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# Reframing the Cinderella Gender Pattern through Space and Time

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## **Introduction.**

In fairy tales, the “from-rags-to-riches” formula is perhaps the best known, and the best-known tale that it characterises is “Cinderella”.

The tale became famous all around the world thanks to Walt Disney’s cinematic adaptation in 1950, and even though Walt Disney’s version is often erroneously taken as the “official” one, “Cinderella” grounds its roots in folklore. The “Cinderella archetype” forms part of the folkloric repertoire of almost every culture, thus every version appears to be unique, shaped by the different cultural contexts and historical periods. As I will analyse in the second chapter, scholars have identified two different, but equally long-lasting, tale types: AT510A (“Cinderella”) and AT510B (“Cap o’ Rushes”).

The dissemination and transformation of the tale are interesting not only formally but also culturally and socially, because fairy tales as a literary form are ideal for passing along cultural concepts from generation to generation. Furthermore, scholars argue that fairy tales represent a fantasy world where everything proceeds as it ideally should in the real one and that fairy tales’ characters can be considered as symbols of models of behaviour. For this ideal representation of the world, fairy tales can be somehow considered as “manuals” of behaviour.

This hidden educational role started to concern scholars and academics when fairy tales’ audience shifted from adults to children. Children’s education and the moral messages they might encounter by reading fairy tales not only started to concern scholars, but also, and above all, feminists. Among all the other fairy tales, Cinderella has been studied as the major and most dangerous example of women’s passive behaviour. If on the one hand, the tale is considered consoling because of the final

triumph of the mistreated heroine, on the other hand, sexual stereotyping is at the centre of the modern debate regarding fairy tales in general and Cinderella in particular.

It is a common belief that fairy tales perpetuate sexist stereotypes, and as a matter of fact, they tend to represent only two types of women. These women are either rewarded for being passive, polite, pretty, submissive, and silent or they are vicious, envious, and chatty. Throughout the countless versions of the story, Cinderella is the perfect example of a submissive main female character, one that fits not only cultural needs but also gender impositions and pre-constructions. However, as I will examine throughout this final thesis, Cinderella as protagonist has changed through the centuries passing from an active and strong-willed heroine to a silent and submissive one.

Even though scholars such as Bettelheim argue that fairy tales are equally relevant for both boys and girls, and are therefore genderless, tales such as “Cinderella” continue to be relevant for modern girls and women. In the modern epoch feminists have started to question whether it is good that children in general and girls, in particular, are exposed to those models.

Furthermore, exactly because the best-known version of the story is Walt Disney’s, we tend to visualise Cinderella as a white, blonde girl, possibly living in a Western country. However, as previously hinted, there are many versions of this tale in different cultures. As a direct exponent of non-Western cultures, fairy tales in general and Cinderella, in particular, can help both children and adults in destroying the countless stereotypes we associate to a particular society without exploring it in depth. With the analysis of a selected number of versions of Cinderella, I will explore the transformation of the character within the fairy tale genre, from folklore to the modern picturebook, and how it has been adopted within different cultures.

## 1. The Fairy-Tale Canon

### 1.1. Origins and structure

#### 1.1.1. From Folklore to Literature

The fairy tale is the first narrative form that everybody can recall having come in contact with, the one that is constantly present throughout the life of an individual and, consciously or not, the most influential.

This type of narrative is said to be so important because, as Calabrese explains, it presents fundamental themes of human experience (life, death, sexuality, fear) in a universal and easily comprehensible language. This language makes it possible for these topics to be explored in depth: in other words, fairy tales do not speak only about fear but about *how to overcome it*.<sup>1</sup> Defining the genre of the fairy tale remains nevertheless a difficult task, due to the long and diverse heritage and especially because of its dual existence in folklore and literature.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the fact that “we do know that humans began telling tales as soon as they developed the capacity of speech”<sup>3</sup>, the origin of the fairy tale must be traced back to well before recorded history. It was originally a product of folkloric oral tradition.

Folklore includes all the traditional forms of expression and of cultural learning that were transmitted orally or through the personal example of members of a specific

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<sup>1</sup> Calabrese, Stefano, *Fiaba*, Firenze: Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1997, p. 75. My italics.

<sup>2</sup> Swann Jones, Steven, *The Fairy Tale: the Magic Mirror of Imagination*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 2.

community.<sup>4</sup> Fairy tales were perhaps the simplest way in which folklore could be passed on from generation to generation. Due to each community participating in its own unique oral narrative traditions, every folktale must gain the consensus of a collective body before it becomes part of a standard selection of tales.<sup>5</sup> The storytellers' powers of invention are to some extent held back by their audiences even though they may appear to exercise a unique control over their material. The successful retelling of a tale requires the narrator to adapt the stories to the listeners, predict their wishes, and veer away from what might offend them. Hence, the folkloristic community operates as a sort of censor, endlessly revising the content of a tale until it meets with full approval.<sup>6</sup>

Thanks to their structure, fairy tales were easy to remember and recount; this characteristic has been maintained through the centuries in spite of all the transformations the genre has been subjected to.<sup>7</sup> What is curious about the fairy tales is the persistence of certain archetypes and their broad geographical dissemination. As Calabrese explains, there are two principal modes for the diffusion of a fairy tale model. The *evolutionistic* model hypothesises the birth of a fairy tale either from the antique rites of passage of the ancient populations or from the attempts to explain natural phenomena. In this case, it is possible to speak of the evolution of the fairy tale as like a *family tree*. The *diffusional* model, on the other hand, tries to identify a historical-geographical source in order to follow the distribution of the tale "in waves" across

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<sup>4</sup> Swann Jones, Steven, *The Fairy Tale: the Magic Mirror of Imagination*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La fiaba popolare europea: Forma e natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015.

different areas. Today a combination of the two modes of diffusion is believed to be at the base of the global distribution of specific tale's archetypes.<sup>8</sup>

Due to their folkloric heritage and the oral circulation, there are no exact and established "original" versions of fairy tales, no identifiable authors and no fixed titles. Different and numerous storytellers have adapted fairy tales over the centuries, modifying the stories depending on personal, cultural tastes and historical circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it is common to find many versions of one story coming not only from different narrators but also from different cultures and times. To borrow Zipes' words, the appeal of fairy tales still has a "great deal to do with utopian transformation and the desire of a better life, and the manner in which we make it relevant in our mental representations will be in reaction to the outside stimuli and to moral codes instituted by hegemonic groups within a respective society."<sup>10</sup>

These adaptations continued with the development of literacy when the genre started to rely more and more on the written word of the published collections of folklore and through the works of different authors for its dissemination. With those publications, it was possible to have an identifiable author and an official "paternity" of the tales. However, it is a common error to refer to these so-called "classic" versions as the "original" ones, forgetting the century-long process of transformation of the tales. As Zipes states:

Folklorists generally make a distinction between wonder folk tales, which originated in oral traditions throughout the world and still exist, and literary fairy tales, which emanated from the oral traditions through the mediation of manuscripts and print, and continue to be created today in various mediated forms around the world. In both the oral and literary traditions, the tale types influenced by cultural patterns are so numerous and diverse that it is almost

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<sup>8</sup> Calabrese, Stefano, *Fiaba*, Firenze: Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Swann Jones, Steven, *The Fairy Tale: the Magic Mirror of Imagination*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Zipes, Jack, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: the Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 106.

impossible to define a wonder folk tale, or explain the relationship between the two modes of communication.<sup>11</sup>

The “classic” fairy tale is thus a *literary* appropriation of the older folk tale, a revision of the folkloric tradition, a preservation of “valuable” elements and its adaptation for a specific audience<sup>12</sup>; an appropriation that nevertheless continues to display and imitate some *folkloric* features.<sup>13</sup> These folkloristic features can help scholars in hypothesising what the ancient form of the fairy tale was.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1.2. Formal Characteristics of the Fairy-Tale

Formally, the fairy tale is a challenging genre to outline. First, it must be distinguished from other related folk narratives: myth, legend, saga, and folktale. As Swann Jones explains, myths are narratives that feature *gods*. The action of the divine characters is always a metaphor of the natural laws that regulate the world; on the other hand, legends are quasi-historical narratives that see *exceptional and extraordinary heroes*, embodiment of ethnic values and models as protagonists; legends do have a certain historical and cultural accuracy and they serve as social guidelines for behaviour, by depicting remarkable phenomena to illustrate cultural ideals, values, and norms. In the saga, on the contrary, the universe is interpreted in terms of clan-familiar consanguinity<sup>15</sup>. Finally, folktales are entertaining narratives that use *common, ordinary people* as main characters to reveal the aspirations and weaknesses of human nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Tosi, Laura, *La fiaba letteraria inglese: metamorfosi di un genere*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2007, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Bacchilega, Cristina, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Calabrese, Stefano, *Fiaba*, Firenze: Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1997, p. 2.

