

Mgr **Dominika Kozera**

UMCS Lublin

e-mail: dominikakozera@wp.pl

Playing with Conventions in *Hoodwinked!*

*Hoodwinked!*¹, “a fast and furious crackpot skewering of *Little Red Riding Hood*”² is a computer-animated movie retelling the story of this commonly known fairy tale. The creators (Cory and Todd Edwards) played with the traditional folk-tale and changed it into a police investigation narrative with a “whodunit” motif. Superficially, the storyline of a little girl who is harassed by the wolf while going to her grandma is retained. However, there are many unexpected twists added to the story that build up its completely new picture since “There’s more to every tale than meets the eye”³. Thus, attention to detail is essential to detect numerous ideas used in the film and define *Hoodwinked!* as a cinematic work, which is challenging due to the indeterminacy of its genre affiliation. My purpose is to establish its genre classification through presenting the production’s cinematic diversity that is a cumulative effect of intertextual references accorded in the animation and the Edwards’ play with genre conventions (especially crime and fairy tale motifs). Close scrutiny of intergeneric variation in the film will allow to state how the narrative content corresponds to audiovisual elements, and finally why both are combined with the use of mixing conventions.

To begin with the task of classifying the Edwards’ production, it will be indispensable to analyze a set of features (i.e. setting, characters, and narrative structure) which are relevant to the identification of predominant genres used in *Hoodwinked!* While the gradual elaboration on them will enable to establish a refined typology of the Edwards’ work, it must be clarified that the motion picture is generally treated as a children’s film due to its animated form and the use of talking animals. This

¹ *Hoodwinked!*, dir. C. Edwards, T. Edwards, T. Leech, 2006 (DVD, dist. Weinstein Company). All quotations from the movie refer to this source.

² O. Gleiberman, *Hoodwinked Review EW*, [online] 11 January 2006. Available on the internet: www.ew.com/article/2006/01/11/hoodwinked [accessed: 30 May 2015].

³ This proverb is used in the intro to the movie.

classification requires to be broadened since regarding the animation entirely as a movie for the youngest generation ignores its more sophisticated value and the idea that *Hoodwinked!*, with its double-coding, is constructed to appeal to a much wider audience⁴.

Indisputably, the cinematic production is imbued with many genre conventions⁵ in the midst of which one can easily identify characteristics of crime fiction. From the very beginning of the story, the idea of crime is incorporated by the intensively expressive music with almost maniacal brass sounds, a bloodcurdling scream and an allusive vocabulary (such as “loot”, “restraining order”). All these elements create a deep sense of unease as well as an aura of mystery and uncertainty which are juxtaposed with the appearance of familiar characters engaged in the “Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!” dialogue.

After Little Red Riding Hood’s well-known yet altered chat with the Wolf in disguise (that ends with his question: “Are we just gonna sit around here and talk about how big I’m getting?”), her tied-up granny pops out from the closet just as the axe-wielding Woodsman bursts through the window yelling hysterically. The scene in Granny’s house is interrupted by the appearance of the movie title, after which there are sounds of blaring sirens and whirling helicopter blades. Amplification of these images, alongside the close-up of yellow tape with the sign “CAUTION – crime scene”, introduce the viewer to the setting and create their expectations of the dominant genre in the story. Not only does crime occupy the foreground of the animated film, but it also combines all bits and pieces into a valid and witty account of the events given by the prime suspects. Red, Wolf, Granny and the Woodsman – all of them are found in the cabin in the woods screaming, but each of them has a different story to tell.

At first glance, the convention may be associated with Clayton Rawson’s *Death from a Top Hat*, where an amateur detective “helps the New York City police solve impossible crimes involving rooms locked from the inside”⁶. In this respect, the Edwards’ animation resembles a locked-room mystery as a peculiar situation occurs at Granny’s house, her bedroom, to be precise. There is no witness who has not participated in the investigated incident and everything happened “behind closed doors” as in the case of Rawson’s fiction. Such a plot outline brings witnesses

⁴ Paul Wells considers animations as art forms since they are intertextual and recombinant, which appeals to adults because they can recognize different patterns used in those films and feel nostalgic. See P. Wells, *Animation and America*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2002.

