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Proud and Wicked No More: “The Red Shoes” and Contemporary Children’s Picturebooks

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Despite young Karen’s dreadful demise in Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Red Shoes”, which casts it as a rather “inappropriate” story for contemporary child audiences, the influence of “The Red Shoes” persists in contemporary picturebooks for young readers. This essay considers both explicit adaptations of “The Red Shoes” as well as texts that borrow the imagery of Andersen’s fraught tale for their stories about girlhood and ballet. Specifically, I consider the ideological implications of reproducing Andersen’s story and imagery, as well as the degree to which revision must occur to get outside of the problems – about gender especially.

Keywords: adaptation, fairy tales, Hans Christian Andersen, picturebooks, “The Red Shoes”

“Repetition with variation [...] the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise [...] recognition and remembrance [...] change” (Hutcheon 2006: 4); all of these qualities, Linda Hutcheon argues in *A Theory of Adaptation*, are a part of “the pleasure of adaptation” (1). Fairy tales, of course, are adaptation exemplar, inviting a speaker to feel free “to expand its form and content” (Zipes 1996: 2). The changing shapes and uses of fairy tales as children’s stories have long been the subject of scholarly attention, especially how the classical fairy tales are “woven together differently to reflect changing times, audiences, aesthetics, and cultural landscapes” (Beckett 2014: 11). Nonetheless, as children’s literature, classical fairy tales are often first and most markedly reworked to fit within the rhetorical

constraints of contemporary children's literature publishing trends, which usually means omitting the violence and cruelty, sanitizing the tale (cf. Zipes 1988). Even Hans Christian Andersen's tales meet with these types of alterations. For, while "we think of Andersen primarily as an author of books for children", as Maria Tatar explains in *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*, his tales often "enlist a pedagogy of fear that does not square with our contemporary sense of bedtime reading" (2008: xxxviii). "The Little Mermaid", Tatar notes, for example, "under the spell of Disney Studios, appears in countless new print editions, each ending with a happily-ever-after wedding that contrasts sharply with three hundred years of good deeds assigned to the mermaid at the end of Andersen's tale" (xxxvii).

Reworked this way, "The Little Mermaid" sits easily alongside Andersen's more toothless children's stories, the blandly didactic "The Emperor's New Clothes", the blithely hopeful "The Ugly Duckling", or even the easily parodied "The Princess and the Pea", as John Scieszka does in *The Stinky Cheese Man* (Scieszka & Smith 1992). But the same cannot be said for all of Andersen's tortured young girls. What of young Karen in "The Red Shoes"? Who will work to save her? Where is her Disneyfication? The lesser-known "The Red Shoes" is a tale about Karen, a pretty young orphan, who is saved from poverty by a kindly old woman. When Karen is old enough to be confirmed, the old woman takes Karen to be fitted for appropriate church clothing. However, the old woman cannot see well and does not notice that Karen has picked out shiny red shoes that are flashy immodest. Despite the stares and judgment – and how the shoes distract Karen from her prayers – Karen is too enamored by her pretty red shoes to wear anything else. Karen's pride is her demise: in the climactic scene, a mysterious old man taps the soles of Karen's pretty red dancing shoes and they become enchanted, eventually fusing to her feet and causing her to "dance in [her] red shoes until [she turns] pale and cold, and [her] skin shrivels up like a mummy" (Andersen 2008: 258). It is not until Karen gets the executioner to chop off her feet that she is able to rest, though her amputated feet "continue their manic dance on earth" (262). Finally, Karen is able to return to church and find redemption for her prideful ways, her heart so "filled with sunshine, and with peace and joy, that it burst" (262), and Karen's soul flies to heaven.

Jack Zipes calls "The Red Shoes" "ghastly" and "reminiscent of the gory, pedagogical [...] *Struwwelpeter*" (2005: 40). Perhaps it is because this story reflects "darker Andersen [...] who is no longer thinking about the child as hero" (Tatar 2008: xxxviii) that "The Red Shoes" has not inspired the same desire to adapt (again and again, across media, from picturebooks to full-length movies) that many of Andersen's other tales have. So where are those enchanted feet now, untethered

from Karen's body and, it seems, from much of mainstream children's culture, but still blood red and dancing?¹ Have they merely danced into less restrictive adult spaces, such as Margaret Atwood and Anne Sexton's feminist poetry, Kate Bush's manic music videos, and Powell and Pressburger's iconic 1948 film of the same name? Even Tatar lists "The Red Shoes" in "Part II: Tales for Adults" in *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*. They have, certainly. But Andersen's red shoes maintain a toehold in children's culture, too. Despite the fact that, without reworking, Andersen's story is an uneasy fit as a straightforward contemporary children's text – the message too dogmatic, the punishment too violent – Andersen's dancing feet in red dancing shoes do in fact continue their manic dance on earth through the pages of contemporary children's picturebooks, both those that are adaptations – defined by Linda Hutcheon as "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" (2006: 170) – and those whose intertextual relationship to Andersen's "The Red Shoes" is more implicit. In fact, "The Red Shoes" has a palimpsestic presence in some unlikely places, namely in some commercially popular picturebooks that never overtly acknowledge the source of its red shoe iconography as Andersen, but point to it just the same – without an apparent problem. Much like the various "Little Red Riding Hood" retellings that Sandra Beckett and Jack Zipes discuss, the various manifestations of "The Red Shoes" raise issues about "gender identity, sexuality, violence, and the civilizing process in a unique and succinct symbolic form [...] that have not been satisfactorily practiced in Western societies" (Zipes 1993: 343). The difference, though, is that while the "ongoing trials and tribulations of *Little Red Riding Hood* [is] closely connected to shifts in social and political attitudes toward gender identity and rape" (ibid.), "The Red Shoes" may not have achieved the same amount of progression. Few of the children's literature versions of "The Red Shoes", neither the announced adaptations (of which there are very few; I employ a few of the more common ones here) nor visual allusions to "The Red Shoes", adequately challenge the outmoded and punitive punishment of Andersen's cautionary tale. In fact, many still punish and confine femininity, not from a religious tradition, but from equally fraught cultural anxieties about gender and gender performance.

