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## BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Comparison of *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones with its film  
adaptation by Hayao Miyazaki

Srovnání románu *Howl's Moving Castle* od Diany Wynne Jones a jeho  
filmového zpracování od Hayao Miyazaki

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## **ABSTRACT**

The topic of this thesis is the comparison of the 1986 novel *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones and its 2004 film adaptation by Hayao Miyazaki produced by the famous production company Studio Ghibli. The film adaptation, despite its nature, has undergone many changes in terms of plot, narrative and head themes. The similarities and the differences between the works are studied through the prism of monographs and other publications on the theory of adaptation by Linda Hutcheon, or Robert Stam. The central research question concerns the possibility of the animated film by Hayao Miyazaki standing on its own, or its continuous perception as a “mere” adaptation, being less valuable because of its nature. The goal of this thesis is to explain the nature of the relationship between the original and its adaptation demonstrating the similarities and explaining the differences based on the essential aspects of the plots, characters and central themes and motifs and to prove that this adaptation is not inherently a lesser version of the original, but a standalone artistic expression. This is done through examining and contrasting parts of the book and the film script, interpreting the changes in the adaptation with consideration of the preferences of themes, motifs and symbolism of each author.

## **KEYWORDS**

*Howl's Moving Castle*, Diana Wynne Jones, Hayao Miyazaki, film adaptation

## **ABSTRAKT**

Práce je zaměřená na dílo *Howl's Moving Castle (Howlův putující zámek)* od autorky Diany Wynne Jonesové a jeho filmovou adaptaci z roku 2004 od slavného animačního studia Ghibli. Tato adaptace, i přes její podstatu, se velice liší od originální novely, která jí byla předlohou. Jejich podobnosti a rozdíly jsou studovány skrze škálu textů o teorii filmové adaptace od Lindy Hutcheonové a Roberta Stama. Hlavní výzkumnou otázkou této bakalářské práce tedy je, zda by se Miyazakiho film dal počítat jako samostatné dílo, zda by mělo být navždy vnímáno jako „pouhá“ adaptace a zda by se na tomto základě mělo toto dílo považovat jako druhořadé. Cílem této práce je přiblížit čtenáři vztah mezi originálem a adaptací na základě příkladů demonstrujících jejich podobnost a odlišnost v kontextu zásadních dějových aspektů, postav a ústředních témat a motivů, a tak prokázat, že se v případě této adaptace nejedná o verzi ve své podstatě podružnou jejímu originálu, nýbrž o samostatný umělecký projev. Tohoto je docíleno pomocí zkoumání a porovnávání částí knihy a filmového scénáře, spolu s interpretací změn v adaptaci, s přihlédnutím k autorským preferencím u motivů, symbolů a témat.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

*Howlův putující zámek*, Diana Wynne Jonesová, Hayao Miyazaki, filmová adaptace

## Obsah

Introduction .....	7
Theoretical part.....	9
1 Theory of film adaptations.....	9
1.1 An adaptation's value .....	9
1.2 What to adapt .....	10
1.3 The goal of an adaptation.....	11
2 Introduction to the authors and genre.....	13
2.1 Works of Diana Wynne Jones.....	13
2.1.1 D. W. Jones's Immersive Fantasy .....	14
2.1.2 <i>Howl's Moving Castle</i> (1986) .....	15
2.2 Works of Hayao Miyazaki .....	16
2.2.1 Themes present in Miyazaki's works .....	17
2.2.2 Hayao Miyazaki's " <i>Howl's Moving Castle</i> " .....	19
Practical Part.....	20
3 Plot lines and differences.....	21
4 Characters in the book and in the film .....	23
4.1 Sophie .....	24
4.2 Howl .....	27
4.3 Witch of the Waste .....	28
5 Themes, motifs and symbols .....	31
5.1 Themes.....	31
5.2 Motifs.....	34
5.3 Symbols .....	36
Conclusion.....	40

Works cited:.....42

## Introduction

This thesis compares and contrast key features of the plot, characters, themes and motifs in 1986 novel *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones and Hayao Miyazaki's film adaptation from 2004. In order to be able to interpret the similarities and differences, the thesis delves into the theoretical background of adaptations and their models.

The thesis reflects my personal interest in the novel as well as its film version. A devotee to the genre of fantasy as I had been in my younger years, I have to admit that I watched the film version only after having had finished the novel which featured a note on the cover, saying that it has been recently adapted by one of the best contemporary animation studios - studio Ghibli. It was the first film from studio Ghibli that I have ever watched, and I was bitterly disappointed at their rendition of my favourite novel. The heroine's story, one of sheer determination and bullheadedness had been reduced, in my eyes, to a narrative of a damsel in distress. Not only that – the characters looked different, the plot made almost no sense to me and the idiosyncratic qualities of all the characters that I had loved were mellowed down. Some years later, when I have entered the social media, I have noticed that the film was almost idolized among the people in my sphere. Some idolized the story of unwavering love and some the wizard Howl's looks. This conflict of my personal opinions and the opinion of the masses made me rewatch it. It was still the same – the characters looked different and the plot was still as hard to follow as I remembered, but it spoke to me nonetheless and became my comfort watch. I still perceived the considerable differences between the original and the adaptation but with even more time passing, I have realized that the differences are not as considerable as I thought, what is more, I realized that the plots are actually very similar. Not only that, but that some parts of the film are much more impactful than in the novel.

I will therefore employ texts and monographs by Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam to first explain the fallacies of adaptation and the complexities of the process of adaptation itself to determine its goals and value. After establishing the bond of an adaptation to its source, I will seek information about the authors themselves through analyses of their pieces and their biographies. For D. W. Jones it will be mostly through interviews and through Farah Mendlesohn's *Diana Wynne Jones: children's literature and the fantastic tradition* (2005).



In case of Hayao Miyazaki, I will consult the works of Gael Berton and Susan Napier. I will also endeavour to introduce the pieces this thesis will study in depth, to explain their origins and the inspirations, together with chapters on what each of the author's personal style consists of, be it themes, a particular way of writing or a stance on the world.

The theoretical part of this thesis strives to point out not only the differences between the two versions, but the likenesses and parallels as well. It is vital to look at the plots first, see what parts of them form the endings and compare them in length and complexity. The film, as said above, has gone through a transformation that has strayed it from the original by a large margin, so it is imperative to draw attention to where these changes can be observed and for what reason they had been made. Through the comparison of the plots, the chapter will also endeavour to introduce the main actors of the plots. There the thesis will seek not only to inform the reader of the character's personalities, but also to contrast the core personality traits each of the characters shares with their film counterparts – their motivations and beliefs that drive them to further the plot. Finally, I will move onto the themes, motifs and symbols where I will focus on how the story is built to fit the message it is trying to convey in each of the authors' way.

## **Theoretical part**

### **1 Theory of film adaptations**

This chapter introduces the main goals of adaptations, why and what to adapt, together with a consideration of the value of an adaptation. The aim is to convince the reader to take the animated version of *Howl's Moving Castle* as a valuable contribution to D.W. Jones' world. It also sets the boundaries of adaptation and how well it must abide to the original, so that the book and film can later be judged independently.

#### **1.1 An adaptation's value**

It is a truth universally acknowledged by today's critics and audiences, that adaptations are a "secondary" form of art, standing lower than its original influences and often being even labelled as a "parasite." Linda Hutcheon in her publication *A Theory Of Adaptation* (2006) later then refutes this statement, stating that film adaptation has its own value and is simply using different tools to convey the ideas and stories. In the case of adaptations, they are often fully open with its interpretative nature, as opposed to comedies. To Robert Stam, one of the authors of *Literature And Film : A Guide To The Theory And Practice Of Film Adaptation* (2005) seems this degradation of adaptations and their "quality" as a topic that is only at the forefront of another topic that he argues is much more riveting (Stam 4).

