

5-2010

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## Recommended Citation

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Kristen Friedman

### *Cinderella Tales and their Significance*

Variations of *Cinderella* tales make use of the device of changes in standing and status to suit different purposes ranging from criticism, teaching, preservation of culture, and many other aims. *Cinderella* tales are cyclical tales in which heroines are introduced as living in a middle to upper class with a loving father proper to their character, birth, and other traits but which they leave or are forced out of. The heroines must prove themselves and engage in work or adventure to find their way back into the class and environment in which they belong. These tales generally reward the good, clever, and fair and punish the wicked while revealing significant ideas about the gender and class relations prevalent within the societies and time periods the tales come from. These tales have become staples in not only Western but global culture with traditional tales being preserved and repeated while new variations and renditions of the tales are continuously produced and spread.

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*Cinderella* tales are one of the most popular types of fairy tales known today. The popularity of *Cinderella* tales is not new but rather has existed for centuries. *Cinderella* tales are found throughout many different regions of the world as well as in different time periods. The passing on of *Cinderella* tales has served many different purposes for different people throughout time. Story tellers, writers, and collectors have used the tale as a social criticism, as a tool to teach lessons or morals, as a tale to entertain in which audiences create sympathetic bonds with characters, as a method of preserving culture, as

a medium to express intellect, and for many other purposes and devices. Studying the history of the tale as well as the differences between versions of the tale as they are connected to different authors and time periods allows for trends and themes dealing with gender and class relations as well as other important issues to come to light.

The origin of fairy tales and folk tales is a much debated and discussed topic, with differences for each explained in many scholarly works. Zipes states, “There are numerous theories about the origins of the fairy tale, but none have provided conclusive proof about the original development of the literary fairy tale. This is because it is next to impossible to pinpoint such proof.”<sup>1</sup> Scholars emphasize different periods and developments as being the most important to the development of the literary fairy tale ranging from the popularity of telling tales in the court of Mme d’Aulnoy to the invention of the printing press to the collection and publication of many tales by the Brothers Grimm. In fact, all of these factors are important to the history of literary fairy tales. Zipes posits, “In fact, the literary fairy tale has evolved from the stories of the oral tradition, piece by piece... in the different cultures of the people who cross-fertilized the oral tales and disseminated them.”<sup>2</sup> When examining fairy tales one must take into account the rich tradition behind each tale as well as its relation to the many other probably existent slightly different versions of the same tale. Fairy tales are often considered to be magic tales, a specific type of folk tale rather than as their own genre apart from folk tales even though not all fairy tales directly involve magic. This school of thought explains folk tales as being collective and having been maintained through oral tradition, with the introduction of the printing press allowing printed tales to further strengthen the tales.

Another theory maintains that literary fairy tales gained their strength and popularity as a sort of salon game for aristocratic French women, and that tales were intended for adults rather than children, who appear to be the audience modern Western societies associate with fairy tales. Seifert confirms adults being the prevalent audience with,

In fact, literary fairy tales *were* intended for adult readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More significant, their classification as children's literature is at least in part a mimetic transposition of content onto intended readership since they depict, by and large, the conflicts of childhood or adolescence and its resolution into adulthood. As such, fairy tales specify with extraordinary precision and economy a culture's prototypical quest for identity; they are *par excellence* narratives of initiation, becoming, and maturity; they are themselves susceptible to becoming (and have become) powerful instruments of socialization and acculturation.<sup>3</sup>

The way in which the major audience for fairy tales has shifted in age is interesting to note when examining changes in fairy tales over time, an example of which would be how many fairy tales were edited to be more suitable for children in later times as they were viewed as too graphically violent and traumatizing for youngsters to hear. Modern audiences' associations of children and fairy tales have been strengthened as a result of movies such as Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. Children's editions of such books are now also a much more commonplace find than adult versions, most likely due to the themes within Seifert's explanation of the tales' association with acculturation, teaching, and socialization.

A popular sort of fairy tale that has been popular throughout several continents and vast time periods of history has been that of the *Cinderella* sort of story, which can even be found in Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Chinese mythologies. The tale has not traditionally been found in Australia, Africa, or the Americas but has since spread to

these regions.<sup>4</sup> The story typically deals with a daughter who is mistreated by her stepmother and her stepsisters, and must then prove herself as the rightful bride of royalty through passing the slipper or shoe test following her losing one after ensnaring a prince or other royal figure with her charms.<sup>5</sup> William R.S. Ralston describes the tale particularly well with,

That is to say, she is reduced to a state of degradation and squalor, and is forced to occupy a servile position, frequently connected in some way with the hearth and its ashes. From this, however, she emerges on certain festive occasions as a temporarily brilliant being, always returning to her obscure position, until at last she is recognised; after which she remains permanently brilliant, her apparently destined period of eclipse having been brought to a close by her recognition, which is accomplished by the aid of her lost shoe or slipper.<sup>6</sup>

This tale is a particularly attractive one to audiences, and has been tailored to suit even Americans though it is amusing this tale is so attractive to Americans. Americans have idealized stories such as those of Horatio Alger and the self made man making it ironic that *Cinderella* stories have gained such popularity as *Cinderella* deals with a noble, middle class, or upper class female who has lost her riches and must reclaim her proper standing in the world. Jane Yolen states,

Yet how ironic that this formula should be the terms on which “Cinderella” is acceptable to most Americans. “Cinderella” is not a story of rags to riches, but rather riches recovered; not poor girl into princess but rather rich girl (or princess) rescued from improper or wicked enslavement; not suffering Griselda enduring but shrewd and practical girl persevering and winning a share of the power.<sup>7</sup>

She also explains that, “Cinderella first came to America in the nursery tale the settlers remembered from their own homes and told their children.”<sup>8</sup> This demonstrates the way in which *Cinderella* made its way to America. She also seems to despair at the way the *Cinderella* tale has changed in recent times. She writes,

Hardy, helpful, inventive, that was the Cinderella of the old tales but not of the mass-market in the nineteenth century. Today’s mass market books are worse....

For the sake of Happy Ever After, the mass-market books have brought forward a good, malleable, forgiving little girl and put her in Cinderella's slippers. However, in most of the Cinderella tales there is no forgiveness in the heroine's heart. No mercy. Just justice.... Missing, too, from the mass-market books is the shrewd, even witty Cinderella.... Even Perrault's heroine bantered with her stepsisters, asking them leading questions about the ball while secretly and deliciously knowing the answers.<sup>9</sup>

Numerous issues are dealt with in *Cinderella* tales. Issues of class, gender, and expected behaviors are dealt with as well as those of the family. Philip states,

The stories that make up what has been called the Cinderella cycle, like many of the most frequently told and recorded folktales, explore from various angles the knot or cluster of tensions inherent in the nuclear family. There are numerous ways of categorizing the Cinderella variants, depending on the nature and the order of the incidents. Many areas have distinctive traditions.<sup>10</sup>

Philip presents the complexity of the *Cinderella* tradition in this statement. He also tries to pinpoint the earliest versions of *Cinderella* in the world as well as in Europe by stating,

The earliest recognizable Cinderella story known to us is the Chinese story of Yeh-hsien, dating in this text from the ninth century A.D. The earliest European Cinderella is the 'Cat Cinderella' ('La Gatta Cenerentola') of Basile's *Il Pentamerone (Lo Cunto de li Cunti)* published posthumously between 1634 and 1636.... The vast majority of recorded Cinderella tales date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>11</sup>

In the modern *Cinderella* tradition it appears that most people are familiar with the characteristics of Perrault's *Cinderella* rather than that of the earliest, Yeh-hsien.