Their quests and difficulties speak directly to humanity's most individual needs. Among the folktales it is possible to distinguish different types of tales: fables, usually featuring anthropomorphic animals, and which usually have a didactic or moralistic message; jokes, humoristic tales; romantic tales, or novellas; and fairy tales, which depict life in realistic terms as well as marvellous or magical elements as a valid part of human experience.<sup>16</sup>

The endurance of the genre throughout human history and its intrinsic influence raised the curiosity of scholars such as Vladimir Propp and Max Lüthi. In their respective works, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) and *The European Folktale* (1979), they tried to delineate the formal characteristics of the *folktale*. Vladimir Propp's analysis of a number of Russian wonder tales in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) was followed by countless studies on the structure of the genre. Propp outlined thirty-one basic functions, the invariable elements in a wonder tale that constitute the formation of the paradigm, not constantly present in every tale analysed but constant in their chronological order.<sup>17</sup> Propp's general scheme of folk tale can be reassumed as follows: initial balance; complication or breaking of the balance; adventures of the hero; return to balance. Each function in the folktale not only refers to a typical situation within the plot but also to the characters and their roles. Propp identified eight character-types: the villain, the dispatcher, the helper, the princess or prize, her father, the donor, the hero and the false hero.

Similarly, Lüthi tried to outline the formal characteristics of the European folktale, attempting to define the formal characteristics of the genre. However, in comparing the structural characteristics of fairy tales, the distinction between simple (oral) and artistic (literary) form must be always taken into consideration. On the formal level, the

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<sup>16</sup> Swann Jones, Steven, *The Fairy Tale: the Magic Mirror of Imagination*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, p. 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 28.

characteristics of the fairy tale are: one-dimensionality; lack of perspective; abstract style in the absence of descriptions, in the vagueness of the time-space structure and in the lack of characterisation of the characters; the repetitions and formulas and the total absence of the first-person narrator.<sup>18</sup> This extreme vagueness of the formal structure allows enormous liberty in plots.

The European folktale is the portrayal of a world, or Primary World as Tolkien calls it<sup>19</sup>, through a one-dimensional narrative perspective closely related to the magical element. However, it is not the presence of the magical element that determines the belonging of a text to the fairy tale genre since many other literary genres share this characteristic. The peculiarity lies on how this element is treated.<sup>20</sup> In the fairy tale there is no fear or curiosity about the numinous<sup>21</sup> while the familiar elements of everyday life lack validity. Lüthi states that rarely does the fairy tale speak of feelings or of actions without having a precise purpose, hinting at them only when they affect the sequence of actions of the plot.<sup>22</sup> In addition, magical gifts, advice and the trials narrated in a specific story lack psychological and social importance, reducing their function to the basic means of making the story proceed.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the World we see characterised in the fairy tale is a world where the morality is, as Jolles defines it, “instinctive” and therefore reassuring. Events in the fairy tales proceed, as they ideally should in the real world<sup>24</sup>: thus, the formula “from-rags-to-riches” is a constant in almost every fairy tale.

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<sup>18</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La fiaba popolare europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Tolkien, J.R.R., “On Fairy-Stories”, in *Essays presented to Charles Williams*, London: Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La fiaba popolare europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Jolles, André, *Forme semplici*, Milano: Mursia, 1980.

By both mimicking history and distancing itself from it, the fairy tale addresses reality more than the represented events would make the listener/reader think.<sup>25</sup> The events in fairy tales may be

Rooted in realistic situations, but they are often so far removed from reality that they demand symbolic readings. Psychological realism and social realism do not stand as special strengths of the fairy tale. Fairy tale heroes may begin their folkloric careers at home in a commonplace setting and they may end them in a castle, but the world that lies in-between is less natural than supernatural, less ordinary than extraordinary, and less real than surreal. Once a fairy-tale hero leaves the realistically portrayed world designated as home to enter a realm that admits the supernatural, he moves into an arena that lends itself more readily to literary and psychological analysis than to historical inquiry.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the separation between the real world and the world represented in the fairy tales can be also observed in the use of expressions such as “once upon a time”. The specific time of the action is undefined and, by collocating it in the past, is not only a symptom of separation between the two worlds<sup>27</sup> but also of the “universality” of the story.

The flexibility of time and space of the tale is shared also by the objects and by the characters themselves. As hinted before, fairy tales’ protagonists are ordinary people, but the intrinsic characteristics of the genre make them so versatile that they can be considered as symbols for something else.<sup>28</sup>

This abstraction is congenial to the creativity of storytellers and writers, who can easily adapt elements of the fairy tale in order to make them suitable for the message

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<sup>25</sup> Calabrese, Stefano, *Fiaba*, Firenze: Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1997, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 56-57.

<sup>27</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La fiaba popolare europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 85.

they want to convey. As previously hinted, scholars consider fairy tales to be metaphors of their own cultural scenarios. In other words, fairy tales tend to reflect the dominant ideology, as they are a product of a determined historical moment.<sup>29</sup> As Maria Tatar explains, few fairy tales dictate a single, univocal, uncontested meaning; as a matter of fact, most of them are so adaptable as to facilitate a broad variety of interpretations, and they derive their meaning from a process of engaged negotiation on the part of the listener and, later, the reader.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, in order for any fairy tale to be fully understood and useful to the listener/reader it is necessary to approach them with enough ingenuity to allow the “suspension of disbelief” to happen.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.2. Narrators and Audience

### 1.2.1. The Shift of the Audience

It is usually assumed that children are the natural or the more appropriate audience for fairy stories; however, Tolkien argues that this confining of the fairy tale to the territory of childhood was a historical mistake since “children as class – except in a common lack of experience they are not one – neither like fairy stories more, nor understand them better than adults do”.<sup>32</sup> For centuries fairy tales were a form of entertainment enjoyed by adults of every social class and in every cultural context. As a matter of fact, during the latter part of the sixteenth century, children of the nobility and of the bourgeoisie started to be gradually regarded as a separate class with a special set

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<sup>29</sup> Tosi, Laura, *La fiaba letteraria inglese: metamorfosi di un genere*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2007, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. xiv.

<sup>31</sup> Tolkien, J.R.R., “On Fairy-Stories”, in *Essays presented to Charles Williams*, London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Tolkien, Op. Cit., p. 49.

of characters and needs.<sup>33</sup> Before this separation children were considered an integral part of the adult world and fairy stories are grounded in this social context. Sexual and violent content was an integral part of folktales, and through these narratives, the peasant community represented its world and the best way to deal with it.<sup>34</sup>

When moralists and educators started to face the problem of children's education, children's literature was born and fairy stories started to be modified in order to suit the special needs of this new social class. The majority of the tales still courted favour primarily with adults, but there was an overwhelming tendency in these fairy stories to provide modes of behaviour for children. The morality and ethics of a patriarchal Christian society had to become part of the literary fairy tale. If we take the simplicity of the fairy tale form into account, concepts such as the social power, values, and hierarchy of the ruling classes had to be simplified in order for the child to naturally internalise specific values and notions of gender.<sup>35</sup> As Zipes argues:

The literary fairy tale for children, as it began to constitute itself as a genre, became more an institutionalised discourse with manipulation as one of its components. This *discourse* had and continues to have many levels to it: the writers of the fairy tales for children entered into a dialogue on values and manners with the folktale, with contemporary writers of fairy tales, with the prevailing social code, with implicit adult and young readers, and with an unimplied audience. The shape of the fairy-tale discourse, of the configurations within the tales, was moulded and bound by the European civilizing process that was undergoing profound changes in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

The point of contact between the oral folkloric tradition and fairy tales' literary re-elaborations written exclusively for children, were usually nannies. These belonged to the lower classes and worked by taking care of the middle-class children. Starting from

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<sup>33</sup> Pisanty, Valentina, *Leggere la Fiaba*, Milano: Strumenti Bompiani, 1993, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Pisanty, Op. Cit., p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Zipes, Jack, *Fairy Tales and the art of subversion: the classical genre for children and the process of civilisation*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 8-9.

