Privilege of the Voice: The Struggle for Authorship in "Little Red Riding Hood" of *The Grimm Variations* (2024)

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Abstract

This article examines the Brothers Grimm's "Little Red Riding Hood" in comparison with its most recent adaptation in *The Grimm Variations* (2024) on Netflix, with a particular focus on the concept of voice. Using narratology, feminist narratology, and intertextuality, the study investigates how the notion of voice operates as both a narrative device and a metaphor for authorship. While the Grimms' version sustains patriarchal control by silencing the heroine, the Netflix adaptation reconfigures the female voice as a source of power and agency. To account for this shift, the article proposes the concept of "negative voice", which is the possibility of an encroachment of an outsider on the narrative space in practice and effect. By repositioning voice from absence to presence, the adaptation destabilises patriarchal storytelling and reclaims narrative authority for the female voice. The anime thus functions as an "anti-narrative", reworking familiar motifs to highlight silenced perspectives within the admission of the Grimms' fallibility. Hence, the anime embodies what we term as "negative voice" in perfect conditions. The findings indicate that voice is not only central to meaning-making but also to the cultural and ideological transformations. Through this micro example, the article argues that foregrounding voice as a critical axis allows for a deeper understanding of how contemporary retellings intervene in and reorganise questions of gender, power, and authorship within the cultural afterlives of fairy tales.

Keywords: negative voice, The Brothers Grimm, *fairy tales*, voice, adaptation, feminist narratology

1. Introduction

We have long normalised the concept of "world-as-meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. xii); now, we tend to forget how meanings are created in the first place. Meanings start with perception with all the compounds of sensory inputs, including sight, sound and touch. As such, the practical performance of literature is not locked in anything more than sound. Each writer has at least an audial texture etched in the words they write. Thus, we hear them through the flow of subsequent sentences as we read. This implicit information accrues itself on the debate of adaptation studies, which is overlooked by the excessive focalisation on just meaning deviation (Abou Adel et al. 2025). Yet, we forget there is another point of discussion that matters just as much and, indeed, is the origin of the meaning deviation itself: the voice. While the meaning changes, it does so because the voice passes into the other hand; once we hear the original author's voice, now we start to hear another with a different manner and focalisation, thus setting up a discussion about authorship as well.

Currently, there is a scholarly consensus that *fairy tales* are the voice of culture and society. In the creation of *world-as-meaning*, however, they were maimed at the beginning by focalising a certain voice by silencing the potential other, namely, females (Abou Adel et al., 2024A). Since the second wave of feminist retellings, the anarchic shift in fairy tale adaptations has saluted this idea. Once, whose voice has been silenced now speaks volumes, holding the authorship and creating a new meaning in what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) calls the "third space", possessed neither by the adverse gender nor cultural voice (Alhourani et al., 2025A). Therefore, it is not just meaning alone, but the voice is trans-mediated into something new and divergent, thus opening up a critical axis for us through voice as a metaphor for authorship. Inspired by this idea, the most recent adaptation of the Grimms' *fairy tales*, *The Grimm Variations* (2024), directly addresses this matter with the spotlight on their sister, Charlotte Grimm, at the beginning of each episode when the Grimms collect the *fairy tales* and have not yet published "their voice" in each tale as we know them today. With each episode zooming in on Charlotte at first and then unfolding as her dreamlike sequence, each episode appears to be deviant from the original ones with an underlying principle of "female voice", thus allowing us to compare the voices between the original voice of the *fairy tales* and the newly added "voice" within the authorship debate. Within the framework of voice as a hermeneutical tool for authorship, our discussion will move along the topic of

voices in "Little Red Riding Hood", chiefly through cultural transmission. While exploring the Grimms' version as well as its modern and reimagined version, we intend to show how voice emerges not only as a narratological presence but also as a part of an ideological and cultural contract. The narratological presence as such will be handled in its intersection with feminist narratology (Gymnich, 2013; Alhourani et al., 2025B), where the classical type of male authorship, and therefore the meaning-making agency, shifts the upper hand, hence illuminating the voice as a power dynamic existing somewhere among society, discourse, and gender.

The Grimm Variations, furthermore, dimensionalises this critical lens with its intermedial retelling in its anime form, where its visuality is expected to outshine the narratological and vocal implications but proves otherwise by taking us to the Grimms' process of writing in short snippets. Obviously, this has already been evident in feminist rewritings of "Little Red Riding Hood", such as Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (1971), *Tanith Lee's Red as Blood* (1983), and Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* (1982), followed by the recent *The Grimm Variations*. The way that Charlotte is in the spotlight in all of the episodes complies with this long tradition and is none other than the turn to the post-classical narrative theory developed by Susan Lanser in 1986 and recouped again in 2010 in her paper titled "Are We There Yet? The Intersectional Future of Feminist Narratology". With her new type of employment called "negative plotting", not in terms of preference but as an "anti-" orientation used in feminist writings, we aim to expand it further to *negative voice* in so-called negative plotting by using *The Grimm Variations* as an open book example for it.

