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Resistance of Female Characters in Grimm Brothers' Selected Fairy Tales

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By

Govinda Raj Khanal

Roll No.: 00006066

T.U. Regd. No: 6-2-48-155-2011

Central Department of English

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Abstract

This research paper examines the condition of female characters in "Snow White", "Cinderella", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Sleepy Beauty" from the feminist perspective. In these fairy tales, we can find horrifying images where weak and poor characters are suppressed in a society either a person images or forces a state of society where there are great suffering and injustice. The conditions of female characters are dreadful in "Snow White", "Cinderella", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Sleepy Beauty". In "Cinderella", the stepmother tells Cinderella to cut off her toe. The girl cuts off her toe, swallows the pain, and goes out the prince. In "Snow White", the stepmother gives a poisonous apple to Snow White and she swallows it accidentally. In "Little Red Riding Hood", the wolf desires to eat Little Red Riding Hood. "Sleeping Beauty", a teenager drugged by the jealous witch is locked in a tower where a prince effectively comes into her bedroom and decides the best thing to do in this situation is kiss her. This research work deals with the psychological dehumanizing of children particularly female characters concerning sexual abuses.

Key Words: Gender, Identity, Resistance, Agency

This research analyzes the status of weak and poor female characters to see how they are made voiceless in society from the feminist eye as an issue that can come from the reading of fairy tales. This research explores the construction, repetition, and dissemination of idealized femininity in popular fairy tales and how, in contemporary visual re-workings, these conventions are being challenged. Gender bias may be seen in how gender is portrayed in these stories. Good women in fairy tales are typecast as and praised for being pretty, fair (white), shapely, delicate, mostly blond, docile, modest, helpless, conforming, obedient, silent, submissive, self-

sacrificing, and vulnerable. Physical beauty is the first prerequisite of the female protagonist in a fairy tale, her supreme virtue. Thus, Snow White is “white as snow” with “skin as red as blood” and “hair as black as ebony.” She is “a paragon of beauty.” In “Sleeping” Beauty, the princess’s “cheeks were carnation...her lips were coral.”

The researcher has chosen subaltern groups of society as a focus in those stories as issues that can form a very convenient bridge among the genres of young adult literature. The study helps common readers to see the commonalities as well as differences among these genres very clearly. In these selected fairy tales, we can find the subaltern view when Cinderella cuts off the toe, or when Snow White is given a poisonous apple by her stepmother, or when Little Red Riding Hood is eaten by a wolf, or when a prince attempts rape at Snow-White. Here the researcher finds the males dominant over females. This research is confined only to the female characters who are submissive and weak; this position in fairy tales is a result of women’s social status at that time. In these fairy tales, men dominate and women are given a weak role. Feminism is thought to be a political language about gender that refuses the fixed and Trans historical definitions of masculinity and feminist in the dominant culture.

In all the fairy tales, the good women are juxtaposed against and suffer because of the evil ones, either the stepmother or the witch. Snow White and Cinderella suffer because of their wicked stepmothers; in Cinderella's case, there are also the stepsisters. Sleeping Beauty suffers because of maleficent witches. The witches and stepmothers, the wicked foil, are shown to have the power to impede and change the course of the virtuous but weak women’s lives. They meddle, speak their minds, make all efforts to make things happen the way they want, and create trouble.

The stepmother is always a selfish, controlling, jealous, and mean woman. The woman appears to be dominant, but she is also evil. Thus, the conflict is also between good and evil. The implication is that a female can be powerful only if she is evil. Gender refers to the roles constructed in the society which are attributed to females and males. These roles distinguish what it is to be feminine or masculine. A female will do things that let people know her gender identity as female, and a male also will express himself as a male. Women's position is different from men's since there is a gender issue between them. The theories of men and women become interesting things to be discussed. Oakley in his book *Sex, Gender, and Society* (1992) says about the difference between gender and sex as follows:

On the whole western society is organized around the assumption that the differences between the sexes are more important than any qualities they have in common. When people try to justify this assumption in terms of "natural" differences, two separate processes become confused; the tendency to differentiate in society, but the second is not, and its constancy marks the division between "sex" and "gender". Sex differences may be "natural" but gender differences have their source in culture, not in nature. It can be concluded that gender differences are created by society. (55)

"Snow White" has three main male characters that wield the power to make decisions that will seal Snow White's fate. The first is the huntsman who has to kill her in the forest on the orders of the queen. He allows her to run away into the forest and thus spares her life. Next, come to the seven dwarfs who act together as a single character. They let her stay in their house, thus, giving her shelter, without which her situation might have been worse. They also lay her in a glass coffin after she falls into a death-like sleep. Finally, the prince arrives and revives her with a kiss. Thus, the men are

heroes but the women are not heroines. The women's singular achievement, which is made to seem commendable and predestined, is to be swept off their feet by a prince charming, marry him and become a good wife. They do not need to possess any type of knowledge, or resourcefulness. The helplessness of the women in these tales is posited against the heroism of the males.