Yeh-hsien is the earliest *Cinderella* tale that there is recorded evidence for. The record of the tale comes from China. Philips states of the tale, "It was written down in this form by a Chinese official with an interest in out-of-the-way information, Tuan Ch'eng-shih, who lived from about AD 800 to 863."<sup>12</sup> The tale begins by explaining that after the death of her mother the smart and industrious Yeh-hsien is mistreated by her stepmother who forces her to collect wood and water. Upon one of these trips she finds a fish that she then takes care of and feeds. The fish answers only to her, but is tricked

when the stepmother dons Yeh-hsien's old clothing and calls to it. The stepmother kills the fish and buries the bones in the dung heap. A man from the sky, who may be compared to the supernatural fairy godmother figure of Perrault's tale, consoles Yeh-hsien as she cries by telling her to fetch the bones and to pray to them for anything she desires. This resembles other *Cinderella* tales because oftentimes an animal, such as the fish, is the embodiment of the Cinderella's true mother or another helpful spirit. As in other tales a social gathering, in this case a cave-festival, approaches and the stepmother and stepdaughter attend while Yeh-hsien is relegated to watching over the fruit trees. She wears clothing and golden shoes that are provided to her by the fish bones to attend the festival and is recognized by her relatives but they lose their suspicions upon finding her home, asleep by a tree. Yeh-hsien realizes her relatives recognized her and hurries home but loses a shoe on the way in her haste to return to the trees. The shoe is found by a cave-man and sold, making its way to a ruler who then searches for the maiden whose foot fits the shoe. Eventually, Yeh-hsien is found and marries the ruler who then overuses her fish bones, which eventually get washed into the sea similarly to how they originally came from the water. Her stepmother and stepsister die by being hit by flying stones and their burial ground becomes known as the Tomb of the Distressed Women.<sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that although this is the earliest recorded evidence we have of the tale that this version is not the oldest in existence. R.D. Jameson points to numerous characteristics of the story that do not quite add up when considering the overall whole of the tale. He points out that these characteristics may be relics from an older version of the tale or from alternative versions with,

Internal evidence gives reason to conclude, at least tentatively, that this is not the case, that the people from whom Li Shih Yuan got the story were not the authors

of it and that the version before us shows signs of some wear and of considerable age. . . . If the considerations here adduced are sound they indicate that this story is a popular version taken from oral tradition, and that it is influenced by other versions and other stories which were in the consciousness of the narrators.<sup>14</sup>

He cites evidence of the way Yeh-hsien sleeps with the arm around the tree, the seemingly pointless attendance at the festival as she does not meet her husband there, and the deaths of her stepmother and stepsister. He finds the way these events are described to be inconsistent with the tale as a whole and takes them to be remnants from an earlier tale or from other versions that circulated at the same time. This helps to demonstrate the age and the longevity of the *Cinderella* tale as well as both its malleability and resistance to change as although details may change, relics of important themes remain in the tale.

The emergence and spread of literary fairy tales is puzzling on its own. Scholars disagree on the origin of literary fairy tales, and what was most important to their survival and spread. Ruth B. Bottigheimer staunchly argues that literary fairy tales emerged and spread most importantly through the use of printed literature. She argues that the invention of the printing press made reading material much more accessible to people and that increases in literacy allowed fairy tales to spread through the printed page. She argues that it is unlikely that illiterate people are the origin of the well known literary fairy tales, though they may have been introduced to the tales through oral repetition which furthered the spread of the tales. She also makes the point that important to the spread of fairy tales through printed works was the urban environment of literate people living more closely together than the people of the countryside.<sup>15</sup> She states,

Above all, a book-based history of fairy tales shows that fairy tales emerged when cities, literate city people, and city possibilities intersected and became a reality in urban people's lives. Venice was the first place where large-scale commerce,



manufacturing, wide-spread literacy, and cheap print existed in the same place at the same time.<sup>16</sup>

She clearly opposes arguments for rural origins of literary fairy tales as well as for the traditions of aristocratic French women's salon games leading to the popularity of the literary fairy tale.

Jack Zipes favors the argument for aristocratic French women being one of the main ways in which literary fairy tales spread and gained popularity. It is noted that the trend of fairy tales in the salons occurred beginning in the last decade of the seventeenth century, with much credit for this going to Mme Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy.<sup>17</sup> Zipes states, "It was not Perrault but groups of writers, particularly aristocratic women, who gathered in salons during the seventeenth century and created the conditions for the rise of the fairy tale."<sup>18</sup> Zipes points to these women as being responsible for the popularity in their time period of literary fairy tales intended for adults and children. He explains,

All the early writers of fairy tales borrowed from other literary and oral tales, and thus their narratives can be regarded as retellings that adapt the motifs, themes, and characters to fit their tastes and the expectations of the audiences for which they were writing.<sup>19</sup>

Zipes notes the importance of change within fairy tales to suit present societal ideals.<sup>20</sup>

He also explains the ways in which some authors criticize these ideals and standards. As is noted in the title of *Fairy Tale as Myth: Myth as Fairy Tale* Zipes also focuses on how fairy tales became widespread and part of collective knowledge, stories that references may be made to with the assumption that common folk will understand the reference. He pinpoints the origin of the literary fairy tale with,

It was within the aristocratic salons that women were able to demonstrate their intelligence and education through different types of conversational games. In fact, the linguistic games often served as models for literary genres such as the occasional lyric or the serial novel. Both women and men participated in these

games and were constantly challenged to invent new ones or to refine the games. Such challenges led the women, in particular, to improve the quality of their dialogues, remarks, and ideas about morals, manners, and education and at times to oppose male standards that have been set to govern their lives.<sup>21</sup>

This bold statement introduces several important ideas regarding the history of the fairy tale. Zipes posits that literary fairy tales began gaining popularity as a sort of amusement or game particularly played by aristocratic French women. He later states that these games were not directly competitive but were competitive in a more unstated than stated nature. He elaborates that women would try to best one another by relating the best story in the most elegant manner while including elements relevant to the challenge at hand, such as addressing a particular topic or including particular descriptions within the story. Such verbal play demands educated players, and further stimulates intellectual activity making it seem likely that these women were more than capable of creating literary fairy tales as we know them. A number of these women went on to not only engage in such oratory but to write down their tales as well. Zipes states that women played these games to both confirm as well as ridicule particular morals and standards presently held within their society, with an example being the legal status of women. The status of women in general as well as legally compared to men has fluctuated over time due to changes in beliefs. A pervasive belief since ancient time is the connection between men and the mind or women with the body, as is explained by Hannon,

Women's inferior position in the marriage hierarchy results from their identification with the body as opposed to the mind, which, since Plato and Aristotle, had been equated with men. ... According to both foes and allies, woman's traditionally devalued position in the pervasive body/mind hierarchy was at times reassessed and even displaced, but resistant to any genuine transformation.<sup>22</sup>

This statement helps to demonstrate why women might be more motivated to share tales with one another. Sharing tales with lessons embedded helped to teach and make lives easier for the listeners as well as to entertain them while they were performing chores or simply for amusement and sparking intellectual activity. Whether the tales they told supported or mocked the common beliefs and standards of the time varied according to the time and occasion both such uses were taken advantage of and women learned to live with their inferior status or even to criticize it in more free thinking times.

Understanding whether a tale ridicules or confirms particular beliefs requires careful attention to the tale as an aim of the original authors of many of such tales was subtlety. Individual examination of tales may reveal whether the tale's author approved or disapproved of a practice or widely held belief. Mme d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault allowed their criticisms of societal expectations and ideals to come through in their works. Such an examination also reveals numerous themes, motifs, and devices present within the tales such as the use of changes in the status of a protagonist in relation to their behavior as well as the purpose of using such a device.