2. Literature Review

This study differs from other previous scholarly works that have been written about the significance and privilege of the "voice" in adapted literature, as it mainly focuses on the Grimms' "Little Red Riding Hood" alongside its most recent adaptation, *The Grimm Variations* (2024) on Netflix. Therefore, this study will particularly provide a more insightful perspective on how the adapted voice functions as a major tool and technique to represent cultural and literary meanings that have various and intricate relations with the original source. Our claim is not only that adapted voice functions as a major tool for representing cultural and literary meanings vis- à-vis the source, but also that voice in adaptation operates through concrete dispositifs that capture publics and redistribute agency. In other words, adapted voice does not merely "express" authorship; it performs captation—the art of attracting, holding, and re-routing audiences through relational techniques that join organisational constraints to public affect (Cochoy, 2007; Jones, 1987). In a similar context, Michelle Scalise Sugiyama's work titled "Predation, Narration, and Adaptation: 'Little Red Riding Hood Revisited'" (2004) focuses on the voice's dictatorship that influences the masses, in which the fairy tale becomes a tool of dictation.

Obviously, the incident of authorship has been the central point in discoursing the society, as is apparent in Jack Zipes' (2006) work titled *Why Fairy Tales Stick*. In *fairy tales*, the voices stick just as they do; however, the authorial implications are buried under the clusters of symbols and metaphors, which eventually elicit the power dynamics transmitted through metaphors and symbols (Sharma, 2023). With certain changes in perspective and performance in the adaptation process, the adaptation disturbs this equilibrium, where the patriarchal authorship can be contested by female rewriting. The adapted voice reveals significant cultural values along with various narratological and semantic transformations which, in turn, suggest new meaningful variations of the whole contextual perception (Abou Adel, 2019). However, there have been many other studies that highlighted the topic of the voice in both visual and cinematic works. For example, HE Jin-Hua (2021), in her study titled "The Establishment of Female Authority of Voice in The Company of Wolves", addressed the idea of the female authority of voice in the adapted story of *The Company of Wolves* by Angela Carter that has been adapted from the original story of "Little Red Riding Hood." The author highlights the images of female voices that represent power and autonomy freed from the distorted images of the female in traditional *fairy tales*. The author explores essential themes pertaining to the female authority voice, such as individual consciousness and binary opposition between male and female, which lead women to be freed from subversions into a more unfettered and independent life of their own choice. Tina-Louise Reid (2012) in her thesis, "From Cap to Cloak: The Evolution of 'Little Red Riding Hood' from Oral Tale to Film", highlights the evolution of mythos in the original "Little Red Riding Hood" through the lenses of adaptation theories, including those by George Bluestone and Sarah Cardwell.

In another dissertation by Kaisa T. Lappalaine (2018) titled "Little Red Riding Hood in the Dialogic Tension of Wolf Politics in the U.S. West", the author investigates the political and cultural aspects embedded in the adaptations of Little Red Riding Hood variants. Each newly adapted story brings new meanings on various levels, including the complicated discourse of the female voice, which represents the dialogue between the pro-wolf and the anti-wolf sentiment. The author, particularly in a separate chapter, focuses on a fairy tale as a voice in the wolf controversy.

In another study by Anisha Sen (2021) titled "Red Riding Hood: Re-visioning the Lesson", the author highlights the theme of adaptation as a translation which transforms the original voice of the original source into various forms of cultural meanings and connotations, referring to the fairy tale as a cultural adaptation of various cultures in folktales. She extensively talks about the German version of the story, which greatly reflects the German culture and folkloric traditions. She asserts that "adaptation becomes a two-way process. It is definitely borrowing from the so-called original text. But, if we consider these adaptations as a form of translation, according to Walter Benjamin's claim in the essay "The Task of the Translator", these adaptations also constitute the afterlife of the original narrative (Sen, 2021, p. 712). Thus, as each adaptation has a tinge of the life beyond the source text, new meaning, voice and focalisation are inescapable at the turn of the new interpretation.

This study will mainly concentrate on the value of the female voice in the story adaptations and its thematic implications and meanings beyond the superficial level of the mere text. It seeks to probe the multiple layers of the voice, especially the female voice as a source of

power and agency that suggests profound social and cultural signification. Shortly before this study, the historical evolution of Little Red Riding Hood was analysed (Reid, 2012), the political and cultural implications of its adaptations were discussed (Lappalainen, 2018), and the female authority of voice in its various renderings was examined (Jin-Hua, 2021), while the examination of voice as a metaphor of authorship and power in its adaptations has largely been ignored. This study addresses that gap by using reception theory, narratology, and feminist criticism to examine *The Grimm Variations* as an example of how the re-voicing of *fairy tales* reconstructs cultural and gender narratives through the fairy tale genre. *The Grimm Variations* exemplifies this potential: its anime form operates as both an intermedial and ideological reconfiguration, unsettling the "stuck" voices of tradition and redistributing agency through new focalisations. Thus, the study of authorship and adaptation becomes inseparable from the study of voice, since voice is the primary medium through which power, identity, and cultural authority are transmitted, resisted, or reimagined.

3. Methodology

The research adopts a comparative and interdisciplinary approach in investigating the differences between the original version of "Little Red Riding Hood" by the Brothers Grimm and its adapted version of 2024 in *The Grimm Variation* on Netflix. The researchers employ a set of critical approaches and theories, including narratology, feminist criticism, and further literary adaptation theories. Within this framework, *voice* is employed both as a narratological category (Genette, 1988; Bal, 2011) and as a metaphorical marker of authorship and authority (Lanser, 1986; 2010). By treating voice as a methodological axis, the analysis moves beyond the fidelity paradigm of adaptation studies and foregrounds how shifts in narrative voice signal broader ideological and cultural transformations.