¹ In *Women Who Run With Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, Clarissa Pinkola Estés asserts that Hans Christian Andersen's tale is a story based on an older tale, "an old woman's teaching tale about the plight of the starved and feral woman. It is variously known by the names 'The Devil's Dancing Shoes,' 'The Red-Hot Shoes of the Devil,' and 'The Red Shoes'" (1992/2003: 215). While I acknowledge that imagery within "The Red Shoes" will likely have existed prior to being in Andersen's story in *New Fairy Tales. First Volume. Third Collection* in 1845, for the purposes of this article I will focus on Andersen's version, from Maria Tatar's *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen* (2008), as the referent text.

While it is a warning tale about a young child who learns a lesson about pride, deceit, and forgiveness – familiar enough elements of didactic children's fiction – Andersen's "merciless [...] curbing [of] the pride of rebellious figures who need to be taught a lesson" (Zipes 2005: 40) doesn't easily translate into today's more subtle forms of instruction. But as is common when rewriting classic fairy tales for children, and similar to "The Little Mermaid" adaptations in particular, new versions of "The Red Shoes" show adaptors reworking the central conflict, secularizing the context, omitting violent imagery, and letting Karen live in order to make the tale fit within the conventions and expectations of contemporary children's literature publishing. In PlayTales' digital-only story *The Red Shoes* (2012), for example, a wealthy old woman takes in young Karen after her mother dies. Karen's "new mother", as she is called in the story, buys Karen fancy dresses and gives her money to buy "a pair of comfortable and elegant shoes."² While there are no particular details about what the new clothes and shoes are for (not for her confirmation in the church, for example) or what "comfortable and elegant" shoes will look like, Karen's new mother's demand to exchange the shoes, for they are "too showy for such a little girl", makes it clear that "[r]ed patent leather shoes with a strap and a platform" are inappropriate. In spite of her new mother's command, Karen keeps the shoes, gazing happily at herself in the mirror, dancing about town (at first of her own volition), enjoying compliments from her friends and even sleeping in her shoes. Karen soon meets a beggar on the street who comments on her shoes – "What pretty shoes! They are perfect for dancing" – and then enchants them with the touch of his finger causing Karen to dance ceaselessly. Bystanders are shocked as Karen does the charleston in the town square, and her friends at school are surprised (and a little impressed) at her "very clever tap dance routine." Karen grows tired and sore from dancing, but the shoes are stuck to her feet, so she seeks out the beggar to cut them off. When the beggar sees regret in Karen's eyes, he takes pity on her and removes the spell from the shoes. In the end, Karen puts away the red dancing shoes and buys instead a pair of "pretty flats", the color and material of which are unknown; the last image is of Karen behind a table that hides her feet from view. Karen has learned "the importance of feeling regret", and promises to "be more humble and obedient."

For PlayTales' Karen, as it is an Andersen's tale, disobeying one's elders leads to worse crimes, such as pride. But because PlayTales' version is contemporized, Karen's prideful display is outside of an explicitly religious context; thus the heavy-handed lesson is much less dreadful than Andersen's. Nonetheless, Karen's refusal to continue dancing – the narrator notes at the end that Karen never danced again,

² This ebook as well as the paper versions of picturebooks used here are unpaginated.

“not even at the spring festival” – suggests her lower stakes but as equally wholesale commitment to repentance as Andersen’s Karen. Even for PlayTales’ Karen, the red shoes are an emblem of pride and a misplaced desire for beauty over practicality. More to the point, the reader is invited to understand that the manic dancing curse is Karen’s fault; she should have known better than to disobey her new mother. Likewise, it is in Karen’s control to remedy the situation (with contrition). Zipes makes a similar point about “Little Red Riding Hood”, that contemporary versions of the tale may have been cleaned up so much that, like PlayTales’ version of “The Red Shoes”, they are “insipid, totally devoid of erotic tension. Yet, the girl is made to feel that she has done something wrong [...] better to be catatonic, than to be adventurous. Control is of essence today” (1986/1989: 377).

In other words, both PlayTales’ and Andersen’s Karens are punished for responding to the “sensual, seductive powers” of beauty “that are, on one level, innocent, natural, and benign” (Tatar 2008: xxvi-xxvii). About Andersen’s Karen, Jack Zipes notes, “Though she is punished for her fetish, the harsh punishment does not fit the crime, and one must wonder why a young girl’s innocent longing for some beauty in her life is considered a sin” (1986/1989: 88). One must also wonder why contemporary adaptations would perpetuate this harsh punishment. While PlayTales does not have Karen ascend to heaven, having her penitently renouncing dancing for the rest of her life seems an equally aggressive and dogmatic punishment for the “crime” of loving beauty. It seems unusual that the PlayTales’ version is neither more reassuring, given the categorical trend to do so, nor more forgiving of Karen’s rather innocuous deceit.

