: 135)

The exchange suggests that the Witch is aware of the traditional categories of good and evil on a meta-level, criticising them from within the play. She rejects the concepts of 'good' and 'bad' and substitutes them for 'nice', ascribed to traditional heroes, and 'right', used to describe herself, a traditional villain:

You're so nice

You're not good

You're not bad

You're just nice

I'm not good

I'm not nice

I'm just right [...]. (2014: 151)

This echoes Little Red's earlier realization that "nice is different than good" (2014: 52) as she ponders on the consequences of straying off the path, as well as Cinderella's choice of adjective to describe the predatory Prince ("A Very Nice Prince"; "On the Steps of the Palace"). Much like the characterization throughout the play, the terms 'nice' and 'right', unlike their traditional counterparts, are not in binary opposition. The ambiguity of these terms rejects archetypal characterization, giving characters more agency over their words and actions than a closed fairy-tale system allows; this ultimately accounts for the fleetingness of the ever-after they experience in between the acts. Moreover, the ambiguity challenges the possibility of the universal truth, as it compels both intradiegetic and metatheatrical assessment of the limitations of the fairy-tale system, which the play symbolically expresses by having the group feed the Narrator to the Giantess, allowing them to claim the course of the(ir) narrative. With the death of the Narrator and following a catastrophic turn of events, Cinderella and the Baker assume the role of storytellers to address Little Red and Jack, as well as the audience, and encourage scepticism regarding inherited narratives, having learned that there is no objective idea of 'good' and 'evil':

Witches can be right,
Giants can be good.
You decide what's right,
You decide what's good. (2014: 162)

Sondheim and Lapine rely heavily on postmodernist relativism. By deconstructing the categories of heroism and villainy, *Into the Woods* dismantles the ever-after trope, and with it the rigid system within which fairy-tales operate. As is often the case with post-modern revisions of the genre, *Into the Woods* makes use of self-awareness and self-referentiality by means of which it expresses its central motif of narratorial responsibility concealed within the variations on the lyric "children should/must/won't/will listen". The following section analyses the way in which *Into the Woods* employs said motif metatheatrically in order to reassess the didacticism of fairy-tales.

3. Sondheim and Postmodernism: Storytelling as a Meta-Motif

By drawing attention to the artificiality of the concepts of 'good' and 'evil', the Witch fosters scepticism regarding the fairy tales' didactic intentions by means of Brechtian distancing. She introduces and carries the meta-motif throughout the play, emphasising the role storytelling has in upbringing, ultimately condemning the romanticized finality of the ever-after. The motif figures as a metatextual warning to storytellers about fallibility of the tradition, and is embedded in the Witch's relationship with Rapunzel, whom she raises as her daughter, with the motif being continually reshaped as their relationship evolves. The Witch introduces the motif in "Stay With Me", expressing disappointment over Rapunzel's disobedience once she learns of her meetings with the Prince:

What did I clearly say?
Children must listen.

What were you not to do?
 Children must see—
 And learn. (2014: 80)

The parent-child relationship is characterized as that of the storyteller and listener. Essentially, Rapunzel is punished for disobeying the house rules the Witch had established, and other children, that is, the metatextual listeners, are to learn from her wrongdoings. The Witch incites the idea of the outside world as menacing (“Don’t you know what’s out there in the world? / Someone has to shield you from the world” [2014: 81]), as opposed to the safety of the tower, thus warning Rapunzel against venturing into the woods. She forbids Rapunzel from entering the woods as she herself fears it for its carnivalesque ethos, where logic and reason are subdued by chaos, surrealism and transgression. The carnivalesque mode interferes with the traditional storytellers’ aspiration to teach a moral lesson to the listeners as they themselves are faced with the uncertainty of how the story ends. Had Rapunzel not been tempted and eventually scathed by the woods, the fairy-tale would have followed the original course; however, given the fact that she falls victim to the woods, her death subverts the tradition, leaving the Witch with nobody to tell the story to on the intradiegetic level. The Witch then reiterates the motif in her “Lament”, albeit from the perspective of a grieving parent:

No matter what you say,
 Children won’t listen.
 No matter what you know,
 Children refuse
 To learn. (2014: 134)

The stage directions indicate that the Witch looks at the audience as she sings the verse, reaffirming its metatheatricality, and cautioning the audience that despite their parental efforts, “children can only grow / from something you love / to something you lose” (134-135). She interprets Rapunzel’s death as a direct consequence of her disobeying a parental figure:

This is the world I meant,
 Couldn’t you listen?
 Couldn’t you stay content
 Safe behind walls,
 As I could not? (2014: 134)

The lyrics reveal that the Witch tries to keep Rapunzel within the constraints of the tradition because it protects and keeps her oblivious to the dangers of the woods. However, as a child, i.e. the listener, Rapunzel is disillusioned with the modernist sentiment of the previous generation and by venturing into the woods, she embarks on a quest for a self-affirming narrative, while the Witch’s attempted didacticism turns against her. Rapunzel’s death inspires the Witch’s epiphany about the narrative constraints within which the characters are trapped, with the Narrator as their puppet-master, leading to her eventual suicide.

Finally, the motif is reiterated and ultimately consolidated in “Children Will Listen”, which closes the show:

Careful the things you say,
Children will listen.
Careful the things you do,
Children will see
And learn.
[...]
Careful the tale you tell,
That is the spell
Children will listen. (original emphasis, 2014: 167-168)

In its final revision, the motif is expressed in light of the Baker’s telling of “the story of how it all happened” (2014: 166) to his son, introducing a subjective perspective to the ‘once upon a time’ format. Singing the lines over the Baker’s story, the Witch underpins the Baker’s breakaway from the tradition, as he is not repeating his father’s mistake of giving in to prescribed narratives and passing them down onto his son as the absolute truth. By personalizing his narrative, the Baker asserts his narratorial, and ultimately, parental responsibility. In that respect, the moral which *Into the Woods* imparts is aimed towards storytellers rather than listeners. As theatre critic Raymond Knapp words it, “the series of equations [in ‘Children Will Listen’] present the fairy tale as the intersection of our primary paths to legacy and potential immortality (leaving aside the promises of religion): our children themselves are continued force of our choices and actions, especially as the latter are recounted in stories ostensibly *for* children” (original emphasis, KNAPP 2006: 162).

4. Narrative Devices in *Into the Woods* on Stage and Screen

This section analyses the layered narration as well as the narrative devices *Into the Woods* employs on stage and screen in order to reinforce its central motif. Regarding the narrative mode, both the play and the film, unlike oral tradition, rely heavily on showing rather than telling. While the play utilizes an omniscient narrator with (as it initially appears) a heterodiegetic status, the film leaves out the character of the Narrator altogether, having instead the disembodied voice of the Baker introduce and occasionally comment on the story. The status of the stage Narrator in relation to both the story and the audience is complex as he both interacts with the characters while also directly addressing the audience. In these aspects, the Narrator is not unlike Thornton Wilder’s Stage Manager of *Our Town* in that he holds authority over the characters while guiding the audience through the events he relates, appearing to exist simultaneously within the two realms. It is not until midway through the second act, when the characters collectively agree to sacrifice the Narrator to the Giantess that his authority is revoked and he is relegated to intradiegesis, while the characters are left to continue the story on their own. This begs the question as to how the Narrator’s death affects the audience.

To return to the previous section and Sondheim’s affinity with postmodernist scepticism, *Into the Woods* strives to challenge the idea of the objective truth as proposed

by the grand narratives, hence its symbolic sacrifice of the traditional storyteller:

NARRATOR (*Nervous*): You must understand, there must always be someone on the outside.

STEWARD: You're going to be on the inside now.

[...]

NARRATOR: You need an objective observer to pass the story along.

WITCH: Some of us don't like the way you've been telling it.

NARRATOR: If you drag me into this mess, you'll never know how the story ends. You'll be lost! (2014: 131)

By sacrificing the Narrator, the group rejects the finality of fairy-tales; they claim both agency over their stories and the previously discussed narratorial responsibility. Consequently, their intradiegetic status is problematized as the fairy-tale world and 'reality' blur before the audience, while the external lens through which their story was being filtered is removed and so is, by extension, the sense of distance between the characters and the audience. The newly founded immediacy thus allows the characters to address the motif to the audience without a filter, ensuring that it is *their* story that will be listened to, and not that of the Narrator.

Given that theatre has a propensity for showing, the audience is to accept that what the characters are showing is that which is told by the Narrator even when he is not physically present, so unless the play is read as text rather than experienced as performance, this poses a difficulty in determining the status of the Narrator in relation to both the text and the audience, and is further complicated by the metatextual and, essentially, metatheatrical, aspects of the play. Postmodernist scholar Kevin Paul Smith defines the trope of a storyteller in postmodern metafictional folkloric intertexts as "a character who is personified within a text, and who orally narrates his or her stories to a narratee, who also appears as a character within the text" (SMITH 2009: 89). Although his study is text-oriented and as such not ideal for performance studies, it nonetheless offers valuable insight into how the narrative structure is constructed in *Into the Woods*. Moreover, it builds upon Gerard Genette's seminal taxonomy of narrative layers discussed in *Narrative Discourse* (GENETTE 1983). In consideration of Smith's definition, a problem that inevitably arises when applying it to *Into the Woods* is the ambiguity regarding the presence of the Narrator's in-text narratee. While the Witch and the Baker, when assuming the role of the storyteller, relate their stories to their children (and on meta-level, to the audience), the Narrator's voice is initially only believed to be heard by the audience whose extradiegetic is indisputable. Owing to the distancing effect, the Narrator is able to step out of the story and exist in the same realm as his narratees, passing down a fictional story, therefore mimicking the ancient oral tradition. In other words, the Narrator is not (or so it appears) a character in the story he tells. This creates the relationship between a storyteller and listener as discussed by Smith but, due to the nature of theatre, such relationship is personified extratextually.

On the other hand, if we read *Into the Woods* as a literary text, the Narrator figures only within the confines of the libretto and given that he hovers above the story similarly to the omniscient narrator literary trope, he is unable to cross over to the narratees', i.e. the readers' realm, only guiding them through the story from within the text. In that re-

spect, the Witch and the Baker figure as what Smith's narratological model may classify as embedded narrators within an *ad infinitum* frame sequence (SMITH 2009: 90), narrating on a narrative level below that of the Narrator, up until the point of his death. Once the Narrator is done away with, the status of the Witch and the Baker is elevated to that of the primary (albeit intradiegetic) narrators, as is that of the other characters, who all claim agency over their words and actions, and are now separated from the reader by only a single narrative layer. Smith expands upon Genette's taxonomy by adding a narratee within each frame in order to distinguish which parts of the narrative are heard by which listener (SMITH 2009: 91). This would suggest that the characters are not aware of the Narrator's story, while the Narrator is not aware that he too operates from within the text. However, only the latter proves true once the characters rebel against the way the Narrator has been telling the(ir) story. A question which arises is whether the characters have all along been aware of the Narrator's presence, and if so, why they did not protest sooner. An interpretation which may account for this is that the Narrator who embodies oral tradition and rigid didacticism, maintains his authority with relative ease throughout the first act which, when considered in isolation, represents a traditional fairy-tale with a happy ending. However, because the second act goes beyond the ever-after, the Narrator finds himself on an uncharted territory, which weakens his authority. The characters are thus able to overthrow him and claim the narrative course. Furthermore, Smith's graph provides the narratees with a mouth to symbolically convey the potential for retelling (SMITH 2009: 98). This aspect is especially resonant with *Into the Woods*, particularly with its central motif to which *ad infinitum* retelling is inherent.

Pertaining to the film adaptation, the character of the Narrator is omitted, and the story is instead narrated by the disembodied voice of the Baker. Once the voice is identified as belonging to the Baker, who is introduced in one of the opening shots, the film immediately problematizes the status of the primary narratorial figure. On the one hand, the Baker is an active participant in the story, while, on the other, his story is marked by omniscience as he has knowledge of the events during which he was not present. As the idea of intradiegetic omniscience is in itself paradoxical and as such not recognized by narratology, the following paragraph considers the Baker's narration in light of both intradiegesis and extradiegesis, although not with an aspiration to determine its status in existing narrative taxonomies, but rather to assess how the conflicting aspects of the primary narratorial figure contribute to the central motif.

The voice-over narration signals a temporal distance between the events of the story and the moment of narration in the same manner as the Narrator's "once upon a time" introduction does on stage; however, in the film, as a result of the Baker's partial intradiegesis, the temporal distance means that his omniscience is rooted in experience, ultimately compromising the objectivity of his narration, despite his narrating in third person, which in turn undermines the source material's shift from an objective point of view to a subjective one. This consequently affects the degree to which the meta-quality of storytelling is preserved. Furthermore, as opposed to the Narrator, the Baker's involvement in the events he narrates undermines his status as the puppet-master, given that he has no interest in deliberately distorting the events. To elaborate on this – the story he tells to his son at the end, the one which his wife characterizes as "the story of how it all

happened”, is embedded into the story he relates to the audience by means of voice-over narration because in the film, his status as the primary narratorial figure is not revoked at any moment. The narrative circumstances are complicated by the fact the external story that is addressed to the audience is also the story of “how it all happened”, or at least how the Baker remembers it happened, as it is virtually impossible for one to objectively relate their own narrative. Because personal narratives are by definition unreliable, and since the movie does not filter the Baker’s story through an objective lens, the extent to which he distorts the story remains unknown. The Baker’s wife’s encouraging him to tell “the story of how it all happened” is thus redundant as it is the recount of the same events which had occurred up until the birth of their son, and it is told from the same perspective. It is thus the lack of a clearly established objective filter that makes it impossible for the characters to rebel against the tradition and claim their own narrative agency; this, in turn, compromises the importance of narrative legacy which proves fundamental to Sondheim’s text.

5. Conclusion

Careful the spell you cast,
Not just on children.
Sometimes the spell may last
Past what you can see
And turn against you. . .

(SONDHEIM & LAPINE 2014: 168)

This paper has postulated storytelling as the central motif in *Into the Woods*, highlighting its metatextuality. It has been suggested that *Into the Woods* underpins said motif as it draws from postmodern scepticism regarding prescribed narratives. As a result, the closed system of fairy-tales is put under scrutiny from within the text. Having experienced immeasurable tragedy following the tradition’s promise of the ever-after, the characters begin to question the romanticized finality of the world within which they are trapped. The line between heroism and villainy is blurred as both sides unite in a battle for narrative agency and eventually overthrow the manipulative Narrator. Once they rid themselves of his objective perspective, the characters learn to steer the narrative on their own, and away from the tradition, having learned that “witches can be right” and “giants can be good”. The collective moral of *Into the Woods* as an intertext stands as a metatextual warning to storytellers that the narratorial responsibility will be theirs to claim once the far-reaching consequences of the clichéd didacticism of the stories they tell returns to haunt them. Instead of criticising individual tales for its quasi-morals, *Into the Woods* focuses its critique on the process of storytelling itself.

Finally, the paper has analysed how transmedial adaptation affects the motif of storytelling. The complex narrative situations in both the play and the film are deconstructed and interpreted against seminal narratological models, concluding that the shift of perspective from objective to subjective is crucial in capturing the essence of Sondheim’s text. The play makes use of Brechtian estrangement, having the Narrator act as if he exists outside of the fictional world he presents, therefore manipulating audience into subscribing to the finality of his version of the story. His presence and eventual sacrifice at the hand

of the characters provide resonance with the Baker's subsequent retelling of the story to his son from a subjective perspective as it reaffirms his acceptance of narratorial responsibility. On the other hand, Rob Marshall's film adaptation, owing to the medium specificity, cannot rely on the Narrator's physical presence. Instead it employs voice-over narration by the Baker whose role in the film is marked by both intradiegesis and extradiegesis. Such approach makes it impossible to separate him from the story which he narrates but in which he had previously taken an active part, resulting in the lack of an objective filter against which the characters protest. Consequently, the essence of the source material is significantly undermined as are the repercussions of subscribing to tradition.

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METATEKSTUALNOST I NARATIVNE TEHNIKE U ZAČARANOJ ŠUMI STIVENA SONDHAJMA NA SCENI I FILMU

Ovaj rad bavi se transmedijalnim odnosom brodvejskog mjuzikla *Začarana šuma* (1987) Stivena Sondhajma i njegove ekranizacije (2014) u režiji Roba Maršala. Naglasak se stavlja na različita narativna sredstva na koja se drama i film oslanjaju kako bi se istakla metatekstualnost centralnog motiva pripovedanja. Motiv pripovedanja dekonstruiše se u okviru Sondhajmove postmodernističke ideologije, koja se u *Začaranoj šumi* ogleda u problematizaciji nedvosmislenog predstavljanja kategorija dobra i zla, kao i u subverziji zatvorenog sistema tradicionalnih bajki. Rad se potom okreće detaljnoj analizi naratora i narativnih slojeva na sceni i filmu, a zaključak koji se izvodi jeste da Maršalova ekranizacija, koja, iako zbog specifičnosti filmskog medija izbacuje Sondhajmovog sveznajućeg Pripovedača, ipak ne uspeva da pronađe adekvatno rešenje da prenese metatekstualnost centralnog motiva, koja je od suštinskog značaja za interpretaciju Sondhajmovog mjuzikla.

Ključne reči: Stiven Sondhajm, *Začarana šuma*, metatekstualnost, narativne tehnike, ekranizacija