Philip makes interesting note of changes throughout the *Cinderella* story throughout its passage through time and different regions. These changes carry significance as they lead to altered themes within the tale. He states,

This simple story developed into a more complex version in which there was a single focus of attention, a motherless girl, and in which the tree growing from the grave acted –as in Grimm –as a marriage test: only the girl could pick the fruit. This story in turn assimilated the oriental motif of the object that is lost and found by change, such as a shoe. To explain why the girl should possess a valuable or beautiful object, the visit to the feast was added, as in 'Yeh-hsien'. In oriental tales the visit to the feast is not the occasion of the girl meeting the prince, which is brought about by the chance of finding the lost object. It is a European development that the feast, ball or church service should also serve as the meeting place, with the consequent flight of the girl and pursuit by the prince. This crucial

change, emphasized by the three-fold visit which is also part of the European tradition, created a new centre of interest in the story, paving the way for the Perrault-type Cinderella story in which the motifs of the earlier story, such as the helpful food-providing animal, the slaying of the animal, the burying of the bones or entrails, and growth of the food-providing tree, are reduced in importance and sometimes dispensed with altogether.<sup>23</sup>

Philip's analysis of changes in the tale demonstrates important trends. Many of the characteristics modern audiences associate with the *Cinderella* tale are in fact European additions to an Oriental tale rather than part of the original tale itself. Although additions and changes being made to tales are part of the natural lifecycles of tales, it is interesting to note that many of the original characteristics of the tale have not survived in the most widely known versions of the tale. It is also important to note the particular changes that were made. In European tales the prince meets Cinderella prior to searching for her with the aid of her lost item though in earlier versions of the tale he did not meet her before this search. Although the social event helps to explain why Cinderella is in possession of a valuable object it also calls into question how she obtained this object. It is interesting to note the changes that took place in this explanation as well. The helpful deceased mother's spirit in the form of a plant or animal slowly diminished over time while the presence of the fairy godmother was created, particularly by Perrault.<sup>24</sup> This changes the behavior of Cinderella in several ways. Taking away the helpful animal or tree also takes away some of Cinderella's cleverness and her ability to take part in helping herself. In the stories with a fairy godmother Cinderella is left with very little mental work to do other than to remember to meet the deadline imposed on how late she may be gone. In other tales, she faces more challenges to overcome such as how to sort legumes or how to be outfitted in the first place, which she manages with the help of the animal she has

taken care of or the tree that she has also paid attention to. Cinderella does not always receive oral advice from the animals or trees and must use her own cleverness to not be caught by her stepmother and stepsisters. Tales that include the fairy godmother reduce Cinderella in some ways as she has little to do that requires her own initiative and in fact is instructed as to how to act and what she must do throughout the tale. This in part may be attributed to the impact male literary figures had on the tale as they imposed their own beliefs on it, pruning it into proper shape to be published or using the tale to criticize the standards set upon women during that time. This in turn reveals significant clues as to the nature of the role of women within society in that they chafed at the roles they were given and chose to confirm their intellect by sharing such tales and rebelling against males who constrained them. As usual, these tales are revealing in terms of the impact marriage had upon the life of women. The *Cinderella* tale demonstrates the importance of marriage to women and the significance in marrying a male who was able to be a provider or was even of a higher class. The European versions of the tale as well as some of the older versions demonstrate that a woman's future depended upon her marriage and that having a suitable husband was crucial for survival.

Various literary sources of the *Cinderella* story make use of changes in status of the main character as well as societal expectations and norms considering behavior. These fairy tales perpetuate or criticize norms depending on the differing aims of the authors. The Grimms attempted to maintain what they thought were proper morals within their works, especially in their later collections which edited the tales more heavily. This served to perpetuate the norms of the time and to teach people the consequences of good or bad behavior as well as teach other lessons, such as the vileness

of characters like those of the stepfamilies. Other authors such as d'Aulnoy and Perrault criticized the expectations for the behavior of women and the upper classes in their times, using their works as a sort of commentary. Interesting to note is the way in which the mother spirit is present in some *Cinderella* tales but not in others. In many of the older versions of the tale the mother's spirit takes on the form of an animal, plant, or other helpful force that allows her daughter to eventually find a happy marriage and escape the tribulations she has faced. This characteristic disappears from other versions of the tale, such as Perrault's where the fairy godmother is introduced instead. Ralston states, "Its earlier scenes appear to have been inspired by the idea that a loving mother may be able, even after her death, to bless and assist a dutiful child."<sup>25</sup> This idea appears to eventually have been lost, particularly in d'Aulnoy's telling of the tale. Her tale seems to demonstrate that women can be intelligent and that being born of high class is not enough for one to be considered good or deserving, one must still be clever, independent, and kind. The sisters in Perrault's tale as well as those in d'Aulnoy's find husbands as a result of the good heart of the Cinderella character and are indebted to her. Although they are not blind or poor such as in other tales, the sisters must live with the actions of the good-hearted Cinderella. D'Aulnoy summarizes well at the end of her tale with,

If it's revenge on the ungrateful you want to see,  
Then follow Finette's wise policy.  
Do favors for the undeserving until they weep.  
Each benefit inflicts a wound most deep,  
Cutting the haughty bosom to the core.  
Finette's proud, selfish sisters suffered more,  
When by her generous kindness overpower'd,  
Than if the ogres had made them into a mess,  
For she overcame them with her kindness.  
From her example then this lesson learn,  
And give good for evil in your turn

No matter what wrong may awake your wrath,  
There is no greater vengeance than this kind path.<sup>26</sup>

D'Aulnoy provides a valuable lesson for audiences, coaxing them into not only being good-hearted and kind rather than callous and cruel but into dealing with less savory people in the correct manner. She does this by demonstrating the rewards of good behavior as well as the problems poor behavior bring, such as the problems the sisters faced with the ogres as a result of being swayed by potentially satiating their greed and vanity. She does so while managing to criticize societal expectations for women as well as ideas about the significance of class.

Also important to examine are the authors and collectors of the tales. Examining the authors allows audiences to see the societal influences and personal beliefs that resulted in the tales we have today. This also helps in examining different variations of the same tale as the reasons for the differences are made clearer.

One of the earliest figures of the literary genre of fairy tales is Ser Giovanni Fiorentino. His *Il Pecorone*, a collection of fifty novelle with material from fables, legends, and fairy tales, was produced in 1378 and even though little is known about his background or true identity his moralistic writing influenced other Italian writers in the following centuries.<sup>27</sup> A slightly less enigmatic figure is that of the Neapolitan lawyer and copyist Girolamo Morlini. His collection of novelle entitled *Novellae, Fabulae, Comoedia* was published in 1520 and influenced one of the most important figures in the history of the fairy tale, Giovan Francesco Straparola.<sup>28</sup>

Giovan Francesco Straparola can be considered one of the most important figures in the history of the literary fairy tale. He was born in Caravaggio, Italy but is yet another

enigmatic figure in that he left little evidence behind to give background to his life and may have written under an assumed name as his surname is a pun in the Italian language.<sup>29</sup> Zipes states,

Whoever this author was, Straparola was the first truly gifted author to write numerous fairy tales in the vernacular and cultivate for this kind of narrative a form and function that made it an acceptable genre among the educated classes in Italy and soon after in France, Germany, and England.... The framework and tales influenced other Italian and European writers, among them Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm.<sup>30</sup>

Straparola's work paved the way for the fairy tale to become an acceptable literary form and to become popular as we know it today by influencing audiences as well as other writers. An important figure who was influenced by his works is Giambattista Basile.

Giambattista Basile is believed to have been born in Posillipo, near Naples, which is roughly at the opposite end of Italy from Straparola's Caravaggio but the influence Straparola had on Basile is still evident.<sup>31</sup> He received an education in his youth and eventually spent most of his life working as a governor and administrator while travelling from court to court, having made his first connections to literary circles through his sister Adriana, a famous singer, eventually becoming a member of actual literary academies.<sup>32</sup> Basile's tales are interesting in that they are not only moralistic in a manner that prescribes behavior but they also criticize the actions and traditions of both the upper and lower classes in a clever manner.<sup>33</sup> Basile not only provides social criticisms but also utilizes devices such as puns and wordplay along with a familiarity of human behavior to produce insightful as well as influential tales.<sup>34</sup>

Jack Zipes relates Giambattista Basile's *The Cat Cinderella*, or *La Gatta Cenerentola* in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the*



*Brothers Grimm*. Basile's *The Cat Cinderella* is exceptionally important as described by Canepa,

Basile's is the first integral collection of literary fairy tales to appear in Western Europe, and contains some of the best-known of fairy-tale types (Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and countless others) in their earliest literary versions. *Lo cunto* marks the passage from the fairy tale (or folktale, as the non-literary forms of this genre will be subsequently referred to) as an oral, popular genre to the artful and sophisticated "authored" fairy tale....<sup>35</sup>

Canepa demonstrates the transition created by Basile's work, in that traditionally oral tales were now becoming a literary form in Western Europe and that not only did he provide the beginning of the trend of the literary fairy tale but that versions of his tales remain popular today. His works were not entirely original, similar to many of the other authors of literary fairy tales. Dundes states, "Basile (1575-1632) had apparently heard in Naples many of the stories he reported in the *Pentamerone*."<sup>36</sup> Basile's *The Cat Cinderella* employs a plot structure that utilizes different levels of status and good fortune in a cyclical manner. Zezolla's father is a prince and dotes on her at the beginning of the story but then remarries a woman who dislikes Zezolla. Zezolla learns from her teacher, Carmosina, how to get rid of her stepmother. Basile's *The Cat Cinderella* employs fearful means as Zezolla resorts to killing her first stepmother by breaking her neck under the lid of a heavy chest. Although such an act appears cruel and unpleasant, the heroine is permitted to do so as she is vanquishing a sort of evil from her home, that of her unpleasant stepmother. Although this calls into question filial duty within the story, Zezolla's situation merits her actions. Additionally, one may interpret the following situation as a sort of punishment for Zezolla for plotting, murdering, and not respecting her first stepmother.

