

Are They Not So Bad, After All?

Re-imagined villains in the Disney live-action films

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Summary

The conflict between good and evil has a long history in storytelling. Disney masters the depiction of heroes and villains in a dualistic paradigm, ensuring the audience a happy ending for the hero. In the last two decades, there has been a trend of live-action remakes of Disney's animated movies in which the "classic" villain is re-imagined. The subject of this study is how the portrayal of villains in Disney movies changed over time, from the first feature-length animated movie to the live-action remakes in the 21st century. Disney movies are not merely cinematic entertainment for children and adults. On the contrary, the ongoing dialogue between media and the audience reflects and shapes society's morality. 27 Disney films have been observed for the research. The animated movies with a live-action counterpart and the first feature-length animated movie Disney has ever made (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937) are included for the observation. The focus lies on the villains' physical appearances, the motivations for their actions, and the way their storylines end in the movie's plot. The literary review on narrative theory and film theory, moral psychology and Disney studies form the frame of reference in which the analysis is conducted. The findings of the research, the depiction of the villains in contrast to or in accordance with the animated movies, are the following: 1) the physical appearances of the villains are similar, depicting the malefactors with sharp facial features that resemble anger and disgust (as opposed to the hero that is portrayed with large and round features), and by continuing the use of the beauty-goodness stereotype; 2) in the remakes, the motivations of the villains are explained situational factors rather than behavioural ones, providing the villains with a background story containing mitigated circumstances, and; 3) the ending of the villains is more present and essential in the live-action remakes, and leave no room for the villains in a happy ending. The (classic) villains are either excluded from the plot (by death, imprisonment or banishment) or able to reconcile with their victims. The concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation are new in the live-action remakes but are portrayed in an oversimplified manner: a hug and an apology are a "quick fix" for the harm and wrong the victims have experienced. The relational aspect of forgiveness is reduced to a therapeutic and individualistic approach, centralising self-healing. It is a trend to be weary of, considering Disney's role as a moral educator and the reflection of society's morality in films. Most of all, the audience is introduced to the complexity of villainous characters and storylines, enticed to sympathise with the villains and wonder: perhaps, they are not so bad after all.

The fantasy world of our great Disney villains was not a place with laws that tried to protect people. [... it was] a world with curses to be undone; victims to be rescued from dungeons and towers in spite of the most diabolic sorcery. A world with either all good or all evil, in which only one of these could survive.

Ollie Johnston

Frank Thomas

In: *The Disney Villain* (p. 11)

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1. Introduction

Stories entwine people's lives. We share our truths and beliefs, our imagination and emotions in a narrative that is told in a personal encounter, or written down in a book, or displayed on screen as a movie. We might like them, maybe even love them. They may terrify us and keep us awake at night. But we can still watch and listen to them over and over again. The retelling of a narrative has a profound social function, framing a story in a cultural framework that praises socially desired (thus 'good') behaviour, providing role models for children (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, pp. 3-4) - and even adults. A major player in the game of contemporary storytelling is the Walt Disney Company. In October 1923, Walt and Roy Disney set up the Disney Brother's Studio¹ on Hyperion Avenue in New York (Wills, 2017, p. 14). It is the beginning of an era in which short cartoons and animated movies highly influence American consumerism and popular culture (Watts, 1997, p. 163). Disney's first success was the creation of Mickey Mouse, a caricatural portrayal of an anthropomorphic, adventurous mouse. The short-animated movies were highly popular, but Walt was inspired to create a feature-length animated movie and in 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was created. It was a well-known story to the audience. It would become the trademark of Disney to retell and re-imagine folk stories and fairytales the audience was already familiar with, but in a simplified and romanticised way, making the stories less terrifying and more family-friendly. It is this Disney touch that will become characteristic of the studio's animated movies (Harrington, 2015). The animated feature-length movies of the Disney Company are almost all based on folk and fairy tales and children's literature (Chambers, 1966, p. 50). Walt Disney coloured the classics with his own values and philosophy, making the stories more family-friendly. The animated movies all had the following three elements: good conquering evil, affirmation of traditional family roles, and a romanticised version of nature (Wills, 2017, p. 104).

In this thesis, the element of good versus evil, especially the portrayal of the villains, is central. We all know the heroes of the stories: the handsome princes and the beautiful princesses. They oppose the evil queens and wicked stepmothers and, at the end, live happily ever after. In the 21st century, heroes are replaced by heroines, there is more ethnic diversity, and the portrayal of the traditional family is no longer the only standard. The heroes moved on with the time, but what happened to the evil queens and envious stepmothers, and the greedy advisor of the sultan? The research question of this thesis is: how did the portrayal of villains and their villainy in Disney movies change over time, from the first feature-length animated movie to the live-action remakes in the 21st century? The first part of the thesis contains the theoretical framework in which the key concepts of film theory, narratology, moral emotions and Disney studies are briefly explained. The next section is an account of the observation of

¹ In 1926 the studio was renamed to Walt Disney Studio, in 1938 to Walt Disney Productions, and in 1986 the Walt Disney Company.

27 movies (a complete list is attached in Appendix A). The observation particularly focuses on the villains' appearances, their motives and incentives, and how their storylines end. The central question of the observation is: to what extent and in what way have these concepts changed over time, from animated movies to live-action films? The next part provides an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the social, cultural and moral concepts that explain these portrayals and changes. The focus is on understandable motives and just endings, that contextualise a villain's behaviour and the way evil is removed from the stage – in either exclusion from society or inclusion in the story in the form of forgiveness and reconciliation. Disney's use of stereotypes and moral emotions engages the audience with the film's characters. The implications of the answer(s) to this question are fundamentally moral: the depiction and description of malefactors and miscreants tell a lot about the cultural and social norms of right and wrong. Finally, some concluding thoughts relate to Disney's morality and its importance considering the role of Disney as an educator.

It does not fit the scope of the thesis to analyse all Disney movies since 1937, therefore the stories that have an animated version as well as a live-action release are selected for the observation, plus the first feature-length movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937). While this is still a long list of 27 movies, three villains will be discussed in more detail: Lady Tremaine, the Queen of Hearts and the Red Queen, and Maleficent. The animated movies they feature in are *Cinderella* (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1951), and *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, 1951). The motivation for the choice is this: Cinderella is one of the most well-known fairy tales and has numerous adaptations in literature and film (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Lathey, & Wozniak, 2017, p. 18). It is interesting to see the differences between the early Disney version and the 21st-century remake of *Cinderella* (Branagh, 2015) of such a well-known fairytale. The success of *Alice in Wonderland* (Burton, 2010) marked a new era of Disney live-action films that filled a gap for a female audience. According to Sean Bailey, president of Walt Disney Studios Motion Picture Production, there was a gap in the film industry that asked for films relating to female empowerment (Fleming, 2017). The sequel to *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) is *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (Bobin, 2016), and provides the audience with a detailed background story of the Red Queen, explaining her malicious behaviour. *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) is the first Disney live-action movie in which the villain has the leading role and transforms from antagonist to protagonist. It is a remake of the Disney classic *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, 1959). There are some disadvantages to this selection. The included animated movies are from one decade, the 1950s, and have the same director, Clyde Geronimi. However, the arguments in favour of this selection, plus the inclusion of the first animated movie and the last live-action remake in the complete list of observations, justify this selection.

It is also important to note that the purpose of the thesis is not to be comprehensive. It does however attempt to give a broad overview of the social, psychological and philosophical perspectives that reflect upon and are reflected in the Disney movies.

2. Research design and theoretical framework

There is a remarkable change in the depiction of villains in the Disney live-action remakes compared to early animated movies of the company. This observation is the hypothesis and motivation for the research question: "how did the portrayal of villains and their villainy in Disney movies change over time, from the first feature-length animated movie to the live-action remakes in the 21st century?" The implications of the answer(s) to this question are fundamentally moral: the depiction and description of malefactors and miscreants tell a lot about the cultural and social norms of right and wrong. The intention of the present research is not to formulate a normative answer but to provide a descriptive analysis. Therefore, this study makes use of the discipline of descriptive ethics. This chapter explains the methodology and theoretical framework that frame the observations and analysis of this study. The research design consists of four parts. It explains the method of observations, literary review, and data analysis and provides an ethical paragraph. The theoretical framework explains the key concepts and theories that build up the research design.

2.1 Methodology

In its 98 years of storytelling, Disney has produced an impressive list of movies (Walt Disney Animation Studios, sd). It is impossible to take into account every single movie in this thesis. Based on the subject of the thesis – changes in the portrayal of villains in Disney movies – the choice of movies is limited to the difference between animated movies and live-action remakes. That makes a list of twelve animated 'classics' and fifteen associated live-action films. The study also includes the first feature-length animated movie the Disney Company has made. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937) marks the start of an era and movie genre later known as the 'Disney genre'. Disney movies are the centre of the observations.

2.1.1 Observations

The approach used for the Disney movies here is qualitative research, including semi-structured observations. The observations focus on the differences and similarities between the early animated films and recent live-action remakes, specifically the following features. First, the appearances of the villains (especially considering the change between animated characters and life actors), in particular the facial features and the use of colours to depict the villains. Second, the motivation that drives the villains to act, and the explanation and contextualization of these motives. Third, the ending of the villains' storylines within the movie.

As mentioned above, the observation and analysis contain the first feature-length animated movie by Disney and the animated movies that have a live-action remake, making a list of 27 movies for observation. Of this list, three villains are discussed in more detail in the thesis (Lady Tremaine, the Queen of Hearts in the animated movie and the Red Queen in the live-action film, and Maleficent).

Occasionally, there will be a reference to the audience's responses to the films in news articles or social media. These references are minimal; therefore, they are not considered a structural method in which both the audience and the responses are the subject of the study.

2.1.2 Literary review

The literary review of the research, as described in the theoretical framework below, revolves primarily around narrative theory and film theory, moral psychology, and Disney studies. Although Disney is not an officially renowned scientific field, the amount of research that has been done on Walt Disney himself, the Disney production company, and the influence Disney has on the social and pedagogical field makes researchers refer to Disney studies. The aim of the theoretical framework is to provide the reader with a reference frame for the analysis of the villains in Disney movies.

2.1.3 Analysis

The analysis of the observations focuses on the "Disneyfication" of the original narratives, the implicit and explicit depiction of motive and ending, and the use of stereotypes in the movies. The concept of motive is divided into the following categories: no motive, greed, revenge, envy and authority. The concept of ending is divided into the categories of no ending, imprisonment and banishment, death, and reconciliation. The stereotypes that are discussed are the beauty-goodness stereotype, ethnic pluralism, gender, and the relation between names and characteristics of the villains.

2.1.4 Ethical considerations

The object of the study is Disney movies between 1937 and 2021. The observation and analysis of both early and contemporary films can be sensitive predispositions. Much effort is made to prevent anachronistic and biased reasoning. At the same time, it is not the intention to write moral statements about the content of the movies. Instead, the thesis merely describes the portrayal of the villains. Therefore, it can be considered a work in the field of descriptive ethics.

There are no participants involved in the research, but the audience's responses are also meaningful. They are derived from different news articles (especially from American online Newspapers and opinion articles) and content on social media, retrieved from Facebook.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework explains the key concepts and essential theories that frame the observations of Disney movies and structure the analysis. Input from narratology, film theory, moral psychology and Disney studies are combined to create a multifarious perspective on analysing the changing roles of villains in Disney movies.

2.2.1 Narratology and film theory

'Story' derives from Latin *historia*, meaning history. It was initially used to describe a historical account, but from the 1400s, stories were more associated with fictional events to entertain the audience (Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins, 2009). Stories have, for millennia, been an oral tradition, for centuries a written tradition and more recently, a digital tradition. Traditionally, a story consists of the following elements: an introduction, a call of the protagonist, a conflict and in the end, the resolution (Booker, 2004, pp. 17-18) and has three components: the narrative, the narrator, and the audience.

The story is a way in which people give meaning and context to their cultural and social traditions (Scheub, 1998, p. 21), and according to Stephens and McCallum (1998, p.3), this is especially the case for the retellings of stories. Since a story is not limited in time, it can be a connection between past and present (Scheub, 1988, p. 13), and it can be an adaptation to current-day cultural contexts in retellings of a narrative (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 3).

2.2.1.1 Retellings and re-versions of movies and stories

The retelling of stories is not merely for entertainment; retelling stories has a profound social meaning. According to Stephens and McCallum (1998), the function of retelling stories is to acquaint the audience with a specific set of cultural norms, values and ideologies. A retelling provides role models for accepted and desirable social behaviour, whereby the pre-text is adjusted to fit the cultural context of the narrative. A retelling also implies a change of discourse. To replicate the narrative and make an exact copy of it is impossible. A reproduction of a story can reshape the pre-text(s) to a new textual and ideological form, making it more of a re-version than a retelling. The authors refer to this as cultural reproduction. The re-version of a story can be a retelling of the content of the pre-text, an adjustment of the narrative to a different audience, or the use of another medium. Especially in the last three decades, storytelling has turned into a transmedia phenomenon (Schiller, 2018, p. 97). Technical innovations lead to a digital age in which stories occur on television series, social media platforms, and in films in theatres.

2.2.1.2 Moving images: film as a medium to tell a tale

Booker (2004, p. 3) states that when people hear words or descriptions, they make pictures in their heads, imagining a fictitious world from a book or envisioning an event as if they are part of it. Movies are imaginative creations, envisioning a story to a large audience. The definition of movies is derived from Noël Carroll: "mainstream, motion-picture, narrative fictions, whether seen on the silver screen or tv" and designed to reach a large audience (Carroll, 2013, p. 86). Film, movie and motion picture are used synonymously in this thesis.

The structure of a narrative, a story, consists of three parts: exposition (beginning), conflict (body), and resolution (ending). In the exposition, the context and characters of the story are introduced, as well as the historical setting. In the conflict, the protagonist is challenged to reach his goal, despite the hindrances the character experiences. The conflict can be physical and external, emotional and internal, or a combination of both. The conflict usually builds up until it reaches a climax, just before the last part of the story: the resolution. This is the film's final part, the ending, in which the conflict resolves, and the plot is complete (Block, 2020, pp. 246-249).

2.2.3 Film and the audience

The objective of films is to entertain the audience. The spectator witnesses the story, the viewers judge the characters and their actions, and the audience revels in the experience of seeing the movie (Carroll, 2013, p. 93, 105). We feel compassion for heroes and victims and applaud or condemn the actions of the different characters (Bloom, 2013, p. 197; Plantinga, 2009, p. 72). Especially the happy ending in which good conquers evil is popular with mass audiences. Still, how can the spectator be entertained by negative emotions, such as sadness, fear, and pity? This concept is called the "paradox of negative emotions" that Plantinga relates to melodramatic movies. Plantinga argues that negative emotions are replaced by positive emotions, a therapeutic storyline that contains a fantasy of assurance and control. A feeling of security that the world around us in all its misery is still manageable (Plantinga, 2009, pp. 183, 186-190). This theory well corresponds with the concept of feasibility and social engineering, typical for the postmodern society. This theory does not disregard that the power of the narrative is not the intellectual message but the emotions the story provokes (Scheub, 1998, p. 8). The film experience is both emotional and moral.

2.2.4 Moral psychology and moral emotions

According to Scheub (1998, p. 21), emotions are "the soul of storytelling." One of the reasons why people enjoy films is because movies address the emotions of the audience in a "cost-free" way (Carroll,

2018, p. 86): people do not seek the experience of fear in the case of real danger, but when fear is not related to real danger, the experience of emotions is exciting. When sadness is not evoked by real-life experiences of loss, people enjoy a good cry. The viewers' morality is satisfied when a film has a happy ending where good conquers evil. Moral judgement springs from moral emotions, and the viewers use their moral reasoning for ethical value judgments of characters' actions and behaviour (Carroll, 2013, pp. 92).