In Andersen’s “The Red Shoes”, little Karen receives “two pairs of red shoes, the first leading to her social elevation [...] and the second to her social degradation” (Tatar 2008: 252, n.1). The first pair of shoes is merely “strips of red cloth [...] crudely made” by Old Mother Shoemaker (Andersen 2008: 252). The second pair is shiny red patent leather, purchased for young Karen by a “grand old woman” (ibid.) who takes Karen in after she is orphaned. When we first meet Karen in the PlayTales’ version, she is so poor that all she wants is “a pair of shoes that would warm and protect her poor little feet.” How quickly does her vain desire for beauty and materialism overshadow her basic human needs, and how soundly that must be punished! For Erin Mackie in “Red Shoes and Bloody Stumps”, “the composition of these first makeshift red shoes invokes and redresses the painful scarcity of Karen’s origins” (2001: 237). Mackie also points out how these first shoes transfer the “bloodred from flesh to fetish” (ibid.). Although PlayTales’ Karen’s first shoes are not cobbled together scraps, her first pair of shoes still symbolizes a negative shift in Karen’s scruples, from needing shoes for protection to wanting shoes

that are pretty but not practical. This move secures her place as a "strange and materialistic creature" for which she is ultimately punished (Carter 1998: 317). Zipes concurs, noting that "[Andersen's] Karen's obsessive appetite reveals the injustices and mortifying humiliation that any child from the lower classes must suffer for desiring to improve his or her lot" (2005: 89).

Clarissa Pinkola Estés has a slightly different reading. About Andersen's "The Red Shoes", Estés (1992/2003) argues that the desire to have young Karen appropriately shod – both times – is to make her proper, to limit her wildness and creativity, to break her instinct to play. The shoes are an emblem of Karen's socialization into an oppressive culture. PlayTales' use of red shoes can also be seen to move Karen from "a natural state to a captured one" (Pinkola Estés 1992/2003: 228), to break her instincts toward play, dance, and beauty. How strange that this update of Andersen's tale, this digital book-only version where Karen's shoes are platform Mary Janes and the wealthy old woman wears pants and pumps, leaves no room for challenging rigid and oppressive gender politics. Nowhere is the reader invited to read Karen's story ironically, designed as it is for an independent reader, for the newly literate; the PlayTales' text comes in both a "Read to me" and "Read by myself" option. In fact, on the preview of the story on PlayTales' website, the child reader is invited to "enter the magical world of Andersen" and read "the best adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Red Shoes'" (np). While it couldn't be argued that PlayTales' *The Red Shoes* is an especially popular piece of children's literature, the accessibility of PlayTales' version nonetheless begs for a close and critical reading. Updated in form and content, the "ideologically driven failure of nerve", as Robert Stam calls it in his article "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation" (2000: 75), doesn't work to "fix" what most marks Andersen's tale as troubling. It is as if the retold tales remain humorless slaves to Andersen rather than playful adaptations of a troubling and heavy hand.

Adaptors of "The Red Shoes" can go to greater lengths than PlayTales does to change the uncomfortable ideological aspects of Andersen's tale, namely concerning gender. While Andersen "only treated girls leniently if they were humble and devout" (Zipes 2005: 89), Maria Tatar offers (2008: 251):

Today, Karen's dance in Andersen's tale is read less as an act of insolent arrogance than as an expression of creativity. The tale has become for many feminist writers and critics an allegory of the violence threatening those who prefer creative fulfillment to compliance with conventional social roles.

The Red Shoes by Gloria Fowler and illustrated by Sun Yung Yoo (2008), for example, takes up that cause, reimagining the story with Karen as the hero, independent, empowered, and triumphant. In Fowler's version, young Karen is the daughter of a poor but loving shoemaker mother. After her mother dies, Karen

dances in the forest to escape her sorrow in the beautiful red shoes her mother made for her. Already we see that for Fowler’s Karen, dancing is healthy and redemptive, and her pretty red shoes are a tie to her mother, a woman who lived a fulfilling and empowered creative life.

While out dancing one day, Karen meets a “spoiled and ill-mannered” princess who covets Karen’s shoes and demands to own them, only the shoes have “grown fast to Karen’s feet” (Fowler & Yoo 2008). Karen is given three days to hand over the shoes or the executioner will cut off her feet, thus reframing the executioner’s role as a threat of punishment rather than a solution to enchantment. Karen “wanted to remove the shoes and give them to the queen, but at the same time feared that all of her memories of her mother, and all of her own dreams and desires, would disappear if the red shoes left her” (ibid.). Ultimately, Karen solves her own problem by creating another set of shoes that the princess wants even more than Karen’s red shoes. Karen sells the new shoes to the queen for a satchel full of gold coins and opens her own shoe shop. In the end, Fowler’s story is recognizable as an adaptation of Andersen’s “The Red Shoes” by its title, obviously, but also by its mimetic elements – red shoes, dancing, magic, an orphan girl named Karen – rather than its plot structure or frame of reference. For Fowler, Karen is rewarded for being an underdog hero who saves herself, magic is protective and not evil, and dancing is a healthy escape from a harsh reality. Also unlike Andersen’s Karen’s red shoes, Fowler’s Karen’s red shoes, even enchanted, are worth coveting and keeping.³

Given the distance between Andersen’s “The Red Shoes” and mainstream contemporary children’s storytelling – namely that the child is not the hero of the tale – perhaps it is no surprise there are a limited number of examples of children’s literature adaptations of “The Red Shoes”, very few more, in fact, than I have gathered here. Fowler and Yoo’s story stands out as a stellar example of adaptation in general, of “The Red Shoes” specifically. Their story plays within the pleasurable space of recognition, but considers the political implications of its source text. Indeed, even when an author changes superficial qualities of her story in order to make it more palatable for readers conditioned to expect a certain kind of experience, problematic ideologies often remain. This is the case in Barbara Bazilian’s picturebook *The Red Shoes* (1997).