⁵ According to creative writing instructor Robert McKee, genre conventions are “specific settings, roles, events, and values that define individual genres and their subgenres”. R. McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*, New York: HarperCollins 1997, p. 87.

⁶ B. Herzogenrath, *Introduction*, [in:] *The Cinema of Tod Browning: Essays of the Macabre and Grotesque*, ed. B. Herzogenrath, Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2008, p. 15.

into prominence because only their testimonies can shed some light on the events leading up to the “domestic disturbance” as well as some other strange happenings in the town⁷. The characters are investigated by thorough detective Nicky Flippers whose introduction to the story reinforces the idea that *Hoodwinked!* is a work of criminal nature since a leading figure in the film, aside from the witnesses, is a chief investigator.

Similarly to prime exponents of mystery genre (e.g. *Sherlock Holmes* series, Christie’s *Poirot* series, *Inspector Morse* episodes), the Edwards’ detective is an independent male with idiosyncratic characteristics who possesses a sharp and inquisitive mind. He demonstrates unconventional investigatory abilities and has recourse to cynical comments. Flippers wants to determine the true identity of the mysterious Goody Bandit who is behind thefts of recipes in the area, which follows the convention of the detective genre since the aim is to unravel the mysterious circumstances by means of clues and clever deduction. Such a character presentation of the private eye and the search for stolen possessions confirm that *Noir* is another clear reference point for the film. This idea is also reinforced by the fact that the classic examples of the genre “represent »the point of view of criminals«”⁸ to undermine the essential distinction between good and evil. Equivalently, in *Hoodwinked!* four potential suspects are given the chance to provide their insights into the case and when the mystery is solved the villain also explains his reasons.

Nevertheless, the presence of noir conventions does not set the dominant tone in the Edwards’ production. It seems that the most important in the story is to find the culprit, which immediately brings to mind the whodunit form that “follows a familiar narrative arc from crime, through investigation, to ultimate revelation”⁹. These three elements turned out to be indispensable ingredients for detective stories created between 1920 and 1950 (the so-called “Golden Age” of detective fiction), which strengthened the position of this mode of writing. Understandably, such a story type with a narrative arc became the hallmark of the best crime writers (notably Agatha Christie, Willkie Collins, Eric Ambler, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Clayton Rawson) who facilitated “various narrative misdirections that attempt to lead the reader into false conclusions about characters and suspects”¹⁰. Such a misleading and deceptive storyline turned out to be perfect for the film industry and

⁷ In the course of the investigation, it turns out that there is the Goody Bandit who steals recipes and dainties from local bakeries as to force them to close down their business.

⁸ J. Naremore, *American Film Noir: The History of an Idea*, “Film Quarterly” 1995–1996, Vol. 49, No. 2, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1213310>, p. 19.

⁹ N. McCaw, *Morse, Frost and the Mystery of the English Working Class*, [in:] *Class and Culture in Crime Fiction: Essays on Works in English Since the 1970s*, ed. J.H. Kim, Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2014, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

proved to be an excellent source of entertainment for generations of film lovers. Its popularity is well-founded owing to the complexity of presented events. Not to mention the fact that the way the story unfolds provides the viewer with the exciting challenge of a guessing game about who is guilty of a crime. Consequently, such a form makes the story more gripping as it presents the idea of putting together the jigsaw pieces into one clear picture.

As far as the plot development is concerned, *Hoodwinked!* is a shining example of a classic whodunit since its storyline is based on the aforesaid narrative arc and the viewers are offered the chance to engage in the process of crime investigation. This process is enabled by two relevant factors. Firstly, the exposition of the story that is quite untypical due to both its prolonged presentation of the characters during their interrogations and the fact that it appears after the introductory scene (presented in Hitchcock's style), which is the main cause of the ongoing investigation. Secondly, the introduction of an eccentric detective who is eager to solve a perplexing riddle, which is a typical motif in whodunit stories used to move the action forward. Thus, the exposition presents the viewer with various bits and pieces about the suspects which the detective collects and uses in the process of deduction "conducted" at the same time by the audience.