Intriguingly, the audience responds emotionally to something it knows does not actually happen. It can be an imaginary world, fictitious events, or non-existing characters. The theatrical context emotionally involves the viewers. This concept is referred to as the "paradox of fiction" (Turvey, 2011, p. 431; Plantinga, 2009, p. 64). The reason we care is that filmmakers use moral emotions as a tool to engage the audience (Carroll, 2013, p. 85). It does not require belief in fictional events as if they were real. The events relate to the viewer because the story relates to human concerns (Plantinga, 2009, pp. 72-77). The realness of the story is the familiarity of the basic narrative and the (moral) emotions it provokes. This gives the story, and in this case the film, a social aspect. Given the frequency of children and adults consuming television and movies, there is also a pedagogical facet to films.

2.2.5 Television and the development of moral reasoning

Media and film influence the social and cultural perceptions of children (Giroux, 1994, p.43). It affects their behaviour, either violent or prosocial (Padilla-Walker et al., 2013, p. 393), and their expectation of a 'normal' or 'ideal' family (Zurcher, Webb, & Robinson, 2018, p. 47). Media influences the mentality of children on right and wrong, their ethical framework, and their development of moral reasoning.

In a recent study, Krcmar and Vieira study children's moral reasoning in relation to both (violence on) television and the family environment (Krcmar & Viera, 2005, p. 272). The portrayal of violence has a negative impact on children's moral reasoning (Padilla-Walker et al., 2013, p. 393; Valkenburg & Krcmar, 1999, p. 629), but the communication within the family has a more significant influence on the development of moral reasoning of children (Krcmar & Vieira, 2005, p. 288). Violence in fantasy television affects moral reasoning in aggressive behaviour, especially when the violence is presented as justified. Justified violence is a (violent) reaction to a kind of harm done to protect someone or as an act of revenge. A lack of different perspectives from the culprit, the victim, and the victim's family prevents children from developing more complex moral reasoning (p. 271). A one-sided perspective on fantasy violence instigates children to develop an egocentric perspective (p. 290). It can also affect the behaviour of children in their social relations in real-life (Coyne & Whitehead, 2008, p. 383). The influence of (fantasy) films on children's moral development is one of the reasons that Disney can be considered a "moral educator" (Ward, 2002, p. 2).

2.2.6 Disney: history, philosophy and morality

In October 1923, Walt and Roy Disney set up the Disney Brother's Studio on Hyperion Avenue in New York (Wills, 2017, pp. 14-16). The invention of Mickey Mouse marked the beginning of an era in which short cartoons and animated movies highly influenced American consumerism and popular culture (Watts, 1997, pp. 143-144). Walt Disney had a creative vision and was determined to find new ways and use technological advances to engage the audience. In 1937, Walt created the first feature-length animated movie: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937). It was a well-known story people were already familiar with: a folklore fairy tale with a hero, a villain and a comic touch with the dwarfs. Disney aimed to use animation to create realistic and believable actors, making the audience relate to the characters in the movie (Madej & Lee, 2020, pp. 55-56; Berkowitz, 2010 pp. 135-136). The Disney version of *Snow White* was a family-friendly version of the classic fairy tale: good conquers evil, and the ending for the protagonist is a happily-ever-after. Disney found a new formula to engage a mass audience: the studio created feature-length animated movies that were (almost all) based on well-known children's stories, such as folk and fairy tales (Chambers, 1966, p. 50). Although Disney indeed addressed a mass audience, the pedagogical success of the adaptations of classic stories was disputed. Some praised Walt Disney for his "code of moral regulation" (Wills, 2017, p. 105). Others critiqued the "Disney Touch" that equalled a shallow and oversimplified revision of the classic tales (Chambers, 1966, p. 50). Both positions implicitly acknowledge the pedagogical function of the Disney films and define the movies as a particular genre with distinguished stylistic elements the polarisation of good and evil, by which the first will always conquer the latter. Also, the narratives that Disney used as source materials were simplified and romanticised, making the stories less terrifying and more family-friendly (Harrington, 2015, pp. 52-53). Steven Watts described the Disney genre, or rather he calls it the Disney style, as sentimental modernism: the Disney company blends the real with the unreal, sentimentality with morality, rationality and emotion in animation and popular culture (Watts, 1997, pp. 104-105). The three pillars of Disney morality are good conquering evil, a traditional family structure, and a romanticised version of nature (Wills, 2017, pp. 104, 114). The observation and analysis in this thesis research aim to describe to what extent these traditional and conventional values are still present in the live-action remakes of the animated classics.

3. Observation

The analysis of the villains in Disney consists of the villains portrayed in thirteen animated movies and fifteen live-action films that are remakes of the animated movies. It will be abundant to discuss them all in detail. Therefore, the following selection of villains provides compelling examples for the argument of the thesis.

- Lady Tremaine is featured in *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1950) and *Cinderella* (Branagh, 2015). The tale of Cinderella is one of the most widely known fairy tales and Disney retelling (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Lathey, & Wozniak, 2017).
- The Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1951) and the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland* (Burton, 2010) and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (Bobin, 2016) are chosen for the live-action remakes that mark a new era in Disney movies (Fleming, 2017).
- Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, 1951) is in the eponymous live-action film transformed from antagonist to (one of the) protagonists (Stromberg, 2014).

Appendix A provides a list of all the movies that are observed for this research, divided into A1 for the animated movies and A2 for the live-action remakes. The overview enlists the film specifications (title, year, PG/Kijkwijzer rating), the main characters (hero, victim, and villain), and the motive and ending of the villains. Motives are classified as follows: no explanation, envy, greed, authority, and revenge. The endings are divided into no ending, banishment, imprisonment, death, and reconciliation. The first part of this chapter describes the characteristics and storylines of the villains in the different movies. The villain's role in the animated movie is described: this is the benchmark for the analysis and the comparison between the Disney classic, the pre-text or original story, and the live-action remake. Motive, actions and ending of the three villains listed above in more detail. The second part of the chapter describes the main characteristics of all the villains that are observed, as well as a general storyline. The third and last part of the chapter describes how villainy is defined according to Disney.

3.1 Villains

The three villains selected from the range of movies are Lady Tremaine, the Queen of Hearts or the Red Queen, and Maleficent. They are described below, with attention to the actions, motive and plot finale. The Disney animated movies are the 'benchmark' for the observation and comparison to original text and live-action remakes. Therefore, the first part of the description illustrates how Disney depicts the villain in the animated Disney movie; the second part describes how this is a change from the original text; the third part recounts how the live-action film portrays the villain. Appendix B enlists a more detailed plot summary of the original texts and the Disney re-versions.

3.1.1 Lady Tremaine

Lady Tremaine marries Cinderella's father. She has two daughters from a previous marriage who are lazy, vain and spoiled. Short after their marriage, her husband dies, and Lady Tremaine's true nature comes to light: "cruel, cold and bitterly jealous of Cinderella's beauty." When the prince hosts a ball, Lady Tremaine presents Cinderella with an endless list of chores to prevent her from attending the dance. She is afraid Cinderella will outshine her daughters. However, Cinderella does manage to finish the chores. Lady Tremaine is speechless when her stepdaughter walks down the stairs in her dress, embellished with beads and pearls from her stepsisters. She stands by and watches as Anastasia and Drisella rip Cinderella's dress apart. Lady Tremaine and her stepdaughters attend the ball, where a mysterious girl steals the prince's heart. She loses her slipper on the way home, and the prince acclaims that the girl who fits the slippers will be his princess. When the grand duke arrives at the house of Lady Tremaine, Anastasia and Drisella do not fit the glass slipper. Lady Tremaine prevents Cinderella from trying it on by tripping the grand duke with her cane. Cinderella presents the other glass slipper to the duke and marries the prince (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1950).

In the original folktale by Charles Perrault (2015), *Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper*, Lady Tremaine is only mentioned in the story's introduction. She has two daughters from a previous marriage when she marries the father of a young girl. She makes the girl run the household and uses her as a scullery maid. Her daughters resemble their mother in character and temper and call the girl Cindertail or Cinderella. The stepsisters treat Cinderella in a mean way, but when she fits the glass slipper that is presented and marries the prince, they beg her for forgiveness. Cinderella marries the prince and forgives her stepsisters.

In the live-action remake of Cinderella by Disney (Branagh, 2015), Lady Tremaine marries a man who has a daughter from a previous marriage called Ella. She is beautiful and kind-hearted, unlike Lady Tremaine's own daughters, Anastasia and Drisella. During a party, she overhears Ella's father saying that Ella's mother remains the heart of the house and that he misses her every day. When Ella's father dies, Lady Tremaine fires the staff due to financial worries and Ella is ordered to run the entire household. Her stepsisters start to call her Cinderella. When the prince hosts a ball, Lady Tremaine forbids Cinderella to attend. Lady Tremaine and her daughters arrive at the ball, and later, a mystery princess arrives. Lady Tremaine suspects this is Cinderella and finds one of the glass slippers in the attic. She orders Cinderella to marry the prince and let her run the court, but Cinderella refuses. In answer to that, she smashes the glass slipper and locks Cinderella in the attic. Lady Tremaine plots with the Grand Duke to ensure the prince does not marry Cinderella, negotiating advantageous marriages for her daughters. On the day the Grand Duke arrives at the house with the other glass slipper, Anastasia and

Drisella do not fit the shoe. Cinderella is locked in the attic, but the Captain finds her and orders her to come downstairs. Cinderella fits the shoe, walks away with the prince and forgives Lady Tremaine.

In the original tale by Perrault, the stepmother has a minor part: she is the instigator of the girl's mistreatment, but Cinderella's stepsisters are the main antagonists. In the first Disney animated movie, Lady Tremaine is constantly plotting and scheming against Cinderella. Her own daughters are more of a comic touch and a contrast to Cinderella's loveliness (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, pp. 101-102). Also, in the Disney version, Lady Tremaine has a cat named Lucifer. The cat mirrors Lady Tremaine as a villain in a secondary storyline. Lucifer's main enemy is the dog Bruno, Cinderella's friend. In the end, Lucifer tries to prevent Cinderella from escaping but is chased by Bruno. Lucifer falls down the tower to certain death. The live-action remake is much like the animated movie. Only Lady Tremaine's aversion to Cinderella is not only related to her beauty in contrast to Anastasia and Drisella. Lady Tremaine comes in second place regarding the affection of her husband. His passing also inflicts financial worries upon the household. In the end, Cinderella forgives her, which is similar to the original story – but the object of forgiveness is Lady Tremaine and not the stepsisters.

3.1.2 The Queen of Hearts and the Red Queen

Alice in Wonderland (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske 1951) is a movie with an original storyline and colourful characters. In this story, Alice enters the strange world of Wonderland, where she meets different people and animals. One of them is the Queen of Hearts. When she enters her garden, she finds the gardeners painted her roses red when they mistakenly planted white roses, trying to hide their mistake. She orders for them to be beheaded and finds Alice. She gives Alice specific instructions on standing and speaking and invites her to play croquet. They use flamingos as mallets, a hedgehog as a ball and playing cards for hoops. Suddenly, the Queen of Hearts finds herself put in her undershirt (literally) and blames Alice. She orders “off with her head!” but the king requests a trial. During the trial, some things go wrong, resulting in the Queen of Hearts being hit by a hammer and smeared with jam. Once again, she blames Alice. Alice eats a piece of cake that makes her grow ten times larger than the Queen of Hearts and overconfident, she scolds the queen. Alice shrinks to regular size, and the queen's verdict is again: “off with her head!” Alice runs away and is chased by the Queen of Hearts and her entourage. Alice returns to the door's keyhole that got her into her dream and wakes herself up.

The animated version of Disney is based on two novels by Lewis Carroll: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1871) (L. Carroll, 1992). In the books, there are three queens: The Queen of Hearts, the Red Queen and the White Queen. Carroll describes their characteristics as follows: the Queen of Hearts is the embodiment of ungovernable passion and an ill-tempered fury; the Red Queen is cold and calm, formal and strict, not unkind but very regal; the White

Queen is gentle, not too intelligent, overweight and helpless (L. Carroll, 1887). The storyline and the characters are more comprehensive and complex than in the Disney film. There are two significant differences. First, the storylines and personalities of the Queen of Hearts and the Red Queen merge into one character. Second, the great trial is not for Alice but the Knave of Hearts, a playing card in the deck of the Queen of Hearts. He is accused of stealing tarts from the Queen and is judged by the king.

Disney has made two live-action films inspired by the adventures of Alice in Wonderland. The first remake is *Alice in Wonderland* (Burton, 2010). The Red Queen, Iracebeth of Crims, rules Underland. Her right hand is the Knave, an assassin, and the Queen's subjects fear their ruler. An oracle foretells that Alice will return to Underland and slay the Jabberwocky, thereby saving the land from the rule of the Red Queen. Then, the White Queen, Mirana of Crims, will rule and free the land. The Red Queen has an enormous head and a preference for subjects with body parts that are out of proportion. That is the reason she welcomes Um into the court. Um turns out to be Alice but enlarged, who tries to steal the Vorpal sword and rescue her friends. The Red Queen sentences the hatter to be beheaded, but he is saved by the Cheshire Cat and the subject revolt against the queen. The Red Queen releases the Jabberwocky and meets her sister, the White Queen, at the battlefield. Alice slays the Jabberwocky, and the White Queen banishes Iracebeth to the outlands. Mirana sentences the Knave to join her, and they are chained together. He tries to stab the Red Queen, but the hatter prevents this attempt of murder.

Alice Through the Looking Glass (Bobin, 2016) is a sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*. The Red Queen is romantically involved with Time to receive the Chronosphere and travel back in time. Alice steals the Chronosphere to see what happened to the family of the hatter and travels back in time. She witnesses two important events. When Iracebeth and Mirana were young, Mirana stole cookies from the kitchen and blamed Iracebeth. Their parents believed Mirana, and Iracebeth ran away upset. While running, she falls and bumps her head, causing it to grow immediately. Later, on the day of her coronation, the crown does not fit and the hatter mocks Iracebeth. She throws a tantrum, and the king and queen think her unfit to be a ruler. The crown passes to her sister, Mirana. While Alice witnesses these events in time, Iracebeth manages to steal the Chronosphere from her and travels to the day of the cookie incident. She sees herself in both times, causing Underland to petrify. Alice and the hatter make it just in time to bring back the Chronosphere and restore Time. Mirana apologises to Iracebeth for what happened, and the sisters make amends.

In both Disney versions, the Queen is childish and bad-tempered. However, the plots of the stories (original books and the Disney versions) are entirely different. In the Disney live-action movies, the Red Queen and the White Queen are opponents and sisters. Alice's role stands aside from their differences. In *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), Mirana suggests the bad temper of her sister is caused by a swelling in her head. In *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016), the events in the past explain the physical characteristics and the behaviour of Iracebeth. The oversized dimension of Iracebeth's head is caused by

a fall on the streets but would have never happened if Mirana did not frame her sister for the cookie theft. The lack of apologies from Mirana and the mockery of the people cause Iracebeth to develop a bad temper.

3.1.3 Maleficent

In *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, 1959), the King and Queen host a feast in honour of their new-born daughter, Aurora. Maleficent is not invited. She does attend, and like the other three fairies, inferior to Maleficent's power, she presents the girl with a gift. However, Maleficent's gift is a curse: Aurora will prick her finger on a spinning wheel on her sixteenth birthday and die. One of the three good fairies, Merriweather, adds that the curse will not cause Aurora to die but that the girl will fall into a deep slumber until true love's kiss awakens her. On Aurora's sixteenth birthday, a green magic light hypnotises her. Maleficent's voice encourages her to touch the spindle, and Aurora falls to the ground. Maleficent mocks the other fairies for trying to rescue the princess. She vanishes in green light and returns to her castle. Maleficent traps the prince who goes looking for Aurora in the forest and imprisons him in her castle. She chains him in a dungeon and defies him for not being able to save the princess until he is an older man. The prince escapes with the help of the fairies, who petrify Maleficent's pet, the raven. The prince fights Maleficent with the shield of virtue and the sword of truth. Maleficent turns herself into a dragon, but the fairies enchant the sword of truth with the words "o sword of truth, lie swift and sure; that evil die and good endure." The prince kills the dragon.