<sup>36</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., pp. 9-10.

Ovid's Philomela, passing through Scheherazade, to the elderly women that "informed" Basile, Perrault and the Grimms the female voice has always been connected to storytelling.

Since Plato in the *Gorgias* referred to the "old wives' tales" told by nurses to amuse and to frighten children, telling fairy tales has been considered a "domestic art" and although the principal collectors of fairy tales were mostly men, the authors themselves declared in the preface of their work that the tales themselves were ascribed to women narrators:<sup>37</sup>

Gianbattista Basile's seventeenth-century collection of Neapolitan tales, *The Pentamerone*, also has women storytellers – quick-witted, gossipy old crones who recount "those tales that old women tell to amuse children." The renowned *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault were designed by their author as old wives' tales, "told by governesses and grandmothers to little children." And many of the most expansive storytellers consulted by the Grimms were women – family friends or servants who had at their disposal a rich repertoire of folklore.<sup>38</sup>

Curiously, the term "fairy tale" comes from the late seventeenth century's French genre of the *conte de fées*, where the word *fees* and *faerie* derived originally from the Latin *fatum*, the thing spoken, and *fata*, the fates who speak it.<sup>39</sup> As a matter of fact, apart from few exceptions, fairy tales do not feature proper fairies; on the contrary, the word "fairies" refers to the old women narrators who tell the tales. This way of saying converts into literary convention the belief in women as truth-sayers, those gifted with memory and voice to transmit the culture's wisdom. Hence, the act of storytelling was closely related to the female acts of birthing, nursing, prophesying, and spinning. These

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<sup>37</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. x.

<sup>38</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. x.

<sup>39</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 62.

tales can be considered not simply tales about fairies but above all, tales about women, implicitly told by women.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.2.2. The Colonisation of Children's Literature

From the birth of children's literature as a genre, special attention was dedicated to its contents. Scholars and educators questioned whether some topics were suitable for a juvenile audience. This growing interest in children's education, literature, and its contents led to Jacqueline Rose's statement that "Literature for children is (...) a way of colonising (...) the child."<sup>41</sup>

Since the publication of *The Case of Peter Pan* in 1984, scholars in the field of children's literature have taken up a rhetorical viewpoint, which considers children's literature as the site of colonisation of the childhood by imperialist adulthood. Rose claims that, even though the adult's intentions are virtuous, he or she writes books for children to provide them with values and images of themselves *he approves or feels comfortable with*<sup>42</sup>. Whenever an adult writes he or she inevitably locates himself or herself in a superior position, regarding the child as the *other* who has to be educated and helped in order to succeed within the society.<sup>43</sup>

One of the first examples of the application of this argument was Perry Nodelman's essay "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature" (1992).<sup>43</sup> In his work, Nodelman applies ideas from Edward Said's *Orientalism* to the adult-child

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<sup>40</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Rose, Jacqueline, *The Case of Peter Pan or: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> My italics.

<sup>43</sup> Nodelman, Perry, "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children's Literature", in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, XVII (1992): p. 32.

relationship identified in children's texts".<sup>44</sup> He begins his essay by substituting the words "Orient" and "Orientals" with "Children" and "Childhood" in one of Said's most famous statements:

Child psychology and children's literature can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with childhood - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, child psychology and children's literature as an adult style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over childhood.<sup>45</sup>

However, Nodelman claims that "the more we claim to know about childhood, the more we find ourselves insisting on its mysterious otherness - its silence about itself - and the more we feel the need to observe yet more, interpret yet further".<sup>46</sup>

The adult acts as an expert of childhood, basing his knowledge on previous studies on the topic and on his personal experience. He writes from an adult-centred vision, inherently silencing the child, reducing him to a passive addressee since "the colonial/postcolonial theory applied to children's literature considers all that implies in terms of social and sexual control and exploitation; children, like women, have been silenced".<sup>47</sup>

However, this leads the oppressed child to turn into an oppressive adult. To partly avoid this consequence, Nodelman promotes the use of constructive criticism, which gives children the instruments to protect themselves from the oppression of the other. Several scholars who, on the contrary, see in children's literature a way to "decolonise"

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<sup>44</sup> Reynolds, Kimberly, *Children's Literature: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Nodelman, Perry, "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children's Literature", in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, XVII (1992), p. 29. The quotation can be found in its original form in Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978, p. 3: «Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.»

<sup>46</sup> Nodelman, Op. Cit., p. 31.

<sup>47</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 41.

the mind have contested this vision of children's literature as a colonising site. Clare Bradford, for example, responds to Rose's rhetoric of colonisation. She analyses how "Indigenous" authors-illustrators have used children's literature to "interpolate colonial discourses by valorising minority languages and by attributing to English words meanings produced within Indigenous cultures".<sup>48</sup>

Given the power of children's texts to work toward decolonisation, the time has, I think, passed for scholars to deploy the tired and unstable rhetoric, which treat children's literature as a form of colonisation. The innovative work of Indigenous authors and artists offers its own eloquent argument. Far from seeking to colonise children into the values of the dominant culture, Indigenous alphabet books seek to engage very young readers in actively producing meaning. It would be fanciful and insulting to claim that the implied readers of these books are colonised subjects. Whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, the young children implied as readers are open to difference and alive to the adventure of engaging with Indigenous beliefs and practices.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, given that children's literature is essentially defined by its readership:

It is not surprising that reader response theory has been attractive to some of those who study writing for children. Educationalists, with their access to and need to engage with real children as readers, have been particularly active in this area, whether they seek to understand how children develop as readers, the strategies they employ to make texts meaningful, or how texts may affect their grasp of ideas and social practices.<sup>50</sup>

However, children's literature in general, and fairy tales in particular, powerfully validated and reinforced the values of the society in which they appeared through symbolizing and codifying the status quo.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, they became more and more conditioned by patriarchal society, which, along with its ideology, imposed sexist

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<sup>48</sup> Bradford, Clare, "The Case of Children's Literature: colonial or anti-colonial?", in *Global Studies of Childhood*, Volume 1 Number 4, [www.wwwords.co.uk/GSCH](http://www.wwwords.co.uk/GSCH), 2011, p. 271, 16 Nov. 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Bradford, Op. Cit., p. 277, 16 Nov. 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, Kimberly, *Children's Literature: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 50-51.

<sup>51</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 130.

stereotyping. In the next section, I analyse the story of “Cinderella”, which represents a suitable example.

### 1.3. “Cinderella”

It is true that sexist stereotyping afflicts and limits both men and women. However, it is also true that women are the ones that are relegated to a subordinate position in a patriarchal society. Within the fairy tales tradition, “there are those who feel that fairy tales are unsuitable because they reinforce sexist stereotyping for both boys and girls, others who feel that fairy tales challenge such stereotyping, and still others who insist that these stories have neither a negative nor a positive impact in term of gender.”<sup>52</sup> Fairy tales might be fundamentally neutral, but according to the age/gender/culture of the audience, they might not be perceived as such. As Kay Stone claims, many females find in fairy tales an echo of their own struggles to become human beings. The gender of both reader and protagonist is indeed significant in this struggle.”<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the traditional “woman storyteller”, fairy tales usually represent only two types of women. These either are women rewarded for being passive, polite, pretty, submissive, and silent or vicious, envious, wicked women, mainly characterised by loquacity. However, this archetype of the female character changed through the centuries passing from an active and strong-willed heroine to a silent and submissive one. This archetype is best embodied in the figure of Cinderella, “one of the best-known stories in the Western world”.<sup>54</sup> Its popularity has continued unabated into the twenty-

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<sup>52</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women’s Folklore, Women’s Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 125.

