

Gender Representation in Classic Fairy Tales: A Comparative Study of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*

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Abstract

Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* are three examples of classic fairy tales that have been commonly told to children. The writers focused the study on the portrayal of gender representation reflected in these fairy tales. The writers used the descriptive qualitative method and feminist theory to analyze how these fairy tales portray gender representation. This study was expected that it could contribute to gender role discussion in children's literature and introduce children to equal gender roles to make them able to treat different gender equally. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on traditional fairy tales and employs a qualitative methodology that involves close reading and content analysis. The writers found out that Grimms' *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* portray traditional gender stereotypes. *Snow White* and *Cinderella* support the domination of masculinity and submissive femininity, while *Beauty and the Beast* does not portray the traditional gender roles because the tale makes its female protagonist free to determine her life. The writers used a feminist point of view to analyze gender representation in the selected tales. It is expected that this study highlights the importance of critically analyzing gender roles in children's literature and the need for more diverse and complex representations of gender in fairy tales and other literary works.

Keywords: children's literature, comparative analysis, fairy tales, gender roles, gender stereotypes

1. Introduction

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, *Cinderella*, and *Beauty and the Beast* are fairy tales that children are told, teaching them that good always wins over evil. Talking about fairy tales, we cannot leave to mention some famous writers such as Brothers Grimms, Charles Perrault, De Beaumont, H.C. Anderson, etc. Fairy tales have transformed from oral tradition into some different media, starting from books, movies, and television. It is Charles Perrault that started a new tradition of telling fairy tales from oral tradition into written stories. *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals* is one of the traditional folktale collections that Perrault started collecting and publishing. German academics Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who popularized fairy tales in the early 19th century, carried on this tradition (Roller, 2021). The transformation from oral tradition into writing tradition makes fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault widely regarded as authentic versions of the tales (Parsons, 2004). Most fairy tales have common gender stereotypes in which the female characters must follow traditional roles. This reality makes some feminist writers start to write an adaptation of the previous version. Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, one of the feminist writers, wrote an adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*. Throughout the past three hundred years, Belle, the female character, has evolved to further represent an intellectual and self-aware fairy tale heroine, thanks to Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's feminist beliefs (Abbybled, 2017). The primary contribution made by De Beaumont was her persistent advocacy for women's rights to education (Tolovaj, 2020).

Researchers and critics have analyzed fairy tales to look at the historical background, themes, and social effects of the tales on their readers. Fairy tales are claimed by some researchers and critics to help children learn valuable lessons about life. On the other hand, they are also claimed to perpetuate negative stereotypes and gender norms (Zipes, 2015). According to Jung, fairy tales teach children how to resolve common human issues, desires, and positive relationships; mastering these abilities will bring an impact on the children's health, and qualified life, or even shape their future values and beliefs (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). Children's stories are censored to remove the suffering that is inherent in the human condition (Loder, 2015). This isolates kids and fosters an atmosphere that fosters shame and the idea that they aren't good enough because they can't live up to the standards portrayed in these stories. The significance of fairy tales goes beyond their artistic worth. The subtle orientation offered by the fairy tale genre is significantly more effective than other types of teaching, and literature plays a significant part in socialization. Children are introduced to social ideals and conventions through fairy tales. Feminist writers worry to face the fact that the social ideals and conventions that are introduced to children through fairy tales are patriarchal ones. In the patriarchal society, fairy tales assign characters to specific sex roles, and women are not expected to choose their fate (Dewhurst, 2014). There is no chance for the princess to refuse the prince's proposal of marriage. According to Lois Tyson (2006), traditional gender roles portray women as emotional, weak, caring, and subservient, while males are portrayed as logical, powerful, protective, and determined. These gender roles have been quite effective in defending injustices. Thus, patriarchal influences rather than biological factors are responsible for the inferior status of women in society. Neikirk stated that according to feminists, fairy tales have

helped forward the patriarchal objective of subjugating women (Khan, 2019). A quick scan of the fairy tales reveals a clear pattern that emphasizes validating women by their subservient beauty while portraying men as active. These fairy tales promote patriarchal ideas to uphold the gender hierarchy, rather than just reflecting societal standards. The purpose of this study is to compare gender role representation in Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast*. The traditional gender roles of the princess as passive, lovely, and in need of rescue and the male characters as active, powerful, and heroic are both reinforced in Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In keeping with gender roles and stereotypes that have been repressive for ages, Kirsch (2012) observes that the Grimms' *Snow White* promotes the image of a woman in need of male protection and affirmation.