Briar Rose by the Brothers Grimm (Grimm & Grimm, Briar-Rose, 1812) is the inspiration for *Sleeping Beauty*. It is a fairytale about a princess cursed by a Wise Woman. The King invited twelve wise women, but not the thirteenth because he had not enough golden plates for his guests at the banquet. As revenge, the thirteenth woman curses the princess: before Briar Rose turns fifteen, she will prick her finger at a spindle and die. The twelfth Wise Woman changes the curse. Aurora will not die but sleep for a hundred years.

In 2014, Disney made a live-action film called *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014). It features the fairy Maleficent who lives in the Moors. When she is young, she befriends a boy named Stefan. When they grow up, they lose sight of each other. One day, Stefan returns to the Moors, and they spend the day together. He gives Maleficent a sleeping potion and intends to kill her so he can become King. However, he changes his mind and cuts off her wings instead. When Maleficent wakes up, she is in pain and agony. She avenges herself with the help of Diaval, a raven she rescues from a dog. When the queen gives birth to a daughter, Maleficent attends the christening uninvited. She curses the child to prick her finger on a spinning wheel and "fall into a sleep-like death, from which she will never awake." King Stefan begs her to undo the curse, and Maleficent adds that true love's kiss can save Aurora – because

the fairy does not believe it exists. Aurora grows up in a cottage in the forest with the three good fairies, and Maleficent grows fond of the girl. She regrets the curse but cannot take it back. When the curse fulfils itself on Aurora's sixteenth birthday, Maleficent tries to rescue her. She arranges for the prince to find Aurora in the castle, but when he kisses her, nothing happens. Then Maleficent says goodbye to Aurora and kisses her on the forehead and Aurora awakes by true love's kiss. When they leave the castle together, King Stefan captures Maleficent and tries to kill her. Aurora manages to retrieve Maleficent's wings. Maleficent and King Stefan clash on a tower, and Maleficent tells him to end the fight. He attacks her once more, and they both fall. Maleficent is able to rise with her wings, but King Stefan falls and dies. Maleficent crowns Aurora Queen of the Moors.

In 2016, Disney released a sequel to *Maleficent*, called *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (Ronning, 2019). Maleficent disapproves of the marriage between Aurora and Prince Philip but does agree to a dinner with Philip's parents. Queen Ingrith, Philip's mother, taunts Maleficent and frames her for cursing the King. Maleficent and Diaval flee the palace, and Maleficent is shot in the air by Gerda, the right hand of Queen Ingrith. She falls, but a fairy of her kind rescues her. When Maleficent wakes up, she finds herself in the refuge of the Dark Fey. There is a legend saying the Phoenix will rise again, and Maleficent is the last descendant. The Dark Fey go to war with the humans on the day of Aurora's wedding. Only then does Aurora realise that her mother-in-law has ill will towards the inhabitants of the Moors. She tries to rescue them with the help of Diaval. Maleficent is shot by an arrow when she rescues Aurora and turns to ashes. She rises as the Phoenix and ends the war between the Dark Fey and the humans. Aurora and Prince Philip marry with her approval.

There are many differences between the different stories. Maleficent evolves from merely one of the thirteen Wise Women to an evil villain in *Sleeping Beauty*. She curses Aurora, captures the prince and turns herself into a dragon. She has pets and minions that serve her and is defeated by the sword of truth. The live-action movies show a different Maleficent: a strong fairy that has the task of protecting her land. Humans wrong her, and her revenge results from a grudge against those who maltreated her. In both live-action films, Maleficent reconciles with Aurora.

3.2 Portrayal of villains

Disney is often accused of simplifying storylines (Chambers, 1966, p. 50; Wills, 2017, p. 54), making heroes lose their personalities and the original princesses turn into bleak heroines (Wasko, 2016, p. 13). The opposite seems to happen to the villains. The villains have a crucial but small part in the original stories: the antagonist instigates a conflict, providing the protagonist with a reason to act. Disney, however, gave the villains a personality beyond the original narrative, visualizing their devious characters. The proud but overall absent stepmother in Cinderella turns into the haughty Lady Tremaine, plotting,

scheming, and mistreating Cinderella daily. The thirteenth Wise Woman turns into the evil fairy Maleficent, who not only curses Aurora but also imprisons the prince and turns herself into a dragon. The Red Queen and the Queen of Hearts in Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* are a free interpretation of the original characters, blending their personalities into one antagonist of the story. Gaston, the main antagonist in *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991; Condon, 2017), is not even an existing character in the original story (Leprince de Beaumont, 2017). Disney adapts its stories from existing literature but gives the villain a more prominent place. The act of the villain forces its opponent to react and defines the story by the portrayal of the villains (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, p. 21).

Bringing a literary character to life on the screen challenges the directors and animators to visualize its personality. The next part describes what choices the production teams made to create the Disney villains, focussing on the visual appearances and character traits.

3.2.1 Visual appearances

When a Disney film introduces its villain, its visual characteristics invigorate the narrator's description. The first time the viewer encounters Lady Tremaine (*Cinderella*, 1950), she is standing in front of a window, her two daughters beside her. She is wearing a purple gown and cherishes the black cat. She wears green earrings, has her hair up, and has heavily accentuated eyes as if she is wearing make-up. The second time the spectator lays eyes on Lady Tremaine is when Cinderella's father, her husband, dies. The narrator explains it is the moment her true nature reveals: "cold cruel and bitterly jealous of Cinderella's charm and beauty, she was grimly determined to forward the interests of her own two awkward daughters." The camera zooms in on her face: her eyebrows are angled and closer together, her mouth has an expression of contempt, and her green eyes look down on her stepdaughter. The entrance of Lady Tremaine in the live-action film is every bit as dramatic. After her daughters step out of the carriage, so does Lady Tremaine. First, the cat Lucifer falls to the ground, growling and hissing. Then the viewer sees a pair of black boots and the bottom of a wide gown made of black and yellow lace. The narrator says she is a woman of "keen feeling and refined taste," while the camera frames Lady Tremaine's silhouette. The camera follows Lady Tremaine into the house, but her face remains hidden under the shadow of a large black hat. The narrator continues: "and she too had known grief [small pause]. But she wore it wonderfully well." Lady Tremaine turns her head and reveals her face. It is partially hidden by a black veil – perhaps because the audience is not yet aware of her true nature and character?

The example of Lady Tremaine shows how the appearance of a character intensifies its description. It is striking that the Disney villains, although they have very different roles to play, share some particular characteristics. They are mostly tall, taller than the protagonist, literally looking down

upon them. They are distinctly slim and wear long gowns,² with emphasis on their hands and facial expressions. The face expresses most evidently the character's devious personality and mal intentions. Many of Disney's animated villains have sharp facial features. They are hollow-cheeked and have a bony structure. The nose is crooked, sharp-lined and large.³ V-shaped eyebrows frame the squinted (often green) eyes, and pursed lips have a permanent expression of contempt and anger. Research has shown that the expression of certain emotions is (for a large part) universally recognized (Ekman, 1970, p. 156). The features described here are facial expressions that are associated with the emotions of anger and disgust (Ekman & Friesen, 2003, p. 82). In anger, a person's brows are drawn together and lowered down. The expression of disgust manifests in pulling the upper lip, making the nose wrinkle and the eyebrows lower. Disgust and anger often blend (Ekman & Friesen, 2003, p. 76). In the animated movies the villain is portrayed in a rather cartoonish way, with unrealistic and exaggerated facial features.

Another indication of evil on the screen is the use of colour. Colour psychology studies the influence of light and colour on human emotion (Mikellides, 2017, p. 105), explaining people's associations with and emotional responses to colours. Black is a dramatic colour - or rather the absence of colour - associated with darkness, fear and secrecy. Purple is a regal colour, and its negative associations are cruelty and madness. Green symbolizes envy, greed and witchcraft. Red stands for passion, anger, and danger (Günes & Olguntürk, 2020, pp. 130-131; Adams, 2017, pp. 24-31). The colours are evident in the costumes of the Disney villains. The drawing of Maleficent is inspired by the Gothic style and features vertical lines and dark colours (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, p. 120). Lady Tremaine wears purple and red gowns in the animated movie and a black and acid green laced gown in the remake. Maleficent wears black in the animated movie and brown, a natural colour, in the live-action film – until she seeks revenge and starts to wear black as well. The ill-tempered Red Queen wears red, and in *Aladdin* (Clements & Musker, 1992), Jafar's costume is black, and his cape has a red lining. In the live-action film (Ritchie, 2019), his costume is similar. The colours of the villains and their costumes oppose the colours the heroes have and wear: they are wearing light clothes in pastel colours (blue is very common), in general, have lighter skin tones than the villains, and more round features in their faces, bodies and clothes. That applies to both animated movies and live-action movies.

One last remark on the depiction of the villains regards their age. All villains of the observed movies are older than the protagonists.⁴ They are usually middle-aged or a little older, and their faces

² Exceptions to this description are the Red Queen and the Queen of Hearts, who in both the animated and live-action film are characterised by out-of-proportion bodily features (in the animated movie the Queen of Hearts is very opulent, and in the live-action film the Red Queen is rather petite, but the measures of her head are so large they are out of proportion); the Ringmaster in *Dumbo* (Sharpsteen, 1941), who is, as the Queen of Hearts, very opulent. Although their bodies differ from the description here, their facial features are similar.

³ In contrast to the victims and heroes, who, without exception, have a very small nose.

⁴ This might apply to all Disney villains, although the research does not contain the analysis of every Disney movie ever made.

show marionette lines. When the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) disguises herself using magic, she turns herself into an old woman. Disney depicts her with a witch's crooked nose (including wart) and pointy chin. She has enlarged eyes with tiny pupils and creases on her skin. When Jafar disguises himself in *Aladdin* (1992) to persuade Aladdin to escape and retrieve the lamp of wonders, he turns himself into an old man. His facial features resemble those of the disguise of the Evil Queen. The sharp lines and wrinkles are a choice of the animator, artistically drawn in an animated movie. The re-imagined villains have less cartoonesque facial expressions and more subtle manners, both in appearances and personality. Although the appearances of villains in animated and live-action films are construed in a similar way, there is the obvious observation that the first villains are animated, sketched by a designer, while the re-imagined villains are impersonated by real-life actors. The main difference is that the stereotypical facial features that reflect anger and disgust are more subtly played by the actors in the live-action remakes.

3.2.2 Character and personality

The construction of a villain also includes the portrayal of certain character traits. The following character traits frequently occur among the Disney villains subject to observations: pride, vanity, ruthlessness, a cold personality, and ignorance of the well-being of others. Pride is "excessive self-esteem" (Cresswell, Pride, 2009) and is typical of the villain's notion of self-regard. Excessive self-regard for one's physical strengths and visual appearances is considered vain and lacking intrinsic value (Cresswell, Vanity, 2009). A cold personality lacks affection and is unfeeling (Soanes & Stevenson, Cold-hearted, 2008). A ruthless personality has no compassion for others (Soanes & Stevenson, Ruthless, 2008). These character traits together create villains that are ignorant of the well-being of others and will do anything that lies in their power to achieve their goals.

Some villains are loud and rude (i.e., the Red Queen and the Queen of Hearts, Gaston), but most are strategic, cunning, and deceitful. Remarkably, the villain's character is often the opposite of the hero's and victim's characters. For example, the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) is proud, vain, and deceitful. Snow White, on the other hand, is kind, befriends the animals in the forest, and is naïve to trust a stranger despite the queen's determination to kill her. Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) has similar character traits as opposed to the kind-hearted and beautiful Aurora. In the remake (2014), Maleficent is full of sorrow while Aurora grows without a care in the world. The Queen of Hearts quickly judges and screams for the beheading of her subjects without giving it any further thought, while Alice carefully considers her next move and whether or not, she will enter the battlefield. In the remake (2010), the Red Queen has no care for the animals in Wonderland and uses them as furniture. She enjoys the execution of her subjects, while Alice is confident, that she will never kill

anything. Lady Tremaine maligns Cinderella in every way, but the girl remains kind-hearted. In the live-action remake, Cinderella is maltreated and emotionally abused by her stepmother daily. Nonetheless, at the end, when Cinderella leaves the house on the side of the prince, she tells her stepmother that she forgives her. Cinderella's forgiveness is a stark contrast with the bitter behaviour of Lady Tremaine.

The villain is defined by 'otherness'; an antihero alienated from the hero. The villain plots and schemes but is often not in direct contact with its victim. Maleficent has a pet raven and minions to search for Aurora. The curse entails Aurora pricking her finger on a spinning wheel. Lady Tremaine stands by as her daughters rip Cinderella's dress apart. The Red Queen uses her right-hand man, Stain the Knave of Hearts. Cruella hires Jasper and Horace to steal the Dalmatian puppies. The reverse applies as well. Villains portrayed as ill-tempered are more in direct contact with their victims, particularly male villains and antagonists in the animal kingdom. Scar in *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994; Favreau, 2019) kills his brother with his bare claws and tries to do the same to Simba. Jafar makes Aladdin fall into the Cave of Wonders after he retrieves the lamp (Clements & Musker, 1992; Ritchie, 2019). Shan-Yu and Böri Khan in *Mulan* (Cook & Bancroft, 1998; Caro, 2020) attempt to murder the emperor (and everyone that stands in their way). In *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991; Condon, 2017), Gaston attacks the Beast, using a revolver. Most female villains seem to malign their victims from a distance, while male villains are often physically closer to their sufferers.⁵ The remake of Maleficent is an interesting case in this regard. While Maleficent fits the profile of a distant female malefactor in the animated movie, the plot change of the remake creates a different perspective. While Maleficent watches Aurora, she grows fond of the girl and eventually regrets her action. The next chapter explores the similarities and changes in the storylines of the villains in the Disney animated movies and the live-action remakes.

3.3 Storylines

Every villain has a motivation for their behaviour, a reason to act. All villains desire something particular, which conflicts with the protagonists' interests and results in a confrontation. There is a climax, and the opponents meet. In the Disney movie, the hero defeats the villain, and good conquers evil. This basic structure of the movie is the same in every film observed for this research. Even when comparing the early movies to the recent live-action releases, the storylines of the villains remain very similar throughout time. Nevertheless, for some movies, the plot changes slightly in the live-action remakes. The icons of the story remain the same, but the villains (and heroes) have subtleties and nuances that

⁵ For a detailed account of the different relations between female and male villains to their victims, there needs to be more extensive research, including more Disney films to demonstrate this suggested finding.

are lacking in the original stories. The remakes reinterpret and (re)imagine the villains' motivation and how their part of the story ends. The following section provides different examples to explicate this change. A concise overview of the motives and endings is included in Appendix A.

3.3.1 Motive

In the animated Disney classics, the motives of the villains are relatively straightforward. The villain acts and functions as an antagonist to which the protagonist responds. A codification of the villains' motives provides the following categories: greed, revenge, envy, authority or no explicit motive. Greed is an intense and self-centred desire for wealth or power (Soanes & Stevenson, Greed, 2008) and includes the aspiration for something or someone to possess. Revenge is a response, a retaliation for previously inflicted harm (Soanes & Stevenson, Revenge, 2008). Envy is discontent, a desire for another's possessions or qualities (Soanes & Stevenson, Envy, 2008). Authority and the desire for the power to rule can be classified as greed as well, but is constructed as a separate category regarding the villain's inclination to despotism. Authority revolves around the desire to excel and dominate a certain territory. The next section provides an overview of the motivations of the villains, first in the animated movies and then in the live-action films.