Stam argues that rather than to study the quality and trueness of the film adaptation to its source, it is more important to think about reasons adaptations are seen as secondary. He gives a few reasons, varying between Christian iconophobia, denying the audience a simpler way of consuming literature and a naïve notion of historical anteriority and superiority (4-6). He states that films have the innate ability to trigger a much more visceral reaction from the public, not only in terms of physiology, but that they have a much stronger effect psychologically as well. He demonstrates this by citing a montage specialist:

"(Slavko Vorkapich) spoke of motor impulses "passed through joints, muscles, and tendons so that at the end we duplicate internally whatever it is we are watching" (Stam 6). There is a constant pressure placed on the filmmakers, to stay true to the original and when they do, their films are seen as uncreative. But whenever a filmmaker does try to grasp the source from an angle that is seen as "unusual", they are bashed for abandoning the original, being

either cowardly or too vulgar. As Stam states in the final line of the chapter, *The Roots of a Prejudice*: “The adapter, it seems, can never win” (Stam 8).

That idea further supports Hutcheon’s concept of adaptation as a secondary work removed from the original in all sense but the bare bones. The idea of “an adaptation as a repetition without replication”, as something that should be different from the original and to stand on its own (Hutcheon 7). To adapt is to change as the meaning of the verb suggests.

## **1.2 What to adapt**

James Monaco in his work *How to Read a Film* (2009) argues that a novel is the closest medium to film itself, with a narrator and an observer. Literature can always be translated into a film, given that there is enough budget for special effects. However, Monaco continues, the film is also limited in its shorter time span to make an impression, and therefore the books can only serve as a rough draft for the possible interpretations (Monaco 60).

The details in a narrative will be lost during the process of translation, but a change of a medium also opens up new possibilities to convey pictorial details and details that the narrator could perceive as redundant. In this, the authors’ writing betrays his language, ideologies, their prejudices, and the point of view they choose to write from. The film must choose one of these narratives and the view it will convey through detail (Monaco 63).

Hutcheon mentions the attempts at mirroring the so called “spirit” of the author when translating the novels onto a screen, however she notes that the “spirit” is often used only as a justification for changes of form (10). Rather, she sees themes as the easiest way to adapt story elements or contexts into books. She demonstrates this specially on themes in fairy tales, which have been adopted by ballet productions because themes such as “evil vs. good”, “magical tasks” and “disguise and revelations” are easy to achieve with the help of leitmotifs, as well as music, chosen by the producers to help the viewer read the themes (Hutcheon 11).

Characters are crucial for the telling of the story, and there are once again ways in which they can be interpreted. A character narration is often central in plays and films. They are irreversibly intertwined with not only the plot but the aesthetics of the final product as well, and they serve as an instrument to activate the imagination of a viewer, often triggering

emotional responses through the character's personal development (Hutcheon 11). Those emotions are often the core points of the films for the watcher, as Monaco concludes, as those are the economic commodities for the film industry (Monaco 39).

Hutcheon concludes that linear novels seem to be the easiest to adapt into visual mediums. She gives Charles Dickens' novels as an example of that, noting that while this author's novel adaptations have received mostly good reviews for their pictorial depictions and the depictions of characters with developed dialogues, some of the more "radical" texts have been "reduced to a kind of cinematic homogenization", as she quotes Axelrod. That, in the past, gave more space for melodramatic narrations and stories that have strong emotional contrasts like operas and dramas, and now puts films with eye-catching special effects at the forefront of the industry (Hutcheon 15).

### **1.3 The goal of an adaptation**

There are many reasons as for why to produce adaptations. One of them being their possible earnings, seeing as up to 50 per cent of Hollywood films that are adaptations are among the highest grossing at the box office (Kuhn 58). However, along with the possibility of a high payout lays the "responsibility" to make a content that the people within the franchise will enjoy, as fans are very quick to voice their unhappiness when it comes to changes in their favourite works (Kuhn 59). This volatility of the people brings forth a question about "why" anyone would want to adapt anything (Hutcheon 86).

According to Hutcheon, the vision of a financial gain can and had poisoned works right from its beginnings. In her work she mentions a comics artist, Cameron Steward who has confessed that some of his works are only done for the money it can bring as merchandise and are written as film pitches right from the start. There is a big potential for the entertainment industry, especially when the work is aimed at children. While the monetary reward is enough for some, Hutcheon names more possible sources of motivation behind adaptation, other than simply greed. Among those are homage and even worship of the franchise by the adaptator, and even those, Hutcheon notes, are very personally motivated (Hutcheon 86-87).

While Miyazaki has never openly disclosed his reasons for adapting *Howl's Moving Castle*, the director has mentioned in an interview for *The Guardian* his fascination with preserving an image of the world from the viewpoint of children (Brooks).

Well, yes. I believe that children's souls are the inheritors of historical memory from previous generations. It's just that as they grow older and experience the everyday world that memory sinks lower and lower. I feel I need to make a film that reaches down to that level. If I could do that I would die happy. (Miyazaki for *The Guardian*, Brooks "A God Among Animators.")

## 2 Introduction to the authors and genre

This chapter will introduce Diana Wynne Jones, her life and works together with the novel *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986) and Hayao Miyazaki, a Japanese animator who had based his film *Howl's Moving Castle* (Japanese ハウルの動く城) (2004) on D. W. Jones's novel. The chapter furthermore contains the definitions of the genres each of the authors are known for and basic information surrounding both versions of *Howl's Moving Castle*, so that the reader understands the connections between the book and the film, the main themes and the way public perceives it. It will also introduce the authors' inspirations, historical background and how they approach creative work to further explain their methods of storytelling, so that we can further compare and differentiate between them.

### 2.1 Works of Diana Wynne Jones

Diana Wynne Jones, the author of the book *Howl's Moving Castle* was a British author, well known for her fantasy books, mostly for a children audience but relevant to all ages (Mendlesohn 13). She was born in 1934 in England. While her childhood could be considered as unhappy, she had a clear stance on her writing job from young age despite her dyslexia (D. W. Jones when interviewed by Maureen Kincaid Speller). According to Wynne Jones herself, she has been fascinated with old English writers such as Chaucer or Langland and their ways of plot narration, even going as far as saying they had “invented her” (Diana Wynne Jones' profile in *The Guardian*). Most of her works are aimed at younger audience, however there are some that are considered to be for adults, among them for example *A Sudden Wild Magic* (1992) and *Deep Secret* (1997) (Diana Wynn Jones bibliography in Wikipedia). She is understood to have shaken the fantasy genre and force it to reform (Mendlesohn 13).

She has also attended lectures of professor and writer J. R. R. Tolkien, whose work *Lord of The Rings* she praised for its “symphony-like” narration in her essay for Robert Giddings's collection *J. R. R. Tolkien: This Far Land* (Wynne Jones as quoted in Mendlesohn 18) Accordingly, she tended to draw some inspiration from them, as well as other authors and images from the nineteenth and twentieth century classics, and combine them in one way or another. This does not apply on only authors, but myths, folklore, and well-known fairy tales

as well, to the point people well-versed in her writings can pinpoint tales that inspired the work. Perhaps most notably, people quote L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900), an American book, as the inspiration for *Howl's Moving Castle* with similar characters and Sophie, Jones's protagonist, as a parallel to Dorothy (Mendlesohn 25-28).

### **2.1.1 D. W. Jones's Immersive Fantasy**

Jones's own works are interpreted as standing somewhere between science fiction genre and fantasy. She herself introduces magical elements as a "metaphor at its simplest" rather than solutions and has expressed her dislike in writing books to fit a certain genre accordingly (Mendlesohn 13-16).