<sup>53</sup> Jordan and Kalčík, Op. Cit., p. 144.

<sup>54</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p.vii.

first century, but why is that so? Throughout the countless versions of the story, Cinderella is the perfect example of manipulation of the main female character in order to fit not only cultural needs, but also gender impositions and pre-constructions. In addition, the kernel of the story can be found all over the world, in different cultures and times.

The dissemination and transformation of the story are interesting not only formally but also culturally and socially since some of its elements were either adapted or neglected depending on the society in which the story was set. With the analysis of a selected number of versions of Cinderella, I will explore the transformation of the character within the fairy tale genre, from folklore to the modern picturebook, and how it has been adapted culturally and socially.

## 2. From Folklore to the Canon

### 2.1. The Differentiation of the Plots

When we speak of Cinderella, we usually refer to a well-known narrative type. This is “a plot that derives from the interaction between Perrault’s and the Brothers Grimm’s literary versions, plus Walt Disney’s film adaptation as if the Cinderella tale had finally reached its clearest and purest form”,<sup>55</sup> erroneously taken as the “correct” version of the Cinderella tale. “Cinderella”, as any other fairy tale, grounds its roots in folklore and it can be argued to be the best-known fairy tale in the entire western world. However, not everyone is aware that its origins are far more ancient than the Brothers Grimm’s *Ashputtle*.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the first recorded tale with distinct Cinderella motifs comes from ninth-century China.<sup>57</sup> The resemblance of elements, such as the tiny foot size as a mark of extraordinary virtue and beauty, and the slipper made of precious material<sup>58</sup>, to the stories recorded in Europe so many centuries later, is remarkable.

Although there is no original text to revert to<sup>59</sup>, folktales’ central themes tend to remain stable. As an example, the kernel of the many available versions of Cinderella is the passage from rags to riches.<sup>60</sup> The tale’s variant elements were analysed and classified first by Marian Roalfe Cox, who in 1983 published the study *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants*, and then later by Swedish folklorist Anna

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<sup>55</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 150.

<sup>56</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. vii.

<sup>57</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 150.

<sup>58</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 227.

<sup>59</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 98-99.

<sup>60</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 150.

Brigitta Rooth in her investigation *The Cinderella Cycle* (1951). These two scholars classified and divided the different plots of the Cinderella archetype, basing their works on the *Index of Types of Folktales* of Antii Aarne and Stith Thompson.

In spite of all the cultural variants, the Aarne-Thompson's tale index identifies two distinct Cinderella tales. In the first type, AT510A ("Cinderella")<sup>61</sup>, the stories tend to be driven by the stepmothers' anxious jealousy, which subjects the heroine to an ordeal of one domestic chore after another. In these tales that depict the social persecution of a girl by her stepmother, the central focus is on the unbearable family situation produced by her father's remarriage. But while the father's responsibility for creating turmoil by choosing a partner malicious by nature and disposition recedes into the background or is suppressed – and even the father himself is often eliminated as a character – his wife's cruel deeds come to occupy the central stage. Her repulsive attributes and sadistic acts are described in painful detail, while the father remains a noble figure who rarely commits premeditated acts of evil.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, in AT510B ("Cap o' Rushes")<sup>63</sup> the sexual desire of the father and his unseemly behaviour drives the daughter away from home. These tales depict the erotic persecution of a daughter by her father, while the stepmother and her daughters tend to vanish from the core of the action and sometimes are not even present as characters.<sup>64</sup>

While there are no male counterparts to AT510B, male Cinderellas prosper in the folklore of many cultures:

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<sup>61</sup> Aarne, Antii and Thompson, Stith, *The Types of Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, p. 177.

<sup>62</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 102-3.

<sup>63</sup> Aarne, Antii and Thompson, Stith, *The Types of Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, p. 177.

<sup>64</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 102-3.

Antii Aarne and Stith Thompson set up a separate category of Cinderella tales identified by the number AT511<sup>65</sup> (“One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes” for female Cinderellas) and AT511A (“The Little Red Ox” for male Cinderellas). However, in practice tales such as “The Little Red Ox” seem to stage girls almost as often as boys.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, in her nineteenth-century study *Cinderella, Three Hundred and Forty-five Variants*, Marian Roalfe Cox identifies a further variation within the tales, describing the heroine’s degradation by her father. Out of the three hundred and forty-five variants, 226 tales unequivocally belong to one of the three categories identified by Cox as (1) ill-treated heroine (with mothers, stepmothers, and their progeny as victimisers), (2) unnatural father, and (3) King Lear love test.<sup>67</sup> The term “unnatural father” will be attributed either to a father who has an incestuous desire towards his own daughter or to a father who attempts to extract a confession of love from her. Sometimes the father’s confession of love and the erotic attention for the daughter fuse together in a single tale type. Within the literary tradition, it becomes evident how the evil deeds of the stepmother are regularly emphasized, while a father’s incestuous interest in his daughter is generally prudently kept to a minimum.<sup>68</sup>

A further distinction among the variants sees the fusion of the Cinderella archetype with the tale type AT480 (“Kind and Unkind Girls”), which stages a real daughter and a stepdaughter, one kind and one unkind. As in tale type AT510A, the kind girl is mistreated by her stepfamily. The kind girl is then obliged to undertake a journey where she is assigned difficult or impossible tasks. In the course of the journey, she is kind to the characters she encounters (animals or old man/woman) who reward her. When, on

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<sup>65</sup> For tale type AT511 see: Aarne, Antii and Thompson, Stith, *The Types of Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, p. 178.

<sup>66</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 106.

<sup>67</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 153.

<sup>68</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 150.

her return, her sister learns of her success she attempts to have the same adventures, but is unkind and disobedient to everyone and everything and is punished by disfigurement.<sup>69</sup>

The Cinderella tale has been reinvented in so many different cultures that the Aarne-Thompson index plays a central role in the analysis of the different versions. The persecuted heroine of this entire array of stories is sometimes cruel, manipulative and vengeful, and other times empathetic and caring or clever and resourceful. Even within a single culture, there can be different versions of the tale. As Italo Calvino has observed, every tale, no matter what its origin, “tends to absorb something of the place where it is narrated – a landscape, a custom, a moral outlook, or else merely a very faint accent or flavour of the locality.”<sup>70</sup> Within the countless versions of the tale, scholars have noticed how some plot units and the main topics of the tale tend to remain grounded. However, despite the elasticity of the female protagonist within any given culture, it is clear that her passivity and relying on a Prince Charming to rescue her, has replaced the astute and dynamic heroine of folktales from previous centuries.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.2. Folkloric Tradition

### 2.2.1. Structure of Tale Type AT510B

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<sup>69</sup> Aarne, Antii and Thompson, Stith, *The Types of Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, p. 164.

<sup>70</sup> My translation of Calvino, Italo, “Introduzione”, in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, pp. xxi.

<sup>71</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 102.

In the contemporary era, the term “folk-tale” implies an adult audience, while “fairy-tale” a tale dedicated to children. Even though nowadays the distinction is familiar, in the past it scarcely existed. Tale type AT510B demonstrates this. “Many would be reluctant to give it to children nowadays, but from Perrault’s Preface to the *Contes* it is evident that in the seventeenth century things were not the same”.<sup>72</sup>

Like “Cinderella”, even “Catskin” was considered cathartic for society in general as the enactment of Oedipal desires, with each tale suppressing one component of the Oedipal plot, either the jealous mother or amorous father,<sup>73</sup> and their enduring popularity suggests that they address issues that have a significant social function.<sup>74</sup> Despite all this, it remains noticeable that in AT510B the possibility of incest is treated openly, at least as far as adults are concerned. For young children the implications of “marriage” remain hidden, while adults will understand it as a euphemism for sexual abuse; “small girls who announce, as commonly happens, that they will marry Daddy do not mean what adults mean.”<sup>75</sup> Still, to borrow Bettelheim’s words:

This traditional literature fed the child’s imagination and stimulated his fantasising. Simultaneously, since these stories answered the child’s most important questions, they were a major agent of his socialisation. The fairy tale is therapeutic because the patient finds his own solutions, through contemplating what the story seems to imply about him and his inner conflicts at this moment of his life.<sup>76</sup>

In staging one of western society’s most sacred taboos, Catskin stories celebrate daughters as agents of resistance and maintenance of the sanctity of cultural codes, even though the theme of incest alone would serve as an explanation for the increasing lack

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<sup>72</sup> Betts, Christopher, “Introduction” in Perrault, Charles, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xxii.