³ Eleri Glass and Ashley Spires’s version of *The Red Shoes* (2008), for example, is less an adaptation than Bazilian’s (1997) or Fowler’s (2008). However, Glass explicitly invokes Andersen with her title. Like Fowler’s, this story is not about dangerous red shoes at all, but its cover shows the young female protagonist reaching for red shoes that hang just out of reach, “happy apples, waiting to be picked.” Glass and Spires’s red shoes literally lift the young girl off her feet, whisper, and giggle, and so they are enchanted, though they aren’t a danger to the young girl, nor does her interest in the shoes create a didactic situation.

In Bazilian's adaptation of the story, Karen lives a comfortable life with her grandmother and spends her time at school, in the garden, and with her friends. Well provided for but bored, Karen wishes "that something different would happen to her – something unexpected and exciting" (Bazilian 1997). When her grandmother will not buy her the impractical red shoes in the shoemaker's shop window, Karen covets the red shoes and begins fantasizing about them, which causes her to withdraw from her friends and family, to forget to do her chores, and to be disrespectful and deceitful to her grandmother. Karen saves her money and buys herself the shoes in secret. Karen even sneaks out to attend the ball in her pretty red shoes, where she is sure the red shoes will make her look beautiful and "dance better than anyone else at the ball" (ibid.), a prideful and thus wrong-headed conjecture.

As it is in Andersen's text, the more Karen dances in the shoes, the more they stick to her feet until they will not come off at all, moving her uncontrollably until "Karen danced up and down the hills, through the woods, over roads and paths, fields and meadows, by day and by night, through rain and snow" (Bazilian 1997). Karen is depicted moving through the snow-covered forest, alone and at night, her clothes torn, and her hair wild. When she is about to be danced over a cliff she wishes for wings and turns into a bird. Later she wishes to be a person again and returns to her grandmother promising to "always think twice about what I wish for" (ibid.). Here we see the adaptor changing elements of Andersen's story to fit the needs and expectations of contemporary publishing for children. In Bazilian's version (1997), Karen is still drawn to enchanted and dangerous red shoes and still learns important lessons, but she is not physically mutilated or killed, and the religious element is omitted.

Nonetheless, the most complicated elements of Bazilian's story are the various ideological functions of the red shoes that are both the antagonistic force of the text and an integral part of Karen's beauty – not, though, Karen's misperception of her own beauty that turns out to be the beginning of her demise. Though her friends look on with interest, clutching their breasts in admiration when Karen first appears at the ball and begins dancing with a handsome young man, by the next image they have turned away from Karen, and Karen is described and depicted as a puppet on a string. No one hears her as she cries out, "What is happening?" as the shoes "danced her down the stairs, through the doorway, and away from the brightly lit building" (Bazilian 1997). Here readers are invited to see Karen's perception of her own beauty and grace as fleeting, vain, and steeped in dire consequences. Instead, I point to the contradictory cover of the picturebook, where Karen is midstride and *en pointe* in the red shoes – ballet toe shoes – smiling at the viewer, her beribboned skirts held outward like a tutu. In her article "Consuming the Ballerina: Feet,

Fetishism and the Point Shoe”, Keryn Carter argues, “Classical ballet appears to tap into the desire of many young women to act out an idealized and culturally privileged version of ‘femininity’” (2000: 88). And as Erin Mackie asserts: “Pointe shoes are, then, the central fetish of ballet” (2001: 245). The iconography of ballet is an intrinsic element of princess culture, the multibillion-dollar industry most notably critiqued by Peggy Orenstein in *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* (2011). The balletic girl – more to the point, the young female figure who appropriates the highly stylized iconography of ballet, shoes and dress; evidence of formal dance training or age-appropriateness unnecessary – is a common and accepted image in contemporary children’s culture, where “ballet is an artform in which young girls in the West are *expected* to be interested” (Carter 2000: 84, emphasis in the original).

Thus, depicting Karen as a ballerina in pretty red *pointe* shoes dancing happily through the forest invites the contemporary reader into a specific reader position, one that expects (and accepts) a particularly feminized image and story of a young girl. What we don’t expect is to be brought down by the very image that attracted us to Karen in the first place. In this introductory image, the red shoes are an extension – arguably the key element – of Karen’s beauty and grace; here there is no visual suggestion that Karen’s red ballet shoes represent pride, deceit, and danger. While a nighttime forest is her backdrop, delicate flowers frame her in the foreground and stars light the evening sky. Unless one knows the role of the red shoes in Andersen’s prior story, he or she would not know their iconic danger given the details of the cover. The unknowing child reader, then, conditioned as contemporary children are to see the ballet/fairy/princess as identities of familiar, normalized girlhood – and protected as they are from the gruesome details original to many of Andersen’s stories – is as tricked by the “irresistible charisma” (Mackie 2001: 237) of the pretty red dancing shoe as Karen is, drawn in and then made to feel compromised about their mutual attraction to the pretty red shoes. The fact that Bazilian felt free to adapt Andersen’s story line by changing details, but still chooses to punish the dancing girl – and the reader who idealizes her – begs the question: just how far *have* we come? Even today, how comfortable are we with a girl’s desire to perform, and just how tolerant are we when she rebels against societal norms? These tensions are manifested in Bazilian’s use of the red shoe as both a representation of femininity and as a punishment for ambition and creative desires. Culturally we want to accept the red shoe and all that it symbolizes – creativity, ambition, beauty – but its danger and possible consequences still remain: is it dangerous? Are women allowed to be fancy, prideful, or ambitious? As Carter (2000) argues,, the ballet toe shoe is a cultural fetish, a symbol of a culture’s desires. But a fetish is by definition unresolved; so too are cultural notions of a young girl’s femininity.