The methodology is comparative in scope: the two versions are examined through close reading and scene analysis, with particular attention to plot, characterisation, narrative perspective, and thematic expression. Intertextuality is employed to trace how the adaptation reworks and contests the canonical motifs of the Grimms' text. Feminist narratology provides the lens for analysing how patriarchal authorship silences the heroine's voice and how the anime reclaims it through strategies of "negative plotting" (Lanser, 2010) with our *negative voice*.

The term *negative voice* could be explained as a mode of vocality shaped not by absence but by intentional exclusion from the narrative. The term "negative" refers to the dialectical mode of the Western consciousness, which historically offers a script that teaches the admission of acceptability through *what can be* and *what cannot be*. The negative proper, on the other hand, compels us to consider the possibility of what cannot be on ideological ends. When integrated into the concept of voice, it gains a step-up from just a descriptive category to a critical diagnostic tool: negative voice rewrites, reimagines, reconfigures, where "re-" becomes its scalpel to cut through the entrenched patriarchal textual bodies. It is diametrically different from the already circulating term "subaltern speech" in a way that the negative voice is conditioned to rupture from the authority of the existing voice into an inchoate and orderless, empathetically structured narratological mechanism. The subaltern speech is actually an epistemic problem; it yields its existence only insofar as there is a problem, which is not to be solved for the sake of the term's existence. By contrast, negative voice names the narrative pressure point where the excluded voices can garner enough to disrupt the dominant discourse, making material the threshold at which silence becomes voice and illegitimate becomes legitimate within the adaptive process.

In addition, the study considers the intermedial dimension of the adaptation, analysing also how the shift to anime form shapes the visualisation and amplification of the female voice. The anime medium reframes the spoken language as a multimodal construct, which is interspersed through visual framing and gesture as well. This choice enables *The Grimm Variations* to manoeuvre into a different path than what has already been taken. Each episode, for instance, hosts a short time of fragmentation between the reteller and the story unfolded afterwards. This ultimately adds a meta-layer to the series as a whole that rears its anarchic existence as a venture of a rupture in meaning and authority.

Through this combination of approaches, the methodology aims to demonstrate how *The Grimm Variations* destabilises the canonical narrative by foregrounding marginalised voices and repositioning authorship within a feminist critical framework.

4. Voice as an Intrusion: Presence, Absence, and Power in Fairy Tales

What does having a voice mean? What is voice? Despite the ubiquitous use of the term, such as in "the lost voice", "finding the voice", and "the voice of the unheard", the term still remains ambiguous. Indeed, there is no right or wrong answer to encompass the term. But, when we use the term "having a voice", there is a tinge of subjectivity, identity, and personal disposition to it. Even though this might be the case with this pronouncement that goes on with a simple reference that everyone has a voice, the key discussion ontologically hovers around the voice's spatial presence and absence, activity and passivity, which reminds us of the fundamental auditory idea that "the term has become a trope of identity and power" (Lanser, 1992, p. 3) between voicing up and quieting down. The truth behind this trope may be open to discussion, yet its privilege in presence against absence gives itself away to the backdrop of power, ideology, and agency.

Without going far with this term, we would like to continue the discussion with Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656) since we are of the opinion that the painting, with the problematisation of the concept of seeing and being seen, becomes the eloquent testimony to the voice's presence and absence in textual narratives. Diego Velázquez's globally renowned painting, *Las Meninas*, translated from Spanish as "The Ladies-in-waiting", at first seems to be a regular snapshot on a canvas with several figures in a dimly lit room. A handful of figures interact among themselves nonchalantly. On the front side, a higher-class child, believed to be the five-year-old Infanta Margaret Theresa, is surrounded by her chaperones, two dwarfs and a dog. In a discernible look, Margaret looks into the standing of the viewer out of the canvas. Taken aback by this, we later understand that the space of the portrait is not separated from the real world but an

extension of it. Velázquez himself, too, appears in the portrait as the creator of it, standing momentarily while painting the picture and directly looking into the viewer. What is remarkable about this piece is not its operation at the threshold between what is real or not, but the ensuing legacy of the "unwelcome intruder" (Ancell, 2013, p. 156) in the creative work.

In a narrative space, the concept of a creator's intrusion does not occur with a diligent *look* but with a *voice*. As much as what is narrated is important, so is whose voice is governing it. Voice, in the narrative space, becomes the gaze of the bearer, determining how we see the world and recount it. Here lies a twist: just as the persistent look always misses out on something from the scope of the visible, the narrative voice also silences or represses some aspects of the narrative, "expressing perfectly the essential bond between silence and oppression, between the voice and freedom" (Kottman, 2005, p. xxv).

Fairy tales, often seen as the voice of cultural memory and consciousness, hinge on this aspect of the politics of the voice. When we analyse a fairy tale, our scope either teeters on cultural aspects of it, that is, how the memetically transmitted story varies from one culture to another, or the other visible part of it, such as themes and patterns. It goes without saying that apart from the visible space, *fairy tales* also carry diegetic space where the voices of the collectors and the tradition collide. To exemplify it, Jack Zipes in *Grimm Legacies* takes special note in choosing the words "legacy" and "tradition" with reference to Randal Allison: "Tradition [is] a repeated pattern of behaviours, beliefs, or enactments passed down from one generation to the next. Traditions are culturally recognized and sustained; in general, folklorists have maintained a particular interest in those that are orally transmitted" (Allison, 2002, pp. 799-800). Within the subject of tradition and folklore, the voice is all about historicity and preservation of the present, in which the voice "with origins in the past [… is] purposefully maintained by the group in the present" (Allison, 2002, p. 800) To the question that Hélène Cixous asks, "Why this privileged relationship with the voice?" (Cixous, 1976, p. 881), then it is obvious that to have a voice is to have a listener, a group of receptive ears, so to speak, thus granting a sense of agency, that is, authority to the holder of the voice, delivering the content to echo within the ears of the public. Yet, again, the voice is only heard when the collective society amplifies it, which is something the female voice is banished from:

> She has no voice in a universe of rationality that founds itself on repressing all that refuses to speak this specifically masculine discourse. The equation of rationality with masculinity is totalised in her account, and she argues that this equation allows no voice for the feminine Other. (Walker, 1993, p. 401; Gilligan, 1982; Deborah, 2010)

For this very reason, the lens of voice as a metaphor in *fairy tales* involves "a sort of spatial logic" (Walker, 1993, p. 402). Texts, discourses and even bodies in each fairy tale variant become the domains of power. The privileged state of voice takes the simple principle of taking an active agency in governing the issues. According to Diana Rodrígues Bonet, "the voice of the storyteller" springs "from elsewhere, silencing the female voice" (Bonet, 2022, p. 47). To put a final commentary on the section, then, the voice is *inside*, whereas the silence is *outside* in this logic. Presently, if we assume the discourse of texts as the discourse of the auditorial privilege, then Gérard Genette's rhetorical interrogation – "in the most unobtrusive narrative, someone is speaking to me, is telling me a story, is inviting me to listen to it as he tells it" (Genette, 1988, p. 101) – is the hallmark of this discourse.

In this context, it is not that arguable to firmly assert that the voices get into the flesh of the textual narratives. In each text lies another voice. Yet, within the framework of *fairy tales*, the case is more complex than it seems. By their nature, *fairy tales* are fermented on the grounds of legacy, stirring the voices of the past and coming into flesh and bones with another voice, be it the Brothers Grimm or Charles Perrault, so much so that we today cannot come to distinguish them. We daresay that the bottom line is the voices in *fairy tales* are neither polyphonic nor dialogic, as Bakhtin's words suggest, but cacophonic. For this very reason, we suggest looking into the variations of voices in the Brothers Grimm's tales in general and then continuing with how the voices present in their reception of "Little Red Riding Hood" may have influenced the narrative and meaning. Yet, within the framework of narratology, the choice of narrative voices significantly influences how the story is perceived. Approached differently, it does not merely transform the reception of the character in the tale but also reflects broader and societal changes (Bal, 2014). Based on Genette's theory of narrative voice and focalisation (1988), when we explore the adaptation of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story from the Grimms' version, we note how the narrative power shifts from the Brothers Grimm to female characters.

5. Voices of the Past and Present: The Brothers Grimm and "Little Red Riding Hood"

Just as Juliet tells Romeo, "My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words / Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound" (Shakespeare, 1597/2003, 2.2.58-59), we, too, hear so much about *fairy tales*, maybe not about hundreds but dozens of them. But still we know what they would sound like; their contents and meanings are sensible from miles away. It is needless to say it is because *fairy tales* are the voices of tradition and legacy. They are cultural heritage after all. Yet, according to Itamar Even-Zohar's conceptualisation, such a dictum is synonymous with silence and voice that are in parallel with the exclusion and inclusion system that Even-Zohar writes about:

> I therefore suggest to prefer the alternative explanation of "heritage," namely the one that conceives of it as a selected set of traits in a culture, ones that are explicitly "branded" (or otherwise 'marked') as valuable and indispensable for the subsistence of a given group. In short, culture transmission as such does not become heritage unless the transmitted traits are branded to acquire symbolic values. (Zohar, 2021, p. 23)

In this sense, Even-Zohar maintains the significance of "inclusion", selection", and thus "symbolisation" in the cultural heritage, which turns out to be on par with having a voice or not in the cultural share.

These auditory components in *fairy tales* function as the centripetal force in the discussion of authorship and the building of communal and national identity. The term "legacy" has a binding, connecting premise in Italian as a verb, *legare*, that makes "[c]ollecting folk tales […] a social and political act of some kind" (Zipes, 2015, p. 54). It is irrelevant to ask whether the Brothers Grimm had a vision and found what they had looked for while listening to the old relics of the past since the only preoccupation they had was to enforce a German heritage even at the expense of "mut[ing] words of the past so that they could speak for themselves" (Zipes, 2015, p. 26), suggesting what we know as the canonical *fairy tales* were maimed but still declared as original and authentic by the Grimms themselves. They write in the first volume of the collection: "We have tried to grasp and interpret these tales as purely as possible […]. No incident has been added or embellished and changed" (Quoted in Zipes, 2015, p. 21)[1] which is not accurately accomplished and seen even in their changes and additions between the Ölenberg manuscript of 1810 and the first volume of the 1812/15 edition.[2] For this type of authorship that does not even comply with a handful of memory reservoirs of three years, it is hard to imagine for them to accrue their canonical position in world literature upon reflecting the stories as "faithful" as possible. As we mentioned above, the rhetoric of the voice subsists in the inclusion/exclusion or presence/absence dualities, which is fuelled and amplified by the cultural acceptance that we might just as well call "speaker". Insofar as the voice included in the narrative is informed and approved by society, then it reaches out to a vast readership and is bequeathed from one generation to the next as it gradually turns out to be a legacy within the network of canonical literature, which the Grimms' endeavour excels at.