Of the twelve animated Disney movies, three villains are motivated by *greed*. The Ringmaster in *Dumbo* (Sharpsteen, 1941) aims for more financial profit for his circus. Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991) desires to marry Belle, the most beautiful girl in the village. Cruella DeVil desires the Dalmatian puppies to create a dotted fur coat (Herek, 1996). *Envy* is mentioned twice: The Evil Queen and Lady Tremaine are envious of their stepdaughter's beauty. *Authority*, or the power to rule, is the motivator of four villains. The tiger Shere Khan in *Jungle Book* (Reitherman, 1967) has outlawed every human being in the jungle, and all the other animals fear him. Jafar in *Aladdin* wants to overthrow the sultan, rule Agrabah, and become the mightiest ruler in the world. The fratricidal murder of Mufasa in the *Lion King* provides his brother Scar with the opportunity to become the leader of the savannah. In *Mulan*, Shan Yu is the leader of the Huns and is determined to overthrow the emperor of China. *Revenge* is the motivation that best describes the Red Queen's verdict when she believes Alice mocks her during their croquet game. Revenge may be the motivation for Maleficent to curse Aurora when she is not invited to the image of the king and queen's daughter, although even the animation team of the movie is not sure it grieves Maleficent that much (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, p. 125). Arguably, the case of not being invited can be a cause rather than a motive and cursing the child results from her sadistic character. While this is not explicitly mentioned in the movie, nevertheless insinuated, Maleficent's motive is classified as revenge. The last movie that has not been mentioned is *Lady and the Tramp* (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, 1955). There are several villainous characters in the movie. The

dog catcher does what he is supposed to do according to his profession: catching dogs. Aunt Sara and her Siamese cats are not too pleasant either. But the climax of the movie revolves around the attempt of the rat to attack the baby, and the rescue by the Tramp leads to a happy ending. Therefore the ‘true villain’ of the movie is considered to be the rat. Its motive is not explained but seems to be part of its nature. The overview below summarises the occurrences of the different motives.

Motive	Occurrence animated
Greed	3
Envy	2
Revenge	2
Authority	4
No motive	1

Fig 1. Overview of the villain’s motives in Disney animated classics.

Although the typical features remain the same in the live-action remakes, there are some nuances to the classic animations. Lady Tremaine still prevents Cinderella from attending the ball, but her disinclination stems from envy initiated by Cinderella’s father, who put both his daughter and deceased wife over Lady Tremaine. Maleficent still curses Aurora, but this is a vengeful response to King Stefan, who cut off her wings to become King. As Maleficent watches Aurora grow up, she grows to love the girl and regrets her curse. She does everything in her power to break the spell, and it is her true love’s kiss that brings Aurora back to life and they reconcile. The death of King Stefan is inflicted by himself, and Maleficent is only defending herself when he falls down the tower. In *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, The Red Queen is ill-tempered and inconsiderate, but her character develops for worse after she is wrongly accused of theft by her little sister. It is a wrong that has never been made right until the sisters, in the end, reconcile. In *Mulan* (Caro, 2020), Böri Khan plots against the emperor of China. The audience learns that the emperor is responsible for the death of Khan’s father and, in the eyes of the nomad tribes, is the usurper of their lands. The Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, whom the viewers initially learn to be a villain, is also defended by a background story. After the death of his mother, the prince was raised by his cruel father. The staff of the castle, cursed to be furniture, takes the blame for not doing anything to help the young boy. Miss Pott says: “we’ve made our bed, and we must lie in it.” The prince turns into a vain and proud young man, whom one day refuses the gift of an old woman, repelled by her “haggard appearance.” She curses the prince and his castle, and only when the prince, in the appearance of the beast, would find true love, the spell will break. Remarkably, not only is the villain’s motivation explained, the responsibility of the people surrounding the prince is mentioned:

culpability is shared responsibility. The curse on the castle is justified by the lack of interest and care for the young prince. Gaston, however, remains the vain villain determined to possess Belle as his wife. The overview below shows the motives that occur in the live-action movies.

Motive	Occurrence animated	Occurrence live-action
Greed	3	2
Envy	2	1
Revenge	2	4
Authority	4	3
No motive	1	1

Fig 2. Overview of the villain's motives in Disney animated and live-action remakes.

In the overview, there is one less villain in the live-action films, because there is no remake of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The Evil Queen's motive is classified as *envy* in the animated classic, and it remains the motive for Cinderella's stepmother. The category can be regarded as unchanged in the second part of the live-action films. Another category that remains the same is *no motive*: the rat in *Lady and the Tramp* (Bean, 2019) has the same part, unmotivated. In general, the villain's motives are more explained in the live-action remakes, and sometimes the villain's motive changes. Maleficent curses Aurora out of revenge, but her motivation differs hugely from the original cause of events. Shere Khan is convinced that humans do not belong in the jungle. He fears Mowgli will destroy nature in the jungle because men know how to make fire. Shere Khan fears the fire, for a man tried to burn the tiger. It does not justify Shere Khan's murder of Akela or the attempt to murder Mowgli, but it does explain his aversion to the human boy (Favreau, 2016). Böri Khan, the ruthless leader of the Huns in *Mulan*, avenges his father. A completely different story is the live-action film *Cruella* (Gillespie, 2021). The story begins with a young girl called Estella. She has black and white hair and quite a rebellious personality. When the school threatens to kick her out, her mother takes Estella to London to start anew. They stop on the way to the house of the Baroness, where a fashion show is happening. Estella's mother is killed during the event, and the girl flees to London, where she befriends Jasper and Horace. Together they run a successful gang, perfecting the art of stealing. Estella is a fashion designer by heart, and Jasper enables her to work at Liberty, the most prominent fashion house. It turns out to be the empire of the Baroness, and eventually, Estella learns that the Baroness ordered her Dalmatian dogs to kill Estella's mother. Estella turns into Cruella again, her devious alter ego, and plots revenge against the Baroness. The movie's real villain is the Baroness, who will do anything in her power to remain the title fashion queen. The film is not exactly a prequel to the animated movie *One Hundred and One*

Dalmatian (1961), for it fails to answer the question of how Cruella turns into a woman that collects Dalmatian puppies for a decorative fur coat (which is the essential and iconic part of the animated movie). Cruella's appearance resembles her personality in the remake: she is the daughter of a psychopath and of a kind-hearted man. Her black and white hair symbolises her deranged and kind nature.

There are three new villains in the live-action remakes, although they are not included in the overview, for the overview portrays the change of the villains from the animated to the live-action films. King Stefan in *Maleficent*, Queen Ingrith in *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, and the Baroness in *Cruella* are introduced in the live-action films. Stefan grew up with nothing, and is determined to one day live in the castle. He takes his chance to avenge his kind so he can marry the king's daughter and rule the land: Stefan's motive is authority. Queen Ingrith despises the Dark Fey and believes a fairy murdered her brother. Her distrust of fairies and other magical creatures grows and she is determined to exterminate the inhabitants of the Moors. Her motive is hatred, distrust, and maybe even fear. The Baroness is the queen of fashion and does anything necessary to preserve this title. The film portrays her as a narcissist who eliminates everything and everyone that stands in her way – even her own daughter. It is her nature that drives her actions, and her motivation is authority and the power to rule in the world of fashion. Although the 'new villains' create a plot twist in the original story, the 'classic villains' are somehow replaced by a new evil. An evil that is explained and contextualised in the live-action remakes.

3.3.2 Ending

Another noteworthy change between the recent live-action films and the animated movies is how the part of the villain ends. In the animated movies, the emphasis is on a happy ending, and not all the villains are mentioned in the story's finale. The endings are categorised as follows: imprisonment, banishment, death, reconciliation, and no ending mentioned. The following overview summarises the ending of the villains in the animated movies.

Ending	Occurrence animated
Imprisonment	1
Banishment	1
Death	6
Reconciliation	0
No ending	4

Fig 3. Overview of the villain's endings in Disney animated movies.

For most villains in the animated movies, their story ends with either death or no mention at all. A lightning bolt strikes the Evil Queen, and she falls off a cliff. The prince defeats Maleficent, who is transformed into a dragon, and kills her in a fight. The Tramp kills the rat, the Hyenas lynch Scar, Gaston falls from a tower in his attempt to murder the Beast, and fireworks explode Shan Yu, leader of the Huns. For four villains, we do not know how their story continues: there is no ending mentioned. They are the Ringmaster in *Dumbo*, Lady Tremaine in *Cinderella*, the Queen of Hearts, and Cruella DeVil. Three villains remain. Jafar is trapped inside a lamp and sentenced to live the rest of his life as a genie. This entrapment is categorised as imprisonment. Shere Khan is chased away from the jungle, and so is Scar. They are banished from their homeland. The endings of the villains in the live-action films is quite different, as the following overview clarifies.

Ending	Occurrence animated	Occurrence live-action
Imprisonment	1	2
Banishment	1	1
Death	6	5
Reconciliation	0	3
No ending	4	0

Fig 4. Overview of the villain's endings in Disney animated movies and live-action remakes.

As mentioned above, the overview of the live-action film has one less movie for there is no live-action remake that features the Evil Queen. For Jafar, Gaston and the rat, the ending remains the same. For the other villains, it changed in the live-action films. Death is not a sentence but a result of defence without the intention of a kill. Scar dies in the animated as a sentence of the hyenas, whom he betrayed in order to save himself. In the live-action film, he falls off a cliff into the fire when Simba defends himself against his uncle. Shere Khan is fighting Mowgli and falls into the fire. Böri Khan in *Mulan* dies, but it is by his own arrow. Imprisonment is not visualised by bars, but in *Dumbo*, the police confront Vandevere, and the movie implies they take him into custody. Aladdin and the genie sentence Jafar to overthink his morality as a genie trapped in a lamp. Lady Tremaine, along with the Grand Duke, never sets foot in the kingdom again. There is no villain whose story does not have an ending in the live-action remakes. Most remarkable is that some of the classic villains reconcile with their victims. Maleficent reconciles with Aurora twice. The White Queen banishes the Red Queen in the first remake. In the sequel, Mirana apologises, and they make amends. Cruella does not reconcile with the Baroness, but she does make amends with her friends, Jasper and Horace, whom she treated poorly during her reprisal of the Baroness. It seems that the stereotype of the villain that is defeated by good slightly

changes: the classic villain may not be so bad after all, but the new villains replace their role. The following overview depicts the changed endings.

Villain	Ending animated	Ending live-action
Lady Tremaine	No ending	Banishment
The Queen of Hearts/ The Red Queen	No ending	Banishment → Reconciliation
Maleficent	Death	Reconciliation
Shere Khan	Banishment	Death
The Ringmast/ Vandevere	No ending	Imprisonment
Cruella	No ending	Reconciliation

Fig 4. Overview of the villain's changed endings in Disney animated movies and live-action remakes.

3.4 Short summary: imagining the Disney villain

The Disney villains are the opposite of the heroes. Their characteristics are excogitated, making their looks resemble their personalities and character traits. Heavily-bodied villains are loud, impulsive, and often outsmarted by their opponents; old malefactors are corrupt and deceitful; tall and thin miscreants are intelligent, proud, and cunning. Disney uses various stereotypes to portray their villains. They all have in common that their ego causes ignorance for other characters and fury when they hinder the antagonist's plan. Some villains desire power and authority. Others are greedy or envious, and some seek revenge. In the first animated movies, some villains do not seem to have a motive: it is just the way they are. In the live-action remakes, the purposes of the villains often have more nuances and subtleties, and their characters are more intricate. The villains transform from the embodiment of evil to malefactors that have been wronged and mistreated. Although the viewers condemn their resolution, the audience apprehends the villains' motivations to some extent: coming in second place in either family or work affects one's dignity; revenge is born out of sorrow and mistreatment, and remorse follows severe reprisals. For some villains, the story is rewritten entirely from their perspective. Maleficent, the Red Queen and Cruella are wronged by someone very close to them: a close friend, a sister, and a mother. After the movie's climax, they reconcile with their victims (Aurora, the White Queen, and friends Jasper and Horace). The new Disney releases contextualise evil, and depicts villains with understandable motives and rational character development. The next chapter aims to explain these changes between the portrayal of the classic and the re-imagined villains.

4. Interpretation

This chapter explores the cultural and social influences that underly the re-imagination of the Disney villains. The focus lies on three aspects discussed in the previous chapter: depicting the villains' dispositions, the antagonists' motivations, and how their storyline ends. What does the portrayal of a stereotypical villain mean, why is it valuable to know a villain's motivation, and how does a just ending provide the audience with a form of closure and fairness? This chapter aims to contextualise the changes in the portrayal of villains, analysing how re-imagined Disney movies mirror a changing morality in society. The first part describes a theoretical framework on villainy and how intention, consequence and responsibility influence the spectators' judgment. Mitigated circumstances contextualise the villains' motives and raise the questions of guilt and responsibility, reframing the dualistic paradigm. It seems that good and evil are subordinate and reduced to situational events, and villainy is not intrinsically valued but an act by choice. The focus on the ending of their villains in the classic plots and re-imagined storylines questions society's view toward justice, and Disney's interpretation of forgiveness and reconciliation receives a critical note. The second part of this chapter analyses the appearances of the villains concerning the use of stereotypes: the way Disney relates appearance, ethnicity, gender, and names and titles to villains' disposition. The third part of the chapter researches the audience's moral emotions and responses to the movie's characters. This chapter concludes with the argument that the changes in motivation and ending, especially the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation, reflect Western society's focus on restorative justice and enforces the (female) hero's stereotype of beauty-goodness.

4.1 Framing the villain

Villains fascinate the audience. Their actions force the hero to react, and unlike the heroes, the villains' part is not bound by moral rules (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, pp. 15, 22). The reference to a villain as the antagonist of a story dates back to the 1820s. 'Villain' refers to an evil character in a book, someone wicked or guilty of a crime and whose immoral actions are critical to the plot (Soanes & Stevenson, Villain, 2008). The following section explores how, on the one hand, the villains' actions define and direct the story and, on the other hand, how the re-imagined villains are characterised by their own background story.

4.1.1 Motive and intention

The classic Disney villain is the antagonist of the story, the hero's opponent, an evil that is the opposite of the good. Cámara-Arenas (2011, pp. 6-7) argues that there is more to the villain than just a representation of evil and provides the following definition. According to Cámara-Arenas, a villain is a character that is, to some extent, anthropomorphic. Motivation and intention differentiate a villain from natural evil (i.e., catastrophes or animals) and place the character in a moral and ethical dimension. The reader or spectator measures the villain in terms of social responsibility. The aspects of villainy resonate well with a structure of antipathy. According to Kjeldgaard-Christiansen (2019, p. 68-69), three aspects construe filmic villainy: guilty intentionality, consequential action and causal responsibility. Intentionality predicts future offenses. If the villain inflicts harm intending to do so, there is a high probability he or she will repeat the offense. The outcome of the action, and the consequences, affect the spectator's judgement of the malefactor. The closer and more personal the relationship between villain and victim is, the more responsibility the audience ascribes to the villains' actions and the more appalling the act is valued. Disney live-action films contain more complex characters and storylines. The remakes give the villain a background story, and their circumstances mitigate the reprehensibility of their actions. Part 4.3 expands on the relation between the audience as spectator, witness or judge of characters in a story. Cámara-Arenas (2011, p.18) differentiates between three causalities that motivate a villain to act: the response to an incentive, the influence of a set of circumstances, and the villain's nature or character. In the Disney movies, an event or occasion causes the villain to respond and (re)act, and the villain's nature ensures a harsh response. For example, in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991 and 2017), the incentive is Belle's refusal of Gaston's hand in marriage. Gaston's nature (his selfishness, vanity and greed) causes him to act accordingly and change the current state of affairs by removing Belle's father from Belle and killing the beast, directing Belle to accept him as her husband. The influence of a set of circumstances becomes more significant in the live-action remakes. Not only is the (re)action of the villains influenced by certain events, their motivation and intentions are as well. In *Cinderella* (2015), Lady Tremaine is not merely envious; she feels degraded by her husband, who shows more affection for his daughter and puts his deceased wife on a pedestal. It is her dignity that is undermined within the relationship of a family. Another example is the film *Mulan* (2020). Böri Khan does not attack the Chinese empire merely to desire to rule: he avenges his father and reclaims the land of the tribes.