As Mendlesohn concludes in her book in the chapter "The Immersive Fantasy", while Jones had written a wide range of types of fantasies, *Howl's Moving Castle* is regarded as an "immersive fantasy", meaning that the author tries to convince the readers of the existence of the world the book is set in. Jones, in this, takes the path of casualizing the fantastic happenings – not depicting them as something otherworldly, simply as something that exists and skipping over the "How" and "What" that the reader might think of. Magic has little to no explanation and it is perceived as simply being a part of the protagonist's world. This elusion can be seen right at the start of the novel:

In the land of Ingary, where such things as seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility really exist, it is quite a misfortune to be born the eldest of three. Everyone knows you are the one who will fail first, and worst, if the three of you set out to seek your fortunes... (*Howl's Moving Castle* 1)

This forces the reader not only to ask questions, but to provide the answers to said questions themselves through observations as the plot progresses. The reasoning for the lack of explanations is, in Cadden's conclusions on narrative, that D.W. Jones is aware and actively using of one of the ways of fantasy narrative for young adults – inviting the reader to participate in the story by leaving out some of the functionalities of the world (257-258). While this conclusion is meant to point out especially the narrative in *Hexwood* (1993), it is clear, that while the novel might be an extreme case of this due to the disjointed narrative, it further depicts Jones's styles of writing.

Another aspect that should be mentioned in connection with Jones's fantasy novels are the moralities and ideals of the main characters, as she introduces a more realistic view on life itself and its goals in a fantastical setting. Especially her view on heroism is one that separates her novels from the rest. Heroes are not perceived by Jones as such for simply following the laws and doing good, but for their breach of those boundaries and doing things that are socially morally grey or simply bad. Jones perceives heroes as a scapegoat for the writer to fully indulge in their imagination and urges, in some cases putting a fight with yourself, a mental battle rather than one against an opponent, much higher in the list of a character's accomplishment (Mendlesohn 19-23).

### **2.1.2 *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986)**

In regard of Jones's idea of heroes, Sophie, the main protagonist in *Howl's Moving Castle* (further only as *HMC*) is a stellar example of such battles. The novel revolves around her, feeling very much like a too-average young milliner with no real ambitions when a curse is cast upon her by the Witch of the Waste, turning her into an old lady. For Sophie, it is only a minor hiccup in her life, and she goes on to find the wizard Howl who is said to eat the hearts of ladies he seduces to ask him to turn her back. The entire story is her own battle for her self-worth and the will to truly live, as she tries to juggle not only her own problems but Howl's too (*HMC*).

The inspiration, Jones has said in her interview about Miyazaki's film, came from her own experience of having to walk with a cane for some time during a bad lactose intolerance episode in 1984 that almost made her lose the feeling in her legs. This, as she later describes, made her feel very old despite her relatively young age. The experience would lead to the idea behind Sophie (D.W. Jones: Interview).

Thorough the book, there are many allusions to other books and literary pieces, such as a quote from *Hamlet* (1602) by William Shakespeare on page 160, where Howl is talking to a skull that is a part of his living room décor:

“Alas, poor Yorick!” he said. “She heard mermaids, so it follows that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark. I have caught an everlasting cold, but luckily I am terribly dishonest. I cling to that.” (160)



There is also a homage to the *Lord of The Rings* books by J. R. R. Tolkien when naming the house of Howl's sister, first mentioned on page 102: "It had a wooden notice hanging beside it on chains. RIVENDELL, Sophie read, as Howl pushed her into a neat, shiny hall space..."

The idea behind Howl's own curse is another alliteration and is the first part of John Donne's *SONG: GO AND CATCH A FALLING STAR* (1633), first mentioned on page 88, taken literally as a sequence of actions that are to happen.

This all paints an image on how the novel is an amalgamation of different influences and experiences, proving not only the author's knowledge of classical and contemporary literature but also the proficiency in including the references in a playful manner to perhaps amuse the readers and foreshadow future plot points.

## **2.2 Works of Hayao Miyazaki**

When speaking about Hayao Miyazaki, it is impossible to not be met with his accomplishments in the animation industry. Not much is known about his life before his success at Ghibli studios, as he is known to be reclusive, however he had shared some parts of his life with the public in the sparse interviews he had given. Miyazaki was born on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941, closely after his father, an aeronautical engineer, Katsuji has been left in Japan to work on parts for fighter planes. According to Berton, Miyazaki had reminisced that his father had no guilt about having a part in the wars, as apparently, he had often bribed the people in charge to let through defective parts and had a general dislike of people who engaged in wars, this sentiment later carrying over to Miyazaki and shining through in his works.

After the war had ended and Miyazaki started high school, he had found an interest in reading Manga, later emulating the styles and practicing drawing manga as well. A big change in his life came when he had seen *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (1958), a first feature-film from Japan by Toei studios and decided to become an animator.

He had finished his university degrees in political science and economy, perfecting his drawing abilities along the studies, and even sending out some of his works to be published but being denied (Berton 8).

Together with one of the writers he had met along his career, he had published the manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1982) and later decided to adapt it into a film. The success of the film had given them the prospect to found studio Ghibli in June 1985 (Berton, 10).

### **2.2.1 Themes present in Miyazaki's works**

Miyazaki, just like many other authors takes inspiration from not only his life experiences and believes but also other works in the industry. He is no stranger to adapting either, as many of the works at the start of his career were adaptations. He had worked on Nippon Animations studio's *Heidi, Girl of The Alps* (1997) and *Anne of Green Gables* (1979), even going to Sweden to get the rights to Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstockings* (1945) (Berton 9). As Berton concludes, the sources of his inspiration can be traced from literary pieces to real time events and his own personal life.

One of the most known prevalent themes through most of Miyazaki's works is his image of women in his media, Berton describes. This itself aligns with Jones' works very well. The heroines in his works, be it a woman grown or a child, are true to themselves and though they might lose themselves in their own emotions, they are quick to reclaim the helm of their own life.

A prime example of those characters is not only Sophie, from *HMC*, but also Nausicaä, from a film of the same name - *Nausicaä* (1984). This motif of a strong female main character, however, does not dwell on young heroines either, but shifts to the elder side-characters and anti-heroes as well, in the narrative, that a woman can be all that the things society expects from them and much more. A theme and a message that reaches many young children, as well as adults (Moss).

Another theme that can be once again pointed out in the *HMC* is the theme of sickness through life, or, as Berton describes it in his book, "Children and Humanisms, Gaining a Maturity imposed by illness". The theme is being discovered through many motifs, such as old age in *HMC*, a curse in *Princess Mononoke* (1997), or a "real-world" sickness, as seen in *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) and many other films by Studio Ghibli. Miyazaki has a seemingly hopeful approach to the theme, as the characters never truly wallow in their sickness but fight against it or are very at peace with their impending doom. It is another

theme he shares with Diana Wynne Jones, as Sophie (*HMC*) herself is never overly bothered by the curse instilled upon her and tries to move on with her life despite it (Berton 113).

However, a theme Miyazaki seems to always come around to is the horrors of an armed conflict. To quote Berton: “It is quicker to list the director’s works in which war does not form part of the background...” (115)

In most of Miyazaki’s works, we can see war and conflicts happening either in the background of the main storyline, or it is irreversibly intertwined into it, as can be observed in *Nausicaä*. Main characters are mercilessly pulled into the conflict, often despite having no part in it (Berton 115). This theme is added into *Howls’ Moving Castle* as well, despite it being only a side theme in the original novel. It does, however, work well in the story and adds value to Howl’s character, who by the end is fighting to resist the participation in war (Napier 217).