<sup>73</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 153.

<sup>74</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. xi.

<sup>75</sup> Betts, Christopher, “Introduction” in Perrault, Charles, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xxii.

<sup>76</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 27-28.

of interest and disappearance of the tale type AT510B from the folkloric arena. Furthermore, the heroine of the tale challenges the figure of the submissive good woman because, unlike Cinderella, who endures humiliation at home, the heroine of Catskin tales is active and resourceful. She begins with a strong resistance to paternal desires, fleeing the household and moving out into an alien world that requires her to be inventive, energetic, and enterprising if she is to re-establish herself, reclaim her royal rank, and marry the prince. Her resourcefulness is confined largely to sartorial and culinary arts, but traditionally these were the two areas where women could distinguish themselves.<sup>77</sup> Many “Catskin” narratives are composed of two phases of action: in the first, the heroine is persecuted by her father, in the second she turns into a Cinderella figure and is obliged to spend her days in domestic servitude under the supervision of a despotic cook or queen.<sup>78</sup>

Among the entire range of tales belonging to the category AT510B, in this section I analyse Joseph Jacobs’ *Catskin*; Charles Perrault’s *Donkeyskin*; *The Princess in the Suit of Leather*<sup>79</sup>; *Pelle di Vecchia* (“Old Woman’s skin”)<sup>80</sup>; *Maria Wood*<sup>81</sup>; and *Maria di Legno* (“Maria Wood”)<sup>82</sup>.

As previously hinted, this tale type (with the exception of *Catskin* and *Pelle di Vecchia*) is characterised by the erotic interest of a father in his daughter; an interest that leads her to flee from home, seek refuge as a servant in a foreign realm without revealing her true identity and eventually, after attending three different nights of entertainment – marries the prince. The main plot can be summarized in these stages:

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<sup>77</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 105-6.

<sup>78</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 103.

<sup>79</sup> Collected by Maria Tatar in *The Classic Fairy Tales*.

<sup>80</sup> Collected by Italo Calvino in *Fiabe Italiane* and belonging to Pistoia’s folkloric tradition.

<sup>81</sup> Roman tale collected by Busk in 1877, in Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 91.

<sup>82</sup> Collected by Italo Calvino in *Fiabe Italiane* and belonging to Rome’s folkloric tradition.

- Presentation of the family;
- The father is driven/wants to marry his own daughter;
- With the help of an elderly woman (with or without magic powers) or thanks to the heroine's own resourcefulness, three beautiful dresses and a disguise are manufactured, and the heroine flees from home to reach a foreign kingdom where she meets the local prince;
- The maiden becomes the servant of the prince or a cook who throws various objects at her;
- The three nights where the heroine appears and captures the attentions of the prince at the ball;
- Recognition of the protagonist;
- Marriage;
- Reconciliation with the father.

As the Cinderella tale type, AT510B also starts with the function of “absentation”. This function contemplates that one member of the community or family leaves the security of home or of the familiar environment.<sup>83</sup> In both tale types, “absentation” is represented by the death of the heroine's biological mother, which starts in all the situations within the plot.

### 2.2.2. The Wrong Bride

The biological mother can be considered the first accidental antagonist of this tale type. It is her that establishes the conditions under which the king will be able to marry

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<sup>83</sup> Propp, Vladimir Ja. , *Morfologia della fiaba*, with an intervention of Claude Lévi-Strauss and the author's response, edited by Gian Luigi Bravo, Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1988, p. 32.

again after her death. From this point of view, we can argue that she is providing a justification for him and his unnatural longings, making him appear as a victim of the circumstances, who obeys his wife's will.

For example, at the beginning of *Donkeyskin* the king is described as completely devoted to his wife. The character of the father is more mildly treated in Perrault than in other authors. In Perrault's time "a king was semi-sacred, at any rate in public writings, and the father's lust is duly purified."<sup>84</sup> He does not even intend to marry again after his wife's death:

The Queen, then, feeling close to death, addressed, in solemn words, the King: "Permit me with my dying breath to ask of you, my dear, one thing: that if you should desire to wed when I am gone..."

"Alas!" her husband said, "Have no anxieties of such a kind; for never will I take another bride; so please dismiss these worries from your mind."

"That's what I thought you'd say, my dear," replied the queen; "of that your passion makes me sure; But yet I'd like to feel still more secure: I'd like to hear you swear an oath (On which I know I can rely) that only if you find a woman both more lovely and more virtuous than I, you may, upon this one condition, marry her with my permission."<sup>85</sup>

After the queen's death, the king makes such a display of his emotion that "the courtiers judged his sorrow could not last; he wept, they said, as if he wished to see the mourning done as promptly as might be."<sup>86</sup> After the mourning period had passed, the king "announced he thought it good to choose another consort if he could."<sup>87</sup> To keep the promise made to his deceased wife, the king notices how only his own daughter fits the

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<sup>84</sup> Betts, Christopher, "Introduction" in Perrault, Charles, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xxii.

<sup>85</sup> Perrault, Charles, "Donkeyskin", in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> Perrault, Op. Cit., p. 55.

<sup>87</sup> Perrault, Op. Cit., p. 55.

description of the perfect woman described by his dead queen, so he “got the crazy notion in his head that he and the Princess should therefore wed.”<sup>88</sup>

On the other hand, in *Maria Wood*, *Maria di Legno* and *The Princess in the Suit of Leather*, the choice of a new wife is determined not by the fulfilment of certain qualities, but by the fitting of the previous queen’s shoe, ring or anklet. This sort of test can be compared to the ancient German custom mentioned by Cox of the groom giving a shoe to his bride as a sign of engagement.<sup>89</sup> This tradition might be compared to the groom putting the ring on the finger of the bride as an important part of the marriage ceremony,<sup>90</sup> indicating the moment of the dissolution of one nuclear family and the formation of a new one.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, as suggested by Bettelheim, “a tiny receptacle into which some part of the body can slip and fit tightly can be seen as a symbol of the vagina,”<sup>92</sup> and therefore suggestive of future procreation.

Even though fairy tales often describe this new family unit, in AT510B the situation is at first reversed since it is the father himself that offers this symbol of betrothal to his own daughter. The ring, the shoe, and even the anklet do not belong to the heroine herself or to her future husband, as will happen in a second phase of the plot or even in tale type AT510A. On the contrary, they belong to the deceased mother, to a couple in the past.

The heroine does not submit to her fate by accepting to marry her own father, even though the fitting of the garment indicates that she should. The recognition of the

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<sup>88</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Donkeyskin”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 55.

<sup>89</sup> Roalfe Cox, Marian, *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin and Cap O’ Rushes*, with an introduction by Andrew Lang, London: published for the Folk-Lore Society by David Nutt, 1893.

<sup>90</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

<sup>91</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 71.

<sup>92</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

heroine as the designed bride for her father might indicate not only an ill-fated destiny from which she has to escape proving to be the true incarnation of virtue but also a society that accidentally promotes incest and that does not rebel against this unnatural decision. In all the six stories we find an apparent indifference towards the heroine's destiny and even approval for the incoming union. In *Donkeyskin* for example "most of the ladies of the court were completely disappointed that they were unable to dine, but the priest felt the greatest sorrow, for he not only missed a meal but, what's worse, nothing was put on the offering plate"<sup>93</sup> or, in *The Princess with the Suit of Leather*, the *qadi*, the Muslim judge who interprets and administers the law of Islam, gives his consent to the marriage. The society from which the heroine escapes might be considered as the representation of all the wrong behaviours not accepted in the real world.

Even though the heroine must escape everything represented by the marriage with her father, in *Maria Wood*, *Maria di Legno* and *The Princess in the Suit of Leather* the test of the garment happens in three different ways.