Just as in classic detective stories, the figure of the investigator in *Hoodwinked!* and his perspective are seen as a bridge between the storyline and the viewers. Here, not only the function but the physical appearance is of paramount importance since Nicky Flippers in his fancy suit, hat and pencil moustache echoes Hercule Poirot relying on his "little grey cells"¹¹. Similarly, Flippers is able to establish the facts very quickly while listening carefully to the witnesses' versions of events. The detective asks probing questions when it is required, remaining incredibly perceptive because, as he says at one point, he would like "to count chickens after they hatch". That is why he reveals his deductions to a room of suspects and police officers after all interrogations. The fact that Nicky is a debonair frog is also very telling since Poirot, although Belgian, is often mistaken for a Frenchman, and consequently called a frog eater, which is contemptuous for a French person.

Certainly, Flippers' resemblance to the famous detective is not sheer coincidence as his first arrival indicates that the case, which "looks pretty open-and-shut" to Chief Grizzly and which is "all wrapped up" by "fuzzy-wuzzy"¹², has not been properly investigated. As Flippers explains to the police chief, "Four suspects, and that means four stories, and if you get people talking long enough, someone will spill the beans". Similarly to Poirot, Detective Flippers focuses on getting people to talk. Indeed, the characters reveal many of their innermost secrets because they feel

¹¹ The expression Poirot uses to explain his method of investigating cases.

¹² The name for the Chief Grizzly frequently used by Nicky Flippers.

comfortable while sharing their stories with the detective. Nevertheless, despite their active participation, each witness gives a fragmentary account of the incident since they know only their parts of the story and it is the external observer who has to piece together the fragments. As Jon Niccum explains in his review, “By piecing together accounts from the four principals, Flippers deduces a fifth version of the story that exposes a completely different truth”¹³. Here, the investigator is engaged in the process of deduction to the same extent as the audience.

Undoubtedly, the opening scene in the thick of dramatic action produces in the viewer the idea of filling the gaps as it indicates that nonlinear narrative will provide lucid exposition setting up earlier events. After all, “in the spirit of a Tarantino time bender, *Hoodwinked!* begins at the end, with the famous climax of Little Red Riding Hood”¹⁴. Thus, using an aspect of *in medias res* technique prepares the audience for flashbacks, which is naturally one of the hallmarks of mystery films. So are the external analepses that present multiple characters’ points of view. Not only do the flashbacks function as recountings to fill in the backstory, but they are also used to develop the characters and their way of thinking. While telling versions of the story, each suspect becomes a focalizer, as the scene is presented through the subjective perception of a particular character.

As a result, the testimonies are biased although their givers’ intention is to tell the truth. This is, however, distorted truth since the characters are not omniscient and their perceptions differ. Hence, the first interrogatee – Little Red Riding Hood called just Red, tries to convince Flippers that Wolf is a villain by saying: “You’ve gotta admit, a wolf stopping kids in the middle of the forest... That’s pretty creepy!” Red interprets Wolf’s ambiguous words “I’ll get you, and your little Granny too!” as a threat, and she goes on summing up her account “That wolf was gonna eat us all”. The girl gives a testimony that puts the blame on Wolf and although she does it in good faith, she is mistaken. This is because of her limited knowledge that comes to light during Wolf’s testimony in his own defence.

As it turns out, Wolf W. Wolf works as an investigative journalist who writes a column “Facts and Fairy Tales” for the prestigious newspaper called *Once Upon A Times* that triggers obvious associations. He works undercover investigating the Goody Bandit and believes that Granny Puckett and her granddaughter are involved in thefts. The journalist records his thoughts on a dictaphone: “The little delivery girl in the red hood. Always on the go. More goodies pass through her hands than anyone’s in the whole forest”. His suspicions are confirmed when he sees Red “a little too happy”, which results in spying on her and adopting an

¹³ J. Niccum, *Hoodwinked Twists Fairy Tale into Whodunit*, [online] 17 February 2006. Available on the internet: www.lawrence.com/news/2006/feb/17/hoodwinked_twists_fairy_tale_whodunit [accessed: 30 May 2015].

¹⁴ O. Gleiberman, *op. cit.*

elaborate disguise as her Granny: “Disguise was the only way to catch this girl in the act of smuggling”. Although Wolf describes the same incident as Red, their statements vary widely since their background to the story is different. Therefore, they suspect each other because their reasons are mistakenly drawn from their observations based on subjective judgments.