The villains' motives are important because motive and intention are related to responsibility. The question the live-action films implicitly raise is to what extent the villains are accountable for their deeds. A culprit's motive is relevant to their criminal liability (Kaufman, 2003, p. 317). The question of *why* someone acts in a specific way is not merely behavioural but relates to the person's responsibility for that action (Barnes, Falk, & Duncan-Jones, 1945, p. 231). The motive is crucial, for it is subject to the

ethical evaluation of a particular action (Kaufman, 2003, p. 329). The audience assesses the villain's badness and the responsibility for their actions. Mitigated circumstances pass a milder judgment upon the re-imagined villains. Although the villain's motives are understandable, the villains' retaliatory responses are still subject to the audience's judgement and disapproval. It may be for this reason that Disney's more recent movies portray the villain's ending as part of the plot finale.

4.1.2 A just ending

For Disney, the best outcome of a story is a (romantic) happy ending, a happily ever after for the heroes of the tale. For that to happen, good must conquer evil: there is no place for villainous characters in the Disney ideal. No Disney movie exists where the princess dies, the hero is lost, and the villain revels in their success. Each plot finale of the villain ends in removal from the screen. Either by imprisonment, banishment, or death. Some classic villains are rewritten as the victims in their stories, and some reconcile with their victims. What is evident is that in the remakes, each villain has an ending, classic or newly introduced. It seems that Disney cannot afford its happy ending to have loose ends, or maybe, it is the audience's demand for justice, a reprisal for the harm inflicted upon the sympathetic character(s) in the film. Ogletree and Sarat (2005, pp. 1-2) argue that society's view on punishment reveals its true character. In a way, the ending of the villains and the way the moviemakers and the audience find it suitable reflect today's morality on justice and punishment in society. The paragraphs below analyse the different endings of the villains and how this reflects society's morality and sense of justice or fairness. They are divided into two categories: exclusion (death, imprisonment and banishment) and inclusion (forgiveness and reconciliation).

4.1.2.1 Exclusion: death, imprisonment and banishment

A happy ending is the crucial element of a Disney movie, an invention by the company that reflects its Utopian vision of a fantasy world (Brehm & Rees, 2017, p. 362). It is a structure that reoccurs in every movie, and there is certainly no place for the villain in a happy ending. The stories' antagonists are removed from the screen by death, imprisonment or banishment. The deaths result from the intervention of nature or the outcome of a violent confrontation but are, most of all, self-inflicted by evil intentions (Laderman, 2016, p. 170). That is even more overt in the recent remakes, where death results from the protagonist's self-defence against the antagonist: the villains brought it upon themselves. Another way to remove the antagonist from the storyline is imprisonment or banishment. In both cases, the villain is written out of the story, which can be interpreted as implying exclusion from society. Historically, *Verbannung* was a standard penalty during the European Middle Ages (Moeckli, 2016, p. 69). In most societies today, banishment is still part of punitive law in certain ways: it has been

reformulated, for example, as “exclusion from public space”, and its main objective is the prevention of re-offences (Moeckli, 2016, p. 77). Imprisonment is another form of exclusion from society, but with the prospect of returning. Ideally, time in prison constitutes rehabilitation. To rehabilitate is to “return to competence” – the time the person was not yet a culprit. The prisoner is responsible for the harm he or she inflicted and for their personal reformation (Mathiesen, 2006, p. 27). Rehabilitation is not a common motive in Disney movies, especially not in animated films. According to the animators of the Disney company in its earlier period, the villains ought not to have remorse or second thoughts (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, p. 19). For some villains, that changes in the live-action remakes. The stories of classic characters are retold, and for some, like Maleficent, the way they have been personally damaged is just as painful as the harm they inflicted. Disney introduces another approach to rehabilitation: to obliterate the wrong by forgiveness and restore the tense relationship between protagonists and antagonists in the form of reconciliation.

4.1.2.2 Inclusion: forgiveness and reconciliation

In the live-action remakes, forgiveness and reconciliation are new motives that include the endings of some of the villains. Maleficent, Iratebeth, and Cruella try to find a way to reconcile with their friends and family. Cinderella forgives her stepmother, Lady Tremaine. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two different, and complex concepts. Reconciliation is the re-establishment of (friendly) relations (Soanes & Stevenson, Reconciliation, 2008). It is a motive that resonates with society’s emphasis on restoring, healing and transitional justice. To forgive is to hold no resentment toward someone regarding the harmful action they had committed (Soanes & Stevenson, Forgive, 2008) and to repair the distress that is caused by an offence or injury in a relational context (Larocco, 2013, p. 29). In the last decade, the emphasis on forgiveness appears to be much more individual than relational. Forgiveness is more defined as a *unilateral* construct, while reconciliation is the re-establishment of a relationship and is *relational* (Nordquist, 2017, pp. 40-41). Traditionally and conceptually, forgiveness is a gift the victim gives *to the wrongdoer* (Garrard & McNaughton, 2010, p. 13), but in the live-action movies, the relational part is virtually nil. Forgiveness is reduced to a personal affair that revolves merely around the victims. This individualist approach is also referred to as therapeutic forgiveness: psychologists and therapists focus on the benefits of forgiveness for the victims and teach people how to forgive (Garrard & MacNaughton, 2010, pp. 5, 77-78). The act of forgiveness is associated with positive health outcomes, both physical and mental (Johnson, Wiles, & Page, 2015, pp. 7-8), reducing stress and emotional harm to the victims. We could say that the theory of therapeutic forgiveness markets forgiveness. However, if forgiveness is a gift out of generosity that the victim bestowed upon the offender, the central focus is not on the forger but on the restoring of a relationship (Garrard & McNaughton, 2010, pp. 10-11). The media greatly

praises victims who publicly claim to forgive their offenders. As Garrard and McNaughton point out, however, this view on forgiveness surpasses the harm and wrongdoing that has been done to the victim (Garrard & McNaughton, 2010, p. 6).

It is plausible to say that the Disney live-action films reflect the emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation but in an oversimplified and problematic manner. Cinderella is to the last moment prevented by Lady Tremaine to have a future with the prince. When she walks away with Kit, Cinderella turns around, faces her stepmother and says: "I forgive you." But why does she forgive her stepmother, who benefits from this forgiveness? Some might say this is a motive that originates from the original fairy-tale by Perrault. But a large difference is that the stepsisters who wronged Cinderella fall on their knees and beg her for forgiveness. Lady Tremaine does not do that. There seems to be no relational meaning in the words of Cinderella which ring shallow. The problem with this portrayal of forgiveness in Disney heroes - or specifically, Disney princesses - is that it adds another unrealistic and, arguably, educationally harmful aspect to the stereotypical Disney role models. Maleficent curses Aurora, but when the girl wakes up, she is glad Maleficent is there and that she broke the curse. But remember, Maleficent cursed her with a sleeping curse that was supposed to never wake Aurora up. Mirana, the White Queen, apologises to Iracebeth, the Red Queen for framing her for theft. In the years they fought each other, Iracebeth killed numerous of her subjects and haunted families down in order to get her way or take revenge. And yet, it takes just a simple 'sorry' and a hug to make amends. In the film *Cruella*, the relations between Estella and her friends are admittedly more complex. When Estella turns into her alter ego Cruella and neglects their friendship, they are not eager to reconcile. Estella breaks them out of prison and argues they are her family. Only then do Jasper and Horace give in, saying they are unable to hold a grudge when Cruella "plays the family card" (Gillespie, 2021) and their relationship is re-established.

The question which is legitimately raised here is whether the Disney representation of reconciliation takes into account the weight of the wrong that precedes forgiveness and whether harm can ever be so easily erased. Arguably not. Hence, the authors who develop critiques of Disney's cultural pedagogy along these lines have an important point. It seems that the family needs to be forgiven, no matter the harm that precedes remorse (or even without remorse from the offender), while some other family stereotypes are dropped or significantly lessened. For example, whether the family is biological or not is now less important, i.e., the traditional idealization of the biological family is not affirmed anymore.

An original element in these films is that the villains are victimised and have remorse for their evil deeds. The question that arises, however, is one of the accountabilities of the villains. As Barkan (2009, p. 910) argues - even if in a somewhat simplified way - "if everyone is a victim, then neither guilt nor responsibility matter." The background story of the villain and the explanation of their motives make

the ideal of forgiveness possible and more plausible. Evil out of evil, or evil as an ontology, would leave no way back for the offender and lack motivation for the victim to forgive. Understanding (at least a part of) the motivation of the offender and finding something good is a precondition to forgiveness. We may not identify with the action, but we do with the motivation (e.g., greed or envy), for they are common emotional reactions to the situations portrayed (Surrey, 2013, pp. 24-25).

The ideal of forgiveness is very common in Christianity, where the sinner is a central figure and dealing with sin is a central problem (Garrard & McNaughton, 2010, p. 7). It is one of the most deeply rooted values of Christian tradition that resonate in Western culture (Schwöbel, 2003, p. 14). At first sight, the utopian Disney view on forgiveness and reconciliation seems to correspond with the religious view on salvation. Although there are some analogies and a clear relation, the very principle of forgiveness and reconciliation is a different topic. In Christianity, these concepts are closely related to and originate from God's relationship with people (Webster, 2003, p. 112). Christ repents for people's sins. Forgiveness and justification precede reconciliation with God (De Gruchy, 2002, p. 67). This does not mean that to reconcile is to forgive and forget, and it does not mean either that reconciliation replaces other forms of justice.

On the contrary, restorative justice attempts to include different and neglected dimensions of justice while emphasising rehabilitation and reconciliation (De Gruchy, 2002, p. 202). The Bible might be exemplary in this regard. In the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy describes Israel's exodus from Egypt. However, the people disobey God, and God punishes them by sending them to the desert for 40 years. After 40 years, God commands them again to travel to the promised land. Israel repents and recognises their wrongdoing, and then reconciliation with God is possible (Van Rooy, 2005, p. 267). The New Testament begins with letters from different apostles who account for the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Restoring people's relationship with God requires Christ's sacrifice, for the repentance of people will not suffice the wrong they have done. The concept of reconciliation transcends interpersonal human relationships (Schwöbel, 2003, pp. 16-17). In the discourse of reconciliation, guilt is more than a forensic concept, and its definition and meaning surpass juridical terms (De Gruchy, 2002, p. 197). Likewise, forgiveness is not a "rosy and romantic picture [...] in which all conflicts are resolved by universal goodwill" (Garrard & McNaughton, 2010, p. 19). It rather is "a painful process and not something that can be turned on like a tap" (De Gruchy, 2002, p. 171).

In addition, scholars are critical of the emphasis - so often found in popular culture today - on forgiveness as a coping mechanism and healing strategy for individuals. When forgiveness is considered a moral virtue and not a moral duty, the question arises of whether forgiveness is always realistic or appropriate (Bash, 2007, p. 103). A shallow and hollow understanding and practice of forgiveness can reinforce unbalanced power relationships between offender and victim and pass the meaning of forgiveness. If we compare the Disney version of forgiveness and reconciliation with more substantiated theological views

on, and psychological perspectives on, forgiveness and reconciliation, it becomes clear that Disney oversimplifies and romanticises these concepts. As a reflection of society's morality, it is a simplification that is, both, influenced by the society in which it arises as well as influential in that society and possibly beyond.

4.2 Appearances and disposition

The critique of the Disney company for oversimplifying stories and morality also applies to the company's use of stereotypes (Tovbin et al., 2008, p. 24). A stereotype is, of course, "an image or idea of a particular type of person or thing that has become fixed through being widely held" (Soanes & Stevenson, *Stereotype*, 2008). Stereotypes have a practical function: people make generalisations from previous experiences to find their way into the present. But the use of stereotypes can often be inaccurate and immoral (Bloom, 2013, pp. 121-122). Stereotypes cause bias, and people generally hold more negative stereotypes than positive ones (Lee et al., 2009, p. 107). Another relevant consideration in this regard is that viewers, especially children and young adults, tend to identify with television characters. It can have significant psychological implications when television characters act as role models for young adults in appearance and aspiration. Children feel similar to and identify with characters that resemble their race, gender and age (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005, pp. 326-328). The following sections, therefore, examine and reflect on Disney's display of diversity and the use of beauty, ethnicity, and gender stereotypes.

4.2.1 Beauty-goodness stereotype

There is a long history of the relationship between aesthetics and morality, where ugliness indicates moral corruptness (Cámara-Arenas, 2011, p. 10). Vice versa, beauty implies moral goodness. This phenomenon is referred to as the beauty-goodness or the Beauty-is-Good-stereotype (Klebl et al., 2022, p. 83). Especially the face is subject to people's judgements. The view that facial features reveal a person's personality - the so-called physiognomy - so that, for example, a person's beauty is inherent to their moral nature, is flawed and rejected by virtually all scholars today (Garber, 2020, pp. 274-275). Recent studies demonstrate, however, that the belief in physiognomy in the general population still persists. Hassin and Trope (2000, p. 837-838) researched the rationale of physiognomy in a recent study. They found that 75% of the respondents believe the face expresses a person's true personality. Hassin and Trope also researched the extent to which different facial features are assigned to a person's character. They found that the following features were associated with kind-heartedness: abounding amount of hair, round eyebrows, long eyelashes and round eyes, and a round and full face (Hassin & Trope, 2000,

pp. 845-846). Disney films are notorious for depicting and promoting the beauty-goodness stereotype in animated movies (Bazzini et al., 2010, p. 2706). Bazzini et al. (p. 2697) summarise their findings as follows.

“[...] attractive characters displayed higher intelligence, lower aggressiveness, and greater moral virtue. Moreover, physically attractive characters were more likely to achieve positive life outcomes at the film’s end and were more likely to be romantically involved.”

In Disney animated films, beauty is often the most valued characteristic of a woman (Tovbin et al., 2008, p. 30; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005, p. 331). If attractiveness is congruent with morality, Disney’s definitions of beauty on one hand and ugliness on the other determines the looks of virtuous heroes and evil villains. Disney generally depicts its protagonists with light skin, large round eyes, a small nose and full lips. The antagonists have large noses, small squinted eyes, angry brows, wrinkles, and are often dark (they either have darker skin or wear dark clothes). The Disney princesses and heroes are young, white, and beautiful. Primarily blond women represent America’s highest standard of beauty and grace (Hurley, 2016, p. 71) in contrast to the villains (Amador, 2010, p. 178). In the live-action remakes, it seems all actors meet the standards of America’s definition of beauty. Kate Winslet portrays Lady Tremaine, Angelina Jolie stars as Maleficent, and Emma Stone features as Cruella. The authors are lauded for both their performances and their looks. It is fascinating that the young Maleficent meets the beauty standards of more round facial features, implying innocence. She does have two small horns on her head. When Maleficent grows up to be the protector of the Moors, her facial features resemble more of the animated character. Her horns have grown, and prosthetics give Angelina Jolie the high, sharp cheekbones that characterise the animated villain. The dark and the gloomy, stereotypical appearances of the evil animated villains are reflected by the live-action actors as well, be it less exaggerated.

4.2.2 Ethnic pluralism

In *Cultural Diversity in U.S. Media*, Alan Spector (1998, p. 39) critically formulates the problem of how ethnic humour turns to racist stereotyping. If the stereotype is portrayed negatively, depicts a minority group, and maintains misconceptions regarding this group, it is racist humour. Disney, and especially Walt Disney, has often been accused of racism (Wills, 2017, p. 119) and whitewashing, implying the superiority of Western culture to non-Western societies (Hurley, 2016, pp. 67-68). Examples most often cited are the black crow workers in *Dumbo* (1941), who have no face; the South European cooks in *Lady and the Tramp* (1955); and the Asian name of *Jungle Book*’s Shere Khan (Spector, 1998, pp. 43-45). Other movies are particularly mono-racial, for example, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1951), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). A lack of ethnic diversity in a movie can imply that the missing groups are considered unimportant and/or powerless (Lee et al., 2009, p. 99).

Disney's release of *Aladdin* in 1992 was an opportunity to introduce a change, yet arguably, the exact opposite happened. The movie includes crude stereotypes and appears to be premised on orientalist views (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 229). The title song, "Arabian Nights", was considered highly offensive (Shaheen, 2001, p. 50). The initial text is:

"Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face
It's **barbaric**, but hey, it's home."