In *Maria Wood* the heroine's biological mother is not even sick when she makes her husband promise that he will marry no other woman but the woman whose foot her shoe fits.<sup>94</sup> In this version of the tale, "the shoe was under a spell, and would fit no one whom he could marry".<sup>95</sup> The king is here described as "simple" and as soon as his spouse dies, he starts looking for a new bride causing the shoe "to be tried on all manner of women."<sup>96</sup> When the search produces no results "he grew quite bewildered and strange in his mind"<sup>97</sup> and the willingness to marry his own daughter is defined as a

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<sup>93</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 112.

<sup>94</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 91.

<sup>95</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 91.

<sup>96</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 91.

<sup>97</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 91.

silly caprice. His ingenuity is underlined by the fact that “the queen had not said that he should marry the woman whom her shoe fitted, but that he should not marry any whom it did not fit.”<sup>98</sup>

The simplicity of the king in this tale is contrasted by the frankness of the one in *Maria di Legno*. Here, as in *Donkeyskin*, the king promises his dying queen that he will not take any other wife. In this case, it is the queen that encourages him to marry again, so that he can be assisted in raising their daughter. To facilitate the search for a new wife, she gives him her ring. Unfortunately, the king discovers that his own daughter has accidentally tried the ring on and that therefore she is the woman whom he *has to* marry: “Ah, figlia mia, tu devi essere mia moglie!”<sup>99</sup>. In this case, the king is, to some extent, obliged to marry his own daughter in order to have both a new wife and keep the promise made to his queen.

On the other hand, in *The Princess in the Suit of Leather*, readers do not see the mother ask the father in her dying hour to keep a promise, nor does she give him any direction to help search for the future wife. The readers acknowledge the king’s intentions only through his declaration to the matchmakers: “Find me the girl, rich or poor, humble or well-born, whose foot this anklet will fit. For I promised the queen as she lay dying that I would marry that girl and no other.”<sup>100</sup> In this case it is not clear if the queen has forced him to promise or not; the king appears to have no responsibility except that of accepting bad advice. It is actually an old woman who suggests to the other matchmakers that they should ask the king’s own daughter to try the anklet and it is a wrinkled matron who insinuates that the king should marry his own daughter –

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<sup>98</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 91.

<sup>99</sup> “Ah, my daughter! You ought to be my wife!” my translation of Calvino, Italo, “Maria di Legno”, in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, p. 437.

<sup>100</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 131.

since the anklet fits – instead of giving such beauty to a stranger, thus depriving himself.<sup>101</sup> The king is easily convinced and summons the *qadi* to obtain the permission for the marriage, and makes no mention of his plan to the princess.<sup>102</sup>

Notwithstanding the incestuous erotic interest of the father, in these six tales there are two exceptions. Joseph Jacobs' *Catskin* presents a completely different familiar situation. In this version of the fairy tale, the heroine's father "cared a nought"<sup>103</sup> for her since she was not the male heir he was hoping for. Once at the age to be wed, the father declares that she is to marry the first that comes for her (a recurring theme in the Italian folkloric tradition<sup>104</sup>). The unfortunate match with a nasty rough old man leads the girl to flee from home, asking the hen-wife for advice.<sup>105</sup>

*Pelle di Vecchia* is the second exception. This version is intertwined with the tale type AT923, *Love Like Salt*, characterised by the same love test that we find in *King Lear*. In this tale type, a father extracts from his daughter a declaration of love, which he deems insufficient and so results in her banishment, which forces her to adopt the "Cinderella" position.<sup>106</sup> In addition to tale type AT923, tale type AT510A is also prevalent, as the two evil and older sisters (two adjectives often matched in the fairy tale's familiar situations<sup>107</sup>) appear as characters. Similar to Perrault's *Cendrillon*, the beginning of the tale depicts the father about to embark on a trip. He asks the three daughters what presents he can bring back for them and the younger one – traditionally

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<sup>101</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 132.

<sup>102</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 132.

<sup>103</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> See for example "Le Principesse maritate al primo che passa" in Calvino, Italo, *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, p. 532.

<sup>105</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 122.

<sup>106</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 235.

<sup>107</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 28.

the most beautiful and the most ill-treated<sup>108</sup> – asks the father for salt. To invalidate her request, the two sisters tell the father that she needs the salt “per salarvi le cuoia”<sup>109</sup>, an Italian expression that means: “to salt up your corpse”<sup>110</sup>, “to wish someone’s death”. Believing the malicious words of the two sisters, the father sends the daughter away from home with her old nanny.

As a standard feature of the different versions, the heroine listens to the advice of minor characters. They warn her against sexual abuse within the family – omitting unacceptable details – by telling her that she must resist her father’s suggestion at all costs.<sup>111</sup> In order to escape her ill-fated destiny, the heroine is forced to flee from home.

### 2.2.3. The Right Bride

Either thanks to external suggestion or to her own resourcefulness, the heroine asks her father to please her with three different and beautiful dresses as wedding gifts, plus one, usually an animal’s skin. As Christopher Betts explains, “the gifts supply, first, the means to attract the suitor she wants when the time comes, and secondly, the ugly disguise which will deter any sexual approaches meanwhile.”<sup>112</sup> For example, in *Donkeyskin* the heroine’s fairy godmother suggests that she should ask her father for a gown made from the skin of the enchanted Master Donkey, the source of his wealth. The “passionate love” that the father feels for her leads him to satisfy the request, filling

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<sup>108</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 46.

<sup>109</sup> Calvino, Italo, “Pelle di vecchia”, in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, p. 294.

<sup>110</sup> My translation.

<sup>111</sup> Betts, Christopher, “Introduction” in Perrault, Charles, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xxii.

<sup>112</sup> Betts, Op. Cit., p. xxii.

the child “with dread”.<sup>113</sup> In *Pelle di Vecchia* it is the old nanny that buys an old woman’s skin after walking past the old woman’s funeral; in this way, the heroine would be protected from the unwanted advances of young men. In *The Princess with the Suit of Leather*, it is the princess herself that asks a tanner to make her a suit of leather to hide her from head to heels, showing nothing but her eyes.<sup>114</sup>

In the second phase of the plot, the “Cinderella” phase, the heroine reaches a foreign kingdom where she usually enters the services of a cook, or directly of the local prince. During this period of time she lives under the protection of her disguise, diverting anyone’s potential attention. She dismisses her costume only in occasion of the three<sup>115</sup> nights of entertainment that ensue.

With the exception of *Donkeyskin* and *Pelle di Vecchia*, where there are no balls to attend, in the four remaining versions we can find a similar pattern. In *Catskin*, *Maria di Legno*, *The Princess with the Suit of Leather* and *Maria Wood*, the heroine attends different balls, usually set at Carnival time. On each of these nights of entertainment she eludes the questions of the Prince, making up the name of her home country, taking as inspiration the names of the objects he previously threw at her, or giving hints about her living situation. For example, in *The Princess with the Suit of Leather*, Juleidah declares to come from “a land of the paddles and ladles”<sup>116</sup>, or, if we consider one episode of *Maria Wood*, the heroine declares to come from the country of Bootkick,<sup>117</sup> since the Prince previously kicked her with his Boot.

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<sup>113</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Donkeyskin”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 62.

<sup>114</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> For the rigid formulas of the tales see: Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 46.

<sup>116</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 135.

<sup>117</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 93.

The Prince does not understand any of the clues of the heroine; he only tries to follow her home. The Prince, as every fairy tale character, does not learn anything neither from other characters nor from his own experiences,<sup>118</sup> repeating the same actions for (usually) three times.<sup>119</sup>

On the other hand, the heroine's repeatedly running away from this situation could be seen as her effort to protect her virginity.<sup>120</sup> Following Bettelheim's interpretation, the fact that in every story the protagonist goes to the ball to meet the prince, only to run away from him and return to her degraded position, might represent the ambivalence of the young girl who wants to commit personally and sexually, and at the same time is afraid to do so:

As it often does, the three-times-repeated behaviour reflects the child's position in regard to his parents, and his reaching for his true selfhood as he works through his early conviction that he is the most important element in the threesome, and his later fear that he is the least significant. True selfhood is gained not through the three repetitions, but through something else that these lead up to – the fitting of the shoe. The heroine's evading the prince tells that she wants to be chosen for the person that she really is, and not for the splendid appearance.<sup>121</sup>

Even though at first she succeeds to escape, at the end the Prince succeeds in finding his true Bride. If at the beginning it is a garment that condemned her to her cruel destiny, in the end it becomes a garment that frees her. This allows her to regain her independence, both as a person and as a princess, finally allowing her to form a new family.