The same goes with other characters in the film, which leads to surprising subplots and a classic division of crime characters. This is the case of two interrogators who can be labeled as a good cop and a bad cop. The former is courteous Nicky Flippers – a suave and sophisticated gentleman who believes that “pieces of a puzzle make funny shapes, but they still fit together in the end”, whereas the latter is grumpy Chief Ted Grizzly who does not mince his words during interrogations. Another classic device typical for crime narratives is the exposure of Boingo – a friendly and innocent bunny “who’s hippity-hopped his way through all” of the stories. To everyone’s surprise, Detective Flippers reveals that Boingo must be the infamous Goody Bandit, which is confirmed by intercuts of bunny’s wrongdoings throughout Flipper’s explanation. As in an intricate crime story, the perpetrator is the least suspected character. As he explains his evil scheme at the end, his aim is to “blow the competition away” and to be “top of the woods”¹⁵. Fortunately, he and his henchmen¹⁶ are caught in time and all ends well, which is also a defining characteristic of crime stories where the villain, though a worthy opponent, is doomed to failure.

The analysis conducted so far allows the viewers to form a conclusion that *Hoodwinked!* with an escalating number of characters and plot devices typical for crime dramas should be classified to this genre. Yet, the film does not adhere strictly to one category as the Edwards’ animation is designed deliberately to follow the pattern of one genre in order to make a sudden switch into another. Equivalently to conventions of crime fiction the film derives some ideas from the so-called “folk comedy” that is “a light comedy with songs, and marked by an unflinching optimism”¹⁷. This could not exist if the scenes were not rich in a high dose of humour that changes from slapstick to black and wry. As an example may serve the situation when Granny finds herself entangled in the parachute’s drawstrings and lands in her own closet with no possibility of getting out. This is revealed only after her interrogation, which makes Wolf’s respond at Chief’s accusations – “I don’t know, maybe she was tied to make herself look innocent”, even more accurate as he tells his story before Granny. The moments when something is exposed and there is a comment made before its exposure give the story funny twists.

¹⁵ Boingo’s words when he admits that he is a culprit. His aim is to be the only supplier of sweets in the forest as to be the most powerful and richest creature in the world.

¹⁶ Boingo hires the Evil Ski Team consisting of four ruthless and dangerous thugs.

¹⁷ P. Schepelern, *Denmark*, [in:] *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film*, Vol. 2: *Criticism – Ideology*, ed. B.K. Grant, Detroit: Schirmer Reference 2007, p. 44.

Apart from the situational humour, there is focus on puns and other forms of language-based humour. One of the most striking examples is the line that Twitchy delivers when he makes a stupid mistake with candles – “Deen-a-meet-tay. Must be Italian”, which is an explicit reference to the 1983 film *A Christmas Story*. Also, Detective Flippers uses words in a clever way, especially when talking to his colleague – “That’s the problem with you bears, always growling up the wrong tree”. Another instance is a scene when the Woodsman is about to be interrogated and explains that he wouldn’t hurt a butterfly, he is confronted by Deputy Bill Stork, Chief Grizzly’s right-hand man, who, while throwing an axe on the desk in front of Kirk, asks: “Then what’s this? A letter opener?”. Naturally, the mood and humorously exaggerated situations serve the purpose of entertaining the viewers at every age, which brings to mind the genre of family films.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to perceive *Hoodwinked!* in this respect even though the Edwards’ production strongly manifests the idea of double-coding, which means that there are at least two different levels of interpreting the story that is equally attractive to adults and children, but in various ways¹⁸. Classifying the animation as a family film is advisable in accordance with the analysis of its target audience, but in the attempt to define the status of the genre, such a classification is unreasonably precipitous due to the multi-layered nature of the animation. With respect to playing with different genre conventions, the Edwards’ production resembles more a genre hybrid¹⁹ than a family film. Thus, the concept of genre hybridity holds the key to understanding the nature of *Hoodwinked!*

In spite of the recent upsurge in the popularity of this term, blending and blurring of generic elements are not latest inventions and were “just as common in the 1930s as in the 1980s”²⁰. The reason for the omnipresence of genre hybridity is that “genre definitions and boundaries are movable, depending to a larger extent on the perspective of those doing the defining”²¹. Classifying a particular type enables to comprehend and form certain expectations about it, which is a natural mechanism in the conceptualization of abstract and cultural notions. Therefore, as Geoff King explains, “genre labels are flags of convenience more than markers of entirely distinct territories”²². Owing to its boundlessness of form, animation is a prime site wherein the static notions of genre have been continually subverted and

¹⁸ See P. Wells, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ David Duff defines generic hybridization as “the process by which two or more genres combine to form a new genre or subgenre; or by which elements of two or more genres are combined in a single work”. D. Duff, *Key Concepts*, [in:] Idem, *Modern Genre Theory*, Harlow: Longman 2000, p. XIV.

²⁰ G. King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. 2002, p. 141.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 142.

²² *Ibidem*.

challenged (*Looney Tunes* shorts of the 1930s and 1940s may serve as an example of first animation that combined different genres). This process can be achieved by a proliferation of intertextual references and deconstruction of mainstream categories of storytelling, which characterize the Edwards' film.

Surely, the combination of different references to well-known and critically acclaimed films alone maximizes the artistic value of *Hoodwinked!* and affirms its status as a genre hybrid. The Edwards' animation is a product of unique intertextuality with a host of cinematic allusions and pop culture references. Their mixture generates suspense in the story and makes the plot more gripping, which is indicative of its entertainment value since the mechanism of decoding intertextual elements brings enjoyment to the viewers. Assuredly, one can easily recognize inspirations from non-linear crime dramas, such as *Rashomon*, *The Usual Suspects* or *Pulp Fiction*. The introduction of these references is not merely restricted to entertainment purposes. For instance, there is an inspiration from Kurosawa's film as far as the revealing the truth is concerned. The presence of four witnesses and the subjectivity of their testimonies are the results of using the "Rashomon effect" as an underlying idea. The term "used by legal scholars and others to underscore the often elusive nature of truth itself"²³ perfectly fits the Edwards' message that nothing is as it seems and stereotypes do not apply to individuals and their real life situations. The creators themselves "admit the Kurosawa classic was an inspiration"²⁴, which is also visible in the topic of their film and its title.

The use of intertwining various plots that show the complexity of the story and characters is taken from Tarantino's cult film, whereas one look at the theatrical release poster reminds of *The Usual Suspects*. Here, the idea of a hidden antagonist is also developed as in the case of Singer's movie. After all, the sweet bunny is not taken into consideration because of his cuteness in the search of the criminal, just as Roger Kint is underestimated due to cerebral palsy. In both cases, the evil geniuses pretend to be someone else so as to get away with their crimes. The scene where Wolf questions his CI Woolworth (which directly lifts some of its dialogue from *The Naked Gun*) is another homage to a well-known title. Furthermore, there are many references to particular characters. For instance, Wolf W. Wolf as an investigative journalist dresses just as Irwin Fletcher from the 1985 *Fletch* comedy, whereas Chief Ted Grizzly has similar characteristics to Inspector Lestrade from Sherlock Holmes detective stories, and so on and so forth.

²³ P. Greenhill, S. Kohm, *Hoodwinked! and Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade: Animated "Little Red Riding Hood" Films and the Rashomon Effect*, "Marvels & Tales" 2013, Vol. 1 (27), DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13110/marvelstales.27.1.0089>, p. 90.

²⁴ S. Molitorisz, *Hungry like the Wolf*, "The Sydney Morning Herald" 2006, 4 August, p. 23.

All these cultural allusions and intertextual elements are introduced not only to reach a wider audience, but also to retell one of the immortal stories which everyone knows and associates with certain images. Intertextual playfulness is related to the idea of rewriting that the film represents since its creators reanimated a well-known story of *Little Red Riding Hood* and introduced a stylistic updating to this fairy tale. Ergo, the more the story progresses, the less it has in common with the folktale of the Brothers Grimm until it reaches “the point you know you’re not in Grimmville anymore”²⁵. This explains the presence of fairytale motifs maintained in the spirit of police investigation and the gradual decentering from the original conventions.