The Disney company deleted the sentences, shown here in bold, a year later and replaced them with: "Where it's flat and immense / And the heat is intense" (Frook, 1993), but the alteration of the lyrics did not change other provocative content of the movie itself. When Jasmine grabs an apple to give to a hungry child, an Arab vendor threatens to cut off her hand. Shaheen (2001, p.51) argues that such measures are not only offensive but also historically incorrect. He continues, pointing out other inaccuracies: the "Arabic names are mispronounced", and the Arab texts on shop signs in Agrabah are non-existing words. Villainous characters are portrayed with dark hooded eyes, large crooked noses and carry swords. Aladdin and Jasmine have coloured skin but more 'Western facial features', such as a small nose. Notably, the live-action remake in 2019 involves a group of actors from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Egyptian, Afro-American, Iranian, and British-Indian). The directors also changed the references to the oriental culture in title song:

"Oh, imagine a land, it's a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where you wander among every culture and every tongue
It's chaotic, but hey, it's home."

It seems the directors of *Aladdin* (2020) made a deliberate choice to not participate in the Hollywood custom of depicting "evil Arabs as entertainment" (Semmerling, 2006, p. 1), and there are more examples where the Disney company attempts to release more inclusive movies. Similar moves are noticeable in other remakes. The remake of *Lady and the Tramp* (2019) places the story in the mid-twentieth century, adding ethnic diversity with the interracial marriage of Jim Dear and Darling and a diverse cast. *Cinderella* (2015) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) feature more ethnic diversity (Zurcher, Webb, & Robinson, 2018, pp. 59-60), although white Western actors still claim the leading roles. The cast of *Mulan* (2020) has Asian roots, and the film's location is in China. Despite a more accurate portrayal of ethnicity in the film compared to the animated movie, Disney has been condemned for

supporting Chinese institutions in an area where the Chinese government oppresses the Uighur minority (Stone Fish, 2020; BBC, 2020; Wintour, 2021). Finally, the movie *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), while successful with the audience, was disputed by critics: a film that takes place in a fantasy world provides the filmmakers with the ultimate opportunity to include a more ethnically diverse cast, but this diversity was not displayed (Ciezarek, 2015, p. 9). However, the movie does stand out in the portrayal of assertive female characters, which will be further described in the next section on gender.

4.2.3 Gender

In the first decade of this century, scholars criticised Disney for displaying conservative gender images that are considered stereotypical (Tovbin et al., 2008, p. 24). Disney princesses act as role models for young girls, portraying an ideal that includes self-sacrifice, naivety, innocence and a happy ending construed by true love (Golden & Wallace Jacoby, 2018, pp. 299-300; Davis, 2014, p. 161). Notably, even Disney's female feminist heroes end up marrying the prince, both in the animated movie and live-action films (e.g., Belle, Jasmine and Mulan). In this regard, Disney did not change the general features of heroes' aspirations in particular. But how about the villains?

Female villains are portrayed very differently from the Disney heroines, as vicious femme fatales. The villains do not seem to care for romantic involvement and end up alone (Amador, 2016, p. 178). Disney's male villains either resemble their female precursors or possess exaggerated masculine features. Jafar, for example, mirrors the features of Maleficent (Johnston & Thomas, 1993, p. 213) with a fine bone structure, a narrow and pointy face, and coloured eyelids suggesting the use of cosmetics. These features are also depicted in animal villains, such as Scar (Li-Vollmer & LaPointe, 2003, pp. 97-98), and to some extent in Shere Khan. Their manners are constrained, sly, and manipulative. Gaston is an example of hypermasculinity. His macho-like appearance and behaviour contrast the development of the beast from an unpolished animal to a prince with a sensitive personality. It reflects a trend in the 1990s where heroic masculinity is more refined, opposing the muscular and competitive heroes of the 1980s (McCallum, 2002, pp. 117-118; Davis, 2014, p. 159). Both portrayals of femininity in Disney's animated heroes and villains reflect a superficial, simplistic and dualistic view of women: a woman is either a saint or a sadist, sincere or devious, good or evil.

Recent movies portray empowered Disney princesses and heroines. Belle is even more independent and is responsible for the rescue of her father twice. Cinderella is treated poorly but confronts her stepmother in the end, stating no one should be treated the way she was. Alice is destined to slay the Jabberwocky, but it is her choice. For the villains, not much has changed. Their roles are characterised by similar features and dispositions, although they are less exaggerated. Using real-life

actors may influence filmmakers to use a more nuanced and less cartoonish image of villainy. One thing that does not change, is the characterisation of villains by name.

4.2.4 Names have meaning

In the Cinderella remake (2015), the narrator tells: “names have power.” They certainly do in the Disney world. Names often contain references to a person’s heritage and social standing and bynames symbolise the subjective perception of a person’s characteristics (Seeman, 1983, pp. 238, 241). In Disney movies, the name of a character typically depicts its social status, appearance, disposition or function in the story. Cinderella is a sobriquet for Ella, who was named after the cinders of the fireplace. The name degrades her status to a person associated with ash and dust. Snow White was named after her complexion when her mother wished for a girl with skin white as snow, hair black as ebony and lips red as a rose. Characterising a villain is often done by referring to the character’s disposition or function. Maleficent means causing harm (Soanes & Stevenson, *Malefic*, 2008), and her pet raven is called Diablo, which derives from diabolic. More subtle are the names of the characters in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. The Red Queen is Iracebeth of Crims, and her sister the White Queen is Mirana of Crims. Iracebeth is a play on the word *irascible*, which means ‘to be easily angered, irritated’ and ‘being impatient’ (Behind the Name, 2010). Iracebeth with her fiery red appearance, toddler-like manners and agitated attitude is the opposite of her sister Miranda. Miranda is the name of Prospero’s daughter in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. It derives from *mirandum*, Latin for ‘to be admired, to wonder at’ (Harber, 2020). The two sisters are opposites, already by name. Some characters seem to not have a name at all, for example, the Evil Queen in *Snow White* and the Ringmaster in *Dumbo*. Davis (2014, p. 149) argues that having no name at all emphasises the character’s function and symbolic value within the narrative. There is no change in the meaning of names in early animated movies or more recent films by the Disney company. It seems that names also tell a story, introducing the character’s personality subtly. Stereotypes are a tool for moviemakers to quickly introduce a character to the audience (Robinson, Callister, & Magoffin, 2007, p. 203). Alongside its physical appearances and personality traits, the meaning of the characters’ names reinforces the stereotypical image of the villains.

4.3 Narrative, film and audience

The reflection of society’s morality in popular culture - in this case, specifically Disney movies - is not a static rendition. Popular culture can shape an individual’s identity, but not merely in a passive way. There is a constant dialogue and negotiation between the media and its audience (Brehm & Rees, 2017, p. 352). According to Brehm and Rees (2017, pp. 357, 363), Disney has become part of America’s (civil)

religious culture. It is the totality of Disney company's movies, franchises and theme parks; the Disney philosophy and ideology make people want to belong to the Disney world (Watts, 1997, pp. 147-148). The next part attempts to explain some of the particularities of this complex dialogue between the movie and its audience, expanding particularly on the audience's engagement and people's moral emotions.

4.3.1 The appeal of Disney movies

It is not the theoretical reflection on the story's plot that engages the audience but the emotions the story evokes: emotions are the "soul of storytelling" (Scheub, 1998, p. 21). Plantinga (2009, pp. 87-90) describes three different emotions that viewers can experience while watching a movie: direct, sympathetic, and artefact emotions. Filmmakers elicit surprise, curiosity and fascination while making the audience acquainted with the fictional world and series of events, thus addressing direct emotions. Sympathetic emotions induce the viewer's moral engagement. The viewers share the interests of certain characters and align themselves with them. Artefact emotions are directed towards the film itself rather than the construction of its fictional world. The object of artefact emotions can be an actor, for example, Angelina Jolie playing Maleficent or Emma Thompson featuring as the Baroness. In this way, the appreciation for the actors partially determines the appreciation for the film.

Disney movies are narratives of good and evil and address the spectators' sympathetic and moral emotions. The hero or heroine represents the good, and the villain represents evil. The audience is engaged in the film's narrative by sympathising with the hero and developing antipathy against the villain. The Disney remakes reframe the classic villains by presenting them to the audience with understandable motives and mitigating circumstances, making the spectators question: are they not so bad, after all? Yet the question remains why this new approach appeals to the audience. The hypothesis is that this is a combination of the challenge of complex narratives, the morality of the story that evokes emotions of sympathy and empathy, and the identification of the audience with (more realistic) film characters.

4.3.2 Demands of an advanced audience

Disney's nuances the dualistic paradigm of good and evil in their newer releases. It is a trend that occurs in television series as well and Mittel (2006, pp.30-31, 38) refers to as narrative complexity: storylines are not always straightforward but multidimensional and depend on the audience's regular engagement with the show. The television industry now has an advanced audience of "amateur narratologists" (Mittell, 2006, p. 38) they create content for. According to Christie and Van den Oever (2018, p. 14-15), that also applies to cinema: from the 1990s, many movies feature a "complex" storyline (e.g. the

Usual Suspects (1995), The Matrix (1999), Inception (2010)). Disney movies are not renowned for their complex storylines, but the company's newer releases do provide a more compound cast and plot. Good and evil are opposites, yes, but in the confrontation between protagonists and antagonists occur subtleties: the audience starts to understand, and to some extent even feel for the antagonist. For example, Maleficent has been wronged by someone close, and Cruella knew a lot of hardship in her youth. By adding character development of these classic villains using sympathetic emotions, the filmmakers reduce the antipathy of the viewer.

4.3.3 Moral emotions: sympathy and empathy

Morality and moral emotions are complex concepts and much debated by scholars. This part describes different views on moral emotions that the audience experiences while watching a film. According to Neill (1996, p. 175), the responses of moral emotions differ between sympathetic and empathetic (Neill, 1996, p. 175). Briefly put, a sympathetic response is the feeling *for* the character, while an empathetic response is the feeling *with* the character. The difference is in the ways the emotions engage the audience. Sympathy does not necessarily imply an attachment with the character, though it implies compassion. Empathy means the viewer is more emotionally involved and, to some extent, identifies with a character. However, empathy with a fictional character does not necessarily require similar beliefs, convictions or experiences as the fictional character. Rather, it is feeling into the character's experience based on one's experience and emotional responses (Feagin, 1997, p. 57). According to Neill (1996, p. 179-180), there is more to empathetic emotions in films, for fiction can act as a moral educator: experiencing emotion through film, for example, grieving with a character helps to experience and identify feelings and emotions that can be new to a person.

Arguably, most moral emotions in film are sympathetic rather than empathetic. If a character portrays loneliness, the spectator may feel sorry or sad but most likely does not feel lonely themselves. Sympathetic emotions occur with favourable characters and provide the audience with a moral compass (Plantinga, 2009, p. 88). Similarly, the filmmakers can induce a feeling of antipathy for the antagonists, making the audience call for punishment or revenge (Plantinga, 2009, pp. 31-32). The antipathy one can feel for injustice and harm is what inflicts an "appetite for punishment" (Bloom, 2013, p. 3). Perhaps Plantinga and Bloom provide the explanation for the endings in recent Disney releases. Justice has served, and the heroes are allowed a happy ending without the interference of evil forces. Nevertheless, then, how does this fit with the reimagining of the classic villains in the live-action remakes? At first sight, it seems that Disney remakes make the audience sympathise with the villains. There is a certain understanding and compassion - arguably rational - for the wrong that was inflicted on the villains in the past within the narrative. The live-action remakes that feature the villain as the protagonist appeal

to the spectators' sympathy and quite possibly empathy: the audience is compelled to feel *for* the villain, and to some extent even *with them*. One aspect that can explain this is the emotional synchronisation with fictional characters. The audience mimics the expressions of the actor or character (Bègue, 2015, p. 76) and, to some extent, identifies him- or herself with the character (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005, p. 326). That applies not only to heroes; villains are icons as well (Golden & Wallace Jacoby, 2018, p. 299). Reframing the villains in a different light evokes the appreciation of the character.

The appreciation for the cast amplifies the newly found appreciation for the villain. Cate Blanchett portrays Lady Tremaine, Helena Bonham Carter features as the Red Queen, and Luke Evans stars as Gaston. They are all established actors who already have a liking for who they are. The artefact emotions support the moral emotions and arguably enhance the complexity of realistic characters as Disney villains. Cinematic realism blurs the lines between fairytale fantasy and reality (Craven, 2016, p. 194), the audience is ready for more complexity in the storyline (Christie & Van den Oever, 2018, p. 14) and the characters and the portrayal of villains by live actors enable more subtleties and nuances than the early animated movies provided for.

So, sympathy or empathy? The audience's moral satisfaction when justice is restored requires sympathy for the heroes and victims and antipathy toward the story's villains (Carroll N., 2013, p. 100). It does, however, also call upon the audience's empathy. A character's likeability in the animated movies is, for the most part, very straightforward: good opposes bad, and heroes and victims are wronged by the villain. But when the villain is wronged and harmed, the audience starts to understand their motives. The re-imagining of a classic villain like Maleficent evokes also empathetic responses. Still, when the classic villain becomes the story's protagonist, a new evil is introduced to the screen that needs to be erased. In this way, a call for the restoration of justice that satisfies the audience's sympathy for the heroes and reaffirms Disney's utopian philosophy that good always conquers evil is maintained.

5. Concluding thoughts

In an interview with Time, historian Shiamin Kwa states: “Ultimately, the success of an adaptation is how well it resonates with its audience, rather than how well it supports or replicates an original” (Haynes, 2020). Overall, the Disney remakes are lauded for their visual performances (i.e., décor, costume and cast) but also criticised for the re-interpretation of the original stories (reference). *Cinderella* (2015) received positive criticism, and Disney was applauded for not having “lost any of its old-fashioned magic” (Rotten Tomatoes, sd). Others were disappointed that the movie was “anti-revisionist” and “old-fashioned” (Kermode, 2015). *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) received similar ambiguous responses (Grady, 2017). Disney morality is an ongoing dialogue between the heritage of the company’s utopian view of (a fantasy) life, and society’s and the audience’s perspective on ideal and everyday life moral standards. The last part of the body of the thesis provides a brief overview of the observation of the re-imagined Disney villains in the live-action remakes, and the interpretation of these changes in a social and cultural context, using narratology, film theory and moral psychology. Finally, there are some concluding thought on sympathising with the villain, the Disney version of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the moral implications of a changing morality in Disney films.

5.1 Concise overview of observation and interpretation

The first part of the study, the observation, describes the villains’ appearances, motives, and ending in 26 animated and live-action movies. The appearances of the villains reflect their dispositions, and the animated movies portray a cartoonish picture of villains with sharp facial features, thin or overweight figures, and dark costumes. Five categories describe the villains’ motives: greed, envy, authority, revenge, and no motive. In the animated movies, greed and envy were incentives ascribed to women; authority exclusively to men. This changed in the live-action movies, where one female villain was driven by the power to rule a fashion imperium (the Baroness in *Cruella* (2021)). The way the story ends for the villain is categorised into five possible ending: no end, imprisonment and banishment, death, and reconciliation. Reconciliation is an element in the live-action remakes that does not occur in animated movies. Death results from a fight or is at one’s hand in animated movies. In live-action films, it is exclusively self-inflicted. In some live-action films, the original antagonist turns into the protagonist. This happens in *Maleficent* (2014), *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, (2016) and *Cruella* (2021). Maleficent rescues princess Aurora, the Red Queen reconciles with her sister the White Queen, and Cruella apologises to her friends. When the “classic” villain is re-imagined in the remake, another evil rises to the screen and gives the story a new antagonist.