### **Theme of beauty in the mundane**

The theme of war itself can work as a present contrast to the theme of beauty in the mundane, which in Berton is, among many others described as “Harmony Among Life” and in the wide audience observed as something desirable, in the worlds of a user morgangalaxy43 on Tumblr, a social media blogging site:

Studio Ghibli films are so peaceful, I want to live in a world like that, I wanna bake, I wanna run through the woods, I wanna run through the meadows, I wanna meet magical people, I wanna have adventures, and I wanna live in a fantasy world (.)

This theme works with the nature of beasts and their unwillingness to attack unless cornered, innocence of children and the beauty of nature in its pure form. Miyazaki works with sounds, atmospheres, and scenes many other filmmakers ignore or cut around, depicting the aspects of a mundane life with the same meticulous care as the rest of his films (Berton 114).

Napier suggests that this could be perhaps a result of Miyazaki catering, among others, to Japanese audience, who seem to care very much about “fun’iki” (Japanese for “atmosphere, mood, ambiance”). Atmosphere is a big part of Japanese films, along with humanism, sombre quiet scenes and morally dubious characters. All this is most likely the result of Japanese customs that are rooted in religions such as Shinto and Buddhism, which both

promote the idea of a lifetime balancing good and evil. That is in part what allows many contemporary Japanese filmmakers such as Kore-eda Hirokazu to make their films more vivid in their social commentary (Sian “The Cinema of Japan”). Themes and atmosphere all create a strong emotional and physical resonance, not only during the action scenes. And it does resonate, as the post quoted above suggests (Napier 35).

### **2.2.2 Hayao Miyazaki’s “*Howl’s Moving Castle*”**

In fact, wide public does not seem to enjoy the motifs, themes, and story overall, as much as they enjoy and love the beauty of the world pictured in the film. Even most of the critics on Rotten Tomatoes and ČSFD pinpoint the scenery and animation as an undeniably big part of the film-watching experience. Some are however more critical towards the pacing of the film and the way Miyazaki is trying to appease the European critics by including “Disney-like” features in the story and its characters. Some critics in Japan were not too impressed by the film either, finding it “hard to understand” and Shunsuke Sugita, a critic and a writer, has even called the film a “failure” (Napier 215). While a pleasing film visually, Napier argues that one should look at it more as a poetic work, a tapestry of multicoloured strings, woven into a narrative: “Overall, it remains an idiosyncratic and appealing creation—ambitious and angry, while offering indelible visions of solace, beauty, and love (Napier 215).”

While Diana Wynne Jones in an interview acknowledges that the film is different than the book, she said in an interview how she admires the way Miyazaki interpreted her story. She has also said that while the castle she wrote was very different than the castle she had written, she had said that the castle that Miyazaki depicted was distinctive and with a frightening personality. Another thing she delighted in was the way Sophie’s movement was animated, representing the way she was thinking about herself. Jones said that she had the feeling that Miyazaki understood the book in a way no one had (D.W. Jones: Interview). The film now remains a story, grafted on the original, a fan favourite for many and a love letter to Miyazaki’s older colleagues, as well as to old age in general (Napier 216).

## **Practical Part**

My practical part will mostly act as an illustration of the key feature of adaptations, which I determined in the theoretical part of my thesis based on approaches of Linda Hutcheon, Robert Stam and James Monaco. The film adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle* differs in a number of ways from its model, but being a good-quality adaptation, it highlights and renders the same themes, just as Hutcheon's concept dictates the work to be a work that is almost removed from the original – “an adaptation as a repetition without replication” (7).

The first section is dedicated to plots, which will be summarised, compared and contrasted. It also presents scenes that are new/missing in the film and the themes' influence on the plot, naming the possible reasons as for why and how the plot of the film had to be altered.

Having explained the plot, the characters are presented, described and contrasted, mainly from the perspective of their functioning in the plot, their key qualities and motivations. I chose three characters that appear in both versions – the two protagonists and the villain. They will be used to further hint at the themes of both the film and novel and demonstrate that while changed, their core nature remains the same. This next part summarises the main themes of both the book and the film, once again compares and contrasts them and seeks to consider their possible inclusion, exclusion, rendering and its effect of the interpretation of the work – either film or the novel. Having established the themes, the thesis examines reoccurring motifs and how they can be interpreted in relation to the prevalent themes. Finally, the overall symbolism and the individual symbols we can come across when going through the story are introduced.

### **3 Plot lines and differences**

When it comes to main plot lines, the film follows the book's character introductions quite well and while the film of course makes them much simpler, it also makes them more comprehensive and draws a clearer picture of what Hayao Miyazaki made Howl and Sophie's story out to be. Both media also focus on different themes and because of the changes to the characters, the plot, naturally, had to be changed as well. We have to then think about Miyazaki's film less as of an adaptation and more of a work inspired by the original when studying it and take both versions at their own value, so that their individual aspects can be studied.

The plot of the film version is the following: A girl who is unsure of herself and follows the wishes of others gets cursed and acquires an old lady's body, leaves her city and family behind and ends up serving the infamous wizard Howl, working at his house as a cleaning lady and helping him evade two military drafts for a war between two kingdoms. As she dares to finally let herself enjoy life, under a "disguise" of an old lady, she discovers that she likes being in control of her fate and in the end saves Howl from his own curse as well.

The plot of the novel is much more convoluted. Sophie still gets cursed and wakes up in the body of an old lady, but there are more characters included in the plot and both Sophie and Howl's families are introduced and dealt with as the story progresses. There are side plot lines with the family members, Howl going on dates and a time they have to move to escape the Witch, so Sophie sets up a flower shop. Witch of the Waste is defeated, but unlike the film where it is done in the castle by Madame Suliman, it is done within her lair by Howl while saving Sophie. The book is concluded by Sophie and Howl defeating the Witch's fire demon and Sophie getting her young body back.

By choosing different themes he focused on, Miyazaki decided to limit the number of different plot lines. That is why he simplified some parts of the plot and sometimes added his own plot lines, to better illustrate the themes he picked. This corresponds with Monaco's forementioned belief about film adaptations - that while some details are lost in the process of adaptation, new opportunities for pictorial details open up, which would be redundant in the original version (63).

If we were to point out one of the plot lines that Hayao Miyazaki introduced into his version of *HMC*, we could mention the situation when Sophie sees a young Howl eat a star, telling him to wait for her in the future. It is one of the most memorable scenes not only for its visuals but also for being a moment that explains much of film Howl's actions and somewhat ties the ending together. The book introduces characters instead, who in the end come together to pull the plot together. As we have not met most of these characters in the book, Miyazaki had to invent a way to finish the film off and to give the ending depth.

The limited number of scenes that fit the film's narrative appear to have contributed to the director's second solution – re-write the scenes to fit the chosen theme better.

An example of a scene that has appeared in the book but has been reworked to better fit the film's narrative is the one where Sophie goes out shopping in a coastal town. The scene shows that the film leans into the theme of war much more than the book did, certainly not depicting the horrors of town bombings and war machines with the same attention as Miyazaki does. While in the book, we get to see a wizard battle, in the film the focus is on a warship arriving to the town, falling apart with soldiers escaping it, followed by propaganda fliers being thrown out of an enemy airplane. It is a scene inspired by the airborne leaflet propaganda tactics, which were used during America's war with Japan as well (Wikipedia contributors "Airborne Leaflet Propaganda"), thus indicating Hayao Miyazaki's hand in the scene. The factor of a "real-world" threat gives the watcher a way to relate to the terror that sweeps through the town in a way that is familiar to them.

The notion of a "perfect adaptation" is, at its core, unachievable, as we are limited by time, money and the factor of a watcher's opinion. These two stories, while different in plotlines, are the same at their core - Sophie and Howl meet and push each other out of their comfort zones to the point where they both change for the better and eventually fall in love. Through motifs, characters and themes, the "spirit" of the book is retained. And while there are stark differences between the two plots, both versions deliver similar themes and topics. As D. W. Jones herself said in her interview, the story she wrote, and the film shown both have the same message of overcoming hardships while in love.

#### 4 Characters in the book and in the film

When it comes to the original characters and their film counterparts, apart from looking at their differences, we also need to study what they have in common. This process results in finding out that the characters from the novel and the film version share the key qualities as the following examples illustrate.

For example, there is a short and inconspicuous scene situated at the beginning of both the original and the film, which serves as a clue that the characters are interpreted a little differently, however they still provide the viewer with the same impression. It is the moment which sees Sophie stopped and accosted by imperial soldiers. While in the film Howl saves Sophie while escaping the Witch's lackeys as well, in the book Howl is the one who flirts with Sophie and is insistent on walking her.

And when a young man in a fantastical blue-and-silver costume spotted Sophie and decided to accost her as well, Sophie shrank into a shop doorway and tried to hide. The young man looked at her in surprise. "It's all right, you little gray mouse," he said, laughing rather pityingly. "I only want to buy you a drink. Don't look so scared." (*HMC* 9-10)

Both of those scenes present Howl as outgoing and flirtatious. The way it is depicted differs and this is the case of a number of examples, e.g. book's Howl buying a guitar despite not knowing how to play: "I described Howl-you must admit he's pretty recognizable-and she really hadn't seen him or his wretched guitar. I didn't even have to tell her he doesn't know how to play the thing." (*HMC* 70) Or him in the film, flirting with Sophie after dropping her off at the Cesaris.

Howl        I'll draw them off. Wait here until the coast is clear.

Sophie     Yes.

Howl        That's my girl.

(*HMC* Script 3)



## 4.1 Sophie

Sophie, along with Howl, is the biggest driving force behind the plot. In the novel, she portrayed as sceptical of her future because of her status of an eldest sister. She thinks she has no say over her life and that she will never amount to anything, making the whole first part of the book plot a self-fulfilling prophecy. While in the film this is alluded by means of her tone and dialogue, in the book we are explicitly told about her passivity and pessimism right at the beginning:

That's why she sent me so far away, or tried to. Mother knows you don't have to be unkind to someone in order to exploit them. She knows how dutiful you are. She knows you have this thing about being a failure because you're only the eldest. She's managed you perfectly and got you slaving away for her. I bet she doesn't pay you.  
(HMC 15)

Sophie is later convinced by the conversation with her sister to ask for a wage. Her stepmother tells her she would consider it, forgets about it and Sophie gives up on reminding her. This would no doubt lead to her simply taking over the shop later in her life, if Sophie had not gotten upset about her own passivity and lashed out at the Witch of the Waste. That incident then results in the Witch turning her into an old lady.

The lady looked at it with contempt. "This one doesn't do anything for anybody. You're wasting my time, Miss Hatter." "Only because you came in and asked for hats" Sophie said. "This is only a small shop in a small town, Madam. Why did you-" Behind the lady, the man gasped and seemed to be trying to signal warningly. "-bother to come in?" Sophie finished, wondering what was going on. (HMC 18)

With her old body now matching her weary attitude the life she envisioned for herself on hold, she goes to serve Howl, despite his reputation. She thinks she has no other option and nothing to lose. This is the belief that she has in both versions. This results quite unexpectedly in her liberation - as if a switch had been turned, she forgets her fears and begins enjoying herself and the newly found freedom she had gained. All that because the pressure of being the eldest sibling and a role model for others is off her shoulders. She can live her life and unperturbed by her family's reputation or the role she had been supposed to

play. It is this liberation which acts as a strong influence on the plot and eventually leads to the novel's conclusion.

While book Sophie's visage does not really change from her transformation into an old lady, as D. W. Jones focuses on more the changes in her mind, we can notice that the film's Sophie's posture changes accordingly to her fluctuating opinions about herself. That alone serves as a great visual feature by which the viewer can see her progress and it serves as the cinematic equivalent that Hutcheon talks about (58) as it helps us understand the inner workings of the character without a voice-over.

**Sophie** Now I understand why Howl refused to come here.

Something's not right. Forcing your aged guests to climb stairs,  
dragging them into strange rooms... It's like a trap!

You call Howl heartless! Yes, he's selfish, cowardly, and  
unpredictable. But he's straight as an arrow. He only wants to  
be free.

Howl won't turn into an evil monster.

*[Action: Sophie returns to her younger self.]*

**Sophie** He'll battle the demon on his own. I believe in him!

**Suliman** Ms. Pendragon... You're in love with Howl.

*[Action: Sophie returns to her older self.]*

(HMC Script 35)

We later get to another point in the plot, where we learn that the curse only continues to work because Sofie starts to embrace the identity of an old lady. This is explicitly stated in the book:

...I had several goes at taking it off you when you weren't looking. But nothing seems to work. I took you to Mrs. Pentstemmon, hoping she could do something, but

she evidently couldn't. I came to the conclusion that you liked being in disguise.”  
“Disguise!” Sophie yelled. Howl laughed at her. “It must be, since you're doing it yourself,” he said. (*HMC* 183)

Sophie at that point in the plot could finish the story and break the curse any time she chooses to. However, while she had regained a sense of self and found a place where she is happy, she became too comfortable in the mask of an old lady and suppressed her identity of a young woman. She prefers to be an old lady at that point in the plot, rather than her “plain” self, because she sees beauty as a thing of convenience, something she does not possess. The realization that she is the one slowing down her progress then leads to her trying to get rid of this comfortable embrace of her older self for the rest of the plot, which she eventually succeeds at.

Both versions of Sophie give up the vision of ever breaking the curse quite quickly, likely to show the pessimism that is innate to both character versions, but also their insecurities. Surprisingly, Sophie never asks that Howl should break it. She only speaks about it with Calcifer and during the time she is walking up the stairs to the castle along with the Witch. Finally at the end of both versions, she turns back to her younger body through her own power, letting herself love Howl. An interesting difference in the book is, that she barely notices the curse fading, possibly hinting at the fact that a person can transform completely without even noticing any change at all: “Sophie,” said Martha, “the spell's off you! Did you hear?” But Sophie and Howl were holding one another's hands and smiling and smiling, quite unable to stop.” (*HMC* 211)

Sophie's core quality is her bravery together with the insecurity and the pessimism. The resolution of her story, along with her journey is the same in both versions. She learns to value herself and allows herself to love Howl. Her film's counterpart has a much more linear progress in her battle with her insecurities, but that is to be expected, as the plot is simplified and compressed. Sophie's character embodies the theme of love in the story – but not only love towards others, but importantly also love towards yourself.

## 4.2 Howl

The story of Howl is the story of personal growth, much like Sophie's. Irrespective of his magical powers, he fears confrontation and runs away from any problem presented. The book describes his cowardly tendencies in a greater detail, while in the film he is shown repeatedly to simply avoid his responsibilities.

Howl is also repeatedly portrayed as very vain. His looks are everything for him, because he constantly seeks the validation that he gets from the young girls he dates. The one time his visage gets "ruined" by miscolouring his hair he throws a temper tantrum so strong he starts oozing slime just to get back at Sophie, who had just cleaned the house and accidentally messed with his hair dyes.

There were horrendous, dramatic, violent quantities of green slime-oodles of it. It covered Howl completely. It draped his head and shoulders in sticky dollops, heaping on his knees and hands, trickling in glops down his legs, and dripping off the stool in sticky strands (*HMC* 59).

In both versions, he acts as a coward and a flirt. The novel version of him also differs in the way that he is much grouchier. He argues with Sophie often, calls her names and makes jabs at her character: "Busy old fool, unruly Sophie," said Howl. "Am I right in thinking that you turned my doorknob black-side-down and stuck your long nose out through it?" (99) Sophie however does not pull her punches with him either, cutting his best coat into tatters or throwing a bucket of herbicide at his head. Their bickering prolongs the plot, because he is too scared of commitment and has an easier time insulting the person of his infatuations rather than expressing his love. The same can be said for Sophie, who bickers right back, which in turn only spurs him to fight more.

This fighting is never shown in the film, except for the slime accident, but that one incident does not diminish the fact that they are very civil to each other. Film Howl is gentler and kinder, and we can see that this change in his character had to be done, so that their romance could happen in the span of two hours.

Further into the film plot, Howl gets inspired by Sophie's bravery and saves her from Madame Suliman, though he did not want to go there at first, too scared of confronting his

old teacher. A similar thing happens in the novel as well, when Howl hurries to save Sophie from the Witch of the Waste. His story ends when he decides to face his fears. When he realizes that there is much more value to him than just his looks, at least to Sophie. The book version of him might not go without a fight, while the film is once again simplified, but he grows mature in both versions and at the end of both is braver and more responsible.

### **4.3 Witch of the Waste**

The witch, in both media acquires the role of the villain of the story and the main storyline. In the film version, she is demoted into a secondary character. Her animosity is the direct consequence of Howl's cowardice, and she plays the role of the wrench in the works of Sophie's life.

The Witch acts as the initiator of the plot long before the book begins, when Howl breaks up with her and is too scared to tell her off. She sees this as a direct attack on her person and chases after him for the many years that follow. She thrives on his cowardliness. That drives the book plot, as he is too scared to face her, and she keeps chasing him and forcing him to move around the land.

Her putting a curse on Sophie is what truly makes the plot start. In the film it seems as if she had simply disliked the affection he had shown to Sophie, or Sophie's sass, however in the book she seemed to be after anyone that Howl had ever shown any speck of interest in.

“I always bother when someone tries to set themselves up against the Witch of the Waste,” said the lady. “I’ve heard of you, Miss Hatter, and I don’t care for your competition or your attitude. I came to put a stop to you. There.” (*HMC* 18)

The feeling one gets from the book version is much more akin to a crazed woman with a vendetta, rather than the film showing her to be simply very vain and holding a grudge:

“It was said that the Witch had threatened the life of the King’s daughter and that the King had commanded his personal magician, Wizard Suliman, to go into the Waste and deal with the Witch” (*HMC* 4).

She is described as beautiful and perfectly groomed with an extravagant hat in the first meeting but is rude and frightening when Sophie first meets her. The same goes for her design in the film, where she is very visibly opulent and as D. W. Jones notes in her

interview, she looks like the formidable aunt that she had in mind when writing the story. She is the personification of vanity, a direct opposite to Sophie. She does not appear to need to convince herself of her beauty like Howl either.

In his version, Hayao Miyazaki provided her character with an interesting spin, which marks a great departure from the novel. Towards the end of the book, she is simply killed by Howl in a wizard battle. This is long overdue and Howl barely breaks a sweat, further showing that the only problem was that he was too cowardly to face her. But the film gives us a view into what her character could have been. When her powers are erased in the King's castle, she is returned to her true age, turning into a frail old woman. However, she seems happier living a simple life without her magic. And while she does seem to have a strange obsession with Calcifer, the demon that holds Howl's heart, she is rendered a harmless old woman, dependent on Sophie's kindness and constant care.

This deviation from the fate that was set for her in the book demotes her to a secondary evil. One that is showed to be only a small fly in comparison to the war that ails the country. This is, of course, done purposefully to underline the theme of war that Miyazaki chose as one of his main points of focus with the other point of her survival embodying the theme of familiar love. Sophie cares for the Witch in her weakened state in the film, further underlining Sophie's compassion, care and selflessness towards others.

[Scene: Sometime later. Calcifer sulks as the Witch of the Waste watches him while Sophie feeds her.]

**Calcifer** Urgh...

Mmm...

**Sophie** Here, old girl.

**Calcifer** But, Sophie, she's the Witch of the Waste!

**Sophie** No need to worry.

*(HMC Script 43)*

The character of The Witch of the Waste is perhaps the most significant one, in the book and in the film, as it is her anger and desperation that acts as incentive for both main characters to meet and work through their problems. She amplifies the themes and character personalities with her presence and interventions. She is also the same in everything but her intensity and the fate that befalls her – in looks, core characteristics etc. However, her character serves the exact same purpose in both the film and the book, an agent of chaos that is there to disrupt the plot. In the film, however, she turns into the symbol of Sophie's care and selflessness, whereas in the book her killing off by Howl acts as a proof of his newly acquired courage.

## **5 Themes, motifs and symbols**

This chapter describes some of the stylistic devices used to express key themes, motifs and symbols in both the book and the film. These are mentioned by Hutcheon as the easiest way to retain the nature and ideas of the original material (11). In many ways, these devices overlap in the two versions, but as it had been said previously, the authors both have their own agendas they want to convey in their stories, and it is important to make a note of them when differentiating between them.

### **5.1 Themes**

When discussing the themes, we must look at the two versions as individual stories instead of a book and its adaptation. We also need to consider both authors' past works. Diana Wynne Jones is best known for her children's books with heroines that defy the usual standards, with bravery and overcoming the obstacles as prevalent themes. Hayao Miyazaki's works are similar in that, but the director also puts conflict and human bonds to the forefront of his films. This often acquires the form of love, although not necessarily the romantic kind.

#### **Love and friendship**

The theme of love is central in *HMC* as well, either through the romantic storyline between Howl and Sophie or the familial love between all the castle's residents. In the novel it is the romantic storyline that is expanded upon. The book Sophie does not want to admit to herself that she likes Howl for the bigger part of the novel, her constant refusal making the plot more complex, while the film offers only one moment of denial. Familiar love, however, is what the film focuses on more, as Sophie's is more caring than her book counterpart. This applies mainly to Howl's apprentice Markl, the film's version of Michael, the scarecrow and later the Witch.

#### **Beauty**

Beauty is another theme that pushes the plot forwards. Both main characters and the villain are driven by beauty, in one way or another. Sophie sees no beauty in herself, and it is, partly, what keeps the spell on her and prompts her to go to Howl's castle in the first place. Howl needs beauty to feel validated, as he himself says in the film after accidentally ruining his



hair: “I’m done for. What’s the point in living if you aren’t beautiful?” (*HMC* Script 26) It is the determining feature for him and a way for us to grasp how much he cares. Later in the book, when he shows up to save Sophie, seemingly freshly out of bed, she wrongly assumes it is another character he arrived for:

As she had feared, the hard black-and-white daylight coming through the broken wall showed her that Howl had not bothered to shave or tidy his hair. His eyes were still red-rimmed and his black sleeves were torn in several places. There was not much to choose between Howl and the scarecrow. Oh, dear! Sophie thought. He must love Miss Angorian very much (*HMC* 203).

The Witch of the Waste acts as the exact opposite of Sophie. She desires beauty and uses it as a weapon because she is sure that she will become the strongest witch to ever live, should she achieve perfection. There is no stopping her or convincing her. She is desperate to fulfil her wishes.

## **War**

War is a theme that Miyazaki decided to put the utmost focus on in his version, as he does with this in many of his films, likely due to his experience with war at a young age. Jones in the original does not focus on war itself, it is barely mentioned. She dedicates more space to interpersonal conflicts, as well as internal battles, which she has been known to focus on in her books. War is something we are reminded of constantly in the film version of *Howl’s Moving Castle*, however. There are calls to arms that Howl receives, a plane dropping propaganda leaflets and oftentimes when the lens turns to Howl during his outings, we see cities burning or a skirmish between two sides. The witch, who was supposed to be the main villain of the story, lives to see the end, which implies that she is not nearly as threatening as an armed conflict. He shows us that there is no hiding from war, as even when Howl shows Sophie the place where he studied in peace, they see a battleship making its way over the sunny hills. This is a deliberate move from Hayao Miyazaki, showing us that war is a plague creeping even into the most peaceful parts of life.