According to Cristina Bacchilega, rewriting “involves substantive though diverse questioning of both narrative construction and assumptions about gender”²⁶. The former is illustrated by the way *Hoodwinked!* breaks with the conventions of story structure in the Grimm’s fairy tale and the latter is clearly evident in the portrayal of folktale characters. For instance, in her eagerness to explore the world beyond the Big Bad Forest, Red sets on a hazardous journey off the mountain alone. Her adventures introduce to the story “the archetypal hero’s quest as Little Red strikes out to abandon her ordinary world”²⁷. The subplot of her initiation is reinforced by hidden features of Red’s character that come to light as the story develops. Not only is she witty and brave enough to get out of tricky situations, but she also uses her karate skills in self-defence. Such a character presentation of Little Red Riding Hood is a far cry from the innocent and vulnerable girl depicted in the original tale. Instead of being trusting and gullible, Red mostly expresses her doubts with an incredulous look.

Wolf’s characterization performs comparably as he transforms from the main antagonist of the traditional versions by Perrault or Brothers Grimm to a sarcastic investigative reporter working with his companion Twitchy Squirrel on a scoop. In *Hoodwinked!* he comes up with witty remarks and unorthodox disguise ideas in a just cause since he wants to discover the truth. Here, Wolf becomes a likeable figure, who instead of eating Red alive, helps to rescue her. The other fairytale characters also undergo a substantial change. Granny, for example, rules a “sugar-coated kingdom” since her goodies are “unlawfully delicious”. In the meantime, she is an extreme sports enthusiast and her adventurous lifestyle highlights that she “is not like other grannies”. Neither is the Woodsman named Kirk a typical lum-

²⁵ O. Gleiberman, op. cit.

²⁶ C. Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1997, p. 50.

²⁷ D. Krusen, *Hoodwinked Review. It Could’ve Been a Contender*, [online] 18 January 2006. Available on the internet: <http://markstokeshj.blogspot.com/2006/01/hoodwinked.html> [accessed: 30 May 2015].

berjack. In fact, he is a would-be actor of German origin working as the Schnitzel Man between auditions. He likes his job because, as he confesses, he can “bring much joy to the children”.

Definitely, the transformation of the fairytale characters is an excellent example of the deconstructivist postmodern approach that aims at rejecting the idea of applying labels to individuals, and therefore typecasting them as heroes or villains. “This kind of rereading does more than interpret anew or shake the genre’s ground rules”²⁸ because it enables the one-dimensional characters to make their voice heard²⁹. As Krusen admits, “though the characters initially seem to fit the stereotypes of little girls, feeble grannies, carnivorous wolves and mighty woodsmen, they’re anything but”³⁰. Accordingly, the idea of classifying them at all costs is preposterous because of the complexity of each figure by nature. This sobering thought is strongly expressed during the interrogations when the characters’ “inability to look beyond the surface begets unfair judgment, and as a result, the heroes point fingers at one another while the real villain nearly escapes scot-free”³¹.

Interestingly enough, the characters’ failings to look beyond their stereotypes of one another parallel the superficial attempts to assign *Hoodwinked!* to a particular category. In both cases, it is necessary to delve beneath the surface to specify the true nature that is belied. As far as characters are concerned, their personality traits reveal when the story unfolds and they give their testimonies. The details provided by each of them allow to determine their role in the investigated incident and the identity of the perpetrator. As Kevin Smith remarks, “the way in which storyteller operates in the texts under analysis highlights the importance of storytelling”³², which refers to characters in the animation to the same extent as to its creators. Albeit it is the most important what is said in the witnesses’ stories, the Edwards brothers focus on how the story is told.

Indeed, there are apparent discrepancies between the narrative content and its presentation, i.e. audiovisual elements. *Hoodwinked!* touches on serious subjects, such as problems with communication, prejudice and mentioned above evils of labelling. Nevertheless, the themes are conveyed in a light and amusing way, which

²⁸ C. Bacchilega, op. cit.