The second part of the thesis analyses the findings in the observation phase. The oversimplification of the Disney narrative influences the depiction of the characters in terms of stereotyping. The beauty-goodness stereotype suggests that what is good is beautiful, and ugliness is a warning for evil. The lack of ethnic diversity implies the inferiority of minority groups, and the portrayal of the villain as a dark person(ality) with darker skin highlights the notion of white supremacy. The conservative gender portrayals portray women as either innocent and naïve (heroines), or vicious and deceitful (villains). Male miscreants are portrayed with femme-fatale-like features and resemble features similar to those of Maleficent. The names that are given to the characters affirm their role in the story and reinforce the stereotypes. Although the animated movies render a more cartoonish image of goodness and villainy than do the live-action remakes, stereotyping is still present in the live-action movies. Disney's effort to be more inclusive did bring assertive female heroes and a more ethnically diverse cast. The harmfulness of stereotyping is related to the status of Disney as a moral educator and the movies' characters as role models for children. Yet, stereotyping is also a practical tool for filmmakers to introduce a character to the screen in a short amount of time. It becomes harmful when the features and dispositions of a character are discriminative. The live-action films contextualise the villains' motives: a wrong has been inflicted upon them, creating an understanding and sympathetic (or even empathetic) response from the viewers. The main finding is that motive is more explained in situational factors rather than behavioural ones: evil is created by external circumstances. Some of the remakes rewrite the storyline and ending of the "classic" villains in a way they retire from their roles as antagonists. Reconciliation and forgiveness are new features in Disney live-action remakes. This study is somewhat critical of the oversimplified idea of reconciliation and the superficial portrayal of forgiveness that replace rehabilitation and the restoring of relations into an individual process of self-healing, thereby passing on the complex and painful process of forgiveness and reconciliation, with little to no regard to the harm that has been done.

Now the question remains what is the *meaning* of the fact that Disney changed its classic storyline and villains, and how the Disney villains are re-evaluated. One obvious answer is that it sells: if it makes money, Disney creates a sequel. Almost all animated classics have sequels, such as *Cinderella part II* and *III* (Bein, p. 31). However, this does not explain why Disney the live-action remakes allow more than just a remake or a sequel. A re-version can function as an update of earlier stories (Ciezarek, 2015, p. 9) and be updated in a way as to reflect (also) today's morality in a classic tale of good and evil.

5.2 Sympathising with the villain

The antagonists generally desire something particular which conflicts with the protagonist and disturbs the regular course of events. In the (envisioned) reaction to the Disney live-action remakes, it is not necessarily the desire itself that the audience finds appalling. There is a certain understanding of the

villain's motive: not being invited, coming in second place, or being mocked. The antagonist's reaction to rectify the situation in their favour at all costs is what is designed to disturb the viewer. The "capacity to be immoral" (Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, 2019, p. 75) makes an antagonist a villain: the villains will remove any obstacle hindering them from achieving their goals. Villains are motivated by greed, envy, and a desire for authority, motives that consume the villains' minds. They are determined to attain wealth, beauty, or the power to rule. The vanity of the objects of their desire is part of the villain's immorality.

The filmmakers of the live-action remakes induce the audience to sympathise with the villains. Mitigating circumstances and a justified motive do not approve of vindictive reprisals but create an understanding. Importantly, it reflects a society in which motive is predominantly explained in situational rather than behavioural or innate/'fixed nature' factors. Consequentially, villains are in a way victimised. Their mitigating circumstances question to what extent they are responsible for their actions. Their desires are contextualised and arise from a wrong in the past, a lack of fairness and justice that accounts partly the villains' motivation and intentions. For some villains, Disney wrote an entire new storyline. Maleficent is a fairy, protector of the Moors, and a victim of her youth friend Stefan. When he cuts her wings in order to become king, she lashes out in anger and later curses the young princess Aurora. The classic storyline of the curse is still there, but it is completely reframed by a background story that gives Maleficent an understandable motive, and an ending in which Maleficent and Aurora reconcile. In this case, and some others, the "classic" villain is replaced by a new other in the story (i.e., King Stefan, Queen Ingrith and the Baroness), and the antagonist becomes the protagonist. In another example, the Red Queen was offended when her sister lied and her parents chose her sister's side. After an apology by the "classic" villain, they invigorate their remorse by putting words into deeds (for example, Maleficent breaks the curse with true love's kiss, unifies two nations, and Cruella saves her friends from prison). Disney portrays some of its villains in a rather sympathetic way, appealing to moral emotions and sympathetic and empathetic responses in the audience.

5.3 Forgiveness and reconciliation

At first sight, Disney seems to nuance the dualistic paradigm of good and evil of the live-action remakes, where evil is not only evil. Cartoonish images turn into realistic portrayals. A critical note to add to this shifted paradigm, however, is that now, good does not only conquer evil, but the hero also forgives. In the live-action film, Cinderella forgives her stepmother. Some might argue that this derives from the original fairy tale by Charles Perrault. It both does and does not. In *Cendrillon*, the stepsisters treat Cinderella awful, but they do not forbid her to try on the glass slipper in the end. They laugh and let her try, not expecting the shoe actually to fit. When it does, they apologise and beg Cinderella to forgive

them. Out of the kindness of her heart, she does. In *Cinderella* (2015), Lady Tremaine prohibits Cinderella to the last minute to come down and meet the prince. She forbids Cinderella because she is her 'mother'. Cinderella denies this and walks down and away with the prince. On her way outside, she looks up to her stepmother and says: "I forgive you." This appears, however, as a hollow kind of forgiveness and seems to be given for the viewers' entertainment. There is no apology, no regret, only the kind-heartedness of the hero that forgives. What does Cinderella's forgiveness aim to achieve? Is it for the comfort of her stepmother, or is it for her wellbeing, a coping mechanism for self-healing?

Another example of forgiveness includes reconciliation between Maleficent and Aurora. Maleficent curses Aurora after being so mistreated by her old friend Stefan. However, Maleficent watches Aurora grow up, and she grows fond of the girl. She regrets the curse and tries to make it undone. It cannot be, and Aurora does prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel. Prince Philip cannot give her true love's kiss, and Maleficent says goodbye to Aurora. She kisses her gently on her forehead, shedding a tear. Aurora wakes up, smiles and cheers: "you came for me!" They hug and try to flee the castle together. It seems that the fact that Maleficent did *curse* Aurora to fall into a sleep-like death and was never supposed to wake up is irrelevant as long as the story ends well. Stefan, the new antagonist of the story is not so fortunate and falls down a tower to death.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, the White Queen suggests that a swelling in the head causes her sister's ill-temperateness. In the sequel *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, we see Iracebeth running away from home after being wrongly accused of stealing by Mirana. She falls and bumps her head, causing it to grow out of proportion. Her head is so large that her crown does not fit on the coronation day, causing people to laugh and make fun of her. Mirana apologises, and they make amends. It seems the filmmakers do not want to give weight to the fact that Iracebeth's deeds before this were dreadful. Indeed: Iracebeth beheaded a significant part of her subjects without reasonable cause, released the Jabberwocky to kill Alice, and almost petrified all of Wonderland by stealing the Chronosphere from Time. But all it needs is a hug and two words: a 'quick fix' for a happy ending in which everyone reunites.

Forgiveness and reconciliation represent the most distinctive new development in the hero's disposition. Disney seemed on its way toward minimising the use of stereotypes in its portrayal of the villains, but has now added a new and crucial element to the hero's role which appears no less stereotypical and predictable: a true hero always forgives and will not resent a villain that seeks to make amends and reconcile, notwithstanding the harm that has been done. The new villains of the live-action adaptations had plenty of opportunities to retrieve from their evil scheme and make amends. Nevertheless, they chose not to.

It would be interesting if further research on the topic includes a wider spectrum of movies and the entertainment industry, as well a more in-depth analysis of moral emotions and the representation of society's emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation in the context of self-healing.

5.4 Implications of a changing morality

The more authentic and realistic a character is, the more the (young) audience will imitate the characters as role models. (Bègue, 2015, p. 82). Psychologists argue that Disney, as a moral educator, has a chance and the responsibility to change the conventional portrayal of stereotypes and create a realistic and inclusive picture of gender, race, class and beauty. Generations grow up with Disney motion pictures, and Disney morality has a formative role in raising children and young adults. The beauty-goodness stereotype is unrealistic and stories where white people are good and dark people are evil is discriminative and harmful. In recent (live-action) releases, the dualistic paradigm is slightly more nuanced, and Disney replaces its romantic happy ending with the reestablishment of relationships by apologies and remorse. Forgiveness is a new feature of the hero and seems unconditional. This recent additive to the Disney philosophy implies that there is no wrong that cannot be made right and that severe harm cannot stand in the way of reconciliation. The hero has yet another characteristic to add to its disposition: a forgiving nature. The danger here is a shallow portrayal of good and evil, harm and forgiveness. It seems people cannot cope with an uncontrollable and unexplainable evil in today's society and Disney provides an answer by portraying the villain partly as a victim and recontextualising evil in situational factors. If villains are no longer the embodiment of evil and situational factors explain harm and wrongdoing, evil is reduced to a merely circumstantial factor: evil is not born, evil is made; but the agents that ultimately cause it are now one step away from the villains of the stories themselves. So, perhaps, the villains are not so bad after all.

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Appendix A

A1. List of Disney animated movies that were included for observation.

Title, year – MPA/Kijkwijzer*

	Victim	Hero	Villain	Motive	Ending
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Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1937 – G/6

	Snow White	Prince	Evil Queen	Envy	Death (fall)
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Dumbo, 1941 – G/AL

	Dumbo	Timothy Mouse	Ringmaster	Greed (money)	No ending
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Cinderella, 1950 – G/AL

	Cinderella	Prince	Lady Tremaine	Envy	No ending
		Dog: Bruno	Cat: Lucifer	Mirrors villain	Death (fall)

Alice in Wonderland, 1951 – G/AL

	Alice	-	Queen of Hearts	No explanation	No ending
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The Lady and the Tramp, 1955 – G/AL

	Lady/baby	Tramp	Rat	No explanation	Death
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Sleeping Beauty, 1959 – G/AL

	Aurora	Prince Philip	Maleficent	No explanation	Death
		Fairies	Raven: Diablo	Mirrors villain	Death (petrified)

One Hundred and One Dalmatians, 1961 – G/AL

	Puppies	Pongo	Cruella DeVil	Greed (fur)	No ending
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The Jungle Book, 1967 – G/AL

	Mowgli	Mwogli	Shere Khan	Hatred and fear	Banishment
--	--------	--------	------------	-----------------	------------

Beauty and the Beast, 1991 – G/AL

	Belle	Beast	Gaston	Greed (Belle)	Death (fall)
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Aladdin, 1992 – G/AL

	Aladdin Jasmin	Aladdin/Genie Aladdin	Jafar Parrot: Iago	Authority Mirrors villain	Imprisonment Imprisonment
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The Lion King, 1994 – G/AL

	Simba	Simba	Scar	Authority	Death (falls)
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Mulan, 1998 – G/AL

	Mulan	Mulan	Shan Yu/the Huns Falcon: Hayabusa	Authority Mirrors villain	Death No ending
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A2. List of Disney live-action remakes that were included for observation.

Title, year – MPA/Kijkwijzer*

	Victim	Hero	Villain	Motive	Ending
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101 Dalmatians, 1996 – G/AL

	Puppies	Pongo	Cruella DeVil	Greed (fur)	Imprisonment
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102 Dalmatians, 2003 – G/AL

	Puppies	Oddball	Cruella DeVil	Revenge	Imprisonment
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Alice in Wonderland, 2010 – PG/9

	Alice The White Queen	Alice	The Red Queen	No explanation	Banishment
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Maleficent, 2014 – PG/12

	Aurora Maleficent	Maleficent Maleficent	Maleficent King Stefan	Revenge Authority	Reconciliation Death (fall)
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Cinderella, 2015 – G/AL

	Cinderella	Prince	Lady Tremaine	Envy	Banishment
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The Jungle Book, 2016 – G/AL

	Mowgli	Mowgli	Shere Khan	Revenge	Death (fall)
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Alice Through the Looking Glass, 2016 – PG/9

	Hatter Red Queen	Alice	The Red Queen The White Queen	Being wronged	Reconciliation Reconciliation
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Beauty and the Beast, 2017 – PG/12

	Belle	Belle	Gaston	Greed (Belle)	Death (fall)
	Beast both as victim and villain			Vanity	Reconciliation

Dumbo, 2019 – PG/12

	Dumbo	Family	Vandevere	Greed (money)	Imprisonment*
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Aladdin, 2019 – PG/9

Aladdin	Aladdin/Genie	Jafar	Authority	Imprisonment
Jasmin	Aladdin	Parrot: Iago	Mirrors villain	Imprisonment

The Lion King, 2019 – PG/9

Simba	Simba	Scar	Authority	Death (hyenas)
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Maleficent: Mistress of Evil, 2019 – PG/12

Maleficent	Maleficent Aurora	Queen Ingrid	Hatred	Death
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Lady and the Tramp, 2019 – PG/AL

Lady	Jim Dear & Darling	Elliot	No explanation	No ending
Baby	Tramp	Rat	No explanation	Death
Tramp	Lady	Elliot	No explanation	No ending

Mulan, 2020 – PG-13/12

Mulan	Mulan	Böri Khan	Revenge	Death (own arrow)
Xianniag both as villain and as victim			Self-fulfilment	Reconciliation, death

Cruella, 2021 – PG-13/12

Cruella	Cruella	The Baroness	Authority	Imprisonment
		Cruella	Revenge	Reconciliation

Appendix B - Overview of Disney villains

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Lady Tremaine, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Disney Fandom.

https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Lady_Tremaine

Fig. 2 Lady Tremaine, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Disney Fandom.

https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Lady_Tremaine

Fig. 3 The Queen of Hearts, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Villains Fandom.

https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Queen_of_Hearts

Fig. 4 The Red Queen, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Villains Fandom.

[https://villains.fandom.com/wiki/Red_Queen_\(Disney\)](https://villains.fandom.com/wiki/Red_Queen_(Disney))

Fig. 5 The Red Queen, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Disney Fandom.

https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Red_Queen

Fig. 6 Maleficent, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Disney Fandom.

<https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Maleficent>

Fig. 7 Maleficent, accessed on 29-08-2022 from IMDB.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1587310/>

Fig. 8 Maleficent, accessed on 29-08-2022 from Pathé Thuis.

<https://www.pathe-thuis.nl/film/30801/maleficent-2>

Lady Tremaine

Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper by Charles Perrault (1697)

<p>Exposition</p> <p>A girl loses her mother at a young age. Her father remarries Lady Tremaine, a noblewoman with two daughters from a previous marriage. Her stepmother makes her run the household. The stepsisters equal their mother's temper and call her Cindertail or Cinderella because the girl used to sit by the ashes of the fire.</p>	<p>Conflict</p> <p>The King's son hosts a ball for the nobility. Cinderella would like to attend the ball as well, and her godmother uses a magic spell to make it possible. Cinderella meets the prince, who invites her for a ball the next day as well. Cinderella's godmother makes it possible for the girl to go, and when the clock strikes midnight Cinderella rushes away, losing one of her glass slippers.</p>	<p>Climax</p> <p>The prince declares to marry the girl that fits the shoe. Cinderella's stepsisters try it on, but it does not fit. They let Cinderella try and it fits perfectly. Cinderella presents the other glass slipper to the equerry and her stepsisters. The godmother appears and transforms Cinderella's clothes once again.</p>	<p>Resolution</p> <p>The stepsisters beg Cinderella for forgiveness. Thanks to her kind nature, she does. Cinderella marries the prince, lets her stepsisters live in the palace and finds them, suitable husbands, for advantageous marriages.</p>
<p>Motive of Lady Tremaine</p> <p>Lady Tremaine cannot stand Cinderella's excellent qualities that outshine her stepsisters.</p>			
<p>Ending of Lady Tremaine</p> <p>No ending.</p>			

Cinderella (1950) Disney animated movie

<p>Exposition</p> <p>Cinderella loses her mother at a young age. Her father remarries Lady Tremaine, a noblewoman with two daughters from a previous marriage. After a few years of marriage, Cinderella's father passes away too. Cinderella is left alone with her stepfamily, who treats her horribly.</p>	<p>Conflict</p> <p>One day the prince hosts a ball, but Cinderella is prevented to attend. Her Stepmother gives her an infinite list of chores. She manages to finish them all, but when she walks down in her dress her stepsisters tear her clothes apart. Cinderella's fairy godmother comes to the rescue and thanks to a spell, Cinderella attends the ball and meets the prince. When the clock strikes midnight, she</p>	<p>Climax</p> <p>The prince is determined to marry the girl with the glass slipper. The grand duke searches the kingdom until he arrives at the house of Lady Tremaine. Lady Tremaine does everything in her power to prevent Cinderella from trying on the shoe and even trips the Grand Duke with her cane, causing the glass slipper to break.</p>	<p>Resolution</p> <p>Cinderella has saved the other glass slipper and presents it to the grand duke. She tries it on her foot and it fits perfectly. Cinderella and the Prince marry and live happily ever after.</p>
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Fig 1. Lady Tremaine



rushes home and loses her glass slipper on the way.