Carmosina becomes Zezolla's new stepmother and begins treating her worse than the first stepmother did. In addition, Zezolla must now deal with six unpleasant stepsisters who monopolize her father's attention with their greedy demands. Zezolla's original state of being in which she is doted upon by her father changes with the arrival of the first stepmother and then changes further with the arrival of the second one. The first stepmother's appearance can be interpreted as a transition to an utterly changed existence ruled by the second stepmother and her daughters. Such drastic changes in a domestic, home setting as well as within important figures (such as fathers and teachers) are extremely intimidating and frightening. Although Zezolla's actions in killing her first stepmother may alienate audiences from identifying with her, they are soon able to forget about this alienation as her suffering continues in her transformed household.

Audiences may feel sympathy towards Zezolla for the mistreatment her family subjects her to as well as her being able to overcome wearing rags and ashes by asking for magical aid from the fairies. Although Zezolla asks that the dove of the fairies send something to her rather than directly asking for aid, by asking for something for the fairies she is requesting something magical which would most likely help remove her from her unfortunate situation. This is an example of the clever and active sort of Cinderella figure who tries to help herself rather than remain helpless.

Zezolla's suitability for such a gift is confirmed by the fairy dreams of the ship's captain who makes sure to remind the prince of his promise to his diminished daughter. Zezolla is able to use the magical help of the fairies' tree to escape her transformed lifestyle, that of her newly unpleasant home. She is able to attend festivals with the help of her magical tree, which bedecks her so she is attired and groomed properly for this

high class event outside of her own lowly state. In this place of higher social standing of the festivals she is spotted and adored by the king.

The king is a suitable match for a person of Zezolla's birth, but not of her home situation in which she is forced to wear rags and sleep in a room next to the kitchen. Her appearance must change to match the rank of her birth and to enter the type of class she should be living in rather than the one she has become trapped in. She runs from the servant who tries to find out where she lives as the secret of her status within the family would presumably repulse the king. She successfully eludes the servant three times, but loses a patten or slipper on the last trip. Each time she arrives home and changes back into her rags, pretending that she did not escape her diminished status for a short time to attend the festival. The king hosts a feast in order to find the enchanting lady who lost the slipper, and only at the very end is Zezolla summoned to attend. She is described as "worthless and a disgrace and doesn't deserve to sit at the table where you eat"<sup>37</sup> by her own formerly doting father. Important to note now is that she is being brought from her home into the king's domain while wearing the rags from home, making clear the role she holds within her family even though she is the daughter of a prince. The king immediately accepts Zezolla upon the slipper fitting her foot, confirming her transition from her unbearable home and diminished status into a new home and class more appropriate to her birth. The story may be interpreted as cyclical in nature because Zezolla begins the story at home with her father the doting prince and ends the story in a new home with the king as her adoring future husband. She begins the story in a station suitable to her birth and ends in a similar situation.

The six stepsisters are greedy and try to make Zezolla feel poorly and they are not rewarded at the conclusion of the story but are rather jealous of their stepsister. The story hints that those who act in the more just ways Zezolla does rather than the unpleasant ways of her stepsisters will ultimately be rewarded, although Zezolla has her own faults such as the scheming and murder. Iona and Peter Opie confirm this as well as the age of the story with, “The earliest Cinderella-type tale that has been found in Europe was published in Italy. This is the story of ‘La Gatta Cenerentola’ (The Hearth-Cat)... In this tale, however, the heroine’s conduct is by no means exemplary.”<sup>38</sup> With this statement they refer to her scheming and murder, which is a theme present in various *Cinderella* stories but is unfamiliar to those accustomed to some of the other European variants of the tale.

Another influential figure in the history of the literary fairy tale is Charles Perrault. Having been born in Paris to a successful family he went on to study at the College de Beauvais and then to leave school to study on his own and pass the law examinations of the University of Orleans.<sup>39</sup> By finally becoming the secretary of the controller of general finances he was able to become distinguished in the fields of the arts and sciences, having began writing poetry first sympathetic to anti-royal forces and then in support of the crown early on.<sup>40</sup> After retiring his work took on a more socially critical tone and he also altered traditional folktales to make them moralistic and appealing while also defending the intelligence and roles of women.<sup>41</sup>

A more familiar version of the *Cinderella* tale is Charles Perrault’s *Cinderella; or, The Glass Slipper* or *Cendrillon ou la Petite Pantoufle de Verre* as related by Jack Zipes in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers*

*Grimm*. Philips states about the tale, “Perrault’s ‘Cendrillon’ seems to be a fairly recent, European development of a story which has its roots in the Orient.”<sup>42</sup> Perrault’s tale introduces the father and daughter pair as being opposite in nature to the stepmother and two daughters. Perrault strengthens this by saying that the two stepdaughters look the same and act the same, though he concedes the one as being less unpleasant than the other.

Perrault’s tale is similar to Basile’s in that the father’s daughter is displaced from her rightful place and is forced to do all of the housework as a result of the stepmother’s dislike and jealousy of her. The stepdaughters do not help her but rather tease her and have her perform tasks for them, such as preparing their clothing for the ball. This tale is similar to Basile’s in that Cinderella’s status changes. She is the daughter of a loving gentleman but loses her place within the household as a result of the presence of her stepmother and stepsisters. Her father is now controlled by his new wife and will not provide Cinderella with any sort of sympathy but is more likely to scold her, confirming her loss of class status both inside and outside of the family.

Cinderella manages to keep her sweet temperament and beauty despite her hardships and abuse. Her goodness shines and marks her as not belonging in her current station, a class status in which she does not rightfully fit. The king’s son hosts a ball to which her stepsisters are invited as a result of their focus on dress and petty social attractions. Their receipt of an invitation is ironic as the ball is intended for people of quality, which the stepsisters are not. The stepsisters pretend to be of quality with garish display, using this to compensate for their interior and exterior ugliness.

The balls of *Cinderella* stories are many times described as being held so that the prince may choose a wife. In examining the traditions of different cultures as well as *Cinderella* tales Photeine P. Bourboulis makes connections between these tales and the traditions of places such as China. She states,

Now a royal ball where all young girls attend and where the prince selects his bride is again quite compatible with Chinese custom.... A prince's bride-show in China took place on the occasion of a great banquet and reception at the palace. The daughters of the greatest lords of the kingdom, arrayed in rich apparel, were all present.<sup>43</sup>

She also points out the other similarities between the *Cinderella* tale and Chinese culture, namely the importance of women's feet. She demonstrates that upper class Chinese ladies needed to bind their feet to adhere to the prevailing standard of beauty or else face negative consequences, such as a lack of marriage prospects and lowered class status. The importance of the shoe test in the *Cinderella* tale strongly points towards Chinese culture in her eyes due to the importance placed on feet by the culture.

Cinderella is not invited to the ball but her stepsisters do not consider her as worthy to attend and she also lacks the proper attire for such an outing yet she already contains the interior and exterior beauty that the stepsisters lack. Through the help of her fairy godmother, a helper who seems only to be given to those who are worthy in character, she is able to gain proper attire and attend the ball, impressing the prince with her charm and beauty. After her second night at the ball she loses a glass slipper, which leads to a search for the lady whose foot fits within the slipper and ends with Cinderella becoming the princess, gaining back her proper class status.

Numerous interpretations have been made as to the meaning of the glass slipper. Zipes states, "In the various literary versions, the shoes are leather, gold, silver, and glass.

Perrault invented the glass slippers most likely as an ironic joke since a glass slipper was likely to break if it were to fall off a foot.<sup>44</sup> Similarly attesting to Perrault's genius, Opie and Opie assert,

It was his genius, nevertheless, to see how much more effective in the story would be a shoe of glass, a shoe which could not be stretched, and a shoe in which the foot could be seen to fit. There is no doubt he himself intended the shoe should be of glass.<sup>45</sup>

Others suggest that a translation error from fur (vair) to glass (verre) took place as the words are very similar, and other *Cinderella* stories attest to a fur slipper. Alan Dundes explains another reason the glass slippers make sense within the story. He summarizes Paul Delarue with,

One could add only that from a symbolic as opposed to a literal perspective, glass is perfectly appropriate. Glass is a standard symbol of virginity. It is fragile and can be broken only once. In Jewish wedding ritual, the groom crushes a glass under his foot-for good luck.<sup>46</sup>

Other stories meanwhile attest to velvet or other material slippers such as in Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Finette Cendron* where the Cinderella character wears slippers that are "red velvet and embroidered with pearls."<sup>47</sup> Although other materials for slippers are present within *Cinderella* stories, the glass slipper has become iconic as part of Cinderella's story to modern Western societies.

One of the most famous tales Perrault published is a version of the *Cinderella* tale. He published *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* in which his viewpoints are visible in his tales and also attended literary circles not only of the French Academy but of women such as his niece Mlle Lheritier, Mme d'Aulnoy, and others.<sup>48</sup> Women, particularly educated women, were an important source of tales and inspiration for Charles Perrault and his work. Paradiz states,

Charles Perrault's stories were not original creations, but collected oral material edited and fashioned by him into print. Interestingly, as with the Grimms, female storytellers were Perrault's main sources. He took what women had to tell, and then infused the stories with a cheeky style, maintaining a simple language meant to reflect the lives and wisdom of common folk. Often, he appended a moralizing conclusion to instruct boys and girls into proper behavior. His editorial process was uncannily similar to that of the brothers Grimm: No female source was ever cited by name.<sup>49</sup>

Her statements make important points within a small segment of text. First, she points out the importance of women and their stories to Perrault's work. She goes on to explain the ways in which Perrault changed the material to suit the work he was compiling and to include a didactic moral to instruct audiences. She then compares these methods to those of the Grimms, who were influenced by Perrault and demonstrates that they are similar not only in utilizing women as informants and sources of stories but in that they did not offer any credit to specific women in their works.

Mme d'Aulnoy was also an influential figure in the history of the literary fairy tale in her own right. She was born around 1605 to a wealthy family and is unique in that her mother encouraged her independence.<sup>50</sup> From a young age she was told folktales by her aunt and then was married at the age of fifteen but plotted against her husband and was finally forced to flee France.<sup>51</sup> Her willingness to take on lovers and implicate her husband demonstrates her unique character and illuminates the reasons for the themes present within her tales.

Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Finette Cendron* is an example of a *Cinderella* story that strays away from the currently most well known of *Cinderella* stories. This may be at least partially attributed to the popularity of Charles Perrault's version of *Cinderella* over the many other versions of the tale in existence, but d'Aulnoy's version can be seen as a critical piece when viewed in conjunction with the social happenings and



expectations of her time. Seifert explains of her and similar females involved in the production of literary fairy tales that,

While all of this suggests that the genre served as a compensation for the increasing pressure on women in late seventeenth-century France to retreat from the public sphere, it also suggests that the vogue of fairy tales enabled the *conteuses* to assert and demonstrate their own vision of women's role in literary culture and society at large. The fairy-tale form was particularly well suited to this task because of its ambivalent marginality. It was at once an unthreatening genre that was far from approaching the elite status of tragedy or epic poetry and a *mondain* form that signified the sociable ideal of aristocratic culture. It was at once a genre that women could appropriate without threatening male literary figures and a form that enabled them to defend and perpetuate their own *locus* of cultural authority.<sup>52</sup>

Mme d'Aulnoy's version of Cinderella offers a heroine who asserts her intelligence and good nature in a way that one can compare to the act of sharing fairy tales in salons as both demonstrate the worth of the women involved. *Finette Cendron* deals with a heroine's unjust fall from grace and her rise to a world suitable for her character but also includes other elements as well. *Finette Cendron* begins by explaining how Finette's royal family came upon hard times, leading the queen mother of the family to attempt to lose her three burdensome daughters in the woods as their high class status was lost. In this story there are not stepsisters but blood sisters present. Finette's sisters fill the role of the stepsisters as they are not clever and mistreat Finette due to their greediness and other character flaws.

Princess Finette holds royal class standing due to her birth and her positive character traits such as her cleverness (Finette usually meaning clever little girl<sup>53</sup>), generosity, and bravery. The three princesses thwart their mother's plans twice by being able to return through magic help and Finette's cleverness but are lost upon the third outing in which their mother tries to dispose of them. The girls spend a miserable time in

the woods, the second loss of status that Finette does not deserve. Finette has help from her fairy godmother, a figure who confirms Finette's merits.

The girls spot a lovely abode and the elder two believe that royalty must live inside who will welcome them not only as guests but as brides. To their dismay, the house is inhabited by a human-eating ogre couple. This house would be suitable for Finette based on its exterior and interior treasures but not based upon its present inhabitants. One may compare the beautifully bedecked house to Finette's older sisters as they are beautiful on the outside but have ugly characters within. This demonstrates how such beauty is ruined by such ugliness, and should be taken as a warning because it is made clear that Finette does not belong in such a tainted place. Finette uses cleverness to destroy the ogres, making the house suitable for her and her sisters to live in, a somewhat more appropriate home for Finette to live in according to her class status at birth as she is surrounded by riches and beauty. This station is not fully right for Finette though as she is still mistreated and abused by her sisters.

Finette's sisters go off to a ball, gloating to her over the compliments they received from the king's son as well as their gifts. Finette chooses to go to the next balls in secret with her sisters not recognizing her but raving on about the beauty of a woman at the ball, who happens to be the unrecognizable Finette. Finette loses a slipper after hurrying away from the ball which the prince then becomes lovesick over, ending with their marriage and Finette's return to her proper class status, royalty. D'Aulnoy's *Finette Cendron* helps demonstrate the rewards for keeping up with proper behavior and cleverness, which we may interpret as d'Aulnoy stating what is important while also presenting a strong female to ridicule the ideals of gender relations common in her time.

Mme d'Aulnoy published novels and the custom of telling fairy tales and dressing up as their characters in her court on special occasions helped lead to the future popularity of literary fairy tales.<sup>54</sup> Her abilities in describing traditional tales and her imagination as well as her use of devices made her tales interesting to audiences. She also inserted her own views into her tales, which are unsurprising when considering her mother's influence as well as her own actions in life. She did not believe that women should be constrained by men or their rules and instead heaped importance upon the feelings of being in love, even though her tales sometimes contained elements of unpredictability and difficulty.<sup>55</sup>

The Brothers Grimm are regarded as important figures within the history of the literary fairy tale. Their collection of tales is well known throughout the world and has remained popular in to modern times. With Jacob Grimm being born in 1785 and his brother Wilhelm in 1786, their father's death in 1796 left them as responsible for taking care of their family, forcing them to grow up quickly.<sup>56</sup> This also pushed them in to being hardworking students and taking life very seriously. In their youth they studied for over twelve hours each day, each graduating first of his year from the Lyzeum and then going on to study to become lawyers while facing class discrimination at their schools.<sup>57</sup> This is important in that the Grimms identified with ordinary German people as Zipes states,

The identification with the common hard-working folk and the great desire to prove his individual worth were major factors in Jacob's later success and also figured in his idealization of the German folk. These were also the factors that drove Wilhelm, who shared Jacob's reverence for the simple German people and the ascetic life.<sup>58</sup>

This is significant in relation to their work with tales. Also significant is the influence of one of their mentors at school, Professor Friedrich Carl von Savigny. He stressed the

importance of tracing back laws through history and examining the customs and languages of the people that they govern which the Grimms then applied in examining tales.<sup>59</sup> They began collecting and publishing collections of traditional songs and tales after the death of their mother during a period of uncertainty in which the poor young adult children had to make choices as to what sort of careers to pursue to support themselves and the household.<sup>60</sup> Important to note is that the Grimms saw their work as a way of preserving German culture. They sought to preserve the oral traditions, tales, and culture that they believed was being replaced and endangered by literary culture because they viewed the older traditions as important to society.<sup>61</sup> They chose to dedicate themselves to preserving what they viewed as pure forms of German culture in oral and written forms to make sure they did not fade from German awareness and so that the connections between laws and customs with their origins as well as how Germans compared to others in regards to which qualities of traditions were uniquely German were visible and remembered.<sup>62</sup>

Out of the four *Cinderella* tales compiled by Zipes in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm* Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Cinderella* or *Aschenputtel* perhaps utilizes the most fear creating descriptions alongside with lessons in the group. Their tale, one of the later tales of the selected group, is one of their many tales that shows the influences of other scribes of literary fairy tales. Dundes states, "The Grimm brothers had known of Basile's collection earlier and were quite astonished to find that so many of 'their' German 'Kinder und Hausmarchen' had been reported in Naples nearly two centuries before."<sup>63</sup> The Grimms' *Cinderella* tells the tale of a girl who is the daughter of a "rich man"<sup>64</sup> and loses her

mother and gains a stepmother soon after her mother's death. Cinderella's mother's dying words to her were that she "be good and pious. Then the dear Lord will always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you."<sup>65</sup> These words are a portent for the rest of the story in which Cinderella remains pious and good and seemingly is helped by her mother.

Cinderella falls from favor as her new stepmother and stepsisters mistreat her by taking away her fine clothing and turning her into an abused house servant. Cinderella still manages to be good and pious, praying on her mother's grave. Cinderella's good character demonstrates her unsuitability of remaining in such a situation. Her father leaves on a trip and while her stepsisters ask for greedy, valuable gifts she only asks for a twig. This twig becomes a tree through her care and devotion as well as presumably through help from her mother's spirit as is foretold in her dying request. The tree is frequented by two doves, which appear to channel her mother's spirit as they help Cinderella and also live upon her grave.

Cinderella is unfairly not allowed to go to the ball hosted by the king because her stepmother and stepsisters believe she does not belong there. This is ironic because Cinderella is beautiful on the inside as well as the outside while they are ugly within and are too embarrassed for her to go along. Cinderella is aided by the magic hazel tree and wins over the prince at the three balls, finally losing a slipper after the third.

The prince intends to marry the lady whose foot fits within the lost slipper. The two stepsisters of Cinderella try duping the prince by cutting off pieces of their foot so that the slipper will artificially fit but they are exposed by the words of the doves and the blood leaking out of the slipper.

Cinderella is finally called forth to try on the slipper while being insulted by her father and stepmother in the process. These insults are a final sign that Cinderella does not belong in the diminished status that is her current home as not even her father sees any worth in her. The slipper fits Cinderella properly and the prince marries her. On the day of the wedding the doves pluck out the eyes of the stepsisters for their ugly actions and attitudes.

Audiences are led into learning the consequences of their bad deeds and sinful attitudes, such as greed and arrogance. The importance of being virtuous, hardworking, and fulfilling the proper female role is confirmed as Cinderella's worthiness is recognized by the prince, who marries her and brings her into the class status in which she belongs. This creates the belief within audiences that the deserving will be recognized and rewarded for their good actions and character, important components in creating sympathy with audiences as they often believe themselves deserving and under hardship.

A common error in belief is that the Brothers Grimm either authored their tales on their own or found them through research without utilizing the help of others or that their informants were uneducated. The Grimms in fact had help from educated women in collecting their tales as well as scholarly men. The Prologue of *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales* states that "These contributors were neither commoners nor peasants.... They were, in fact, women, and, what's more, they were educated ladies."<sup>66</sup> This debunks the myth that the Grimms created the tales on their own or were helped out by illiterate country bumpkins. Their tales came from the memories, writings, and readings of educated women. The men who helped the Grimms were more likely to help with research aims and copying or locating historic manuscripts for the Grimms.<sup>67</sup>

Rich sources for the Jacob and Wilhelm were their sister, Charlotte, and her friends. The young ladies exchanged stories such as fairy tales with one another in a group and eventually became informants for the Grimms who transcribed their recitations of the tales for their collection.<sup>68</sup> These women were educated middle to upper class ladies rather than peasants. The Grimms also utilized other female acquaintances by enlisting them to collect stories from townspeople and peasants rather than the brothers collecting the material themselves.<sup>69</sup>

The passage of tales from one female to another was and still is an important part of culture. Paradiz states,

For an audience of young female listeners –who were often told such tales by their mothers, aunts, wet nurses, family housekeepers, and washerwomen –the unhappy lot of the heroine was a common fairy tale theme that bound them together in their own shared experience of sacrifice.<sup>70</sup>

This statement is significant as it demonstrates part of the staying power of fairy tales. It demonstrates how the structures of these tales create sympathy between the audience and the protagonist by relying on similarities between the two. Paradiz also explains the function of the tales to women with,

Young women, as they heard and told the tale of “Child of Mary” and similar cautionary stories, seamlessly inscribed the rules of feminine sexual conduct into their hearts and minds, as if drilling a lesson that must not be forgotten at any cost.... The content of the stories women told reflected real lived experience and the particular ordeals they faced as females: the raising of offspring; their beholdenness (economically and legally) to the institution of marriage; the unremitting, menial, and repetitive chores such as spinning, weaving, or even wrapping chocolates in paper. In a society that privileged males with good educations, fairy tales offered a place where the devaluation of their intellect actually provided women and girls with the somewhat subversive and self-affirming opportunity of communicating their experiences outside the privileged realm of books and publishing.<sup>71</sup>

She demonstrates that fairy tales were thrilling and entertaining ways for women to confirm and make use of their intellect as well as to teach lessons and to spread the dominant expectations set upon females by the society and time period that they lived in. The Grimms' original aim of preserving tales without editing them different from the goals of their colleague Brentano, who intentionally made alterations to the tales he collected though in later editions of their tale collections the Grimms also edited their tales or combined multiple versions of the same tale rather than presenting the word for word transcriptions that they had gathered.<sup>72</sup> Paradiz makes clear that different versions of the same tale were in circulation and were traditional tales that could be traced back many years. She states,

Their stories, published in the first volume of the *Children's and Household Fairy Tales*, had descended directly from the seventeenth-century French fairy tale tradition, and particularly from the stories of Charles Perrault, the compiler and editor of the *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passe* (Stories or Fairy Tales from Bygone Eras), also known as the legendary Mother Goose tales. Perrault's anthology was published in 1697, around the time of the great exodus of Huguenots from France who, as the Hassenpflugs' ancestors did, likely carried the stories with them to Germany.... This rich new source of stories was certainly not quintessentially Hessian, nor even German for that matter. In fact, such tales as "Red Riding Hood" and "Sleeping Beauty" were pan-European phenomena, predating even Perrault, with provenances tracing as far back as the Middle Ages and Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, Perrault's influence on the transmission of fairy tales to many parts of the Continent was tremendous, and the Hassenpflugs' involvement with the brothers Grimm played no small role in this literary wonder.<sup>73</sup>

Paradiz makes it clear that fairy tales were a way for women to confirm their intelligence by telling stories of shared experience while creating bonds and sympathy with one another and to the protagonists of the tale, allowing imaginations to be exercised and females to be taught lessons about life that males eventually took scholarly interest in so as to preserve what they believed to be folk knowledge and culture in ways that they



deemed appropriate. She demonstrates that though the first literary fairy tales came from educated women that men adopted and adapted these tales to suit their own beliefs.

Different fairy tale traditions, such as tales with a Cinderella character, demonstrate the popularity of the tale type as well as the changes the tale underwent in its passage through time and space.

Film recreations of the *Cinderella* tale keep many of the original features of the tale such as the use of changes in status as well as the slipper incident intact. One of the most famous cinematic examples of the *Cinderella* tale is Walt Disney's *Cinderella*, which credits Charles Perrault's tale as its basis. The first image after the credits is in fact a story book being opened.