²⁹ Such a device is the recent upsurge in the popularity among creators of rewritten fairy tales e.g. *Maleficent*, *Snow White*, *Cinderella*. There are ambivalent figures, whose underlying motivations prevent them from being labelled as “heroes” or “villains”, which serves the purpose of introducing dissimilarities between the original work and its hypertext. See K. Smith, *The Postmodern Fairy Tale: Folkloric Intertexts in Contemporary Fiction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

³⁰ D. Krusen, op. cit.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² K. Smith, op. cit., p. 8.

corresponds closely to the convention of honeyed tone characteristic for children's animations. This device only simplifies the complexity that the film can offer since "the accompanying soundtrack remains sing-songy"³³ even with the introduction of something downright dangerous. Also, the visual elements and bright colours form a misleadingly rosy picture that seems unrelated to the crime investigation. A clash of these different genres emphasizes that the Edwards' animation belongs to the category of postmodernist films that aim to "subvert the mainstream conventions of narrative structure and characterization"³⁴.

Unquestionably, *Hoodwinked!* breaks down the chronology of events and demonstrates irresistible fascination with mechanisms of storytelling and the concept of rewriting. This is the reason why the story with an ambiguous and indefinable plot that cannot be summarized in few sentences is recounted by means of genre-bending and the most recognizable tropes, such as a pull up from cliff, dead batteries in a flashlight, the mission impossible scene with Granny hanging from a ceiling, evil laugh, the actor adapting the method acting technique, or Record Needle Scratch. Here, the emphasis is put on how the story is told, which places narrative techniques in a position of prominence and explains the complex mixture of conventions – "it seems that the Edwards brothers sat down and wrote their top 100 movie moments, and then figured out how to link those moments"³⁵.

Notwithstanding differences in presentation of particular ideas, a fusion of the intergeneric references in *Hoodwinked!* is constructed in order to show that "There's more to every tale than meets the eye". Two postmodern tropes play a crucial role in the process of rewriting the story so as to demonstrate its belied nature. The first element is the use of storyteller³⁶ that corresponds to the subjective perspectives introduced by folktale characters who do not fit their stereotypes. The second trope is a sense of instability that is implemented to the narrative content, which explicates the play with genre conventions. As producer Preston Stutzman explained in one of his interviews, "The whole film is about surprises and secret lives"³⁷. This is all achieved by destabilization of the narrative form and the introduction of unconventional mixture that defies classification when analyzed as a whole.

As it has been stated above, the Edwards' animation is a far more complex work as it seems to be at first glance. The more its elements are scrutinized, the

³³ D. Krusen, op. cit.

³⁴ S. Hopkins, *Generation Pulp*, "Youth Studies Australia" 1995, Vol. 14 (3), p. 14.

³⁵ D. Krusen, op. cit.

³⁶ See K. Smith, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁷ C. Edwards, *Dr. Toon: A Peek Under the Hood*, interview by M. Goodman, "Animation World Magazine" [online], 3 February 2006. Available on the internet: www.awn.com/animationworld/dr-toon-peek-under-hood [accessed: 30 May 2015].

greater number of cinematic and literary conventions one can find. Undeniably, the film, as its title suggests, aims at tricking viewers with an unconventionally mixed storyline. First of all, it begins at the end of the fairy tale and winds its way back. The mechanism of taking the story back is one of the surprising modes applied in the text. Another one is defamiliarization of the genre since there is a fairy tale which changes into a crime drama with the emphasis put on solving the mystery. Meanwhile there are comedy elements, some characters sing from time to time, which brings musical form to mind. Also, extended fight scenes and frantic chases take place, not to mention the fact that *Hoodwinked!* is a computer-animated movie, which can be subsumed under the category of family films. Every time the viewer gets accustomed to a new convention, it is changed, which points to postmodernist tendency of differentiation and discontinuity. Such a play with genre conventions in the film conveys the message that one cannot judge a book by its cover owing to the danger of being hoodwinked, which contains a direct reference to the title and befits the retold story.