What we read are the words of the past that were palimpsestically rewritten and retold by the Grimms in the first place, which landed on a special place known as a national or even global legacy and tradition, thus remarking on Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin's words, "[n]ationalist politics and folkloric endeavours intertwine throughout all the Grimm brothers' project" (2012, p. 409). There is not so much to disagree with, considering the recent scholarship also has acknowledged that the use of folklore may be diverted into cultural heritage initiatives (Bendix, 1997; Krishenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Hafstein, 2018; Smith, 2006; Richardson, 2019; Silverman, 2015). Yet, the legacy mentioned here falls into the hands of "the invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p. 1). It is not just the voice of culture alone but also the male voice speaking through the text and content, even more so when we characterise the symbolic worlds of *fairy tales* as a language with the concept of authorship through which the symbolic representations become the signifier and the signified takes up some morality, purity, and sexual caress in hindsight. This is what Cornelia Funke, in her introduction to *Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm*, actually fingers by understanding their status as "whispers from the past" in one of the recent publications of the Grimms' vast collection of *fairy tales* (Funke, 2012).

Then, what is it that is so special about "Little Red Riding Hood"? How can we discern the voices of both the Grimms and their *habitus*, so to speak? First, it is safe to say that this specific tale could be called a symptom. In psychoanalysis, a symptom refers to a repression that fails. The tale's vast reception by different folklorists with different vocalisations and manners varied through each era, and the voice recalls the validity of such a concept. Second, each tale, if different even by the slightest margins, has a lot to say about a single motif in the tale: sexuality, morality, and transgression with the adventure of a young girl. This motif constitutes the repression-that-fails characterisation, as remarked by Jack Zipes in *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*: "As part of our common heritage, the tale and its reception through history indicate the hidden power of the commonplace that we neglect or tend to repress [… that] evolved from male phantasy and sexual struggle for domination" (Zipes, 1993, p. xi). Little is known about how the tale was passed down to be known for its "redness", but it is associated with "Perrault's personal prejudices and the male-dominated civilizing process" (Zipes, 1993, p. 31) for its connotations of sin, sensuality and evil. For each version that intertextually refers to this redness, Perrault's patriarchal sentiment is still present and seems to be everlasting. Thereby, even though each voice adds another thin layer to the story, they are still nonopaque, as one could easily look through it and still see the sexual regulations at the centre of the story.

For the Grimm's version that continues the legacy of "redness" with the title "Little Red Cap", it is overt that "the original source of the Grimms' tale was the Perrault version" (Zipes, 1993, p. 32) and therefore sticks another pin into the sexual innuendos of the story. When we think of it, the colour red does not appeal to the general structure of the plot any more than it serves for a label etched on the girl's identity. The simple core story about Little Red Riding Hood goes like this: a young girl, tasked with bringing food to her sick grandmother, strays from her mother's warning to stay on the path and encounters a cunning wolf. Learning her destination, the wolf coaxes the girl into the lure of flowers for wasting her time and paces up, reaching the grandmother's house first, devouring her, and disguising himself as the grandmother. The girl arrives at the house, unaware of the wolf's deception yet sensing the peculiar strangeness in the appearance; the wolf reveals himself and attempts to devour her. Although the ending varies in each reception, the girl and the grandmother either are saved by a

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[1] This article uses Zipes' own translation of the Grimms' entries from Kinder- und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm [1812/1815, Erstausgabe], edited by Ulrike Marquardt and Heinz Rölleke (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

[2] Zipes explains the process as such: "[T]he Grimms made or had to make substantial changes because it was difficult for them and their contributors to copy down on paper the exact words of the tales that they heard. Moreover, the Grimms also began adapting tales from books published from the fifteenth through the eighteenth century. In short, none of their tales could ever be designated as 'pure,' 'authentic,' or 'original.' The Grimms actually knew this, and yet they used those terms because they believed their tales bore the traces of a profound oral tradition. They felt justified to proclaim that their tales were 'genuine' and 'pure' because the changes that they made were based on their understanding of the "natural" poetics of oral storytelling, and the more they did research about the oral tradition, the more they felt confident in their skills as writers to re-present the unique elements of traditional stories" (2015, pp. 29-30).

hunter or are destined to die, in which case the Grimms' version pertains to the former with morality in hindsight.

In fact, the colour red gradually overlaps with the landscape and atmosphere of the story, making the colour a sense of performance through involving food metaphor in the tale.[1] The girl is mentioned as "a sweet little maiden" (Zipes, 1993, p. 135). When the girl departs from the home and takes the path to the grandmother's house, the wolf asks about the food that she is "carrying under [her] apron" (Zipes, 1993, p. 135). In the aftermath of the girl's explanation of wine and cake, the wolf shifts the discussion topic with a single sentence with a question about the place she is heading to. After the girl answers naively, the wolf mulls over: "[T]his is a good juicy morsel for me" (Zipes, 1993, p. 136). Indeed, while it is not explicit whether the wolf directs the thought about the food or the girl, in the memorable scene when the wolf and the girl oscillate the conversation about "big ears, big eyes, and big hands", the "big mouth" of the wolf refers to the strong possibility that the morsel has been the girl all along:

> Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!
>
> The better to hear you with.
>
> Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!
>
> The better to see you with.
>
> Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!
>
> The better to grab you with.
>
> Oh, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!
>
> The better to eat you with. (Zipes, 1993, pp.   136-37)