The victimization of subaltern women by the feudal landlords is clearly shown in this fiction. Devi Writes: The lower castes had different roles to play at different times; sometimes these men and women were bonded laborers, debtors, sometimes they were landless farmers evicted from their land, sometimes kept women- these roles were decided by the higher castes. Who usually spoke and the lower castes listened. This time to the women remained silent (28).

In the selected fairy tales "Cinderella", "Snow-White", "Little Red Riding Hood", and "Sleeping Beauty", the researcher focuses on the horrifying images where everything is bad. In this regard, Jack Zipes in his article "Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England", opines feminism in these stories as:

Most well-known fairy tales, such as "Cinderella" and "Snow White", all focus on the lives of a princess or princess-to-be. Much research has been done into these tales, and especially the gender aspect of these tales has been critiqued. Most criticism focuses on the princess who is depicted as a damsel in distress. The movement toward autonomy, that women should govern their destiny and write their history, has been a dominant tendency in feminist literary criticism and fairy tale criticism as well. (8)

These fairy tales have raised the voice of contemporary and feminist issues. The

central characters in all these selected short stories are shown weak and their physical beauty has been emphasized by the masculine eye. They are deprived of their freedom of speech and they are not allowed to enjoy their liberty. Alison Lurie's groundbreaking 1970s essay "Fairy Tales Liberation" examined the stories and found that they provide subversive roles for the women and the underclass. Freud also notices the consoling benefits of fairy tales for children and Angela Carter's darkly erotic short story collection *The Bloody Chamber* had an impact on feminist working in art and literature. Carter has revived the tales by interrogating their biases. In one of these fairy tales, the wolf chats with Little Red Riding Hood. "Little Red Riding Hood" is not about early seduction though the girl sits near him. Her arms are crossed in a gesture of resistance and her expression is wary. It is a discomfiting scene that suggests predatory sexual behavior practiced by some older men and children. That despite her resistance, she is shown more in a weaker posture is a symbol of domination of subaltern character.

"Snow White" draws on modern phenomena such as the "beauty myth" (1) to present characters playing out an old story to an outcome that resists both technology and closure. "Cinderella" also describes a society, where the central character suffers at the hands of her stepsister and stepmother. They cut her finger. In Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf pretends to be the grandmother and eats the titular character. In "Sleeping Beauty", a teenager is drugged into an enchanted sleep and is locked in a tower to be resurrected by a powerful kiss of a prince. In German societies, males dominate females; and these fairy tales reflect the German history of 1812. These stories capture the imagination of children and adults.

Female roles in fairy tales are polarized. The heroine is always perfect. She is beautiful, kind, helpful, and compassionate. She is also helpless, submissive, and

lacks any sort of intelligence. She has no ambition as well. Another type of character that shows signs of intelligence or ambition is evil and ugly. In “Cinderella”, Cinderella is shown as beautiful, listening to her mother’s instructions prays to Gods every day, and obeys her step-mother and step-sister. On the contrary, the stepmother and two stepsisters are evil, ugly, and jealous of Cinderella’s beauty. In “Snow White”, the contrast is between the active and passive woman. Both the queen and Snow White are beautiful but they differ in their level of purity. Feminism suggests that the given concept of gender is a construct. These stories do not contain dogmatic views from a generation that did not view females as equal, but as those who need to be saved by a male to survive. The piece of writing is created from a society that lacked gender equality and hence the story perpetuates the same gender roles. E.g. in “Snow White”, it is told that she would have protection from the seven dwarves if she would “cook, make beds, wash, sew and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly” (4). This is how gender roles before the 50s were and this is replicated here. Another example of reinforcement of the gender roles can be seen by the Queen's action of repeatedly seeing and staring at the mirror. By consistently reinforcing these gender roles, Cinderella gives the impression that a woman is always in need, and because of these needs, negative traits arise. The stepmother, for instance, is shown negatively because she needs security. Linda T. Parsons in her article “Ella Evolving: Cinderella Stories tersest include children’s engagement during aesthetic reading and the Construction of Gender and the impact of gender on literacy” analyzes feminism in “Cinderella” as:

Cinderella exhibits neither agency nor voice. As the stepsisters leave for the ball, she follows them only with her eyes and begins to cry. She is disconsolate and incapable of action. When her fairy godmother appears and

asks what is wrong, Cinderella is unable to speak; she cannot even voice her desire to go to the ball. Her godmother directs her to get a pumpkin, six mice, a rat, and six lizards that she turns into the coach, horses, coachman, and footmen. She also clothes Cinderella and tells her when she must leave the ball. Cinderella is an object acted upon. The fact that a messenger of the prince discovers Cinderella and she is transformed once again by magic and beautiful clothes before meeting the prince indicates that in her humble state she would not be worthy of the match. She must be beautiful to be worthy.(144)

Cinderella is also someone in need but she can redeem herself by being brave enough to face her stepmother and taking the risk of getting caught at the ball. These gender roles also suggest that men dominate women by being the ones who can decide whom to marry. The males have the power to take every decision. Moreover, Cinderella losing the sense of time is an implication that women are emotional and someone who loses control of the action. It is a representation of the then German society where the women were dominated and controlled every time by men.

A definition from *Feminism is for Everybody* by Bell Hooks states that “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, exploitation, and oppression (1). To understand this definition, it is important to clarify what sexism is. *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* defines sexism as “a social relationship in which males have authority over females” (258). So, to end this kind of social relationship, feminism is needed. Regarding the feministic view on “Little Red Riding Hood” Kylie Hammellin her article “The Grimm Fairy Tales Rewritten with Feminist Perspectives” states:

Little Red Riding Hood was different from other young girls her age because she was very independent, and she loved to prove that she could take care of herself. So on one day, when she and her mother were going to bring lunch to

Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother, who was unwell and would be cheered by seeing her granddaughter, the young girl asks to take the food by herself.

Little Red's mother finally agreed after much prodding but warned her

daughter: "Go straight through the woods. Do not stop to talk to anyone". (27)

"The Little Red Riding Hood" does not have a typical fairytale-like happy ending.

The story suggests that young girls should not talk to strangers as such talking is insecure and can bring about unexpected results. The titular character is an imaginary character that embodies a warning to children, particularly girls, about what might happen if they are disobedient and careless. In "Sleeping Beauty", the readers can see how biological differences set apart the male and females: men are perceived as strong and women are the weaker section. In each culture, the expectations of how men and women behave are influenced by the ideals and norms of that culture.

Throughout history, tradition and literature provide a template to the identities of various cultures. "Sleeping Beauty" takes a central precept that the conscious and unconscious literature influenced by male-dominated perspectives and social standards are what cause the patriarchal archetypal perceptions of women. In this regard Eleanor Ross with reference to the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" writes:

Although the term subaltern conventionally denotes an inferior military rank, it is more generally used as a name for the general attribute of subordination in south Asian society, often expressed in terms of gender and caste. In this way, both brown women and low castes are subalterns, social subordinates. (2)

Little Red saves herself instead of relying on the huntsman. The original story makes it seem like whenever women get in trouble, they need a man to save them. This might have been true when the Grimm Brothers wrote down the story, but it is not true anymore. Here it is wanted this story to reflect that, so it is made sure that Little

Red Riding Hood can save herself. Little Red got herself into trouble, so she should be able to get herself out of it. Another aspect, which is to make sure Little Red feels ashamed about what happened. Though Little Red is a victim and should not feel responsible about being attacked, we feel that she should learn that a young woman cannot give her address to random strangers in the world we live in.

Many feminist writers in the second half of the twentieth century were able to see how unjustly fairy tales treat female characters and decided to transform them. This thesis explores the transformation of one of the most famous tales best-known as the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" and attempts to find common feminist features in three contemporary versions of the tale. Furthermore, it explains why the well-known version of the tale is not a feminist one and answers what makes the female protagonists of the contemporary versions feminist.

It is, therefore, feminists critique the works of former literature (where such traditional gender roles are implicit) by highlighting the sexual discriminations and broadcasting their versions of the former texts. This critique paints a composite image of women's oppression. By painting a composite image, feminist critics try to show what and how they were discriminated against.

Fairy tales have existed for thousands of years and most of them deal with fantasy characters like fairies, ogres, witches, gnomes, and elves. They come in different versions because they originated in oral forms and they can, thus, be interpreted in various ways. The variations of the stories are the results of the efforts of the authors of bringing back the folklore and culture of their countries. In this regard, what some feminists find is that fairy tales diminish gender roles. Karen F. Rowe in her article "Renaissance Literature on Women Studies" writes:

These types of narratives glorify passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice and

that culture's very survival depends upon the woman's acceptance of roles that relegate her to motherhood and domesticity. Rowe also remarks that young women in fairy-tales can only be saved by external forces (magic, a prince, a huntsman, a fairy godmother) and rarely by their means, which enforces this dependency.(239)

Nevertheless, not all feminist critics think of fairy tales in such negative light. Sharon R. Wilson believes that "both oral and written tales dramatize basic human emotions and maybe timeless works of art, among the greatest achievement of western culture" (14). Fairy tales, thus, remain speculative fiction that tries to fill the blanks of reality by creating another reality. New universes are sometimes used to recreate real-life issues from other's points of view by employing analog concepts in the allegorical works: that is, by representation, symbolism, imageries, events, and actions that convey literal and figurative meanings. These analog concepts should be easily associated so that the readers can identify themselves as subjects that exist in the real world. The author who seeks to follow the conventions of this genre can stretch the boundaries than if they were to write realistic fiction.

We can feel that in the story that Little Red Riding Hood never really learned from her mistake. I always got the impression that Little Red Riding Hood would not stop talking to strangers, believing that nothing could go wrong and there would always be a man to save her after she made a mistake. Here it is wanted to make it clear that Little Red Riding Hood was remorseful about what happened, and that she would never risk herself or her grandmother again; they might not have such a lucky outcome the next time. A woman should not have to be afraid of any man she sees walking through the woods, or in a real-life example, walking home, but that is the unfortunate world we live in. While we do not want our recreation to say that it is the

victim's fault if and when she is attacked, we do want our story to show that, at least for now, women must be cautious, but hopefully they will not have to be so careful in the future.

“Snow White” is a fairy tale that traffics in some tropes that we might now roll our eyes at - feminine jealousy, unrealistic expectations of beauty, a woman cleaning up after seven ungrateful men. Now Snow White has gotten a feminist adaptation, a dark and chilly fantasy that even has a touch of frozen thrown in. Fairy tales have been present in many generations, portraying a fantasy world for people of all ages. This fantasy that is portrayed by the stories shows that good always wins, and evil always suffers. But, what is the hidden message behind the characters of princesses and princes? In the entire original, Grimm Brother's fairytales, many subtle messages have one way or another shaped today's generation, not so much in a positive way. Originally, these stories were meant to be read by adults, not children. They oftentimes included dark themes such as violence, or sex. Although these stories contained dark themes, they became popular amongst all generations. Stories such as Cinderella, which has a strong theme of sexism and gender roles, Little Snow-White, which places a negative connotation on stepmothers, and teaches that beauty is power, and last but not least, Hansel and Gretel in which the theme of gender roles is the main focus, are just a few examples of the Grimm's brothers most well-known influential stories.

Gender roles abound in this story and are practically the entire plot. Cinderella is forced into basic slavery by her abusive stepmother. While their conversations about what housework Cinderella will be required to do during the day satisfies. She is perpetually doing housework and domestic chores granted, this is painted in a negative light and as a form of abuse, so it can perhaps be painted in a more feminist light

(Cinderella must break free from domesticity) but the most obvious offense comes from the mice. There are several mice with whom Cinderella talks and befriends, and in return for her kindness and hard work, these mice decide to help Cinderella finish mending her dress for the Prince's ball, satisfying Lady Tremaine's requirements to go.

In "Cinderella", one can compare the male character to the female character and instantly notice how Grimm Brother's idea of a good woman is always portrayed as beautiful, weak, innocent, and submissive. Whereas the male character is always the one to save the damsel in distress, has ultimately being portrayed as strong, sure of himself, and the hero of the story. This female character gives the image that women should be weak, and not fend for themselves. The character of Cinderella is a bad example for women as she does not fight against the cruel situation she is in, rather, most of the time she is submissive and does not take matters into her own hands and runs away; instead, she just waits for the day her prince will find her and rescue her. This story has influenced the image of men and women in society, and how they should play their roles. Women's role beings one of weakness, and men always having to take control of the situation.

The story of "Little Snow-White" also contains dark themes. Although there are many themes in this story that have influenced today's generation, there is one characteristic of the story that stands out the most, and that is, stepmothers. Little Snow-White transforms stepmothers into a negative, wicked character. In many of the Grimm Brothers' stories, there is an evil mother or stepmother. Although the character of the stepmother in "Little Snow-White" is not necessarily known for being the fairest of them all, on the contrary, this character is known as the most sinister of them all. This transformation on stepmothers influenced many generations into

thinking that all stepmothers came with an evil gene in them. Silver asked both American and international friends about their thoughts and feelings on the word stepmother and four found the cruel stereotype deeply embedded in their psyches, and widespread across cultural lines. (35) This makes one think that indeed the Grimm Brothers' "Little Snow White" had a major influence on the way people all around the world think when they hear the word stepmother, instantly associating it with a mean, evil character.

Furthermore, another subject that stands out in "Little Snow White" is that beauty is power. The character of Snow White has a long-lasting battle with her evil stepmother, all based on the fact that Snow White is the most beautiful girl in all the land, and this makes the narcissistic stepmother want to destroy her, as she believes she should be the only beautiful woman in all the land. Even though this might seem like an innocent theme, it has influenced generations into thinking that being physically beautiful is one of the most important characteristics of a human being. When taking a look at the relationship between the stepmother and Snow White, one can realize that the stepmother does not hate Snow White because of how she is as a person; she hates her because she symbolizes beauty and youth. By looking at beauty as a commodity through which power can be gained, this action can be interpreted as a means for the Queen to preserve her power through beauty. The stepmother believes that her beauty is what makes her powerful, and if there is someone else more beautiful than her, they might take away that power. The way the Grimm Brothers depict beauty in "Little Snow White" has influenced many girls of this generation into making them have an unrealistic, narcissistic point of view when it comes to physical beauty.

The Grimm brother's version of "Little Red Riding Hood" is a very

traditional, familiar tale saturated with gender conventions. To read it from a feminist point of view proved to be easy but also more insightful than I had thought. Many of the indications of Red Riding Hood's oppression Barbara Smith had never noticed before:

One resource to which children might look for role models is in the available literature. Stereotypically sexist depictions of girls and women in literature may serve not only to reinforce sexist attitudes in society but also to impact the psychological development of females. Little Red Riding Hood is a classic example of a stereotypically sexist depiction of the protagonist, whose traditional portrayal ranges from polite and naive, to carnal and seductive. (1)

The first noticeable instance of Red Riding Hood's oppression can be seen when her mother urges her to stay on the path, lest she falls and breaks the wine glass.

Symbolically this refers to Riding Hood's confinement to her gender roles. She has a set path that she must take or she will face negative consequences. However, she runs into the deceptive wolf, "She did not know what a wicked animal he was and was not afraid of him" (4). This implies that she cannot use logic to infer the danger of the situation and instead tells the wolf exactly where she is heading. This same irrationality later makes her fail to see that her grandmother is a wolf, but she is not only illogical; she lets emotions deter her from her goal as well. When the wolf tells her to slow down and observe the beauty of the forest, she complies by letting it overwhelm her emotions and wanders off the path. Because she wandered from this symbolic path, her grandmother ends up in a wolf's stomach. Finally, when the huntsman comes to save her and her grandma from the wolf it displays the necessity of a masculine hero to save the day that Riding Hood could have never pulled herself out of this situation given her role as a girl.

The intended moral of the story is to not talk to strangers; however, this story also perpetuates gender stereotypes that women are irrational, emotional, and inferior to men. These implications resonate through most stereotypes, and sadly somewhat through the reality of more traditional social conventions.

We all know the story of Sleeping Beauty: the gorgeous princess, cursed by an evil sorceress, will sleep in her tower until a handsome prince wakes her with true love's first kiss. Shuang Yi in his essay "A Feminist Reading on Sleeping Beauty" tells that:

Sleeping Beauty is a specific representative of the passive victim in patriarchy. Other heroines are trapped in traditional conventions and only lose their discourse while Sleeping Beauty has been slumbering on her bed for one hundred years, losing all her right of action and waiting with her whole heart for her rescuer. However, "when the King's son came near to the thorn hedge, it was nothing but large and beautiful flowers, which parted from each other of their own accord and let him pass unhurt"(4). The prince does nothing to get to her chamber only because "by this time the hundred years had just passed" (2). The author wants his readers to know that everything is meant to be in fairy tales. The prince needs to do nothing to get the princess because his fate is destined. The princess also needs to do nothing to be saved because there is always a godmother or a twelfth Wise Woman who waves her wand or bestows her magic gifts to ensure perfection, as long as the princess behaves properly and meets men's desire.(3)

Brother Grimm likes to use the names of the heroines as the title, such as the former mentioned "Snow White" and "Cinderella". "Sleeping Beauty", also known as *Briar Rose* in Brother Grimm's edition, is also one of them. With her passivity and

helplessness, she is deemed to be the ideal woman image from the perspective of the man. However, the story is slightly different from the former two as the binary opposition exists not between two women but the hero and heroine. As fairy tales indicate the social background with or without purpose, this kind of narration gives readers a more specific and clear clue about the patriarchy at that time. All a woman needs is to be beautiful, paralyzed and then she will get what she wants most—a happy marriage.

The most distinctive feature of “Sleeping Beauty” is the visual contrast between dynamic and static states. The princess lies quietly with all the others in her castle just like a photograph. Grimm brothers say that:

The spell breaks when the lucky prince comes into the photo and devastates the tranquility. He wakes up the princess, later the whole castle, and the horses in the courtyard stood up and shook themselves; the hounds jumped up and wagged their tails; the pigeons upon the roof pulled out their heads from under their wings, looked around, and flew into the open country; the flies on the wall crept again; the fire in the kitchen burned up and flicked and cooked the meat; the joint began to turn and sizzle again, and the cook gave the boy such a box on the ear that he screamed, and the maid finished plucking the fowl.

(23)

When examining ‘Snow White’ from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that feminism is shown through the characters in the story; Snow White, Evil Queen, Huntsman. In the story, for Snow White to be given shelter and protection, she is forced to complete traditional womanly tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, and protecting the house for the seven dwarfs, "If you will keep house for us, and cook, make beds, wash, sew, and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly, then you can stay with us, and

you shall have everything that you want” (4). The Queen and snow-white both use their beauty to control the men in their lives, and have power over others.

“Snow White” shows the main female, Snow White, as a young, naive, and weak character. It tells young girls that they must rely on men for their well-being. Snow White is placed in a coma, and the only way she can be saved is by a man. She is completely helpless. She can do nothing without a man coming to her rescue. This places females lower than males in social status.

In addition to portraying the female as helpless, the story portrays the female as a housekeeper. In “Snow White” the only thing that Snow White is good for is cleaning up after the men, the seven dwarfs. When she finds the home of the dwarfs she immediately cleans it up completely. It is as if it is natural for her. This shows young girls that they should automatically clean up after the men and that their only role is that of a housekeeper. Again, this puts females below males. The woman is simply a servant to the men. “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” does not do any favors to women. It is especially important because this story may be one of the first ways that children identify their role in society.

Desire is not only a subject of great importance for feminism; it also plays a significant role in fairy tales and most certainly in Carter’s fairy tales. In patriarchal ideology, desire is either categorized as right or wrong and is also closely related to heterosexuality. The fables by the Brothers Grimm create a misguided perception about women. Cinderella is portrayed as a frail and helpless young girl that needs a prince to save her from her life of misery. Even looking at the other female characters in the story, one common thread is clear, a woman is defined by the man that she marries. Without a man in her life she cannot provide for herself and have all the things she wants neither can she stand up for herself even against her stepmother.

A clear trend in Grimm's fairy tales is the portrayal of women as submissive and beautiful while men are painted as brave, active, and strong. The fairy tales seem to encourage the patriarchal structure of the unique roles and positions that men and women hold in a society where men are made to appear as superior to their female counterparts as Writer Christina Bacchilega in his article "An introduction to the innocent Heroine" writes:

These have grown to become stereotypes that many in today's society are familiar with. A woman that wishes to challenge the perception that she is the weaker sex has a much harder time being accepted by men. In many instances, the men deem her unfit because she is not feminine enough. Fairy tales are therefore not just a pastime while someone gets ready for bed but they have been elevated to tools of maintaining gender inequality and seeking power over women and maintaining gender inequality. (1)

This stereotype has evolved around sexuality and violence with the female being portrayed as the weaker sex. However, some productions portray women as capable of being just as powerful, strong, and brave as their male counterparts.

It is argued that the stereotype has resulted in fairy tales being an effective tool for exercising power over women and strengthening the stereotype that men are the superior sex.

The story of "Cinderella" reflects on different relationships that women have with their siblings and much older women. Cinderella is portrayed as a young girl that has to endure constant bullying from her stepsisters. Even though she does her chores well, she receives no praise for her efforts, and this chips at her self-esteem. She not only represents children that have no living relatives to care for them but also those that endure emotional abuse.

Apart from sibling rivalry, the “Cinderella” fable is also about hope for those that have little going for them in terms of opportunity and status in society. A girl that was a lowly kitchen hand is elevated to high society when a prince falls in love with her. This yet again asserts the need for a woman to be married for them to be considered successful or in a better position in society. On her own, the woman is portrayed in a less than favorable light. Cinderella’s stepmother and her stepsisters are made to appear vain and materialistic rather than independent and self-sufficient. The focus of all their efforts is to nab the most eligible suitor; in this case the prince. It’s a slap in the face for any feminist because yet again the story is built on the weakness of the female gender. These stories also seem to classify women based on their physical attributes.

Cinderella’s sisters are painted as plain Jane’s who are loud and obnoxious. Creating the impression that women that speak their mind are not considered being beautiful. The stepmother is presented as a woman that is not beautiful inside and out because she cruelly treats her stepdaughter and is not physically attractive. So women that are not physically attractive are evil and those that risk being the victim of resentment and hatred by those that are not beautiful. As a result, young girls grow up with a desire to be Cinderella and this stereotype becomes the source of many emotional, mental, social, and physical issues. When a young girl is told stories with girls such as Cinderella and sleeping beauty, she grows up believing that she is only beautiful if she has a tiny waist, musical voice, and pretty face. She also has it ingrained in her that she is only beautiful if a man tells her that she is and marries her. The result is an increase in focus on superficial things like looks.

Women in the 21st century still struggle with the stereotypes that were created by fables such as Cinderella. A strong, independent, and well-educated woman still

struggles with her physical appearance because she wants men to find her attractive. Her counterparts in the same society seek to stifle her by telling her not to be too ambitious or too excellent because it will result in her losing her femininity. The result is the creation of a society with divisive values as far as how men and women should view one another and identifies them. As society evolves, fairy tales like Cinderella and others by the Grimm Brothers are becoming less acceptable because they encourage negative stereotypes which pit the male gender against their female counterparts making it hard to achieve a harmonious society that is all-inclusive. According to Joe Santillan in her essay “Feminist Theory, Crime and Social Justice” says that:

Patriarchy is a system where male-dominated structures and social arrangements cause oppression of women. This is exhibited in Cinderella through the concept of her living 'happily ever after' after getting married to the prince. In this context, Cinderella fulfills the damsel in distress archetype whereas the prince is represented as the hero, although he had no role to play in her initial rebellion from her family and her will to change her situation. The story is wrapped up as if her deep-rooted issues disappeared through the arrival of the male figure. (10-11)

Cinderella is objectified through her role as the winner of the prince's affections because of her beauty. The prince wishes to dance with her just because he finds her to be the most sexually attractive female in the room. He fails to ask her of her name and about her life, which is shown through his difficulties in finding her after the ball.

In “Snow White” the mother and the daughter are both beautiful, but they are not beautiful in the same ways. The mother is beautiful because she does not conform to society, and the daughter is more beautiful than the mother because she conforms

to the ideals of society. Therefore, Snow-White's conformity makes her beauty more desirable in and to patriarchal society. These two women can't exist peacefully together in the same landscape frame at the same time because the types of beauty they embody signify conflicting ideals. When they do inhabit the same landscape frame at the same time, one of them will have to either appear dead or have to die.

In many young adult novels and stories, the protagonists are male adolescents who successfully wield their agency as a tool with which they can destabilize and undermine existing sociopolitical structures; however, female protagonists and their attempts are shown futile and submissive.

A lot of people note that the Disney version of Cinderella, at least, is feminist because Cinderella is a passive entity in the execution of her fate. Take away the mice and fairy godmother, and I can notice that Cinderella does just about nothing to improve her situation, and executes exactly none of the critical actions of the story. She wishes for something, and others give it to her.

We can take a look at those critical turning points in the story. We can notice that the mice design her dress for her. Her godmother gives her a carriage and a new dress when her sisters destroy the first. The mice out of her room when her stepmother locks her away and the prince whisks her away from her place of servitude. Cinderella herself, meanwhile, does little more than lament her situation and wish for someone to rescue her.

Princesses from the Disney canon that are seen as more feminist (though interpretations vary on just how feminist they are) are those that exercise agency. In *Beauty and the Beast*, for instance, Belle's life is shaped by her own decisions to take her father's place in the beast's castle, to go where she is forbidden to go, to leave the beast's castle, and to return as she sees fit. One last, even more, modern example is

Disney's version of Rapunzel. Contrast the actions of Cinderella with those in the Rapunzel clip linked below, and see which appears to be more feminist.

Folktales are a way to represent situations analyzing different prospects about gender, through the stories that contribute with the reality of the culture in which they develop while these provide ideas about the behavior and roles of specific sex building a culture of womanhood, manhood, and childhood. This is what the stories of Little Red Riding Hood of Charles Perrault (1697) and Little Red-Cap of the Grimm Brothers (1812) show. We really should consider it the same way today. Partly because the Witch scared me so much as a child that this is the first time

Snow White is the epitome of goodness, which, in this case, seems to mean passivity. She cleans and sings, dreaming of the nice things her prince will say when she meets him. She screams and cowers when threatened, but she cannot run unless someone tells her to. She communes with the animals and wins over even the “humorously” misogynistic Grumpy. Her natural beauty looks like a woman wearing make-up (apparently the animators used real rouge to paint her cheeks), and she walks and spins and gasps in a delicate way that no human being has ever attempted.

She has no real emotions of her own. She runs through the woods in terror but afterward tells the animals that she is “ashamed” of her fear. After singing with them, she is perfectly happy again and responds to everything with laughing delight. She never seems truly afraid of her stepmother, and in her gentleness, has to be reminded over and over by the dwarfs to watch out for her and her tricks. She of course ignores this advice once told that “men prefer apple pie,” so she should buy some apples. She’s so insufferably good that it’s no wonder the Evil Queen wanted to kill her. And anyone trying to emulate her would learn that laughing and taking any nonsense that anyone gives you is the best way to get ahead in life.

Snow White is so detached from her own story that she barely even interacts with the two characters that drive it. She never says a word to her true love, the prince, whom she sees once and instantly falls in love with. While he declares his passion for her immediately, she, in all her sweet innocence, instantly runs and hides from him. Quite right, perhaps, since he first appears as a creepy eavesdropper with a feather in his cap, who appears beside her and joins her in a duet without invitation, and next appears to kiss the lips of a beautiful corpse. But the “true love” hardly rings true.

On the bright side, the Queen has initiative and a goal, which is more than I can say for simpering Snow White. But she is the villainous older woman, and I came out of analyzing the story with the sense that I was being shown two kinds of femininity and two kinds of motherhood: an older, jealous, selfish type, contrasted with the young, sweet purity of Snow White. To say that the Evil Queen is a bad mother figure is beyond understatement. Snow White, on the other hand, despite being a “young girl,” immediately becomes a mother to the dwarfs, earning her place by cooking and cleaning, sternly telling them to go and wash, and generally being the perfect image of passive domesticity. Whilst making references to other relevant anti-tales where appropriate. It is questioned whether the work of humanizing the heroines and females in society has been in vain or, as a descendant of the fairy-tale genre, the anti-tale (as a subversive retelling) harbors an emancipating potential to disrupt comfortable illusions by confronting us with the problems inherent in our existing reality. In short, it questions the state of female identity in the twenty-first century and investigates whether anti-tales are an adequate weapon to prod a sleeping nation into action.

As a result, Snow White gets her dream prince, and the Evil Queen dies, struck down partly by her wickedness and partly by the world itself, as a bolt of

lightning tears the ground from under her. Why such a powerful woman flees from seven little men with pickaxes in the first place is unclear. But evil is struck down, sweet purity is saved, and everything is right with the world... without Snow White having to do a single thing (other than laugh and scream and be motherly) to save herself. Beauty is essential for all the heroines in fairy tales. Snow White is so pretty that the prince cannot live without seeing her. Cinderella is so gorgeous that the prince “would dance with no other maiden, and never let loose of her hand” (1). And Sleeping Beauty is so enchanting that “from time to time Kings’ sons came and tried to get through the thorny hedge into the castle” without scaring of dying “a miserable death” (6). As Maria Tart puts in her essay, “the very name Sleeping Beauty invokes a double movement between a passive gerund (sleeping) and a descriptive noun (beauty) that invites a retinal response. Beauty may be sleeping, but we want to look at her to indulge in the pleasure of her visible charms” (2) Imagine after one hundred years, the lucky prince finally gets into Sleeping Beauty’s room and only finds out an ugly woman who may be as old as his great-great-grandmother lying on the bed, comatose, waiting for his kiss to wake her up—romanticism suddenly turns in to hallucinatory realism. It inspires some relationship experts nowadays. Emphasis is placed on beauty and becoming the woman he desires, essentially constructing oneself for male attention. It shows the shadow of patriarchy at present. Women are told to behave properly and take strategies to catch a man’s heart. Men have become the active “bearer-of-the-look,” whereas women have been relegated to the position of objects on display.

While answering the main research question on how elements of fairy tales and subaltern intersect about gender in popular contemporary young adult fiction, this chapter examines the fairy tale elements of the prince and princess, the quest, and the

voice of voiceless characters, mainly female characters.

All in all, Grimm in these all selected short stories we can find the major characters are females and they are dominated or suppressed either physically or psychologically. Some of them are raped whereas others are facing different gender-related violations. Even though these stories represent so much culture and folklore, one must take a different point of view and see what message these stories are giving to future generations. Sadly, many of these messages might seem harmless, but in reality, they are harmful in the long run. These stories teach people that stepmothers are sinister, that beauty is the key to success, and those men and women have fixed roles in society. This should not be the case, because stepmothers are not as evil as they are portrayed, intelligence should rise above good looks, and women can be as strong and equal as men, not the typical damsel in distress.

As the precious spiritual wealth of humans, the classic fairy tales hold an irreplaceable status on the stage of literature. But the way of reading them needs to be guided correctly with the selection so that the quintessence is absorbed while the dregs can be abandoned. It will not be achieved without the full awareness of the masses and the determination of the feminist revolution. By writing the thesis it is realized that only if more readers notice the unbalance between men and women will the equality pursued by feminists come sooner; only if more girls quit the dream of waiting for the rescue of a prince charming will they finally have the courage to seek their happiness.

These stories have captured the imaginations of children and adults alike. The title is telling curiously what fairy tales mostly lack are fairies but it is such an evocative title that it has usurped the Grimm's original one and continues to describe the genre to this day characters such as Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, sleepy

beauty and Cinderella are deeply woven into western culture, their stories supplying resonate and compelling narratives of innocent, fear, loss and triumph over adversity.

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