Bazilian's ideologically contradictory book cover – outdated and sexist ideologies reminiscent of Andersen's own text as opposed to more familiar and accepted notions of young girls dancing ballet in the current moment – points to a distinct turning point in the evolution of Andersen's iconic story in contemporary popular culture: the 1948 film *The Red Shoes* directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. The film is the story of prima ballerina Victoria Page who is released from her contract with the ballet company after she marries. When the ballet company director convinces Victoria to dance again in a revival of *The Red Shoes* ballet, Victoria must sneak away from her husband to dance. Her husband finds out and confronts Victoria before opening night. By choosing to dance, she is choosing ballet over her marriage, and her husband flees. Running after him – in a scene that is often read as her red ballet shoes compelling her to do so – Victoria falls off of a balcony and in front of a moving train. In her final breath she asks her husband to remove her shoes, choosing him after all. By all accounts, Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* seems like an outmoded and highly problematic story about female artists having to decide between creative expression and being married, and yet the film is still regarded as an influential recruiting tool for bringing little girls to ballet class. In Patricia Lee Gauch's and Satomi Ichikawa's 2002 picturebook *Tanya and the Red Shoes*, for example, young Tanya dreams "of whirling on the tips of my toes" in the iconic red shoes after seeing Powell and Pressburger's film on TV.

Beyond recruiting dancers, Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* is also influential in its reimagining of Karen's pretty red dancing shoes as ballet slippers, toe shoes in particular. Andersen's red shoes are delicate slippers and Karen dances in them, but they are not explicitly ballet toe shoes. In other words, the iconography of "The Red Shoes" changed; more recent invocations of Andersen's red shoes are filtered through Powell and Pressburger's imagery, as seen in Bazilian's adaptation, the aforementioned cover art in particular. It is the red shoes as ballet toe shoes that three recent picturebooks owe a complicated debt to Andersen via Powell and Pressburger. In *Ballerina Rosie* by Sarah Ferguson and Diane Goode (2012), *Fancy Nancy*, and *Fancy Nancy and the Mermaid Ballet* by Jane O'Conner and Robin Preiss Glasser (2006, 2012) the ballet dancing, red-haired protagonist in red ballet shoes is eerily reminiscent of Powell and Pressburger's Victoria, the ballet dancing, red-haired protagonist in red ballet shoes.

As adaptors manipulate Andersen's imagery in order to recreate "The Red Shoes" as viable contemporary children's literature, the result still reflects complex notions of girlhood, less merciless and rigid in their definitions of "appropriate" behavior, but conflicted nonetheless. More ideologically complex are the texts that exist not as adaptations, but as pastiches. Even if unknown to the authors,

“The Red Shoes” bleeds through Ferguson and O’Conner’s rather lighthearted picturebook fare and offers “a different relationship between work and viewer, one that is more actively interpretative and interactive than the passivity often encoded in looking” (Kjellman-Chapin 2006: 88).⁴ In the picturebooks I examine here, the young girls – both around 5-6 years old – are drawn in red dancing shoes,⁵ though it is more than just superficial imagery that allows us to see the picturebooks as hypertexts of “The Red Shoes.” I have argued elsewhere (Miscec 2014) that contemporary picturebooks such as *Ballerina Rosie* (Fergusson 2012) and *Fancy Nancy* (O’Conner & Preiss Glasser 2006) engage in problematic depictions of little girls as ballerinas *en pointe*, in which authors are encoding adult forms and ideals onto little girls. A five-year-old *en pointe* is unrealistic, of course, with most ballet dancers transitioning to *pointe* work only after years of formal dance training and at least after the age of 10 or 12. More troubling is the adult dance in which the young girl is thus engaged, eroticized and made more adult by her arched foot and perfect form, grand jetteting and arabesquing around her home in ankle-laced ballet toe shoes as if she were a much older and much more experienced dancer. Counterintuitively, this highly stylized artificial dance is presented as guileless play, the creative dance of the imaginative young girl, suggesting, of course, that ballet is a natural feminine act. While culturally it is now familiar, even encouraged, for a little girl to be dancing, in private and in public, even performing the adult dance of ballet in pretty red dancing shoes that the parent has knowingly purchased for the young girl, the politics of including pretty red dancing shoes enter these stories into the contentious legacy of Andersen’s “The Red Shoes” via Powell and Pressburger’s film *The Red Shoes*.