Symbolically speaking, "metaphors of consumption act as a major symbolic vehicle to both convey and shape concepts of sexuality, agency, and gender identity" (Andrievskikh, 2014, p. 137). There are many more ideological concerns about the girl's being eaten by the wolf. The wolf is semiotically assigned as a male, while the girl is mentioned as a maiden. Despite the multifaceted meaning of "maiden", it fingers the pre-teen phase where the menstrual blood does not leave the *homeland*, metaphorically speaking. When the girl leaves home, it connotatively becomes on par with the first step of sexual initiation that reaches the climax by the actual act with the wolf, rendering copulation at sight and even rape culture. For this reason, we daresay, remembering Alberto Manguel's warning in *Reading Pictures* (2000; Batchelor, 2000; Gage, 1999) that maintains every colour has social codification within, the quality of red and the girl's personal identification with it foregrounds the initiatory state of the menarcheal state that leads to sexual molestation (Warner, 1994; Dundes, 1989; Tatar, 1992).

This sense of molestation could be seen in the penetrating voice of the Grimms, levelling at textual and narratological kinds of violence as well. The body of the girl, whose story is countlessly retold and rewritten, is subject to a narratological type of violence, in which the Grimms' version is another fragment that mutilates the body and her fate. As a parenthetical note, the Grimms gathered their *fairy tales* during a time when Germany lacked a unified ethnic identity. For them, there were two complementary aspects: 1) collecting the tales was coterminous with the unification of the national identity that lacked a collective voice, which they aimed to reconcile through the unifying nature of *fairy tales*, and 2) they found themselves in a position to implement their own voices that echoed the "Protestant ethic and patriarchal viewpoint that shaped their sense of social justice" (Zipes, 2015, p. 36). The result was neither the artistic enrichment nor the naïve act of storytelling but rather an amalgamation filled with voices and expressions from anonymous people, a collective voice somewhere between the past and the present, and most notably, the voices of Wilhelm and Jacob. It is not a symphonically pleasing experience because these components add up to one another and render the heroine's body objectified as the object of narration. In other words, the girl's voice cannot be heard against this sense of cacophony.

It is this premise that the girl's voicelessness is used for a moral turn in the story by the happy ending. In the Grimms' version, the atmosphere the story was received in was more vulnerable than the one for Perrault's. Perrault's version was already marked by excessive content for sexuality and transgression. His version included a direct euphemism, *elle a vu le loup*, which translates to *"seeing the wolf"*, a common phrase for the loss of a girl's virginity in French (Orenstein, 2002, p. 26). Not to mention she dies for it, the Grimms wanted to normalise and soften the content for the unifying disposition they held. After the main story, the Grimms were careful to add another repetitive occasion with a difference. This time, however, "Little Red Cap was on her guard" (Zipes, 1993, p.   137). Complying with the dictations to stay on the path, even though the wolf "wanted to sneak after her and eat her up in the darkness" (Zipes, 1993, p.   137), with a similar sexual innuendo, the girl does not give in to him and celebrates the idea of staying on the *path*: "[H]e would have eaten me were it not for the fact that we were on the open road" (Zipes, 1993, p.   137). This happy and anticlimactic ending overtly spells out the girl as an extra-referential stereotype: one for the voices governing her disposition and giving them agency through authorship, the other one for the people learning from her experiences. In both cases, however, the girl fails to find and speak through her own voice; rather, she is the one spoken through and processed by others.

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[1] The analysis of the fairy tale in this essay pertains to the Grimms' version taken from Jack Zipes' *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993).

6. The Grimm Variations (2024) – Who is Talking?

The complex relationship between the adaptation and the adapted source material is all about the question: Who is talking now? As the adaptation studies indicate, the purpose of adaptations has long gone beyond creating new stories to tell but reimagining, retelling, and recrafting the old ones as divergent outcomes. In this sense, the original source is a palimpsest that is retold and rewritten – or at least has different yet complementary voices put on top of it to the extent that the precedent is not seen/heard anymore. Kristen Layne Figgins discusses the original sources' adaptations with the metaphor of organisms that regenerate *ad infinitum* for survival (Figgins, 2023, p. 264); however, if the antecedent diverges from the original material, it becomes not an organism anymore but its parasitic *other*, that is, the virus. [1] Working its way through using the source's protein – expanding the biological metaphor – the viral component reprograms/reimagines the systems of the organism/source material until it damages it and makes the whole network ill. *The Grimm Variations* (2024), which works like a virus as a whole, is a collection of anti-tales that feed off and damage the entire legacy of the Grimms, which can be metaphorically called the organism, providing the sources for the series until the whole system of patriarchal voice is damaged.

The way the series operates recalls the significance of voice. Even though the critical perspective of intermedial narratives does not have to deal with gendered voice, the series' "anti-" orientation engages with the subversion of voice on a gendered basis, thus "remind[ing] us of the significance and potential of re-imagining inherited and received story worlds, and taking the liberty to claim a gaze and voice that would see and articulate other possible versions of being" (Hatipoğlu, 2024, p. 68). Each episode of the series starts with a one-minute vignette depicting the Grimms' creative process as they gather and develop the target tale. These opening scenes prepare the episode for the reimagined renditions of tales from the "Cinderella" story to "Little Red Riding Hood". The series marks a notable gendered turn by introducing Charlotte Grimm, the Grimms' sister, in the first episode, whose unexpected appearance serves as a trope for the female gaze and voice.

In the first episode, this dynamic unfolds when Jacob asks Wilhelm, "Wilhelm, how is the fairy tale we heard last month coming along?" (*Cinderella*, 2024, 00:28). Wilhelm replies, "I've written it down, Jacob" (*Cinderella*, 2024, 00: 36), holding the papers, thus posing the principle of palimpsest in a symbolic sense. Nonetheless, the papers get carried by a gust of wind and land at the feet of Charlotte:

> Wilhelm: Is that you, Charlotte?
>
> Jacob: Come in.
>
> Charlotte: Dear brother Jacob. Dear brother Wilhelm. What fairy tale did you discuss today? (*Cinderella*, 2024, 00:34 – 00:52)

This meta-layered scene could be symbolically read as the female intrusion onto the male-dominated narratives as we know them today. With Charlotte coming out of nowhere, moreover, the female voice is introduced as a virus-like agent metaphorically connoting the "anti-" orientation of *fairy tales*. This intrusion is part of Charlotte's active engagement in rereading and rewriting the tales from a female perspective that happens throughout the series. Her presence in the final frame of each vignette points out a commentary underlining the question of "what if" the *fairy tales* were not written by Wilhelm and Jacob. This intrusive thought, then, is followed by distinct stories as Charlotte's dreamlike sequences. This anecdote tells us the fact that the word "variations" in the title of the series stems from Charlotte's female gaze and voice, which successfully and virally infects the whole series and recrafts something new and unexpected. The generic quality of the adaptation from a textual narrative to an anime product also backs up such a vast spectrum to entrench new interpretations of the existing tradition. This shift not only broadens the story's narrative but also deepens the feminist critique by allowing the probing of themes of agency, identity and reinterpretation of ancient stories in a contemporary context (Alhourani et al., 2026). Here, the adaptation is a means of undermining patriarchal stories in storytelling and respecting female creativity and reinterpretation:

> [T]he academic study of manga, and anime, must contribute to revising naturalized preconceptions of culture, identity, authorship, society, subversiveness and so on instead of ennobling or legitimizing the new subject by means of already established authoritative, and as such safe, tools. (Berndt, 2015, p. 28)

Besides, the transposition of *fairy tales* to the media is a scattering translation that comes with changes in the meaning. First, the transpositions and adaptations are acts of reading in a way. In each reading, the meaning is rewritten over and over by saluting Roland Barthes' "death of the author" dictum. As a scriptwriter of the series, Michiko Yokote not only reads the tales but also claims a privileged voice that, one way or another, must have been reflected in the series. This is not to claim that Charlotte is Yokote's incarnate specifically, but we can be sure that she gazes back at the audience in a *mise en abyme* function and makes the female voice heard, as once did the Grimms. Second, there is an intrusion of voice. As Luce Irigaray observes, "to find a voice (*voix*)" means "to find a way (*voie*)" (1985, p. 209). Even though Irigaray does not clarify it, we can say that Yokote finds a way to be *in* on a textual level and lets females find ways to be *out* from the classical and misogynistic symbolic universes that *fairy tales* depict on a contextual level, which is to be seen nowhere more readily than in the second episode as the subversion of the Grimms' "Little Red Riding Hood" with Charlotte's response to Jacob's question, "The wolf doesn't frighten you?" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 00:38) as "Not at all […] I am not at all scared" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 00:43), which constitutes the one and only reason for the meaning shift paradigm in the episode.

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[1] Viruses are not organisms; known as intercellular parasites, they need hosts to replicate since they lack the sources to replicate themselves.

To clarify, the first half of the episode salutes the classical tale but then takes a dramatic turn, as if unquoting the sentences from the legacy and rephrasing them in a different focalisation. The episode starts with the wolf's incarnation as a murderer, Grey, hunting down female victims in a club called The Wolves Club. Taking the initiative to approach a person called Rose, he evinces the first impression of lure and plays coy with an exchange of drinks: "May I get you another one" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 04:22). Even in a cursory mediation, we understand that Grey operates exactly how the wolf in the original tale does, which also conditions that a symbolic rape scene is yet to follow.

> Grey: [W]hy don't we go to the back?
>
> Rose: The back?
>
> Grey: Well, you aren't exactly ready to leave yet, are you? We can have even more fun.
>
> Rose: Okay. Let's go. (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 04:58 – 05:10)

In a momentary lapse, the space changes; they find themselves in a gloomy atmosphere of unending hotel corridors, thus recalling the metaphor of a forest. Once defined as a morsel, the episode does not hold itself back from depicting the scene as vividly as possible. Lured into Grey's sinister intentions, Rose, "[a] slightly scared and very sweet Little Red Riding Hood" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 07:17), finds herself handcuffed and bound to the bed: "Okay, I've had enough. You're seriously creeping me out. […] This isn't supposed to happen! Unhand me, you charlatan" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 08:02). Then the first strike of stabbing follows the other – a symbol in a sense that stabbing becomes penetration with a phallic instrument. It does not go without noticing that even though Rose tries to speak up, she is unheard: "But I wonder if your sweet little voice will reach ears" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 08:35), which is also symbolic on a textual level that illustrates how the original story leaves out the female voice.

As discussed elsewhere (Ayrım, 2024), the series marks its meaning deviation by juxtaposing traditional intrusions with sudden ambushes. The second half of the episode corresponds to how the series rephrases the male-written incidents. Grey, as it turns out, is compelled to hunt down another Little Red Riding Hood, named Scarlet. Within the ebbs and flows, playing the same old trick, Grey tries to lure her in: "You're very … attractive […] I want to know more about you" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 25:09 – 25:18). This time, however, the pieces that he plays the game with are distributed by not a male but a female voice. The forward-looking incidents follow a similar line of occurrence, but once the girl, who was victimised in the quotation coming from the lips of the Grimms, is now palimpsestically redesigned to be on the same level as the wolf, showing the same amount of agency and capable of turning the tides, which is foreshadowed just before Grey finds herself bound up as repayment and undergoes the same torment, uttering: "I get the feeling that we are alike" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 27:47). In a secluded room, Grey is the prey, and Scarlet is the hunter. But what is of importance is the fact that in the parodied scene of "big ears-eyes-hands-mouth", the episode realigns "the-big-mouth" as the first part, even though it is the last part in the original tale, as Scarlet prepares to castrate Grey's body parts, which becomes on par with castrating the voice first, then the meaning:

> Scarlet: My, what a big, powerful mouth you have. […] Why does it look so powerful? [*slices.*] My, what big hands you have. Such big fingers. Why are they so big and strong? [*slices*] My, what big, sharp eyes you have. I bet you can see the tiniest things in the distance. [*pierces*] (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 28:24 – 29:51)

"Do you remember how the story ends?" (*Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024, 31:33) asks Scarlet later on. Besides, we do, but her question is rhetorical; she has already redesigned the story in her fashion; her actions become her voice, and her voice later reverberates in Charlotte's mind, which is further transported by the scriptwriter's intermedial narrative. This is simple, yet it is the backbone of the adaptation strategy invested in the aspect of the voice as handled in this article.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the voice overtly transgresses beyond being just a word into what we use in determining any ideologies behind a creative work. In any case, as it turns out, creative work is accompanied by the *mise en abyme* effect, which is illustrated as the intrusion of the writer's autonomy, mixing the multifaceted narrative layers with self-reflection, which altogether constitutes the voice of the target narrative.

As this paper explores how the Grimms' "Little Red Cap" embodies a cacophony of voices, when the realisation about the patriarchal meaning in *fairy tales* came to the fore, specifically in the second-wave feminist movement, the discussion of voice has not been given a proper focus, but instead it was the root cause in the patriarchal discourse. Chiefly speaking, the Grimms' appropriation of oral traditions was not only an act of cultural preservation but also an intentional stretch of authorship that silenced alternative voices, chiefly female voices. This inclusion/exclusion dynamic maintains the broader system that defines cultural and literal legacies.

The Grimm Variations emerges as a critical counter-narrative that is as avant-garde and subversive of the patriarchal legacy of the Grimms as any other oft-tended adaptation. But this adaptation holds a special place in its subversive attitude by delivering a root cause of the problem: the voice. By introducing Charlotte Grimm as a symbolic and literal voice for the unheard, the series destabilises the male-dominated discourse, opening a "third space" where female voices reclaim their agency (Abou Adel et al., 2024B). Through intermedial adaptations, the series not only interrogates the traditional motifs and themes of "Little Red Riding Hood" but also asserts that every reimagination is accompanied by the change of the voice, which provides the subversion of the meaning that adaptation studies take as a focal point.

Drawing on the "reception theory", we can see how "Little Red Riding Hood" serves as a cultural tool that reveals societal values and conflicts regarding gender, sexuality and morality. For instance, feminist receivers of the Netflix adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood" tend to perceive the main element of the story as a strong woman rather than a weak little girl compared to the original version. And the key element contributing to this transformation in reactions is the "voice". In the original version, Little Red Riding Hood embodies a submissive voice. However, the persona in the new adaptation possesses a stronger voice reflecting strength and determination. Therefore, each adaptation offers new interpretations, creates different meanings, and elicits new reactions. This reminds us of the concept of "horizon of expectations" as the central idea of reception theory, referring to the set of expectations against which audiences interpret the adapted literary or visual works (Zhang, 2013). In this approach, the target culture plays a significant role in shaping the audience's expectations of the new version. If we apply this idea to compare the original and the most recent version of the girl, we note that in Perrault's and the Grimms' versions, the authors conveyed direct moral lessons about obedience, caution and fear of dangers. In this manner, she was shown to be unaware, naïve and weak, highlighting cultural norms regarding gender. On the other hand, the recent retelling of the story depicts Little Red Riding Hood as a more independent or disobedient young woman who can overcome the wolf, which shifts the dynamics and moral lessons of the original versions. Thus, modern audiences of the most recent versions expect more complex portrayals of gender roles, where the heroine is today able to proactively change her world and challenge traditional victim stories.

This paper showcases how *The Grimm Variations*' peculiar retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood" and the girl's voice subverts patriarchal authorship and tropes of grand narratives within fairy tale scholarship. This adaptation will matter to fairy tale and gender studies by demonstrating that reworking folklore can be a way to disrupt entrenched hierarchies of gender. As the article highlights, the *negative voice* reshapes meaning regardless of plot-based transformations. Future research could study the cross-cultural adaptations of *fairy tales* or how the intermediality gives way to the redefinition of narrative authority.

Informed Consent

Not applicable.

Ethics Approval

This study adheres to the publication ethics set by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and abides by the journal's editorial policies.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

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