[Action: Howl looks toward the mountain. He sees a war plane.]

**Howl**                      Why's that flying here?

**Sophie**                     A battleship?

**Howl**                      On its way to burn cities and people.

**Sophie**                     Is it the enemy's? Ours?

**Howl**                      What difference does it make?

(*HMC Script 47*)

### **Personal growth**

Finally, the theme that is the leading point of both versions is the theme of personal growth. It is nothing new for the authors that wrote them, as both Miyazaki and Jones are keen on depicting overcoming obstacles in their works. The plot of both the book and the film be abridged into one sentence. Two characters meet, which forces them to grow to get over their problems. The theme of personal growth is intertwined with the theme of love in this story, and it is also the main point of both stories. The plot starts with Sophie being tired of her passivity and Howl's consequences finally catching up with him, and the plot ends once they both dealt with those problems. While Howl offers Sophie a place of refuge, where she can learn to truly love herself, Sophie to Howl is the incentive for a change. He is constantly pushed by her to solve the problems he was avoiding, which eventually saves both him and Sophie from the villain and her fire demon.

Not much had changed about Howl that she could see, now he had his heart back, except maybe that his eyes seemed a deeper color-more like eyes and less like glass marbles. "Unlike some people's," she said, "it's natural." "I've never seen why people put such a value on things being natural," Howl said, and Sophie knew then that he was scarcely changed at all. (*HMC 210*)

As we can see, all of these themes are shared by both the book and the film version. They may be portrayed differently and with varying degree of intensity, but the essential themes

are what both versions share. The fact that they have that much in common speaks about Miyazaki's ability to properly choose the stories that fit him for his adaptations.

## 5.2 Motifs

Motifs in *Howl's Moving Castle* appear with a meaning that is heavily linked to the prevalent themes of the source version. That is to say that while a motif might appear in both versions, it might not necessarily carry the same meaning.

### Sophie's magic

If we look at the motifs from the book version, we might come upon animation magic for one. Sophie makes things come to life by talking to inanimate objects, usually without any intent to bring them to life. This motif helps to drive the plot because contributes to the resolution of the story by accident. This tendency of hers is foreshadowed right at the beginning, when we get to know that the hats Sophie makes give people who wear them certain qualities they lacked before:

Sophie got into the habit of putting each hat on the stand as she finished it, where it sat almost looking like a head without a body, and pausing while she told the hat what the body under it ought to be like. "You are going to have to marry money!" and to a caterpillar-green straw with a curly green feather she said, "You are young as a spring leaf." She told pink bonnets they had dimpled charm and smart hats trimmed with velvet that they were witty. (*HMC* 8)

Or:

"That hat shop is making a mint these days, and all because of you! You made that green hat that makes the Mayor's wife look like a stunning schoolgirl, didn't you?" "Caterpillar green. I trimmed it," said Sophie. "And the bonnet Jane Farrier was wearing when she met that nobleman," Martha swept on. (*HMC* 15)

Acting as a sign of her caring nature, this develops into a fully conscious activity later, even making it a crucial part of the book's ending, when Sophie orders her walking stick to beat the remaining villain.

In the film, we do not witness the full extent of this power, although there are some instances when it becomes clear, e.g. Sophie meeting and caring for the scarecrow. We are told about it at the end, when Calcifer comments, that if it were to be Sophie, who would let him go, Howl would likely survive the ordeal. This refers to Sophie's animation magic, proving that while we have not seen many direct results of it, the ability has been retained and was seen by the writers as a vital element for both of the endings.

### **Fire**

Should we look for more motifs, we could notice the one of fire, which both authors have chosen to show as one of the primary ones. The film displays this motif through the character of Calcifer as well as burning cities left in the wake of the war and the bombs dropped on the towns. Fire appears any time there is something violent happening on the screen.

As mentioned already in the practical part, Jones's usage of magic as a "metaphor at its simplest" is a very apt description of the motif of fire in the book. In the book it is portrayed mostly through the fire demons like Calcifer, simply signifying magic itself. This becomes apparent already at the beginning: "Blue flames were shooting out of all four of the castle's turrets, bringing balls of blue fire with them that exploded high in the sky, quite horrendously. Wizard Howl seemed to be offended by May Day" (*HMC* 10). And during the fight in Porthaven, when the Witch runs away: "A ball of pale fire rolled lazily up in the distance. It must have been enormous. The bang that went with hit only reached the watchers when the fireball had become a spreading tower of smoke" (*HMC* 153).

### **Sophie's hat**

Another prominent motif is Sophie's hat in the film. Despite being a hatter and making a multitude of fancy hats, the one she wears is a smaller strawhat with a very plain decoration that she wears when she goes out to see Lettie and later when she sets off for Howl's castle. She wears it every time she goes outside, further playing into the "plain" characteristics she thinks she possesses. There is a hint towards its possible meaning before she sets out to the castle:

[Scene: Sometime later. Sophie smashes her hat on her head.]

**Howl** You're wearing that hat?

[Action: Sophie takes a paper from Howl.]

**Howl** After all the magic I spent making your dress pretty...

(*HMC* Script 29)

She wears it to visit Madame Suliman as well, where it gets destroyed when Howl saves her. Not only does it mark the end of her old life, but also shows that there are big changes coming to her personality. From that point on, Sophie is more open with her feelings and expresses them outwardly much more. At the end of the film we see another hat, much wider, and, while not necessarily richer in decoration, different from the previous plain one. This motif had been added into the story by Hayao Miyazaki and is there to further point out the theme of personal growth and act as a forementioned Hutcheon's cinematic equivalent.

The duality of motifs that have been mentioned closely related to what this thesis attempts to prove - the motifs appear in both versions, implicating that they should be the same, and yet the authors then use them to each tell us something different. That tells us that one story can be narrated in multiple ways where even the motifs can be tweaked, and yet the overall effect and message remains the same. It speaks on the nature of adaptation and inspiration, showing us how far the author can take his interpretation without it making the story different.

### **5.3 Symbols**

When it comes to symbols in *Howl's Moving Castle*, there are many that we may find if we took the novel and the film apart completely. The film, being a visual medium, is at an advantage in this. It is not only easier to notice them, but their inclusion adds the depth needed for a good storytelling. However, that does not imply that there are none the film and the book would share. Quite the opposite, similarly to the motifs, the symbols mentioned below are employed in both versions, and yet do not necessarily carry the same meaning.

### **Howl's castle**

The striking symbol is the castle itself. It is interesting to see how the authors have interpreted the symbol. A castle is a symbol for a place of safety and refuge but is also depicted as a place preventing one's growth and that is exactly what it becomes to Sophie. While D. W. Jones talks about her castle as a standard impregnable stone fort, Hayao Miyazaki interpreted it into a living, and most importantly – moving, walking entity. What is interesting about this version of it is its changing and moving nature. It is built from many smaller buildings and shacks that stick together, much like the multitude of Howl's personality traits in the film. It can also be seen as a symbol for Howl's cowardly nature, as the castle in the film will simply run away from danger. The book castle is written as one that can withstand any attack. This too is a commentary on Howl's personality, as in the books he is shown to be cold and with an interior that is impenetrable – just like the cold stone walls of the castle that D. W. Jones had imagined.