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<sup>118</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 55.

<sup>119</sup> As Lüthi explains, the use of *repetitions* in the fairy tale is typical of oral forms. For a detailed study see: Op. Cit., p. 63.

<sup>120</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

<sup>121</sup> Bettelheim, Op. Cit., p. 251.

In *Donkeyskin*, the prince peeps from a keyhole and is described to have “almost lost his breath while he was gazing at her”.<sup>122</sup> Once back at the palace, he refuses to attend the balls of Carnival and a “lethal melancholy was at the root of his ailment”.<sup>123</sup> At this point, he asks Donkeyskin to bake him a cake with her own hands and the narrator underlines the wit of the heroine:

It is said that she worked little too hastily and that one of her precious rings fell from her finger into the dough. But those thought to be knowledgeable about the outcome to this story claim that she put it in there with a purpose. As for me, quite frankly, I believe it, for I am sure that when the prince stopped at the door and saw her through the keyhole, she knew exactly what was happening. In those matters women are so discerning and their eyes are so sharp that you can't look at them for a moment without their knowing it. I have no doubts, and I give you my words that she was confident that her young admirer would accept the ring with gratitude.<sup>124</sup>

It is the same Donkeyskin that resourcefully establishes how she will be recognised as the designated wife. By giving the ring to the prince even though it had been suggested that it was a magical object, it “rejected everyone with equal disdain”<sup>125</sup> until it met the finger of its true owner, Donkeyskin. The other women's behaviours are contrasted with that of the heroine, and as in the Grimms' *Aschenputtel*, mutilations of body parts are described since “there was no single trick left unused by women trying to make their fingers fit the ring”.<sup>126</sup>

The use of a ring as a means of recognition is present also in *The Princess with the Suit of Leather*. At the insistence of the mother, the prince attends the third night of entertainment at the *wazir*'s house and attempts to stop Juleidah from running away at the end of the night. In the scuffle to escape, she pulls the prince's ring off his hand.

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<sup>122</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 113.

<sup>123</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 113.

<sup>124</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 114.

<sup>125</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 115.

<sup>126</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 115.

After starting a journey to look for the “land of paddles and ladles”,<sup>127</sup> the prince finds his own ring in the dough of the cake made for him by Juleidah as a provision for the trip.

In the tale *Maria Wood*, the prince gives Maria his ring on the first night of the ball and spends the successive two trying to understand who she was by ordering his servants to follow her. At the impossibility to track down her whereabouts, the prince falls sick with disappointment, “because he saw no hope of hearing any more of the fair domino with whom he had spent three happy evenings, nor could any doctor find any remedy for his sickness”.<sup>128</sup> Three times Maria offers the prince a cup of broth of her making to heal him and only after accepting the broth does he find the ring he gave the foreign beautiful woman on the night of the first ball.

The recognition in *Maria di Legno* happens slightly differently. In this tale, at each of the three balls the prince gives Maria a present: a brooch, a precious ring and a medallion with his own portrait. Maria succeeds in leaving behind the servants designated to follow her by scattering on the floor a handful of gold coins to distract them; her swiftness thus creates a lovesick and frustrated prince. The prince’s mother makes Maria prepare a pizza – a strongly culture bound element – in order to make the prince feel better. One by one, within the *three*<sup>129</sup> pizzas Maria prepares him, he finds all the presents he had given the beautiful stranger at the three balls.

Two other tales provide an exception in the recognition of the future wife as the true one. In *Catskin*, the element of the three balls where she declares to come from picaresque countries is maintained. However, after the third ball, the prince succeeds in

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<sup>127</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 135.

<sup>128</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 94.

<sup>129</sup> My italics. For the rigid formulas of the tales see: Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 46.

following her and marries her immediately after convincing his mother that Catskin was the beautiful maiden that he deserved. In the tale *Pelle di Vecchia*, there are no balls to attend: on the contrary, the prince discovers her true identity by spying on her through the keyhole, having been suspicious of the great capacities of the old lady in sewing and spinning.

If we consider the various garments of the different versions, Bettelheim further argues that “the usage of a garment made of stiff material reminds readers of the hymen and can be seen as an appropriate image for virginity, particularly when the male sets a trap to catch her.”<sup>130</sup> From this point of view, the different heroines appear as virginal brides. Still, in this tale type the heroine is not only resourceful, but also lacks the typical modesty associated with a virginal bride. For example, in *Donkeyskin*, *Catskin* and *Maria di Legno*, the protagonist takes her time to appear as the beautiful princess she is, as she appears in front of the prince and his family. For what regards the marriage itself, the heroine of the tale type AT510B may appear as a traditionally virginal bride, but, still, she challenges the Cinderella’s model we are used to.

#### 2.2.4. Reconciliation with the Father

The tale type AT510B resolves around two possible ends: the formation of a new nuclear family and/or the reconciliation with the father. In *Maria di Legno* and *Maria Wood* the story ends right after the wedding. As previously explained, *Pelle di Vecchia* is intertwined with the tale type AT923 and at the end of the tale the motif of salt returns. At the royal wedding, the father of the bride – a neighbour of his daughter’s

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<sup>130</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

husband – is invited. At the banquet he is served only insipid courses, with the exception of the roast beef, so that he can understand the importance of the salt and of the request made by his daughter. At the end of the tale the father recognises her, understands his mistakes and punishes the evil sisters.<sup>131</sup>

In *Catskin*, the marriage is crowned with a “dear little son”. However, the evil cook that was once the guardian of Catskin continues to consider her a beggar and her son a bastard. Offended by the infamy, the heroine asks her husband to track her father down in order to resolve this issue and be recognised for who she truly is. As punishment for his evil conduct and for the poor care he had for his daughter, the father is presented as a miserable repentant:

“Pray, sir, had you not once a young daughter whom you would never see or own?” The old gentleman said: “It is true; I am a hardened sinner. But I would give all my worldly goods if I could but see her once before I die.” Then the young lord told him what happened to Catskin, and took him to the inn, and brought his father-in-law to his own castle, where they lived happily afterwards.<sup>132</sup>

In *Donkeyskin*, no other prince arrives at the marriage with as much splendour “as the father of the bride, who, though he had once been in love with her, had since purified the fires that had inflamed his heart.” Perrault clarifies that “he had purged himself of all lawless desires and all that was left in his heart of that wicked flame had been transformed into paternal devotion.”<sup>133</sup>

Finally, in *The Princess with the Suit of Leather*, the father undertakes a journey in order to find his lost daughter. Disguised, Juleidah tells her story while dining with both her father and the wicked old woman who suggested that he should have taken her as a

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<sup>131</sup> Calvino, Italo, “Pelle di vecchia”, in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, p. 296.

<sup>132</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 125.

<sup>133</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 116.

wife. At the end of the story they fling the old woman “over a tall cliff into the *wadi*” and the father gives his daughter half of his reign and they lived in “happiness and contentment until death, the partner of the truest lovers, divided them”.<sup>134</sup>

The acted Oedipal fantasies in the six fairy tales are remarkably similar in contrast to the differing social realities, and yet they are nonetheless reshaped and modified by the cultural setting in which they are told and retold. In our own age, it is easy to see why fairy tales that were adapted into stories for children, favour the theme of maternal malice over the forbidden and forbidding theme of incest.<sup>135</sup>

## 2.3. Literary Tradition

### 2.3.1. Caring Mothers and Ill-tempered Stepmothers

Folktale scholars have tried to discover the oldest form of the tale and to trace the development through time of the different types of the tale.<sup>136</sup> It might be the universal appeal of a “rags to riches” story with an emphasis on sensitive family issues that explains its successful dissemination through time and space.<sup>137</sup> As previously hinted, the first recorded tale with distinct Cinderella motifs comes from ninth-century China.<sup>138</sup> However, it has circulated principally in the Indo-European world.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 137.