At least in superficial ways, the influence of “The Red Shoes”/*The Red Shoes* is apparent from the front cover of Ferguson’s and Goode’s *Ballerina Rosie* (2012). Here we see a young girl (with red hair) *en pointe*, her body turned to the right, arms outstretched, motioning toward the script-font title. Hanging from the “B” in “Ballerina” is a pair of red ballet toe shoes. The story itself reinforces the association. Young Rosie loves to dance. In the first image of the story we see Rosie

⁴ It is hard to know if Ferguson and O’Conner are aware at all of the “intertextual tension created between pre-text and the re-version” (Beckett 2014: xviii) that situates their picturebooks the way I discuss here, given the rather limited presence “The Red Shoes” has in contemporary children’s literature. Much like “Little Red Riding Hood”, “The Red Shoes” has not been given the Disney treatment, but while “Little Red Riding Hood” flourishes nonetheless, as Sandra Beckett points out, “The Red Shoes” seems to suffer in popularity from this absence. In turn, the average reader, and probably author, has little critical framework to employ when images of the red shoes are used to tell a story.

⁵ Nancy is depicted in red high-heeled shoes on the cover of *Fancy Nancy* (O’Conner 2006), the first book in the series, though I am more interested in the red ballet shoes she wears within the story.

dancing in front of a large picture window, its curtains like theater curtains that would flank a stage. Rosie's audience is three stuffed animals and her dog. Rosie is said to wear her tutu everywhere – in the rain, swimming, to play baseball and soccer, and even to climb a tree. After bedtime stories of "*The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*" (Ferguson & Goode 2012), Rosie dreams of dancing on a real stage. In a two-panel dream sequence, Rosie is shown in a nightgown and pink *pointe* shoes and holding a nutcracker, Clara's costume from *The Nutcracker*, and then in Odette's iconic headpiece from *Swan Lake*, standing in *bourées* pose in a tutu and matching *pointe* shoes. But despite Rosie's constant practice and dreams of dancing, when Rosie "made her entrance to breakfast with a thud" one morning, Rosie's mother asserts, "I think it is time for ballet school for you" (ibid.).

In other words, young Rosie is in need of fixing. In Estés' reading of Andersen's "The Red Shoes", the kindly old lady's gilded carriage "supposedly offers something more comfortable, less stressful" for Karen (Pinkola Estés 1992/2003: 224), but instead entraps her in the rules and mores of her culture (224). Here we see a similar impulse in Rosie's mother, to contain and refine Rosie's movements. Apparently, her constant dancing and ballet *accoutrement* is not enough to make her graceful, a more idealized feminine condition, and so Rosie begins attending ballet class. In class Rosie finds herself less skilled and less graceful than when she is at home. Rosie tries to push her shoulders back and hold her head high, "but in the long dance mirror she looked like a wilted flower" (Ferguson & Goode 2012). Exhausted and discouraged, having twisted her feet and tripping into classmates, Rosie feels like she has "lost her talent for dance" (ibid.). But as Pinkola Estés claims about Karen in Andersen's tale, "The spirit of dread thereby seals her into an obsession that parallels an addiction" (1992/2003: 248). Although it exhausts her, during school Rosie works on her posture, takes "small, ladylike steps", and "cross[es] her ankles daintily" (Ferguson & Goode 2012).

It isn't until she receives a gift "from a special friend" that Rosie truly begins to excel at dance. Inside "the pink box at the bottom of her bed [...] was a beautiful pair of red ballet shoes with lovely ribbons." And then: "In class in her new shoes, Rosie did a perfect plié and a graceful arabesque and was the best in the class at the pirouette" (Ferguson & Goode 2012). Rosie's improvement is explained textually and is shown in analogous panels. First we are shown Rosie's feet too far apart in her *plié*, her face unsmiling; her *pirouette* (in three subsequent images with movement lines) apparently wobbly; and her *arabesque* off center. Three pages later we see Rosie in her red *pointe* shoes executing a perfect *plié* without the *barre*; a centered *arabesque*; and a *pirouette* represented not by multiple moment-to-moment shots, but in a single image – fifth position arms, leg in *sur le coup de pied* – that represents

a controlled *pirouette*. On the following page, Rosie has raised her foot to just below her knee, now standing in a technically perfect *passé en pointe*, when she notices a picture of her teacher, Madam Natalie, on the piano. In the image Natalie is wearing red shoes just like Rosie's. Natalie admits that she gave Rosie the shoes as a gift: "You always were a talented dancer, Rosie; you just needed practice and confidence." Natalie qualifies her gift, discounting Rosie's assertion that "[she is] a much better dancer in them", by saying, "[Practice and confidence] comes from inside you, not from your shoes" (Ferguson & Goode 2012). But there is no denying the correlation between the shoes and Rosie's improved dancing. The final image in the book is Rosie doing "her best curtsy ever", reinforcing the correlation between her red shoes and her ballet prowess.

An older woman giving a younger woman red shoes is, of course, reminiscent of "The Red Shoes", and the act is easily read as significant beyond the plot level. For Keryn Carter in "Cinderella's Sisters and *The Red Shoes*", the first shoes are "replacements for the lost, maternal, *menstruating* and life giving" mother that Karen is mourning at the beginning of Andersen's tale (1998: 318, emphasis in the original). For Estés, the gift is about interpellation. Culturally, Pinkola Estés warns, a woman's wildness and creativity is threatening and must be reigned in, and sometimes it is a woman as gatekeeper. The older woman – in this case Miss Natalie – "is the rigid keeper of collective tradition, an enforcer of the unquestioned status quo" (1992/2003: 227). This is doubly relevant in Rosie's entrée into ballet, the rigid, formal, practiced, and highly stylized dance form. The irony, of course, is that dance may be "the most ephemeral of all the arts" but "the fleeting presence of the dancer in performance depends upon process of training more physically arduous and ineradicable in its effects than that of any other art form" (Summers-Bremner 2000: 91). Culture and ballet are both rather rigidly defined. And the fetishized nature of the red ballet shoes is enticing enough to bring Rosie into unnatural but culturally valued behaviors. Maria Tatar notes Andersen's ability to turn red shoes into cult objects, "the most ordinary objects can come to be invested with a special aura" (2008: xxvi), an "aesthetic and material value" (77, n.7). This supports Pinkola Estés' notion that (1992/2003: 242):

The problem with the girl in the red shoes is that instead of becoming strong for the fight, she is off in la-la land, captured by the romance of the red shoes . . . The girl's fascination with the red shoes actually keeps her from a meaningful rebellion, one that would promote change, give a message, cause an awakening.

Rosie's wild and creative dance is replaced with formal, classical dance training. The adult dancing shoe elevates her status, but with it she becomes more feminized. As her dance becomes more prescribed, more formal, so does her

identity. Like the red shoes in Fowler's and Yoo's *The Red Shoes* (2008), the red shoes in *Ballerina Rosie* do make Rosie dance better, and in both stories the dancing goes unpunished. This can be seen as an inversion of Andersen's imagery, perhaps reflective of our mainstream acceptance of girls and women as artists. However, one could argue that the purpose behind Rosie's dance instruction in *Ballerina Rosie* is still ideologically similar to Andersen's, and that is to bring Rosie into more "gender appropriate" behaviors, not in the repressive fashion of Andersen but in the more delightful fashion of contemporary didacticism. Andersen's Karen dances, not in any formal style, but manically. She cannot control herself until the shoes are removed. Ballet is also about control. Rosie's behavior becomes more controlled the better she gets as ballet. Ironically, though stripped of its religious context, Rosie, like Andersen's Karen, becomes more controlled and reverent by the end of this tale.

We see a similarly instructive impulse in both *Fancy Nancy* (O'Conner & Preiss Glasser 2006) and *Fancy Nancy and the Mermaid Ballet* (O'Conner & Preiss Glasser 2012). When we first meet Nancy in the first book in the series, *Fancy Nancy*, she explains that she loves "being fancy." She demonstrates this fact to the reader on the copyright page by first showing us her room, "before she made it fancy", and then, on the next two-page spread, after she made it fancy. In the after image, Nancy's four-poster bed has become a canopy bed that is decorated with garlands and ribbons; her nightstand is covered in flower stickers and ribbons; her trunk is overflowing; and her mirror has a lace frame and is covered with Christmas lights. Since "Nobody in [her] family is fancy at all" (O'Conner & Preiss Glasser 2006), Nancy takes it upon herself to bring her family into the identity that she has claimed by offering lessons in being fancy. Her parents dutifully take notes and agree to get started right away by going out to dinner at the King's Crown. Up until this point, Nancy has been shown both inside and outside of her home in various costumes. Though her toes tend to be pointed, it is not until she offers lessons in being fancy that she dons the red ballet shoes, red ribbons laced up her legs. And when she stands in the doorway of the King's Crown restaurant she is shown fully *en pointe*. In this image – standing with her mom, dad, and toddler sister, now decked out in every flounce, feather, and bobble Nancy has in her dress-up trunk – the reader sees how ridiculous Nancy's fancy ideas are in the real world; other restaurant patrons are shown turned in their seats, their eyes wide, surprised to see the spectacle.

In her red dancing shoes, one red ribbon unlaced, Nancy toe walks to retrieve the family's dessert, then trips on the trailing ribbon and spills the sundaes all over herself and the floor. Covered in ice cream, Nancy doesn't feel fancy anymore and

wants to go home. In the final two images of the book, Nancy is shown in fuzzy house slippers – for once flat-footed – and then tucked into bed, the red ballet shoes removed. Much like Andersen’s Karen, the red shoes are impractical and ultimately dangerous. Nancy and Karen are both doomed as they perform “fancy”, the status elevation that the red shoes promise. Neither girl is “appropriate” in her red shoes, and the red shoes – in which they are explicitly dancing or just walking *en pointe* – lead to the girls’ demise. In particular, the red shoes are depicted as inappropriate in a public setting. At home Nancy might have more latitude to wear her red shoes, but the ridiculous public display is akin to Karen’s improper display. Of course, the consequences of Nancy’s “inappropriateness” might lead to her “fall”, but her fall is merely embarrassing. The actual consequences are not the same, though the sentiment could be seen as reflecting problematic cultural anxieties about the performing, dancing girl, her inappropriateness, pride, and arrogance even as she is invited into this particular subject position as a “natural” outpouring of femininity.

Fancy Nancy and the Mermaid Ballet upholds this tension. Here, Nancy is shown as two different kinds of dancer: skilled at ballet in private (the home) and a weak beginner in public (the dance studio). In her living room, Nancy is shown executing *jetés* and *pliés* with grace and technically accurate form. However, in her ballet class she is shown running into a classmate and she is happy to report: “I hardly wobble at all when I balance on one leg” (O’Conner & Preiss Glasser 2012). In *Fancy Nancy and the Mermaid Ballet*, the red toe shoes are only shown when she is dancing at home, in private. When she is finally shown succeeding at dance in the book’s resolution, Nancy is wearing pink beginner ballet slippers, and she is engaged in creative dance movement and not stylized and formal ballet moves. My point here is this: Nancy could be seen as a modern day Karen, whose lessons about public and private, appropriate and inappropriate, help save her. Nancy succeeds when she wears proper shoes, and engages in more modest dancing endeavors. When she attempts to transcend her age and social class she fails, but when she remains in the culturally defined – and limiting – “appropriate” spaces for a girl her age, Nancy is more successful. It is as if “The Red Shoes”/*The Red Shoes* influence helps O’Conner tell the story of a young girl’s interpellation into a culture still fraught by gender and femininity.