### **Sophie's staff**

Most of the things that Sophie possesses could also be seen as a symbol of self-help and personal growth. Especially her staff – a literal and a metaphorical crutch. She carries it with her in both versions and while in the book it is used to defeat the villain, in the film she drops it entirely. Both of these two interpretations can have different possible meanings. For the book version, we can see as her “weakness” and a tool that she carries to get herself around becomes her weapon that she brandishes with full confidence, similarly to her personal growth. It is no longer regarded to as a tool to help her get around easier, but rather as a magical staff, as had been noted by another character in the book.

Sophie raised her stick, slowly and gently. This time she thought for an instant before she acted. “Stick,” she muttered. “Beat Miss Angorian, but don't hurt anyone else.” Then she swung the stick and hit Miss Angorian's tight knuckles the biggest crack she could...

Her stick, to her surprise, hit Miss Angorian again on its own, and again, and again. But of course it would! Sophie thought. She had talked life into that stick. Mrs. Pentstemmon had told her so. (*HMC* 207)

As for the film, we could interpret it as her outgrowing this tool, not needing any external help to make herself known and to carry herself confidently. The staff is shed during the same time that the hat is lost, that is the incident in the palace. She is confronted about liking Howl and has to rely on herself to get herself and her companions home. This all forces her to rapidly grow past her need for a crutch, both physically and mentally.

### **Old age**

Another symbol linked to the themes of personal growth and beauty can be the forementioned aging. Old age, at least in the film, seems to symbolize a peace within oneself, experience and growth. A prime example of it being linked to the beauty theme, should we ignore Sophie for now, would be the Witch, who had sought beauty through her whole life. She is turned back to her “true age”, as a result of losing her magic and the visual that we get of her is much less imposing. Immediately we see a change in her personality as well. She is calmer, much more relaxed and almost indifferent to most of the dramatic things that follow. With Sophie, we get to see the personal growth side of the symbol. She navigates her self-consciousness through her aging body, growing fond of her youth and herself in the end. The road to self-confidence is not a linear one and we get to witness that through Sophie’s constant and fluid transformations.

### **Color**

There are also many instances of colour symbolism in the film. Colour is one of the factors of beauty, linking this not only to personal growth, but the theme of beauty as well. Colours seem to be a symbol of being truthful to yourself, or “showing your true colors”. Some of the examples for it could be Sophie’s dress colours getting more and more bold, similarly to her growing freedom of expression, Howl’s hair changing from unnatural blonde to his black as he learns to accept his real personality and learns to face his fears or Sophie retaining her grey hair at the end of the film as a reminder of her journey and past convictions. Another theme we are drawn to through this symbol is war. We are shown, through the blooming fields and the clear skies, how beautiful peace is. Then, in contrast, we see the red flames and the lack of any cheerful colours that is present in every scene where war is shown. No glorification or even an objective lens. The only apparent colours in those scenes are those of violence and devoid of life.

## **Weather**

A classic motif that's been used in many pieces and adaptations, as even Hutcheon mentions in her works, is the weather. It works as a clear indicator of the mood that the characters are in. And it is used in *HMC* as well, mostly to convey Sophie's emotions. Clear skies during the times that she feels calm and at peace, and clouds starting to gather in the skies during the times that she feels sullen or afraid. That is then followed by rain, as she works through the negative emotions. One example of that is the time when in the movie she goes outside to cry in the rain during the time that Howl makes a scene about his hair. She returns from the rain, rejuvenated and ready to take on the challenge of calming Howl down.

These are all smaller symbols that have varying interpretations that are based on the primary theme of the version they come from. What we can gather from the examples presented, is that the themes were considered in the creation of the film's characters, not just through their personalities, but through the motifs and symbols surrounding them as well. We also see the artistic touch that comes with a visual adaptation, as new symbols are invented, which could be considered redundant in the original. This is where films can truly shine through, especially the animated ones, and Hayao Miyazaki explores that advantage to its full potential, adding almost invisible details to fully submerge us into the plot.



## Conclusion

This thesis aims evaluate the ways in which the film adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) develops the themes, motifs, characters and plotline from the original novel written by Diana Wynne Jones published in 1986.

One of the main findings revolves around the fact that the film deviates from the novel - much has been changed but the essence remains. As I illustrate in my theoretical part, it is impossible to create a perfect adaptation. As the film medium differs from the written medium in its communicative nature and cannot convey the story in full, the animation studio had to decide on a direction that their film was going to head in. Miyazaki chose to highlight mainly the themes of love and war in his version, and he succeeded in delivering the message of the book although he narrowed down its scope of themes. His characters feel real and even though they had been changed greatly, their original qualities peek through just enough to satisfy those who know the original well. Not only that, but unlike some adaptations, the changes seem to be done with a great deal of respect to the original material and in a way that pleased the author of the novel as well - D. W. Jones expressed her approval of the film. The changes appear to add all the plausibility it needs. This opinion is also shared by the community, which formed around *Howl's Moving Castle* which thrives until today, making cosplays and their own merchandise. All that despite the book being published almost forty years ago. As it was mentioned in chapter 1.3, fans are usually quick to voice their unhappiness and now, with the use of modern technology and social media, it is easier than ever. However, the community based on *Howl's Moving Castle* draws attention to the differences between the novel and its adaptation in an observant but not malicious manner.

The thesis has proven that we should look at both versions of *Howl's Moving Castle* like two sides of one coin. The plots, while having been reduced, still hold the same points and goals. Not only are the main story lines kept somewhat similar, but Miyazaki had decided to keep the smaller scenes as well, which speaks volumes about the respect he has for the original novel. The changes he had made to the plot are understandable and necessary and his ways of doing it are commendable, as they seem to fit the narrative almost seamlessly.

The film all around paints Ingary, the world where *Howl's Moving Castle* is set as a much kinder place – a place of magic and wonder, same as the characters. The same transformation

can be said for the characters. Film versions of Sophie and Howl are interpreted as more amicable and generally more emotionally mature than their book counterparts, however naïve they might seem at first. And still, they retain the core traits that they've had in the original – Howl and his flirtatious and cowardly nature, Sophie with her thick skin and pessimistic outlook and the Witch and her hunger for power and all that is beautiful. The characters, though they are more complex in the book, are captured in the film in a very romanticised and yet just realistic enough way that captures the hearts of the audience.

When it comes to the themes, most of them had been kept to match the original, though some more intensively than others. The book mainly tells the tale of self-worth, the film emphasises the importance of unconditional love and compassion. The adaptation of the theme of war that shines through Miyazaki's anti-militant narrative is much more impactful than it is in the book. The visuals of the military conflict are akin to a warning to the audience, and yet it also calms us with the depictions of life thriving despite it. The messages, too, are similar, if not completely the same – that love will prevail, be it through life's or world's obstacles. That along with the theme of personal growth is implied to be inevitable. Motifs we know from the book are kept in the plots, if now interpreted in a way that suits Miyazaki's narrative more and some are added to further paint the picture he is trying to convey. It is interesting to see this progression and interpretation of the motifs, as it highlights that a singular narrative prompt might have different outcomes. When it comes to the symbols, the film is a medium that capable of conveying them in a way that is more apparent than the book medium. Miyazaki utilised that to its full potential, using it as a way to communicate to the audience the details that he would have to narrate over or put into a dialogue.

These changes do not contradict each other; they rather complement and complete each other as every good quality adaptation and its original should and the story, though convoluted, has a clear meaning. Hayao Miyazaki has a long history of adapting works and after going through the similarities in plot, themes and characters, I think it is safe to say that the value of his version of *Howl's Moving Castle* is not decreased by neither its adaptative nature nor by its deviation from the novel, it rather uplifts the novel, gives it a new life and brings the people who enjoy the *HMC* franchise together. It can stand on its own just as well as any other film.

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