Streszczenie

Zabawa konwencjami w *Hoodwinked!*

Hoodwinked! to film będący przykładem animacji komputerowej, który opowiada na nowo historię Czerwonego Kapturka. Choć główna oś fabuły, w której mała dziewczynka zostaje zaatakowana przez wilka podczas swej wyprawy do babci, jest w nim zachowana, do znanej baśni wprowadzono też wiele zmian. Przede wszystkim twórcy filmu zabawili się narracyjną konwencją, zmieniając historię w musicalowy kryminał z „efektem Rashomon”. Stąd wiele niespodziewanych zwrotów akcji zmienia obraz dobrze znanego utworu. Opracowanie skupia się na wyjątkowej intertekstualności *Hoodwinked!*, który jest doskonałym przykładem kina postmodernistycznego z mnóstwem aluzji i odniesień do kultury popularnej. Analiza tych elementów i cech charakterystycznych baśni udowadnia, że film ten zasługuje na więcej aniżeli miano słabej imitacji.

Słowa kluczowe: *rewriting*; konwencja; baśń; zbrodnia

Summary

Hoodwinked! is a computer-animated movie retelling the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Although the storyline of a little girl who is harassed by the wolf while going to her grandma is retained, the creators have played with narrative conventions and changed it into a whodunit musical with the “Rashomon effect”. Many unexpected twists added to the story build up a completely new picture of the commonly known fairy tale. This paper focuses on the unique intertextuality of *Hoodwinked!* which is a prime example of the postmodern

genre with a host of cinematic allusions and pop culture references. The analysis of these elements and ones specific for a folktale prove that such a combination forms a palatable product that cannot be called a pale imitation.

Keywords: rewriting; convention; fairy tale; crime

Bibliography

- Bacchilega C., *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1997.
- Duff D., *Key Concepts*, [in:] Idem, *Modern Genre Theory*, Harlow: Longman 2000, p. XIV.
- Edwards C., *Dr. Toon: A Peek Under the Hood*, interview by M. Goodman, "Animation World Magazine" [online], 3 February 2006. Available on the internet: www.awn.com/animationworld/dr-toon-peek-under-hood [accessed: 30 May 2015].
- Gleiberman O., *Hoodwinked Review EW*, [online] 11 January 2006. Available on the internet: www.ew.com/article/2006/01/11/hoodwinked [accessed: 30 May 2015].
- Greenhill P., Kohm S., *Hoodwinked! and Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade: Animated "Little Red Riding Hood" Films and the Rashômon Effect*, "Marvels & Tales" 2013, Vol. 1 (27), DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13110/marvelstales.27.1.0089>, pp. 89–108.
- Herzogenrath B., *Introduction*, [in:] *The Cinema of Tod Browning: Essays of the Macabre and Grotesque*, ed. B. Herzogenrath, Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2008, pp. 1–17.
- Hoodwinked!*, dir. C. Edwards, T. Edwards, T. Leech, 2006 (DVD, dist. Weinstein Company).
- Hopkins S., *Generation Pulp*, "Youth Studies Australia" 1995, Vol. 14 (3), pp. 14–18.
- King G., *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. 2002.
- Krusen D., *Hoodwinked Review. It Could've Been a Contender*, [online] 18 January 2006. Available on the internet: <http://markstokeshj.blogspot.com/2006/01/hoodwinked.html> [accessed: 30 May 2015].
- McCaw N., *Morse, Frost and the Mystery of the English Working Class*, [in:] *Class and Culture in Crime Fiction: Essays on Works in English Since the 1970s*, ed. J.H. Kim, Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2014, pp. 11–30.
- McKee R., *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*, New York: HarperCollins 1997.
- Molitorisz S., *Hungry like the Wolf*, "The Sydney Morning Herald" 2006, 4 August, pp. 22–23.
- Naremore J., *American Film Noir: The History of an Idea*, "Film Quarterly" 1995–1996, Vol. 49, No. 2, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1213310>, pp. 12–28.
- Niccum J., *Hoodwinked Twists Fairy Tale into Whodunit*, [online] 17 February 2006. Available on the internet: www.lawrence.com/news/2006/feb/17/hoodwinked_twists_fairy_tale_whodunit [accessed: 30 May 2015].

Schepeleern P., *Denmark*, [in:] *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film*, Vol. 2: *Criticism – Ideology*, ed. B.K. Grant, Detroit: Schirmer Reference 2007, pp. 43–49.

Smith K., *The Postmodern Fairy Tale: Folkloric Intertexts in Contemporary Fiction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

Wells P., *Animation and America*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2002.