Similarly to many of the tales, Cinderella's gentleman widower father remarries a rich but repulsive woman with two equally as repulsive daughters who spend the family fortune and coldly turn Cinderella into a servant after her father's death.

Cinderella still retains her sweet nature and beauty after being forced into becoming a servant, befriending the animals of the house who both receive and provide her with aid. These characters also help to create comic relief as they compete with the stepmother's cat whose name, Lucifer, connects to the devil and further cements their connections to evil. Cinderella's helpful animals may be compared the animals of other tales that are of the helpful mother spirit, such as in the version of the tale presented by the Grimms.

Cinderella is shown to be responsible for the chores of the house. The first appearances by her stepmother and stepsisters depict them as spoiled and arrogant as they boss her about, adding to her list of chores. The grown up stepsisters are drawn to be

ugly and awkward with big feet, which is a portent for the slipper episode of the story. True to form they pile on chores so that she cannot attend the king's ball that is thrown to find the prince a bride and ruin the dress that her animal friends constructed but through the help of her fairy godmother Cinderella is able to attend the ball. The mere presence of the fairy godmother helps to demonstrate Cinderella's worthiness of attending the ball and also harks back to critics such as Yolen who claim that Cinderella's character is lessened by the stylistic choices made by Disney as she does not have to take action on her own and is instead helped out by animals and the supernatural. Disney makes Cinderella into an inactive character in a way different than does Perrault, who uses her to criticize the expectations for women of his time.

Cinderella manages to attend the ball and after various close calls and mishaps marries the prince. The film ends with the closing of the fairy tale book. The film reinforces the idea that the good will be rewarded while the bad will not enjoy such rewards. Cinderella stays pure and kind, even while enduring the abuses of her stepmother and stepsisters and is finally rewarded by being placed back into a role and status in which she belongs and will be appreciated rather than abused.

Walt Disney's rendition of Perrault's *Cinderella* is distinctive as the tale has been tweaked with Disney's style and flair. Disney's manipulation of the tale such as by shortening the story so as to include one ball and to add elements to make the tale more amusing as a film for audiences such as songs does not detract from the overall story Perrault projects. Watts posits,

This work continued the tradition of 'sentimental modernism' that defined the Disney style. Feature films... blended modernist fantasy with sentimental domestic tales where animals transparently stood in for humans. Other movies such as *Cinderella* (1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) used familiar fairy tales to

blend sentimental love stories with fantastic imagery as they trod in the well-worn paths of comforting Disney entertainment.<sup>74</sup>

Watts demonstrates how while Disney seeks to entertain audiences with novel attractions in films he also strives to remain loyal to the traditions behind the tales he presents.

Disney uses the addition of songs as well as singing animal friends to make the tale livelier for presentation through film.

The use of talking animals is actually a traditional device, as we see within the Grimms' *Cinderella* tale talking birds that are implied to be channeling the spirit of Cinderella's mother. The birds expose the fraud of the stepsisters with, "Looky, look, look at the shoe that she took. There's blood all over, and the shoe's too small. She's not the bride you met at the ball."<sup>75</sup> and "Looky, look, look at the shoe that she took. The shoe's just right, and there's no blood at all. She's truly the bride you met at the ball."<sup>76</sup> being said in reference to Cinderella being the true bride of the prince. These animals also help Cinderella earlier in the Grimms' tale as she must pick lentils out of ashes in order to be allowed to attend the ball in,

Two white pigeons came flying in the kitchen window, followed by the turtledoves. Eventually, all the birds under heaven swooped down, swarmed into the kitchen, and settled around the ashes. The pigeons bobbed their heads and began to peck, peck, peck, peck, and all the other birds also began to peck, peck, peck, peck, and they put all the good lentils into the bowl.<sup>77</sup>

She is also barred from attending the ball in this version of the tale similarly to how she is barred from attending in Disney's animated film, in the Grimms' tale her stepmother states, "Nothing can help you. I can't let you come with us because you don't have any clothes to wear and you don't know how to dance. We'd only be ashamed of you!"<sup>78</sup>

The stepmother of the film similarly prevents Cinderella from attending the ball even after the bargain of completing all of the assigned household chores prior to leaving is

complete. In the animated version the stepmother indirectly leads her daughters into ripping apart Cinderella's dress as they recognize their beads and sashes on her. Both of these tales give examples of how the wicked bar the good from privilege by resorting to unfair measures but the films also demonstrate the consequences of such evil behavior and the rewards of good behavior, as Cinderella's fairy godmother helps her to attend the ball and win the heart of the prince.

Disney's use of animals in the tale is not only to be found in the tradition of the Grimms' tale but also in Perrault's, which the Disney film credits as its basis. In Perrault's tale the fairy godmother does not utilize animal friends as Cinderella's team of escorts but uses animals from the household area. She uses mice from the mousetrap, a rat from the rattrap, and lizards to create Cinderella's horses, coachman, and footmen.<sup>79</sup> Disney's version also includes transformed animals making up Cinderella's team and pays homage to the rescue of mice from traps with an earlier scene. This scene is when Cinderella rescues the new, pudgy mouse from the mousetrap and names him Octavian, taking his nickname Gus from the historical Octavian's other name, Augustus. This simultaneously creates comic relief while paying homage to Perrault's tale.

Disney also remains loyal to details from Perrault's tale by choosing to retain the pumpkin carriage. Perrault's tale states, "Then she struck it with her wand, and the pumpkin was immediately changed into a beautiful coach gilded all over."<sup>80</sup> The Disney film turns this episode into a musical number, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" in which the fairy godmother sings while working her magic. The warning she imparts to Cinderella to leave by midnight remains the same in the animated movie as it does in Perrault's tale. Cinderella being grateful to her godmother for the time she is given rather than being

upset over time constraints further demonstrates her good manners as well as her good character in that she is willing to be obedient to a figure she respects. Disney manages to create new and interesting entertainment while staying true to the important elements of the tales he recreates, such as the authors' use of changes in status to reinforce ideals and teach traditional values, morals, and ideas. At the same time, Disney changes the tales to suit his own tastes. Dundes states, "Walt Disney's personal philosophy of life definitely affected the way he presented the Disney version of *Cinderella*."<sup>81</sup> Many other critics have determined that Disney's own spin was incorporated into his version of Perrault's *Cinderella*. Jane Yolen appears to take a particularly critical view of Walt Disney's influence on the modern American perception of *Cinderella*. She states,

The American "Cinderella" is partially Perrault's. The rest is a spun-sugar caricature of her hardier European and Oriental forbears, who made their own way in the world, tricking the stepsister with double-talk, artfully disguising themselves, or figuring out a way to win the king's son. The final bit of icing on the American Cinderella was concocted by that master candy-maker, Walt Disney, in the 1950s. Since then, America's Cinderella has been a coy, helpless dreamer, a "nice" girl who awaits her rescue with patience and a song. This Cinderella of the mass market books finds her way into a majority of American homes while the classic heroines sit unread in old volumes on library shelves. Poor Cinderella.<sup>82</sup>

Yolen appears regretful that modern society's view of Cinderella is of a helpless girl rather than a strong heroine, placing her blame partially on Disney. Other recent films have continued this trend of the somewhat or completely helpless Cinderella, occasionally allowing Cinderella to have strength of character.

Live action film versions of *Cinderella* tales provide the same lessons for audiences as do literary and cartoon renditions while using many of the same devices and also modernizing the tale. An example of this would be the ninety-five minute Warner

Bros. *A Cinderella Story* (July 16, 2004), directed by Mark Rosman and written by Leigh Dunlap which ran in theaters rather than being released directly to DVD as its sequel *Another Cinderella Story* was. This is a recent adaptation of the *Cinderella* tale type that reached great popularity through advertisement, the collaboration of famous movie stars and production staff, and box office sales. The film stars Hilary Duff, Jennifer Coolidge, Chad Michael Murray, and Regina King along with other supporting actors. The film opens with a shot of a castle and the narrator familiarizing the audience with the background of the story in the way that many *Cinderella* tales start. In this film, Cinderella, or Sam, lives with her widowed father, just as she does in literary versions. Rather than being a setting contemporary with tale writers it is contemporary with modern viewing audiences and set in San Fernando Valley, California. Very quickly the new stepmother is introduced, her name being Fiona. Her daughters are named Brianna and Gabriella, modern takes on the names of the stepsisters that still hint back to earlier versions of the tale.

Interjections are made throughout the opening scenes that connect to the topic of fairytales. At her birthday party the Cinderella figure is called princess, and as narrator of the film she states that her family's life was not a fairy tale sort of situation. Her father is seen to be reading her a fairy tale with a happy ending as we are introduced to their home. At the end of the story read to her, Cinderella asks whether fairy tales come true and is told that dreams rather than fairy tales come true. This scene presents an important idea about fairy tales. Her father tells her that fairy tales are about fulfilling dreams and standing up for beliefs rather than finding princes, a statement that walks a fine line.

It can be argued that the writers of *Cinderella* tales would both agree and disagree with such a statement. In a sense, fairy tales in some cases are about finding a husband as a husband represents a form of support. Without a husband a woman presumably cannot be a mother and will not be able to eat or survive. Finding a husband has been an important aspect of womanhood throughout history in many societies.

In *A Cinderella Story*, the Cinderella character, Sam, finds her dream to be shattered as a little girl when her father dies in an earthquake. Since a will cannot be found, her stepmother inherits his estate as well as her and she is vanquished to live in the attic as her stepsisters look on and giggle as it rains outside. Sam is banished from her own world, her bedroom in her father's house, into the attic which is the beginning of her trials as a Cinderella.

Audiences are then swept through time to eight years later, similarly to the way in which audiences of the literary versions of the tale are given the background of Cinderella's youthful life and then taken to a point in time years later while she has been treated as a servant throughout. She is also demonstrated to be scholarly and pretty while her stepmother and stepsisters are proven to be stupid, awkward, and unattractive.

We are introduced to many characters who are present in *Cinderella* tales in one form or another. In this tale, the characters happen to be human rather than animal or supernatural. We are introduced to characters playing the roles of Prince Charming, an evil princess, Cinderella's helpers, and the fairy godmother. In this version, she also has a best friend experiencing a similar plight as he pines after the evil princess. These characters are given modern roles more suited to the setting of the film. The traditional slipper test is also updated so that Cinderella loses her cellular phone rather than a shoe or

slipper and Cinderella is given a ride to the ball in a gold colored car rather than a pumpkin coach.

The story plays itself out as a loose interpretation of Perrault's tale including many of the same major facets such as the fairy godmother figure, the ball, the search for the Cinderella, and the happy reunited couple. One of the last scenes shows her packing and as she picks up the fairy tale book from her childhood a packet falls out of it. This packet contains her father's will, which leaves his entire estate to her, allowing her to follow her dreams and go to college as well as be free from her stepfamily. In this adaptation of *Cinderella* the worthy are rewarded while the wicked are punished in keeping with the traditional tales. This adaptation also takes modern living and conveniences into consideration, making the characters socialize not only in person but through emails, phone calls, text messages, intercoms, and other modern devices. It also takes into consideration that modern teenagers attend high school and college with schooling being a major part of their life. The film adapts the traditional *Cinderella* tale to fit with these modern trappings so that it is more familiar to modern audiences and allows them to better sympathize and empathize with the characters presented. This sympathy and empathy is important as this is a major component of why fairy tales have endured the test of time as is stated by Paradiz.<sup>83</sup> This film's Cinderella is allowed more strength of character than is Disney's Cinderella, being able to confront her stepmother and the prince towards the end of the film rather than remaining completely passive. This strength of character pays homage back to other *Cinderella* tales in which Cinderella is shown to be clever, disobedient, sneaky, and having all sorts of other decisive and strong character traits that allow her to move back up in society. This film's choice in



incorporating these lost elements of Cinderella's character is important as these traits have been forgotten and left out of the heroine's character over time, notably by prominent writers or film makers such as Walt Disney.

*Cinderella* tales utilize the device of changes in class status and standing within family in order to achieve different aims ranging from social criticism to teaching. These tales point to different ideals, ranging from the importance of independence and cleverness to female passivity and industriousness. Many traditional *Cinderella* tales are mainly about heroines who choose to take action on their own behalf rather than being completely helpless. Jane Yolen points this out with,

“Cinderella” speaks to all of us in whatever skin we inhabit: the child mistreated, a princess or highborn lady in disguise bearing her trials with patience and fortitude. She makes intelligent decisions for she knows that wishing solves nothing without the concomitant action.... To make Cinderella less than she is, then, is a heresy of the worst kind.<sup>84</sup>

These tales are cyclical in nature as the heroines start out the tale within the high class status they belong in but are displaced and must work their way back into the class that is proper for them to remain in.

The tales also at times use fear and insecurities to help teach their lesson. Steven Swann Jones states,

The tales offer some instruction about how society expects females to behave, part of which is drawn from idealized and sexist conceptualizations of women fostered by a male-dominated society (inasmuch as the examples of these tales have been exclusively collected from western patriarchal societies). But the tales also apparently provide dramatic representations of a young girl's point of view, depictions of what might be regarded as her attitudes about those whom she grows up with or encounters and towards the tasks, difficulties, and goals that she faces and must succeed in mastering. The texts and the genre as a whole are multi-dimensional, capable of reflecting different perspectives simultaneously.<sup>85</sup>

Certain literary versions of the tale, such as the later versions presented by the Grimms, make audiences scared of the consequences of possessing bad character or of making poor choices, especially when the choice is noticeably poor. These tales counteract the fear by making audiences hopeful by demonstrating the rewards in store for those who display good character, cleverness, and kindness as well as other important feminine traits such as industriousness and passivity. At the same time, many versions of the tale demonstrate the importance of taking action to make gains. Elisabeth Panttaja states,

But while Cinderella's piety does play an important role in the forging of her supernatural alliance, it plays almost no role in the important practical business of seducing the prince.... Cinderella's triumph at the ball has less to do with her innate goodness and more to do with her loyalty to the dead mother and a string of subversive acts: she disobeys her stepmother, enlists forbidden helpers, uses magic powers, lies, hides, dissembles, disguises herself, and evades pursuit.<sup>86</sup>

This demonstrates the importance of action in advancing one's self in society, independence, and cleverness. These types of themes can be seen in the work of d'Aulnoy and Perrault as they criticized the expectations for women of their time. The tales demonstrate the consequences of poor behavior as well as the rewards for exemplary behavior to make a solid impression upon audiences. Elisabeth Panttaja states, "By making Cinderella, who internalizes aristocratic values, so much more preferable to the sisters, who exhibit offensive lower class traits, the tale perpetuates traditional ideas about character and status."<sup>87</sup> This helps to make people feel as if they can achieve higher standing for themselves by emulating Cinderella rather than the stepsisters. These tales often taught while entertaining audiences rather than by teaching through lecture or other more boring means.

Fairy tales, particularly *Cinderella* tales, have become staples of Western culture. Older tales are still read while modern adaptations continue to be made such as Mercedes

Lackey's *The Fairy Godmother: A tale of the Five Hundred Kingdoms*, the *A Cinderella Story* film, and many others that appear year after year. Fairy tales remain popular through means similar to how Bottigheimer suggests they first became popular<sup>88</sup>, through cheap and widespread means of circulation. High literacy, cheapness and availability of books, the internet, and film have made fairy tales highly accessible and widespread. These forms of mass circulation have allowed tales to reach people from all over the world with differing socioeconomic status levels, traditions, and identities. The mass spread of fairy tales has cemented them as an important part of popular cultural traditions. These forms of communication and sharing of information have put the world in a situation Marshall McLuhan defines as the "global village,"<sup>89</sup> in which all of the world is united through the sharing of information that puts places on the opposite side of the world in connection similarly to how they are connected to areas that are geographically close as a result of the relationships that build through the constant spread and accessibility of information. Through the sharing of information the culture of the global village is created, with fairy tales having become a key part of this culture. The role of fairy tales has become one of global proportions, in which diverse people are both entertained and taught through familiar, staple tales such as *Cinderella* tales. Audiences are taught through the use of different devices in *Cinderella* tales but are also provided with a character to empathize with or with social criticisms, the range and purpose of the existence of literary fairy tales being vast and having multiple purposes.

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