<sup>135</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 155.

<sup>136</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. ix.

<sup>137</sup> (edited by) Zipes, Jack, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: the western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 97.

<sup>138</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 97.

<sup>139</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 97.

The first European literary versions of the Cinderella tale (AT510A) was in Gianbattista Basile's *Il Pentamerone* (1634-6), followed by the best-known versions in Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Stories or Tales of Times Past*, 1697) and in Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, 1812-15).

It is not by chance that the literary fairy tale began flourishing in Italy before other European countries. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Italian cities and duchies had prospered as great commercial centres. The flourishing of trade favoured the development of culture at the courts and in the city-states, and foreign influences started to be significant in the cultural scene.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, with the invention of the printing press the previously oral tradition of storytelling underwent an immense revolution. Not only were the oral tales taken over by a different social class, and the form, themes, production and reception of the tale were transformed; but also a great deal of foreign influences on storytelling was mixed up with the strong native oral traditions<sup>141</sup>. Although it cannot be fully documented, it is highly likely that the Italian literary fairy tales gradually spread in print and by word of mouth throughout Europe.<sup>142</sup>

Basile's version of the Cinderella tale was written in the Neapolitan dialect and published posthumously during the years 1634-1636 in a collection entitled *Lo Cunto de li Cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, and better known as *Il Pentamerone*.

*Il Pentamerone* marked a climax of the interest in popular culture and folk traditions that permeated the Renaissance, when isolated fairy tales started to be included in

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<sup>140</sup> Zipes, Jack, "Breaking the Disney Spell", in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, edited by Maria Tatar, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 334.

<sup>141</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 334.

<sup>142</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 11.

novella collections.<sup>143</sup> As it was the first collection consisting entirely of fairy tales to appear in Europe, *Il Pentamerone* marks the passage from the oral tradition of folk tales to the artful and sophisticated “authored” fairy tale.<sup>144</sup> In this particular type of narrative, “high” and “low” cultures intersected offering no easy answers to the problem of how an oral narrative genre can be refashioned in literary form:<sup>145</sup>

Basile did not merely transcribe the oral materials that heard around Naples and in his travels, but transformed them into original tales distinguished by rhetorical play, abundant references to the everyday life and popular culture of the time, and a subtext of the playful critique of courtly culture and the canonical literary tradition.<sup>146</sup>

As was Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, *Il Pentamerone* is divided into five days, each comprising a set of ten tales, framed by an old-folktale motif about laughter.<sup>147</sup> Basile’s version of Cinderella, “The Cat Cinderella”, is the sixth diversion of the first day.

The Cinderella protagonist of the tale has nothing of the French-inspired heroine that Disney made famous with his film in 1950. Even though Basile’s tales exerted a noteworthy influence on later fairy tale writers such as Perrault and the Grimms, they are often coarser and crueller. Deceit, dishonesty and even murder are key elements of Basile’s collection whereas moral might not be central.<sup>148</sup>

As every tale in the collection, “The Cat Cinderella” starts with a brief summary of the tale:

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<sup>143</sup> Zipes, Jack, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 42-43.

<sup>144</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., pp. 42-43.

<sup>145</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., pp. 42-43.

<sup>146</sup> (edited by) Zipes, Jack, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: the western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 41.

<sup>147</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>148</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 152.

Zezenia, ‘nmezzata de la maiestra ad accidere la matreia e credenno co farele avere lo patre pe marito d’essere tenuta cara, è posta a la cucina; ma, pe vertute de le fate, dapò varie fortune se guadagna no re pe marito.<sup>149</sup>

This is the English translation:

Zezenia, incited by her governess to kill her stepmother, believes that she will be cherished by the former if she helps her to become her father’s wife; instead she is kept in the kitchen. After many adventures and by the help of the fairies, she wins a king for her husband.<sup>150</sup>

The summary might recall the description of the tale AT510A, where the stepmother’s evil deeds are central. However, the reader can notice a fundamental difference in the character of the young Neapolitan protagonist. In this tale, Zezenia actively acts in order to evade the submissive and pitiful condition she is put into by the hostility of her stepmother, an “evil, malicious and bad tempered woman”.<sup>151</sup> Zezenia complains about her stepmother’s ill treatment with her governess, Carmosina, who on the contrary shows her “more love than was possible to describe”.<sup>152</sup> Frustrated by the fact that the tender governess is not her actual stepmother, Zezenia puts “a wasp in her ear”.<sup>153</sup> Tempted by the prospect of climbing up the social ladder, Carmosina contrives a plan in order to grant Zezenia’s wish and thus become her stepmother.

Zezenia does not hesitate in taking the role of executor in the plan her governess has devised:

“Well then,” answered her governess, “listen carefully; keep your ears open and you shall always enjoy the whitest bread of the finest flour. When your father leaves the house, tell your step-mom that you would like one of those old dresses that are kept in the big chest in the closet, to save the one you now have

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<sup>149</sup> Basile, Gianbattista, “La Gatta Cenerentola”, in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, pp. 53.

<sup>150</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>151</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 5.

on. As she always wants to see you in rags and tatters, she will open the chest and say, 'Hold the lid.' You must hold it while she is rummaging inside and then suddenly let it fall so that it breaks her neck. After that, you know well that your father would even coin false money to please you, so when he fondles you, beg him to take me for his wife, and then you shall be happy and the mistress even of my life."<sup>154</sup>

Until Zezolla carries out the governess' plan, "every hour seemed a thousand years"<sup>155</sup>

After the period of mourning for the first stepmother, the Prince gives way to Zezolla's persuasive words and marries Carmosina, who after a little time of "every sort of caress"<sup>156</sup> turns into a second evil stepmother. She not only pushes forward six daughters of her own, but also works on her husband in order to make them win his good graces; in this way, he lets his own daughter slip out of his heart."<sup>157</sup> Zezolla's condition changes and she becomes the maid in her own house, dressed in rags and sleeping close to the fireplace. Not only does she change her status, but also her name, and she starts to be called "Cat Cinderella".<sup>158</sup>

Mothers-in-law never enjoyed a reputation of warm-hearted kindness, and in the vast majority of tales, stepmothers do not actively persecute their stepsons, but their

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<sup>154</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 5. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, "La Gatta Cenerentola", in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 54: «Ora susso – leprecaie la maiestra, – siente buono, apre l'aurecchie e te venerà lo pane ianco comm'a li shiure. Comme esce patreto, di a matreiate ca vuoi 'no vestito de chille viecchie che stanno drinto lo cascione granne de lo retreto, pe sparagnare chisto che puorte 'n cuollo. Essa, che te vo' vedere tutta pezze e peruoglie, aprerà lo cascione e dirrà: 'Tiene lo copierchio'. E tu, tenennolo, mentre iarrà scervecando pe drinto, lassalo cadere de botta, ca se romparrà lo cuollo. Fatto chesto, tu sai ca patreto farria moneta fauza pe contentarete, e tu, quando te fa carizze, pregalo a pigliareme pe moglie, ca viata te, ca sarrai la patrona de la vita mia».

<sup>155</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 6.

<sup>156</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 5. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, "La Gatta Cenerentola", in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, pp. 53-60: «Ma, dopo pochissimo tempo, mandò al diavolo e scordò del tutto il favore ricevuto (oh triste l'anima, che ha cattiva padrona!), e cominciò a mettere al primo posto le sue sei figlie, che fin allora aveva tenute segrete; e tanto fece che il marito, presele in grazia, si fece cadere dal cuore la propria figlia».

<sup>157</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 5. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, "La Gatta Cenerentola", in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, pp. 53-60: Ma, dopo pochissimo tempo, mandò al diavolo e scordò del tutto il favore ricevuto (oh triste l'anima, che ha cattiva padrona!), e cominciò a mettere al primo posto le sue sei figlie, che fin allora aveva tenute segrete; e tanto fece che il marito, presele in grazia, si fece cadere dal cuore la propria figlia.

<sup>158</sup> