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Putting Mowgli to the Test

A Comparison of Heroism in Kipling's Stories and Disney's Film

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Abstract

This research concerns Kipling's novels *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895) and discusses the heroism of their main character Mowgli. Both versions are put to the test by comparing their lives to the heroic biography created by De Vries (Ó Cathasaigh 6). In both the collection of stories and the film, Mowgli is left in the jungle as a baby and is raised by a foster-family of wolves, and ends up in all sorts of dangerous situations. For instance, dangerous situations that occur in both versions are his exile from his wolf pack and his fight with a monster. In both Kipling's stories and the film, the boy goes through the same stages, but he behaves very differently. While Kipling's Mowgli is brave and selfless and saves his friends, in the adaptation, Mowgli is ignorant and selfish and needs to be saved himself multiple times. The result is that the film has turned a colonial hero into a normal American boy that is not heroic. The differences between the two Mowglis suggest that Kipling's Mowgli is an exemplary figure whose story is a temporary escape from reality, while Disney's Mowgli's is not.

Introduction

922 words

The hero is a phenomenon that has been present in stories even before they were written down. Although modern literature does not have a concrete archetypal hero, like the epic hero or the Medieval warrior hero, heroes are still present in literature. The protagonist can be seen as the hero, and his enemy, the antagonist, as the anti-hero. Mowgli, as the protagonist of several of Kipling's short stories in *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), can be considered a hero. In previous research on Mowgli, he is analysed with a focus on racial and imperial ideologies and frequently depicted as the "other." However, there is much more to this character than his "otherness". He is also adventurous and someone the animals look up to. He lives by his own rules and can be considered the hero of the jungle.

Not only the animals looked up to Mowgli, but children as well. Kipling's classic children's stories were at some point immensely popular, and have inspired multiple film adaptations. The best known is probably the Disney animation *The Jungle Book* (1967), which was the last film Walt Disney himself worked on (Metcalf 85). A sequel, *The Jungle Book 2*, came out in 2003. More recently, the stories were adapted in a live-action film, also called *The Jungle Book* (2016), and another live-action adventure that is set to be released in the fall of 2018, *Mowgli*. Since the release of the 1967 Disney film *The Jungle Book*, the film has overshadowed the original text. The production company is known for adapting the original to their own standards (Cartmell 169). Altering the original is necessary for the story to become suitable for a different form of media or audience. Therefore, remaining faithful to the original is not what determines the adaptation's success (Hutcheon 7). Yet, not everyone agrees with this, and think unfaithful adaptations are harmful to the original (Stam 7). Since film combines visuals, movements, décor and performance, the audience no longer relies on their own imagination to form a character's features, like one would while reading (Hutcheon

35; Stam 14-15). For example, while reading Kipling's work, one could imagine Mowgli as a muscular boy, but Disney portrays him as skinny legged.

In Kipling's first *Jungle Book* (1894), Mowgli is raised by wolves, and taught to survive by Bagheera the panther and Baloo the bear. At one point he is kidnapped by monkeys and at the age of ten banned from the pack, because Shere Khan, the tiger, is after him. Mowgli then goes to the village, where he uses their herd of bulls to trample Shere Khan, after which the people think he is a dangerous sorcerer and he is forced to leave again. In *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), Mowgli takes revenge on the villagers, has his first experience with the feeling of desire and fights a pack of dholes. In his last story, Mowgli feels uneasy in the jungle and thinks he will die. To feel better, he returns to the village, where he meets a girl and decides to stay for good. However, this is not really the last story, as "In the Rukh" takes place in the human world when Mowgli is an adult. Kipling wrote this story before he wrote *The Jungle Books* and it is not officially part of the collection of stories. Therefore, this story is not part of this analysis of Mowgli.

The Disney adaptation, *The Jungle Book* (1967), also does not include this story, nor those of *The Second Jungle Book*. At the start of the film, Bagheera finds Mowgli alone in the jungle and brings him to a family of wolves. Ten years later, the wolves are threatened by Shere Khan because he wants to kill Mowgli. Bagheera takes on the task of bringing the boy to safety in the man-village. On their way, they encounter dangers such as the hypnotising snake, Kaa, and Colonel Hathi and his marching elephants. All this time, Bagheera urges Mowgli to go to the man-village, but Mowgli does not listen. Bagheera leaves him on his own and Mowgli then stumbles upon Baloo. The bear is not paying attention and Mowgli is kidnapped by the monkeys. Both Bagheera and Baloo come to his rescue and again argue that he should go to the man-village, but Mowgli is stubborn and runs away. Out of nowhere, Shere Khan appears and attacks Mowgli. He is saved by Bagheera and Baloo and only

realises that they were right all along when he encounters a girl, who he follows into the man-village.

Mowgli's story has thus changed very much, and this study compares the two versions of Mowgli in terms of heroism. Although both versions follow the heroic biography of De Vries, only Kipling's Mowgli is a hero and Disney's Mowgli is not. The first chapter explains the heroic theory to some detail and provides a model that will be the basis of the character analysis that will follow. The second chapter focusses on Kipling's stories about Mowgli. The heroic model is applied to the character of Mowgli and analysed. In the following chapter, the same model is applied to Mowgli of the Disney film from 1967 and further analysed. The last chapter provides an explanation of the differences between the two Mowglis. The aim of this project is not to analyse the differences between the two forms of media, but to get a better understanding of the character of Mowgli in both Kipling's short stories and the Disney film.

Chapter 1: Heroic Theory

979 words

In order to get a better understanding of the character of Mowgli, a theory about the characteristics of the hero needs to be established first. Throughout time, the hero always was a special man, who was different and left his mark on society as a strong leader (Ousby 157). Yet, each literary genre has its own traditions and because of that the hero ideologies changed over time.

The genre of epic poetry is one of the first in which the phenomenon of the hero occurs. This epic hero is born greater than any other man, and he is recognisable as such (Kabat 5). He is often of divine descent, but is held back by his mortality when he goes on a quest with a particular purpose (Carruthers 106; Kabat 5; Williams 15). His goals are to reach fame on earth and to be remembered after death (Kabat 9; Williams 16). This suggests a selfish nature of the hero.

Although the epic and Medieval hero share some characteristics, there are also some differences. The Medieval hero usually is a courageous man of nobility (Carruthers 23). He is conflicted by two features; his fame and his concern with society. However, the hero puts society above his personal safety and desires as his achievements are often directed towards society. This suggests the hero is selfless, and that he figures as an example (Carruthers 3). His ability to inspire others to defend his cause, together with the fame he acquires by defeating enemies, turn a man into a hero (27).

Based on heroes' lives in Medieval stories, two heroic biographies are presented by Ó Cathasaigh. The first is set up by Von Hahn and Nutt, who based their pattern upon Celtic traditions of the warrior hero. The hero life is structured in four main categories, namely the birth of the hero, his youth of poverty, his exile, and his return to home (Ó Cathasaigh 2-4).

De Vries provides another heroic biography that is more open to variation (Ó Cathasaigh 6). He structuralises the life of the hero in ten categories, based on Medieval heroic legends. However, regarding the similarities in structure, Medieval legends might be based on classical myths. For example, the Greek hero Perseus defeats a monster in the form of Medusa, marries Andromeda, and is only then able to return to his native city. This suggests that the pattern is applicable to any hero in general. It looks as follows:

I The Begetting of the hero.

II The Birth of the hero.

III The youth of the hero is threatened.

IV The way in which the hero is brought up.

V The hero often acquires invulnerability.

VI The fight with a dragon or other monster.

VII The hero wins a maiden, usually after overcoming great dangers.

VIII The hero makes an expedition to the underworld.

IX When the hero is banished in his youth he returns later and is victorious over his enemies.

X The death of the hero. (Ó Cathasaigh 6)

The phenomenon of the hero changes in the nineteenth century. The hero of the Romantics becomes egocentric, and follows his instinct and feelings instead of his sense of duty. He is dominant, and can be rebellious and destructive (Furst 55-58). Still, the Romantic protagonist remains heroic, as he possesses the potential to change society (Williams 12). Usually, the hero is isolated from civilisation, but because of his influence on society he is never completely separated (Reed 7; Williams 10; 12). He is different and is not concerned with society's norms and morals, but rather goes his own way. He is constantly looking for his true self, and his identity is never truly fixed (Reed 10). The average reader fails to recognise

himself in the Romantic hero, because the hero is distanced from common human experience (Reed 18-19).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Victorian Age, interest in classical myths, Christian tales and Medieval legends developed itself (Vance 169-70). Victorian authors were inspired by all kinds of heroes and looked at them with a new vision (174). They realised that things had changed socially and culturally, which made old heroic ideals no longer relevant in present society. The hero was adapted to fit modern ideals (Ousby 152). Some scholars think the Victorians did not know any heroism at all, while others think heroism provided guidance in times of change (Korte 181). Valued characteristics of the hero were determination, selflessness and following one's duty. This meant that one did not have to be special to be a hero and that everyone could be one (182).

As presented above, the characteristics of the hero changed in many ways over time, but the pattern of his life remained the same. Campbell explains that there is one myth that is the base for all other myths, the monomyth. He argues that myths are reflections of our dreams. All of our dreams are the same because the human psyche is universal, which results in a universal hero and story structure. The hero can be seen as the "eternal man," because he is present in every era (Campbell 17-21). Even though *The Jungle Book* is no myth, it can be considered a reflection of Kipling's psyche and dreams. Therefore, Mowgli can be considered an eternal hero and his storyline can be compared to that of other heroes. The pattern of De Vries might also be about a universal hero, even though it is based on Medieval legends. Its stages are not focussed on knightly traditions, but instead lack details. Similar patterns are too elaborate and focussed on a specific time period. De Vries's pattern is applicable to modern literature as well and a useful base to analyse the character of Mowgli. These heroic life stages, such as a fight with a monster, clarify whether Mowgli shows heroic qualities such as courage and selflessness.

Chapter 2:

Mowgli in Kipling's Stories

1273 words

Mowgli is the protagonist of eight of Kipling's stories in both *Jungle Books*. Possible due to the Disney adaptation, he is the most well-known character of the story collection. In his adventures, Mowgli fights his enemies and leads his pack through the jungle. He can be considered as the hero of *The Jungle Books*.

Mowgli was found in the jungle, and adopted by the Wolf family. His begetting and the birth are not clear, but Mowgli is reborn when he is taken in by the wolves. It marks the start of his new life in the jungle. Mowgli is brought up by the wolves, and develops outside of civilised culture (Goodwin 106). He has no parents, but Baloo and Bagheera figure as his teachers during his youth (Kipling 13). They teach him how to survive in the jungle, because it is a dangerous place for a child (Goodwin 109). The "Master Words of the Jungle" provide him with protection from all animals in the jungle (Kipling 26). With these words, Mowgli can refrain from using physical strength and learns that sometimes words are as important as actions (Dillingham 176). He claims to speak all languages of the jungle, and no-one dares to look him straight in the eye. He is superior over others and hated for it (Kipling 27). He needs to be protected from the animals, and in the form of Akela, the pack leader, Mowgli acquires invulnerability. Because of this, Mowgli lives in a world of wilderness that is secure as well (Montefiore 100). All in all, his extraordinary youth suggests that Mowgli has the potential of becoming someone special (Dillingham 176).

Mowgli lives up to this potential when he is forced to leave the Wolf Pack and the jungle. He is exiled to the village, where he has to adapt to new circumstances, such as wearing clothes and using money (Kipling 52-53). He feels like an outsider and has a hard time dealing with the differences between the village and the jungle. In the jungle he is the

weakest, but he is the strongest in the village (Kipling 53). He wants to be civilised, but at the same time hold on to his youthful, lupine identity (McBratney 278). Because of these opposing desires, Mowgli will never be accepted into either civilisation or jungle. He is a child born between worlds and is an outcast everywhere he goes (Hotchkiss 446). Yet, he is still bothered with the well-being of the jungle and the danger that Shere Khan, the tiger, poses. He manages to trap Shere Khan with the village's herd, and acts out of both selfish and selfless reasons (Kipling 58-61). He wants to protect the jungle from Shere Khan, but he also needs to save himself from the tiger's hatred of men. Either way, he shows that he is special when he manages to return to the jungle victoriously after being exiled.

Mowgli also lives up to his heroic potential during his fights with his enemies. When he fights Shere Khan, Mowgli manages to defeat the tiger by clever thinking. He knows Shere Khan is stronger than him and comes up with a plan the tiger will not expect. The same is true for his revenge on the village and his fight with a pack of dholes. After he defeats Shere Khan, the villagers think Mowgli is a dangerous sorcerer, and throw stones at him (Kipling 63). He wants to get his revenge on the villagers and uses his dominance over other animals to get it (Murray 9). He demands to be their leader by staring into their eyes (Kipling 178-81). Instead of doing what is best for the pack, he acts on behalf of his feelings and uses elephants to get revenge. Mowgli's fight with the dholes is different. He spies on them to prepare a counterattack. This time, Mowgli prioritises the wellbeing of his pack, instead of his own feelings. He lures the dholes into a trap, and defeats them. Both sides have many casualties, but according to Akela, Mowgli has saved the pack (Kipling 289). During this fight, Mowgli seems more mature as he uses his intelligence to save others (Murray 9). He shows a humane side of him that none of the animals possess, which makes him much more lovable (Montefiore 107). His ability to plan and to recognise his opponent's weaknesses

contributes to the idea of his superiority (Goodwin 111). His pack looks up to him and he can therefore be seen as their hero.

Now that Mowgli has established himself as a true leader, he takes risks to ensure the safety of all animals. When Mowgli's life is threatened by the White Cobra, he traps him, but does not kill him: "I will never kill again save for food" (Kipling 235). This suggests Mowgli thinks killing is wrong and that he has morals. This way, he is different from the animals and makes him stand out (Montefiore 108). Instead of killing him, Mowgli takes one of the White Cobra's treasures: an ankus embedded with gemstones. The snake warns him that the thing is cursed and that Death will follow him (Kipling 236). Mowgli gives into his desire for the object and takes it with him. Because of that, dead bodies show up everywhere Mowgli goes. This can be considered Mowgli's close encounter with Death. He feels guilty about the blood he has spilled and returns the ankus to the White Cobra (Kipling 243). He is taking a risk in going back to the White Cobra in order to preserve the safety of all the creatures in the jungle. Mowgli acts out of selflessness and puts the safety of others above that of himself, and learns his lesson about desires.

Eventually, Mowgli's heroic adventure ends when he meets a maiden. In "The Spring Running," Mowgli is seventeen years old and unhappy (Kipling 296). He feels that he cannot continue to live like this. Mowgli wanders through the jungle and stumbles upon a village. When he sees a girl, he is determined to leave the jungle for good. Because of his upbringing, Mowgli is still an outsider, but he is willing to adapt. He states "Mowgli the Frog I have been ... Mowgli the Wolf have I said I am. Now Mowgli the Ape I must be before I am Mowgli the Buck. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man," which indicates that Mowgli has struggled with his identity, but now knows his place is among humans (Kipling 280). He eventually gets married and has a happy ending (Kipling 65).

During his adventures, Mowgli proves that he has heroic potential. He follows De Vries's pattern quite faithfully and shows heroic qualities as well. He is exiled from the pack but returns victoriously, fights his enemies and wins a maiden. It is obvious that Mowgli is no average boy. He is extraordinary because of both his upbringing and his brave behaviour. He continuously has to deal with opposites; He wants to be at home in the jungle, as well as in civilisation; Sometimes he is selfless and sometimes he is selfish. He is a hero, but he is not perfect. In both worlds, he is an outsider because he is one of a kind. His extraordinariness might suggest that Kipling intended to create a special boy. Mowgli is someone to look up to, as well as someone to learn from. His heroic story can be considered an escape from real life for the reader. His is a story that provides guidance in times of change, as was expected from the hero in the Victorian Age.

Chapter 3:

Mowgli in Disney's Film

1202 words

While he is a hero in Kipling's work, the Disney film does not depict Mowgli the same way. Mowgli looks and behaves differently. Because of this, the film emphasises Mowgli's childlike nature, instead of heroism.

The film starts with Mowgli being found by Bagheera, who brings the young boy to a family of wolves in the hope that they will take care of the man-cub (*The Jungle Book* 0:02:57-0:04:55). His adoption can be seen as a rebirth, as he leaves his human life behind and starts one among wolves. Mowgli grows into an American boy with an American accent. His dark skin marks him as foreign, and his skinny appearance suggests a certain vulnerability compared to the animals of the jungle (Schaffer; Whitley 107). These characteristics do not suggest that Mowgli is someone to look up to. His upbringing by wolves indicates that Mowgli is a special boy, but he is not yet a hero. His story does have an anti-hero, in the form of the everlasting threat of Shere Khan. The tiger wants to kill Mowgli, which puts the wolf pack in danger as well, and therefore Mowgli is banned from it. His friend Bagheera steps in to protect him (*The Jungle Book* 0:06:24-0:07:21). With Bagheera's protection, Mowgli cannot be harmed and is thus invulnerable. He is exiled from the pack, but he never returns to the wolves.

Mowgli does not see harm in anything and does not understand why anyone would want to kill him. He is not aware of the dangers that the jungle poses and he thinks he will be able to talk Shere Khan out of killing him. However, the tiger's hatred for men is irrational because he thinks all men are hunters with guns. It is unlikely that Mowgli can convince Shere Khan that he is different (*The Jungle Book* 0:08:10-0:08:25). Mowgli's innocence and unawareness of danger emphasise his childlike nature. These characteristics also result in him

being unable to rescue himself or others. Likewise, Bagheera is convinced Mowgli would not survive alone in the jungle. Mowgli appears immature and unheroic compared to the panther. He calls Mowgli man-cub or boy, instead of by his name, which suggests inferiority (Schaffer). He laughs at him when Mowgli is not able to climb up a tree, which is a simple task to himself (0:09:00-0:09:37). Also, Bagheera's accent suggests a certain kind of authority that Mowgli does not have. To signify class differences, the film relies on stereotyping of accents. Powerful characters such as Bagheera and Shere Khan speak with a posh British accent, while Mowgli, who is a normal boy, speaks with an average American accent (Miller and Rode 92-93). Mowgli thus shows no special skills, and appears too juvenile to be a hero.

Yet, King Louie thinks of Mowgli as superior. He is kidnapped by the monkeys because their king wants Mowgli to teach him how to make fire. The ape is portrayed as African American by his accent and jazz music, unlike Mowgli who is Caucasian American (Towbin et al. 36; Metcalf 91-93). King Louie sings "I want to walk like you, talk like you / I want to be like you" (*The Jungle Book* 0:33:50-0:35:40). These lines suggest that the two of them are not equal, and that King Louie wants something that Mowgli has other than the ability to make fire. Compared to him, Mowgli is civilised: He walks up straight and has a standard accent. King Louie sings "An ape like me, can learn to be human too," indicating that he thinks humans are the superior creature. He is actually not able to become like men, because Mowgli does not know how to make fire (Metcalf 93). Baloo and Bagheera manage to save Mowgli from King Louie, which suggests that although humans are superior over monkeys, Mowgli is not able to escape by himself (*The Jungle Book* 0:38:50). His need for help from others implies that he is not superior at all.

Mowgli's final opportunity to show heroism is his fight with Shere Khan (*The Jungle Book* 1:06:41). Only, Mowgli does not show bravery here, he is actually scared of the tiger

and runs away (1:07:40). This also suggests that the heroic life stages just befall him, instead of him pursuing them. Unlike Mowgli, Baloo does take actively part in the battle by grabbing the tiger's tail and is nearly killed. Although Mowgli eventually defeats Shere Khan by quick thinking, it is Baloo who truly engages in the fight. The bear can be considered the true hero of *The Jungle Book*, because he almost dies rescuing Mowgli, and therefore will always be remembered for his selfless deeds (1:10:18-1:12:52). Baloo might not have won a maiden, but he has fought with a "monster," and the lack of scratches of the tiger's claws suggests an invulnerability. His apparent death can be seen as his exile, from which he returns victoriously because he survives. He acts bravely and selflessly, while Mowgli does not.

Mowgli's heroic adventure comes to an end when he stumbles upon a girl near a man-village (*The Jungle Book* 1:13:33). By flirting with him, the girl gains power over Mowgli. He is completely entranced by her. He has no control over his sexuality anymore as he steps in to help when she drops her water jug on purpose and follows her to the man-village (1:16:17; Metcalf 95; Towbin et al. 29). She sings a song about marriage and gender roles, which might be a prediction of Mowgli's future in the man-village (Miller and Rode 93). In this manner, Mowgli finds a maiden, after overcoming great dangers. Mowgli is finally where he belongs, according to Bagheera (1:17:02). The scene suggests that in the man-village Mowgli will not be an outsider because he is with his own kind, who share the same features and values (Towbin et al. 33). If the song predicts his future, Mowgli has a normal life ahead of him instead of a heroic one.

Disney's Mowgli follows De Vries' pattern to some extent. The way he is brought up indicates that he is special, but not that he is a hero. He is exiled from the wolf pack, but never returns. He is attacked by a monster, but does not fight back. He is an outsider in the jungle, but finds his place in the man-village. Furthermore, he lacks other heroic characteristics, such as superiority and selflessness. He is portrayed as a headstrong and

disobedient child rather than a hero. He does not accept anything from authoritative figures, including Bagheera and Baloo, and runs away when he does not agree with them. He is not willing to sacrifice himself to save others, as he is the one who repeatedly needs to be saved himself. Although Mowgli is able to come up with clever solutions that do not require physical strength when his friends are in danger, these occasions do not outweigh all the times they need to save him. The only one who thinks Mowgli is a superior creature is King Louie. Others like Bagheera and Baloo laugh at him because he is skinny and clumsy. He is not a hero because he is still a child, both physically and mentally.

Chapter 4:

Kipling's Mowgli and Disney's Mowgli Compared

953 words

As established before, Mowgli shows different heroic potential in the Kipling's short stories and their film adaptation. In both versions, Mowgli follows all of the heroic biography's steps. In the short stories, Mowgli shows heroism by actively taken part in events. In the film, Mowgli does not live up to his heroic potential. It appears as if the events happen to him instead of him pursuing them. The reason for these different depictions of heroism can be found in Disney's ideology, the difference in narration, and different cultural contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The Disney production company is known for lacking fidelity to the work they are adapting. They use the original as inspiration and turn it into their own story (Cartmell 171; Zipes 31). Disney intends to create a version of the text that is more popular than the original and mocks any pretentiousness of the original (Cartmell 172). Therefore, cultural elements are changed to make the film interesting for audiences all around the world. Mowgli has turned from an Indian boy, to an American boy with a slightly tanned skin. Also, Disney films often remove character complexities, which turns them into stereotypes and makes the story comprehensible for everyone (Metcalf 88; Zipes 33; 40). For instance, the film shows very little violence. Because of this, Mowgli is unable to show his fighting skills, which problematizes his depiction as a hero. Kipling, however, does not hold back in showing Mowgli's violent side in his stories. His Mowgli engages in battles together with his pack, but Kipling focusses on Mowgli's success alone. The wolves do not even have names. In the film, Mowgli thus does not stand out as a hero, as the importance of friendship is emphasised rather than personal success. Mowgli, Baloo and Bagheera really care for each other and form a team that needs each other in order to defeat Shere Khan.

Another difference between the original and the adaptation is the narrated time. In Kipling's work, Mowgli's adventures start when he is ten or eleven years old, and in the last story, Mowgli is nearly seventeen years old (Kipling 13; 292). Each of the eight stories about Mowgli are separate entities, as there is no particular order that they take place in, except for the beginning and the end. Mowgli is forced to mature at an early age, and is able to do so because the stories are spread out over seven years. He is aware of the dangers in the jungle and learns from his previous encounters. He learns to act selflessly and care for others, which add to his heroism. Mowgli does not mature like this in the film. All of his adventures take place in two nights and two days. He barely has time to learn from his mistakes before he gets in trouble again. The jungle exposes the same dangers, but Mowgli does not mature. His problem is resolved by settling in the human world, where he can remain a child a little longer. Mowgli thus turns away from danger, and does not become a hero.

The time of publication is also influential on Mowgli's depiction of heroism. The idea of the wild child was immensely popular in the nineteenth century. The figure was seen as something in between: not fully human, nor fully animalistic. The natives of colonized India also felt in between things. They felt like they were exiled in their own land because of British imperialism (Hotchkiss 435-36). Like the native Indians, Mowgli is a child born between two worlds (446). He is an Indian, but he is separated from Indian culture and history because he lives in the jungle (441). There, Mowgli is powerful because he can escape from the Empire and from adulthood (McBratney 291). Therefore, the jungle can be seen as place of escape. Mowgli is clearly marked as the "other," which makes him special and someone people look up to. This adds to his heroic character.

The film is no longer tied to Indian history and region (Whitley 101). It was produced in a different time, when the fascination with the wild-child had died down. The sixties are characterised by its changing society. Walt Disney was a conservative man, and had a hard

time adjusting to these changes. His movies were accused of racism on multiple occasions (Metcalf 85-86). The same goes for *The Jungle Book*, with its portrayal of monkeys. Their accents and jazz music are typical to African Americans. It is suggested that that they do drugs by the bananas that widen Mowgli's eyes (Metcalf 92; *The Jungle Book* 0:33:15-0:35:40). The monkeys emphasise that Mowgli is a normal Caucasian boy (92). He speaks American English without an accent and wears a loincloth, which suggests that he is to some degree civilised. Therefore, Mowgli has become a character in which the audience can recognise themselves. He is no longer the "other," and does not stand out as special, like a hero would.

The character of Mowgli has changed from the original into the adaptation. Disney films have their own ideology, where the importance of friendship is emphasised, instead of personal success. Mowgli, therefore, does not stand out as a hero. In the adaptation, the narrated time has changed as well, which forced Mowgli to remain a child and made it impossible for him to mature. The change from a nineteenth century audience to one of the twentieth century caused the context of the wild-child in the British Empire to be lost. Instead, Mowgli has turned into a normal American boy that the audience identifies with. For these reasons, the Mowgli from the story has changed from a hero into a character that is not heroic.

Conclusion

649 words

Over time, the characteristics of the hero have changed in many ways. The pattern of the hero's life, however, has not. Events such as being exiled and a fight with a monster remain essential to the hero's story. They are present in ancient myths, as well as modern heroic tales. In both Kipling's *The Jungle Books* and the Disney film *The Jungle Book*, Mowgli follows the stages of the heroic biography as proposed by De Vries. However, the execution of these stages is very different. In Kipling's stories, Mowgli shows heroic qualities such as bravery and selflessness. He is dominant over the wolves and is eager to seek out a fight. He is a hero because he has a heroic life, and most importantly, acts heroically. This is not the case for Disney's Mowgli. He does not actively pursue danger, but dangerous things just happen to him. He runs away from the fight and actually needs to be saved more often than he saves others. He is portrayed as a skinny and clumsy child instead of a hero.

The character of Mowgli has thus changed from a hero into someone who is not a hero. This change can be ascribed to Disney's ideology, without violence and a focus on friendship, that differs with Kipling's. The difference in narrated time does not give Mowgli enough opportunity to mature and become a hero in the film. Finally, the difference between the nineteenth and twentieth century also plays a role in Mowgli's portrayal as hero. Instead of the wild-child that is free of the Empire, Mowgli has turned into a normal American boy.

The difference between the two versions of Mowgli might imply that Kipling's stories are about dealing with reality by escaping it, while the Disney film is essentially about returning to reality. Kipling's Mowgli is quite special, as he does not fit in anywhere. He is an outsider and his struggle to find a place in either of two worlds reflects the problem of the native Indians under the pressure of British colonialization. His story might be a way to escape, but he can be considered an exemplary figure in the sense that he is not perfect and

has to deal with problems. Disney's Mowgli, on the other hand, is a normal boy, who should return to the human world where he is from. He does not need to be a hero because he is protected by parental figures. This Mowgli does not face his problems, which makes him less exemplary than Kipling's Mowgli. His character is rather flat, which results in his story remaining quite simple. The fact that Kipling's Mowgli is a hero and Disney's is not, might imply that in the 1960s people were not looking for a hero, as opposed to the 1890s when they were.

To reflect on this research, the heroic biography as proposed by De Vries might not have been the best theory to use. The pattern is based on Medieval legends, while Kipling's work dates from the late nineteenth century. Both the film and the novel were compatible with the pattern and showed very clear results. While both versions of Mowgli adhere to the pattern, one is heroic, the other is not. The use of this pattern provided an analysis of Mowgli's character that could have been interpreted further with both Kipling and Disney's social and cultural background in mind if their importance had been realised earlier in the process and if the size of the project had allowed it. Other ideas for further analysis would be looking into Mowgli's antagonist, the anti-hero and the other animals he encounters in the jungle. Furthermore, Disney's mocking of characters such as the elephant herd could be analysed as contribution to Mowgli's heroism. Lastly, there are numerous other film adaptations of Kipling's work, which all can be compared to the original text in regard to heroism.

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