The sexist undertones in the stories' storylines and characters were immediately denounced by feminists as soon as they entered the social and political arena. Fairy tales, according to Maria Lieberman in Erum (2009), are not "universal stories" and instead teach girls that physical attractiveness, morbidity, and passivity will make them the "most desirable" girls in the world. According to Karen Rowe (1986), fairy tales promote 'alluring fantasies' of punishment and reward: passivity, beauty, and helplessness result in marriage and confer wealth and status, whereas self-aware, 'aggressive,' and powerful women suffer social censure and are killed. Fairy tales are criticized by feminists as being anti-feminist since they tell young girls that virtuous females should simply "wait for their prince to come." These young girls discover that it is fundamentally terrible to have independent thought and a desire for personal independence in a world ruled by males. All they need to do to achieve their goals is to appear lovely, kind, and submissive.

The goal of the fairy tales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to teach young girls and women gender norms and conceptions of suitable behavior (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). These stories reinforce the discriminatory gender system because they place a strong emphasis on the passivity and attractiveness of women (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). Feminine beauty is described as the socially manufactured idea that all women should try to obtain and retain physical appearance as one of their most valuable attributes. The primary female character is either born naturally flawless and the most beautiful or later acquires beauty through magic. The other bad female characters, however, are primarily presented as ugly and do not have a happy ending. Beauty, especially, is dependent exclusively on physical appearance, according to Etcoff et al (2004:4), who defines beauty as traits agreeable to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the aesthetic, and the moral sense. While passivity is the portrayal of women as helpless and incapable of independent thought. The primary female character is consistently portrayed as passive and without effort. She always looks to the prince or a supporting cast member to get her out of a jam. In *Cinderella* story, there are numerous misrepresentations of social feminine roles, beginning with the stepmother and her daughters being portrayed as evil and merciless, the father as being passive and appearing unconcerned about his daughter, *Cinderella* appearing content with her fate, the magic power helping her, and the beauty, grace, and expensive dresses being what catch the attention of a royal matron. The gender role stereotypes category can be used to group all six undesirable characteristics (El Shaban, 2017).

In society, gender roles refer to how we are expected to behave, speak, dress, groom, and carry ourselves according to the sex to which we have been assigned (Johnson, 2022). Gender roles are what society expects of a particular gender and how that gender should act in that society. They are founded on social conventions or the expectations of other people (Sethmini, 2021). Girls and women, for instance, are frequently expected to behave politely, be accommodating, and be nurturing. Gender roles can be thought of as biologically based behavioral expectations. In the past, men were supposed to exhibit traits like power, strength, and competitiveness rather than freely expressing their feelings of love and devotion (Fawkner, 2012). According to Gaye Tuchman (1978), women are disproportionately underrepresented in a small number of social roles, where they are typically portrayed as performing stereotyped gender roles such as working at home, being spouses and mothers, etc. Ibinge (2007) asserts that the physical depiction of female characters frequently conveys the idea of women reflecting masculine preconceptions, where the female body becomes the key concern while overlooking the other part of women's lives. The novelty of this study is that it examines how gender is represented in conventional fairy tales and does it from a feminist perspective. While gender issues in children's literature may have been discussed in earlier studies, this study focuses primarily on timeless fairy tales that are frequently recited to young children. Additionally, the careful reading and content analysis techniques employed in this study's qualitative methodology enable a thorough investigation of how gender is represented in these stories. According to the study's findings, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* both feature traditional gender stereotypes, however, *Beauty and the Beast* presents a more progressive view of gender roles. This study emphasizes the value of examining gender representation in children's literature critically as well as the demand for more varied and complex gender representations in fairy tales and other literary works.

2. Methodology

The writers used a qualitative approach to assess the study that was based on library research. This study compares Brothers Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast*, with a particular emphasis on how gender is portrayed in each story. To determine the topic connected to gender roles, the study was conducted by watching the animation and reading the texts. Both the male and female characters were the focus of the analysis. Two separate categories of sources provide the data. De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast*, Grimm's *Snow White*, and *Cinderella*, whether in text or animated film form, serve as the data's primary sources. Literature books, essays, and magazines serve as the data's secondary sources. To gather the data, the authors first viewed the animated film, read some books and article reviews, and performed an Internet search to learn more about gender roles. Second, there was note-taking and underlining done. To acquire the key data, the writers sorted and filtered the data. The data were categorized as the study's primary focus in the final step. This study applied not only Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz's theory but also the theory developed by Tyson. The study focused to see the portrayal of gender representation in the selected tales based on the above theory and seen from a feminist point of view.

3. Literature Review

The writers also looked at several related earlier studies as part of their examination of the gender representation depicted in these literary works to acquire a diversity of perspectives on the study's focus. The first paper that the writers studied was *Gender Roles in Giambattista Basile's Sun, Moon, and Talia, and Walt Disney's Sleeping Beauty*. According to Sumarsono et al (2022), male characters in *Sun Moon and Talia* and Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* are portrayed as more heroic and braver than their female counterparts, while women are portrayed as passive and uninspired to pursue their goals, delicate with stereotypically feminine traits, unable to resolve their difficulties on their own, dependent on men to solve their problems, and must be beautiful to succeed. Women do not have the right to refuse, but they must say 'yes'. Women who are intelligently demonstrative, forceful in pursuing their ambitions, and ambitious are not regarded as ideal role models.

The second paper that the writers studied was a paper that compare Grimms' *Cinderella, Egyptian Cinderella, and Korean Cinderella*. El Saban (2017) claimed that even though women are the main protagonists in *Cinderella, The Egyptian Cinderella, and The Korean Cinderella*, these tales nonetheless implicitly and misrepresented gendered females, portraying them as weak, meek, obedient, dependent, and evil. The fundamental common misconceptions that good is associated with beauty and evil with ugliness were also highlighted in these stories. As a result, this would harm how the children's attitudes and values develop and mature.

The writers also read what Chow studied about gender roles in *Beauty and the Beast*. Chow (2013) stated the celebration of violent relationships, and the promotion of feminine subservience and subjection are both themes in *Beauty and the Beast*. These gendered differences are embodied by the movie's female lead, Belle, who is also constantly objectified by the male characters. At first impression, Belle appears to be a confident, brave heroine. According to Banks (2021), the female character in *Beauty and the Beast* portrays roles that go against the stereotypes that were held about women in the 18th century. De Beaumont created a strong female protagonist who actively challenges gendered and patriarchal norms. She provided Beauty the ability to choose her destiny in addition to giving her a gorgeous face. De Beaumont created an independent female figure who is more knowledgeable and in charge than the Beauties from earlier stories by giving Beauty greater power. She rejected traditional patriarchal notions that women should accept their situation in life with submissiveness and stood in opposition to female passivity and submission. De Beaumont gave her female protagonist a choice over their course in life.

The next article the writers read is Erum's *The History of Gender Ideology in Brothers Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Erum (2009) concluded that the female character in the story of *Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty* live happily with their real lovers. Women frequently must accept the role of being directed and ruled by men. The assumption of feminine roles by women and masculine duties by males seems natural. According to the concept, this fosters social peace.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Gender Representation in Grimms' Snow White and Seven Dwarfs

Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* portray the female characters having traditional roles. Societal norms and culture assign males and females different responsibilities and behaviors, such as males being the ones who have responsibility for the family living, while the females are responsible for taking care of the home and the kids. These roles have a strong historical and cultural foundation, and socialization techniques like parental modeling, media depictions, and education help to maintain them (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Snow White is presented in the tale as a feminine, delicate princess who is lovely, kind, and submissive. She is a domesticated person who does things like cooking and cleaning. She has a dream to live happily by marrying a handsome and rich prince. Unlike Snow White, the seven dwarfs are depicted as hard workers and they are good protectors for Snow White. The roles played by the dwarfs are typically masculine roles, such as defending and caring for others. The narrative supports gender stereotypes and traditional gender norms that portray males as strong, independent, and benevolent while portraying women as submissive and in need of protection. Women are portrayed without their right to give opinions and willingness. They must accept what the male determines in their life. They do not have to right to say 'No'.

In the narrative, women are portrayed as delicate and defenseless, in need of protection from males who are powerful and valiant. Snow White is portrayed as a young woman in need of the seven dwarfs and the prince's protection. For example, when Snow White first meets the dwarfs, they initially see her as a helpless damsel in distress and offer her their protection. Women are portrayed as weak creatures, non-dependent, and rely on men, while men are depicted as women's saviors.

When it was morning little Snow White awoke and was frightened when she saw the seven dwarfs. But they were friendly and asked her what her name was. "My name is Snow-white," she answered. "How have you come to our house?" said the dwarfs.

Then she told them that her stepmother had wished to have her killed, but that the huntsman had spared her life, and that she had run for the whole day until at last, she had found their dwelling (Books, 1944, 233).

Snow White runs from the evil Queen and searches for protection and she finds the seven dwarfs' dwelling. She is now under the seven dwarfs' protection.

Snow White is described as "the prettiest woman" making the Evil Queen's jealousy of her beauty indicate that the tale supports the conventional standard of beauty. It represents that women's value is determined by their physical bodies and how they look. Beauty is the only asset that makes her just an object. Self-reliant women are invariably ugly, terrible, and wicked, whether they be stepmothers,

sisters, or witches. The Evil Queen tries to get rid of Snow White because she is envious of her beauty rather than her happiness and liveliness, which drives the story's plot. Moreover, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by Grimm shows female rivalry for beauty. Because she feels she is no longer the fairest in the land, the Evil Queen is envious of Snow White's beauty. The novel repeatedly emphasizes how these women are competing with one another.

“Looking-glass, Looking-glass, on the wall, Who in this land is the fairest of all?”

it answered: “Thou art fairer than all who are here, Lady Queen.

But more beautiful still is Snow-white, as I ween.” (Books, 1944, p. 232).

The dwarfs are portrayed as skilled workers, mining and working with metal, whereas Snow White is limited to domestic duties like cooking and cleaning. This promotes gendered labor norms. It is not required for women to be intelligent and skilled. Women are not required to work hard or be conscientious. Women must be beautiful and care about household activities, while the men will perform all the labor-intensive tasks.

The dwarfs said: “If you will take care of our house, cook, make the beds, wash, sew, and knit, and if you will keep everything neat and clean, you can stay with us and you shall want for nothing.” “Yes,” said Snow-white, “with all my heart,” and she stayed with them (Books, 1944, p.233).

All gender representations described above give negative consequences for children who read or watch the tales since they will have a negative point of view towards gender representations, especially in seeing female roles in society. Male children will believe that they are superior to females, so they possibly underestimate their female counterparts. They will believe that females are weak and not independent, have unequal right as males. While for the female readers, they will believe that being ideal beautiful is important in gaining happiness. They will believe that being female they have to be passive and willing to accept what society determine their life and future.

4.2 Gender Representation in Grimms' Cinderella

Traditional gender roles are emphasized in Grimm's *Cinderella*. Men are represented as aggressive and assertive, whereas women are seen as passive and subservient. Cinderella does not have any freedom. She cannot leave home and be back anytime she wants. In the story, Cinderella must leave the ballroom before midnight. When the clock strikes twelve, she rushes to go home which makes one of her shoes left behind her. The prince finds one of the shoes and searches for her. After going from one house to another house to search for the owner of the shoes, finally, the prince finds Cinderella. The prince then asks her to marry him. Cinderella cannot free herself from her stepmother and stepsisters, and from precarious conditions, if she does not get married to the prince. Cinderella is portrayed as a helpless being who is powerless to escape her challenging circumstances. She will always be powerless to alter her course. Cinderella seeks assistance from a little white bird when she is in need, and the prince subsequently rescues her from her stepmother's abuse.

Thrice a day Cinderella went and sat beneath it, and wept and prayed, and a little white bird always came on the tree, and if Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird threw down to her what she had wished for (Books, 1944, p. 115).

Women must be decent, gorgeous, and beautiful to live happily. Beauty is the most important asset for women since with their beauty they can live happily. Women don't have to be intelligent and smart. Women must be beautiful and good. A woman will be able to realize her dreams if she can be a good person. And finding a gorgeous prince to wed is the key to a happy life. Cinderella, like Snow White, supports conventional notions of beauty; she is referred to as the most lovely and kindest girl in the world. This supports the notion that a woman's value is correlated with her outward looks. The prince does not look at Cinderella's intelligence, but he only sees her beauty. Her beauty makes the prince fall in love with her and beg her to be his princess. Also, the story illustrates female rivalry, particularly in terms of attractiveness. The stepsisters want to get rid of Cinderella because they are envious of her beauty. The novel repeatedly emphasizes how these women are competing with one another. This story also gives negative stereotypes to stepmother and stepsisters that stepmother and stepsisters are always evil.

They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bedgown on her, and gave her wooden shoes. “Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is!” they cried, and laughed, and led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning till night, get up before daybreak, carry water, light fires, cook and wash. In the evening when she had worked till she was weary she had no bed to go to, but had to sleep by the hearth in the cinders (Books, 1944, p. 114).

Moreover, the fiction reinforces gendered labor roles. The men are shown as active and assertive, while Cinderella is limited to domestic duties like cooking and cleaning. As an illustration, the father is described as a laborer who spends most of his time working and does not acknowledge how his wife and stepdaughters treat Cinderella. Another illustration is when the prince makes the initiative to track down Cinderella and ask her to be his wife, and the male attendees at the ball are depicted as being assertive and active. The only person who can save Cinderella from her monotonous and challenging life is the prince. Cinderella is saved by him from her vengeful stepmother and stepsisters. The prince saves her because she is beautiful and good. In conclusion, typical gender norms and stereotypes that were prominent at the time are reflected in Grimm's *Cinderella*. Men are represented as aggressive and assertive, whereas women are seen as passive and subservient. The emphasis on female competition and beauty standards reinforces gendered labor patterns.

The gender representation in *Cinderella* is not different so far from what is portrayed in *Snow White*. It is not harmless for children who read and watch the tales in movies. They will be brainwashed that being males must be more superior than being females. It forms their

way of thinking in seeing their roles in society. When they have misconception about the gender roles, it will cause them conduct wrong treatments towards their different sexes.

4.3 Gender Representation in De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast*

Different from Snow White and Cinderella, De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* is more feminist since it represents more modern gender roles. De Beaumont portrays Belle, the protagonist as a hero and an active agent of change. On the contrary, she portrays her male character as passive and needing someone to rescue him. De Beaumont has challenged the traditional gender stereotypes that have existed for a long time. The female lead, Beauty, is bold and fearless in addition to being smart and resourceful. Belle is the only girl in the community who can read, and she is very intelligent (Masofa & Sumarsono, 2021). She gives reading lessons to the local girls, and as a result, the villagers chastise her. She is responsible for rescuing both her father and the Beast from their respective situations. Beauty is not portrayed as a stereotypical domesticated woman. She is sharp and energetic. De Beaumont creates Belle as an independent and does not rely on her life on men and has the freedom to lead her life.

"But, (she said to herself,) were I to cry ever so much, that would not make things better, I must try to make myself happy without a fortune." (De Beaumont, 2003).

In addition, the story shows men being vulnerable and sensitive, which is unusual in conventional fairy tales. The Beast is shown as a compassionate and caring person who craves acceptance and love. He does not fit the mold of an aggressive, controlling man. Several of these conventional gender norms are, however, challenged by the Beast's temperament. He is initially depicted as a terrifying and strong monster, yet he is also incredibly emotional, sensitive, and in need of love and friendship. Often, feminine traits like empathy and emotional intelligence are linked to this softer side of the Beast.

"I must, for, alas! I know too well my own misfortune; but then I love you with the tenderest affection: ... promise me never to leave me."... "I could, (answered she), indeed promise never to leave you entirely, but I have so great a desire to see my father, that I shall fret to death, if you refuse me that satisfaction." "I had rather die myself, (said the monster,) than give you the least uneasiness: I will send you to your father, you shall remain with him, and poor Beast will die with grief." (De Beaumont, 2003).

Also, the transformation of the Beast after the story might be interpreted as a rejection of conventional gender stereotypes. The Beast is changed into a gorgeous prince rather than Belle, who is changed into a more stereotypically feminine character. This shift in roles demonstrates that real love can overcome gender norms and preconceptions.

Beyond questioning conventional gender roles, *Beauty and the Beast* also challenges conventional notions of beauty. The protagonist, Belle, is not conventionally attractive in the way that many heroines of fairy tales are frequently portrayed. Instead, she is frequently referred to as plain, and those who are close to her do not instantly notice her attractiveness. But Belle's character traits from the inside are what makes her attractive. She possesses traits that the Beast comes to admire and love, including kindness, intelligence, bravery, and compassion. *Beauty and the Beast* teach readers that true beauty rests in one's values and inner traits, in contrast to other fairy tales where the heroines' beauty is the only quality that is respected and admired. The narrative questions the conventional wisdom that a woman must be physically attractive to find happiness and love. Initially, Belle is drawn to the Beast's gentle and compassionate demeanor rather than his outward looks. She gains an appreciation for his genuine nature by interacting with him and learning to look past his outward appearance.

The quote echoes the story's central theme, which is that true love is founded on character traits rather than outward appearances. The Beast is expressing his love for Belle in this scenario, not because of her outward beauty but rather because of her kind nature and sensitive heart. The typical fairy tale cliché that the heroine must be attractive and physically ideal to be loved and respected is questioned by this message. The Beast also highlights the value of interior values, such as goodness, gentleness, and compassion. In our culture, which frequently places a greater focus on outward appearances, these abilities are frequently overlooked. The Beast's affection for Belle, however, demonstrates that these intangible traits are at least as significant as outward beauty.

As children literature, *Beauty and the Beast* is different from the previous two fairy tales. It teaches better lesson to children since it portrays the female character different from the previous ones. The female character is depicted as a character who has a courage, active and strong. She has her own right in directing her future and life. She is not dependence on the male character. This tale tells its readers, children, that females and males have the equality in directing their future and life. Females are not weaker, neither are more inferior than males.

4.4 Similarities

The three tales, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by Grimm, *Cinderella* by Grimm, and *Beauty and the Beast* by De Beaumont, have a lot in common. The protagonist of the three tales is a young beautiful woman who gains happy life after marrying a handsome prince. Snow White is placed into a profound sleep by the poisoned apple that the evil queen, posing as an elderly woman, gave her. This sleep can only be awakened by the kiss of true love. Snow White is awakened by the prince's kiss, which stands for the ability of love to get over even the most insurmountable challenges. The dwarfs are essential to Snow White's happiness and salvation. With her mother's passing, Snow White has been deprived of a sense of family and community; they provide her with defense and assistance. Snow White is given a sense of stability and belonging by their generosity that she was unable to experience in her former existence.

Another well-known fairy tale that tackles themes of oppression, magic, and love is the tale of *Cinderella*. The gender representation in

Cinderella is relatively conventional, like that in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, with the female protagonist reflecting stereotypically feminine traits and the female antagonists being presented as ruthless and petty. A young woman named Cinderella suffers from abuse and oppression at the hands of her stepmother and stepsisters. She is compelled to handle every home chore, and her existence is filled with constant toil and sorrow. Nonetheless, Cinderella's inherent goodness and kindness are visible throughout the narrative, and she maintains her optimism and hope despite hardship. Cinderella can only get to the ball and finally find love and happiness.

Beauty and the Beast portrays the male character as ugly and unattractive, while the female is depicted as smart, brave, strong, and independent. Belle is depicted as an obedient daughter and willing to sacrifice her life for her father's freedom. She is empathetic and caring, and her readiness to look past the Beast's outer appearance speaks much about who she is. Belle learns to see past the Beast's outward form and recognize the decent person inside, despite her initial disgust at his appearance. The Beast can change into a charming and attractive prince as he learns to be open with Belle and let go of his resentment and hatred. While the male adversary is initially portrayed as boorish and unattractive, the female heroine in *Beauty and the Beast* is initially shown to be clever, independent, and caring. As the narrative goes on, we learn that the Beast's actual essence is one of suffering and loneliness rather than one of cruelty and violence. The narrative tells us that real love entails seeing past external manifestations and seeing the goodness within. In general, tyranny, magic, and the victory of good over evil are recurrent themes in these fairy tales. They impart wisdom about kindness, tenacity, and the value of inner beauty over outer beauty. Generations of readers and viewers continue to enjoy and cherish these stories, and their timeless morals are still relevant today.

The portrayal of gender in these fairy tales is heavily influenced by gender stereotypes, with the male protagonists being shown as courageous, powerful, and heroic while the female antagonists are portrayed as envious, petty, and vengeful. The evil queen from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is a representation of undesirable feminine qualities including jealousy and conceit. She continuously tries to kill Snow White because she is so obsessed with her beauty and is envious of Snow White's attractiveness. With a kiss, the prince saves Snow White, and the dwarfs look after and guard her. These individuals represent stereotypically masculine traits like strength and boldness.

For how the stepmother and stepsisters in *Cinderella* are represented as being petty and sexist for mistreating Cinderella and preventing her from attending the ball, The idea that women are servants and should do all the housekeeping is reinforced by the stepmother, who makes Cinderella do it all and treats her like a slave. The prince and the monarch, on the other hand, are portrayed as strong and tyrannical male characters in *Cinderella*. The king is shown as imposing and powerful, while the prince is heroic and strong. These individuals represent the dominance and authority that are typically associated with men.

Gaston is described as violent, arrogant, and haughty in *Beauty and the Beast*, typifying toxic masculinity. He is enamored with Belle and will do anything to gain her, displaying an entitlement that supports conventional gender norms. The Beast, on the other hand, is initially portrayed as being aggressive and frightening, but later it is revealed that he is a rich, multifaceted character who can change and evolve. Showing a male character that is emotionally open to change and susceptible to emotional vulnerability, subverts traditional gender stereotypes. Overall, the portrayal of gender in these fairy tales maintains conventional gender stereotypes, with the male protagonists embodying stereotypical masculine traits and the female antagonists representing undesirable feminine tendencies. There are certain exceptions to these preconceptions, too, like the way the male character in *Beauty and the Beast* develops.

4.5 Differences

What makes the gender representation in these three classic fairy tales is the way how the tales portray their characters. The previous two tales portray their female protagonist as beautiful, but passive and dependent on the male characters. They do not have the freedom to direct their lives and need the males to save them from their difficulties. Snow White has to wait until she is saved by the prince who kisses her, while Cinderella cannot free herself from her stepmother and stepsisters' oppression if she does not get married to the prince. Cinderella, on the other hand, is not only a passive victim but a resourceful and bright figure who uses her wit and charm to overcome misfortune, as mentioned by Zipes (1991), and *Cinderella* portrays a more nuanced representation of gender roles than *Snow White*. In contrast to *Snow White*, she actively takes part in her rescue by dressing up and outwitting her stepmother to go to the ball. In contrast to *Snow White*, the prince is also shown to be a more sympathetic and caring person, falling in love with Cinderella for her inner traits rather than her outward appearance. In the end, the narrative challenges conventional gender stereotypes by emphasizing the superiority of authentic character and inner beauty. Yet, both tales support conventional gender stereotypes in how men and women are portrayed, despite Cinderella more 's nuanced treatment of gender roles. According to Kirsch (2012), these tales support the notion that males are heroic and active while women are submissive and require male protection. This strengthens negative gender stereotypes and upholds patriarchal views of women.

In comparison to Grimm's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, De Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* offers a more complex depiction of gender roles. Beauty is a strong and clever person who challenges conventional gender stereotypes, as stated by Zipes (1991). Beauty, in contrast to Snow White, is a strong and aggressive protagonist rather than a helpless victim. She courageously and selflessly forgoes her happiness to save her father. The Beast, on the other hand, defies conventional masculine stereotypes by beginning the novel as a terrifying and violent figure, but as the plot develops, he shows himself to be a loving and kind-hearted creature. In the end, the narrative highlights the value of genuine character and inner beauty over outward beauty since Beauty falls in love with the Beast not because of his good looks but because of his sensitive and gentle disposition. Compared to the representation of gender roles in Grimm's *Snow White*

and the Seven Dwarfs, this portrayal is more liberal and progressive.

The representation of gender roles in *Beauty and the Beast* by De Beaumont and *Cinderella* by Grimm is distinct. The female lead, Beauty, is shown as a powerful and clever figure who challenges conventional gender stereotypes in *Beauty and the Beast*. She is brave, selfless, and forceful, giving up her happiness voluntarily to save her father. The Beast, on the other hand, defies conventional masculine stereotypes by beginning the novel as a terrifying and violent figure, but as the plot develops, he shows himself to be a loving and kind-hearted creature. In the end, the narrative highlights the value of genuine character and inner beauty over outward beauty since Beauty falls in love with the Beast not because of his good looks but because of his sensitive and gentle disposition.

The protagonist of *Beauty and the Beast* is a powerful woman with full control. Beauty is the daughter of a recently destitute merchant rather than the product of magic and nobility. She is neither a peasant nor a princess, which makes her unique among fairy tale characters—as does the setting of her urban house. The quest of Beauty to find her prince through the Beast became a metaphor for a woman's search for the self in a patriarchal society, and *Beauty and the Beast* highlighted issues with rigid gender norms. Belle is a champion of gender equality and women's rights.

The female heroine in *Cinderella* is a passive victim who depends on the prince to save her, which promotes traditional gender norms. In the beginning, Cinderella is portrayed as a weak, depressed figure who is abused by her stepmother and stepsisters. She is ultimately rewarded for her beauty and loyalty after the prince steps in to save her. The prince, on the other hand, is portrayed as a brave and self-assured figure who saves Cinderella and weds her.

The queen's acts are associated with unfavorable gender stereotypes that depict women as conceited and jealous. The dwarfs and the prince, however, offer admirable examples of powerful and protective masculine characters, demonstrating that gender roles in the narrative are not completely fixed.

The main adversaries in *Cinderella* are the stepmother and stepsisters, who are motivated by their conceit and desire for social prestige. They treat Cinderella harshly, making her perform all the home duties and forbidding her from going to the dance because they perceive her as a danger to their authority. The drama in the narrative is around *Cinderella's* battle to get out of her predicament and find a means to go to the ball. The stepmother and stepsisters are portrayed as conceited and vengeful, once more associating the antagonists with derogatory notions of womanhood. Nonetheless, the prince and the king, who is portrayed as strong and heroic personalities, also serve as good models of masculine characters in the story.

The plot's main struggle is around Belle's efforts to look past the Beast's outward appearance and discern his true character. In contrast to the previous two tales, *Beauty and the Beast* challenges gender stereotypes by depicting a male character who is emotionally open to change. Yet, Belle offers a strong feminine contrast to these attributes with her brilliance, sensitivity, and independence, whereas Gaston exhibits problematic aspects of masculinity like aggression and entitlement.

5. Conclusion

The gender portrayal in the fairy tales *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* is all firmly rooted in conventional gender norms. Self-reliant women are invariably ugly, terrible, and wicked, whether they be stepmothers, sisters, or witches. The illusory pleasures of wealth and designer clothing are enjoyed by passive princesses, and wives "live" via their husbands. Their single quality, which reduces them to mere things, is beauty. In contrast, males are consistently active, bold, wealthy, and attractive and triumph despite obstacles.

It is different from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast* portrays its heroine differently. *Beauty and the Beast* challenges conventional beauty standards by including a protagonist who is not conventionally attractive but is yet appreciated and valued for her character traits. It tells readers that true beauty originates from within and that what matters most about a person is their inner beauty. This is a crucial lesson for both kids and adults, and it is especially pertinent in a society where beauty standards are sometimes unrealistic and unreachable.

Fairytales served as a means of teaching children about national societal norms as well as a means of comforting and uplifting. Children adore the character they relate to the most, whom they can most easily identify with, and whom they try to imitate in behavior. Children discover and learn proper etiquette and the role they should play in society through these fairy tales. Children can be manipulated and brainwashed using this method of teaching through stories. Additionally, the viewpoint, conduct, and way of thinking of a group can alter according to the depiction of a certain group. When the representation of women must follow the patriarchal system, it will make children have negative stereotypes of females. Children will have misperceptions of gender roles in their societal life. It is harmful to the children's conception of gender representation.

It is expected that the finding of this study will make parents and educators more aware of choosing the appropriate tales for their children or students. It is very important for writers to rewrite new versions of fairy tales in which the characters, especially female characters, have equality in their gender representation. Movie directors have to produce animation or motion pictures that are written based on classic fairytales have to challenge the traditional gender roles. Tales or stories in which the plot portrays the correct concept of gender representation in which there is no misperception of gender roles will make children have the correct concept of gender roles in society. They will not underestimate their female counterparts and will treat them well and fairly.

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