Tatar notes how in the hands of Andersen “even the most ordinary objects can come to be invested with a special aura” (2008: xxvi). As “objet d’art, a cult object [is] endowed with an aesthetic and material value” (77, n.7) that is both “social and magical” (Mackie 2001: 234). As Elaine Webster notes in her article “Red Shoes: Linking Fashion and Myth”, “Red shoes are never neutral” (2009: 165). Even in contemporary children’s picturebooks that emphasize red shoes, either

those working explicitly within the mimetic remnants of Andersen's iconic story as adaptations, or those that are merely invoking the mimetic remnants of Andersen, probably via Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes*, writers as filters of culture still betray culture's struggle with gender and the metanarratives that define girlhood. The gender problems implicit within both Andersen's mid-nineteenth century and Powell and Pressburger's mid-twentieth century film are both routinely criticized – much like Zipes' point about Little Red Riding Hood: "Fortunately, as a result of the women's movement and continual struggles against sexism during the past twenty years, our eyes have been opened and made more receptive to a re-framing of Little Red Riding Hood's story" (1993: 380) – and yet perpetuated in these ideologically frustrating images of contemporary girlhood, red shoes, and wish fulfillment. In her article "Folk Materials, Re-Visions, and Narrative Images: The Intertextual Games They Play", Claire Malarte-Feldman contends (2003: 210):

Children thus receive the legacy of those retold stories, which now constitute a large part of the field of children's literature. They share this legacy with adults, who can also appreciate the intertextual play between multiple models, copies, parodies, and their representations, and the blurring of the borders between one genre of literature and another.

While this is surely true, how do we reconcile the invocation of the problematic ideologies implicit in Andersen's "The Red Shoes"? I would argue that Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* so mutated Andersen's tale that red shoes have become more synonymous with creativity and passion than the sins of pride and wickedness, though, ironically, Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* is no less drenched in gender problems than is Andersen's tale. Given that Andersen's "The Red Shoes" is harder to turn into marketable children's cultural fare – it is as John Stephens and Robyn McCullum note: there is an ongoing struggle between the "three-way relationship between the already-given story, the meta-narrative(s) which constitute its top-down framing, and its bottom up discursual processes" (1998: 4) – it stands to reason that adults would be more familiar with "The Red Shoes" than contemporary children, as Malarte-Feldman (2003) notes.

But why the continued appearances – unironically, uncritically portrayed – given its troubling starting place? While Andersen's "The Red Shoes" seems most limited in its overt punishing of the prideful female, and despite the feminist reclamation of the red shoes in particular, that we are still – perhaps unknowingly – invoking these icons to simultaneously praise and punish femininity calls into question just how far we've come as a gendered culture. In other words, Andersen's legacy is one of explicit problems but implicit blame. Today's Karens (Nancys and Rosies) may no longer be proud and wicked, but it is still the dancing girls' fault.

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Kraj ponosu i zlobi: „Crvene cipelice“ i suvremene dječje slikovnice

Iako zastrašujuća sudbina mlade Karen u „Crvenim cipelicama“ Hansa Christiana Andersena priču čini prilično „neprikladnom“ za suvremenu dječju publiku, utjecaj spomenute bajke i dalje je zamjetan u suvremenim slikovnicama za mlade čitatelje. U ovome se radu istražuju izravne adaptacije „Crvenih cipelica“, kao i tekstovi koji u vlastite priče o djevojaštvu i baletu upliću teme i motive iz Andersenove bremenite bajke. Konkretno, u radu se razmatraju ideološke implikacije reprodukcija Andersenove priče i predodžaba te stupnjevi revizija nužnih za stvaranje odmaka od određenih, napose rodnih, problema izvornika.

Ključne riječi: adaptacija, bajke, Hans Christian Andersen, slikovnice, „Crvene cipelice“

Kein Stolz und keine Bosheit mehr: „Die roten Schuhe“ und die zeitgenössischen Bilderbücher

Obwohl es den Anschein hat, dass das schreckliche Schicksal der jungen Karen aus Andersens Märchen „Die roten Schuhe“ die Geschichte fürs zeitgenössische Kinderpublikum „ungeeignet“ macht, ist der Einfluss dieses Märchens auf zeitgenössische Bilderbücher für junge Leser und Leserinnen dennoch spürbar. Im Beitrag werden sowohl unmittelbare Adaptionen des Märchens als auch Texte untersucht, in denen nach den Themen und Motiven aus Andersens grauenvollem Märchen gegriffen wird, um darin das eigene Erzählen über Mädchenzeit und Ballett zu entwerfen. Insofern werden hier die ideologischen Implikationen der Reproduktion von Vorstellungen aus Andersens Geschichte sowie der Grad der zu unternehmenden Umarbeitung erforscht, um von bestimmten (insbesondere geschlechtsspezifischen) in der ursprünglichen Vorlage enthaltenen Problemen auf Distanz zu gehen.

Schlüsselwörter: Adaption, Märchen, Hans Christian Andersen, Bilderbücher, „Die roten Schuhe“