Motive of Lady Tremaine

Lady Tremaine is highly envious of Cinderella's beauty. She dreads Cinderella will outshine her daughters at the ball, ruining the prospects of an Anastasia and Drisella marrying above their class.

Ending of Lady Tremaine

No ending.

Cinderella (2015) Disney live-action film

Exposition	Conflict	Climax	Resolution
<p>Ella loses her mother at a young age. Her father remarries Lady Tremaine, a noblewoman with two daughters from a previous marriage. She can never replace Ella's mother, who remains the heart of the house and is missed everyday by her father. After a few years of marriage, Cinderella's father passes away too. Ella is left alone with her stepfamily, who start treating her horribly.</p>	<p>One day Ella serves the family breakfast but has cinders on her face from the fireplace. Her stepsister mockingly calls her Cinderella, which results in laughter from Lady Tremaine. Cinderella is upset and runs away. In the forest, she meets Kit, not aware that he is the prince. The prince is mesmerised by Cinderella and hosts a ball where all the people are invited. Cinderella would like to attend but Lady Tremaine makes clear she cannot attend the ball. Cinderella finds a dress from her mother, but her stepsisters tear the gown apart. Her fairy godmother uses a magic spell and Cinderella can attend the ball after all.</p>	<p>Lady Tremaine suspects that Cinderella is the mysterious princess at the ball and confronts her when she finds the glass slipper. Cinderella is not sensitive to Lady Tremaine's threat to let her stepmother run the court. In response to Cinderella, Lady Tremaine breaks the glass slipper. Lady Tremaine plots with the Grand Duke in order to enable suitable marriages for her daughters. When the Grand Duke visits the house, she pretends Cinderella is not there.</p>	<p>The prince has been hiding in the entourage and demands the Captain to retrieve the girl. Cinderella fits the slipper perfectly. Cinderella leaves the house with the prince. Lady Tremaine looks down from the stairs and Cinderella claims she forgives her.</p>

Fig. 2 Lady Tremaine



Motive of Lady Tremaine

Lady Tremaine is highly envious of Cinderella's beauty. She dreads Cinderella will outshine her daughters at the ball, ruining the prospects of her daughters for advantageous marriages.

Ending of Lady Tremaine

Cinderella forgives Lady Tremaine for what she has done. Lady Tremaine and her daughters leave the kingdom with the Grand Duke to never return.

The Red Queen and the Queen of Hearts

Alice's adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (1865)

<p>Exposition Alice Lidell follows a white rabbit down a hole in the ground.</p>	<p>Conflict The thirteenth Wise Woman had ill-will and cursed the child: when Briar Rose would turn fifteen, she would prick her finger with a spindle and fall dead. The twelfth Wise Woman had her gift to give and turned death to sleep of hundred years.</p>	<p>Climax On her fifteenth birthday, Briar Rose is alone in the castle. While she was wandering around, she found an old tower where an old lady was spinning flax. Briar Rose takes the spindle to spin and pricked her finger when the magic decree is fulfilled. She falls asleep on the bed, and everyone in the whole palace falls asleep as well.</p>	<p>Resolution After a hundred years and numerous fallen attempts of rescue, a prince finds his way to the castle. The hedge of thorns which grew beautiful flowers receded and the prince found Briar Rose in the tower. He gave her a kiss, she awakened and so did the rest of the castle. They married and lived contented to the end of their days.</p>
<p>Motive of the thirteenth Wise Woman She avenged herself for not being invited by the King, for the other twelve Wise Women were.</p>			
<p>Ending of Lady Tremaine No ending.</p>			

Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll (1871)

Exposition	Conflict	Climax	Resolution
The King and Queen received a daughter, after years of longing for a child. The King ordered a great feast and invited the Wise Women. Because he had	The thirteenth Wise Woman had ill-will and cursed the child: when Briar Rose would turn fifteen, she would prick her finger with a spindle and fall dead. The twelfth Wise Woman had her gift to give and turned death to sleep of hundred years.	On her fifteenth birthday, Briar Rose is alone in the castle. While she was wandering around, she found an old tower where an old lady was spinning flax. Briar thorn hedge grew around the castle.	After a hundred years and numerous fallen attempts of rescue, a prince finds his way to the castle. The hedge of thorns
Motive of the thirteenth Wise Woman She avenged herself for not being invited by the King, for the other twelve Wise Women were.			
Ending of the thirteenth Wise Woman No ending.			

Alice in Wonderland (1951) Disney animated movie

Exposition	Conflict	Climax	Resolution
Alice falls asleep when her sister is teaching her outside. She has a strange dream in which she encounters a rabbit, a hare, a hatter, the Cheshire cat, and the caterpillar Absolem.	A series of strange events lead her to the garden of the Queen of Hearts, where she is invited by the Queen to play croquet. During the game, the Cheshire Cat pranks the queen, but Alice is blames for it. The queen orders “off with her head!” but the king requests a trial for Alice.	This show trial is not benefitting Alice. The Queen of Hearts decides that Alice will lose her head. Alice runs away from the court.	Alice escapes, and finds her way out by waking herself up.
Motive of the Queen of Hearts She thinks Alice has insulted her.			
Ending of the Queen of Hearts No ending.			

Fig. 3 The Queen of Hearts



Alice in Wonderland(2010) Disney live-action film

<p>Exposition At the age of nineteen, Alice Kingsleigh returns to Wonderland. When she arrives, Underland is under the rule of the Red Queen, Iracebeth of Crims, who is the sister of the White Queen, Mirana of Crims. The oracle foretells that Alice will slay the Jabberwocky and free Underland.</p>	<p>Conflict There is some debate whether Alice is the 'right' Alice. Alice is convinced Underland is a dream and refuses to take her part in the war. After the Queen captures the Hatter, Alice pays a visit to the palace to save him, disguised as Um. The Red Queen finds out Um is Alice and she needs to flee.</p>	<p>Climax Alice escapes the palace and steals the Vorpal sword to hand it to the White Queen. She realises Underland is real and decides to fight. The battle forces of the Red Queen and the White Queen meet on a chessboard battlefield. They both choose their champion: Iracebeth chooses the Jabberwocky, and Mirana chooses Alice.</p>	<p>Resolution With the help of the Vorpal sword, Alice wins from the Jabberwocky cutting off his head. The White Queen banished the Red Queen together with the Knave.</p>
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Fig. 4 *The Red Queen*



Motive of the Red Queen

The Red Queen claims the crown belongs to her.

Ending of the Red Queen

Iracebeth is banished from Underland with the Knave of Hearts.

Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016) Disney live-action film

<p>Exposition</p> <p>The hatter is terribly ill and Alice is asked to make him better. The hatter is convinced his family is alive and has survived the attack of the Jabberwocky years ago. Alice visits Time to find out what happened to the hatters family.</p>	<p>Conflict</p> <p>Alice steals the Chronosphere from Time, allowing her to travel back in time. She witnesses a series of events revolving around the younger Iracebeth. First, Alice is present on the coronation day of Iracebeth. The hatter makes fun of her when the crown does not fit and Iracebeth makes a scene, causing her parents to believe the crown belongs to Mirana. Second, when Alice travels further back in time, she witnesses the two sisters eating cookies in the kitchen. Mirana snatches the last cookie but frames Iracebeth. Iracebeth runs away in anger and falls on the street. Her head immediately starts to swell.</p>	<p>Climax</p> <p>The Red Queen steals the chromosphere and returns with Mirana to the day she stole the cookies. Iracebeth sees herself back in time, causing Wonderland to petrify. Alice and the hatter retrieve the Chronosphere and return it to the present day, putting it back in its place.</p>	<p>Resolution</p> <p>The hatter is reunited with his family. Mirana apologises to Iracebeth. The apology is everything Iracebeth ever wanted and the sisters make amends.</p>
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Fig. 5 The Red Queen



<p>Motive of the Red Queen</p> <p>Mirana has lied about stealing the cookies herself and Iracebeth has been wrongly accused by her parents for stealing and dishonesty.</p> <p>Ending of the Red Queen</p> <p>Mirana and Iracebeth reconcile.</p>

Maleficent

Briar Rose by the brothers Grimm (1812)

Exposition	Conflict	Climax	Resolution
<p>The King and Queen received a daughter, after years of longing for a child. The King ordered a great feast and invited the Wise Women. Because he had only 12 golden plates, the thirteenth Wise Woman was not invited. During the feast, eleven Wise Women bestowed their gifts upon Briar-Rose, when the thirteenth entered.</p>	<p>The thirteenth Wise Woman had ill-will and cursed the child: when Briar Rose would turn fifteen, she would prick her finger with a spindle and fall dead. The twelfth Wise Woman had her gift to give and turned death to sleep of hundred years.</p>	<p>On her fifteenth birthday, Briar Rose is alone in the castle. While she was wandering around, she found an old tower where an old lady was spinning flax. Briar Rose takes the spindle to spin and pricked her finger when the magic decree is fulfilled. She falls asleep on the bed, and everyone in the whole palace fell asleep as well. A great thorn hedge grew around the castle.</p>	<p>After a hundred years and numerous fallen attempts of rescue, a prince finds his way to the castle. The hedge of thorns which grew beautiful flowers receded and the prince found Briar Rose in the tower. He gave her a kiss, she awakened and so did the rest of the castle. They married and lived contented to the end of their days.</p>
<p>Motive of the thirteenth Wise Woman She avenged herself for not being invited by the King, for the other twelve Wise Women were.</p>			
<p>Ending of Lady Tremaine No ending.</p>			

Sleeping Beauty (1959) Disney animated movie

Exposition	Conflict	Climax	Resolution
<p>When King Stefan and his wife are granted a daughter, the whole kingdom is invited to celebrate. King Hubert and King Stefan plan to unite their kingdom through a marriage between their son and daughter. Maleficent is not invited to the feast, but does attend with her pet raven.</p>	<p>Maleficent curses the princess: before her sixteenth birthday, Aurora will prick her finger on a spindle wheel and die. Thanks to one of the fairy godmothers of Aurora, she will not die of the finger prick but fall asleep, until true love's kiss breaks the spell. In order to protect Aurora from Maleficent, the fairy godmothers take care of her in a house in the forest.</p>	<p>On her sixteenth birthday, Aurora returns to the castle. There she is lured to a spindle wheel by Maleficent. She pricks her finger and falls asleep. Maleficent kidnaps the Prince and brings him to her castle, envisioning that he will only save Aurora when he is an old man, and Aurora is still a young girl.</p>	<p>The fairy godmothers help prince Philip escape and give him the weapons to fight Maleficent. He defeats Maleficent when she is in the form of a dragon and rescues Aurora. They return to the palace together and live happily ever after.</p>

Fig. 6 Maleficent



<p>Motive of Maleficent Maleficent claims to be distressed for not being invited.</p>
<p>Ending of Maleficent When Maleficent fights Prince Philip, she turns herself into a dragon. Prince Philip uses the Sword of Truth that is enchanted by the fairies to kill the dragon and defeat evil.</p>

Maleficent (2014) Disney live-action film

<p>Exposition Maleficent is a fairy who lives in the Moors, on the other side of the kingdom of men. One day a young boy enters the Moors, and they develop a special friendship. Maleficent falls in love with Stefan. Over time, Maleficent and Stefan lose side of each other. One day the Moors are attacked by men, and Maleficent defeats the king. The king promises the one that kills Maleficent will be heir to the throne.</p>	<p>Conflict Stefan seeks Maleficent out in the Moors and gives her a sleeping potion. He cannot bring himself to kill her but cuts her wings instead. When Maleficent wakes up, she is furious, determined to revenge on Stefan. She rescues a raven, Diaval, to be her wings, eyes and ears. When Stefan's daughter is born, Maleficent attends the homage. She curses Aurora with a sleeping curse, caused by a finger prick with a spindle wheel. King Stefan begs her to undo the curse, and Maleficent adds that the curse can be undone by true love's kiss – convinced that true love does not exist.</p>	<p>Climax Aurora grows up in the forest with her fairy godmothers. Maleficent watches the girl grow up, and becomes fond of Aurora. She regrets her curse, but it cannot be undone. On her sixteenth birthday, Aurora finds out she is a princess and returns to the palace. King Stefan has her locked up in protection of the curse, but a mysterious green light guides Aurora to a spindle wheel. Aurora pricks her finger and falls into a deep sleep. Maleficent and Diablo sneak into the castle but find they are too late.</p>	<p>Resolution A prince Aurora met in the forest is moved by Maleficent to the castle. The fairy godmothers urged him to kiss Aurora, but nothing happens. Maleficent grieves for Aurora and kisses her goodbye. Aurora wakes up by true love's kiss. When they try to leave the castle, Maleficent is caught by King Stefan and his knights. Aurora releases Maleficent's wings and Maleficent fights with Stefan. He falls down the tower to death. Maleficent takes Aurora to the Moors and crowns her queen.</p>
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Fig. 7 Maleficent



<p>Motive of Lady Tremaine Maleficent is betrayed by Stefan, who was once her friend. She avenges the loss of her wings and the greed of men.</p>
<p>Ending of Lady Tremaine Maleficent wakes Aurora with true love's kiss. They reconcile and Aurora becomes queen of the Moors and the kingdom of men.</p>

Maleficent: Mistress of Evil (2019) Disney live-action film

<p>Exposition Prince Philip asks Aurora to marry him and she says yes. Maleficent disagrees with the arrangement, for a deep distrust of humans. Because of her love of Aurora, she agrees to a dinner with the parents of Prince Philip: king John and queen Ingrith.</p>	<p>Conflict During the dinner, Maleficent is taunted by Queen Ingrith due to a long during conflict between the kingdom of Ulstead and the Moors. Queen Ingrith pricks King John with a cursed spindle, similar to the curse Aurora received and makes it appear as if Maleficent has cursed King John. When Maleficent flees the castle, she is shot by Gerda, the right hand of Queen Ingrith. When Maleficent falls down she is saved by a fellow fairy of her kind, the Dark Fey. They take her in and care for Maleficent, also convincing her to go to war with the humans.</p>	<p>Climax The wedding of Prince Philip and Aurora is planned and all of the Moors are invited. They attend the wedding and when they are seated in the church, they are poisoned by a specific gas that kills fairies. At the same time, Maleficent and the Dark Fey attack Ulstead. Aurora finds out what the plans of Queen Ingrith are and saves the fairies in the church, together with Diaval. She tries to convince both parties, humans and fairies, not to fight. When Queen Ingrith threatens to kill Aurora, Maleficent takes an arrow for her and falls into ashes.</p>	<p>Resolution Aurora cries over the ashes of Maleficent, and Maleficent rises as Phoenix. She rescues Aurora again from Queen Ingrith. Back into her normal form, she destroys the spindle that was used for the curse. The curse is lifted, and King John awakes. When Queen Ingrith tries to flee, she is turned into a goat. Maleficent gives prince Philip and Aurora her blessing for the wedding and they marry at the sight, joined by humans and fairies of both kingdoms in peace.</p>
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Fig. 8 Maleficent



<p>Motive of Maleficent Maleficent is taunted by Queen Ingrith and wrongly accused of cursing King Stefan.</p>
<p>Ending of Lady Tremaine Maleficent turns into the Phoenix of her people, saving Aurora and the King. She reconciles with Aurora and gives her blessing to the marriage.</p>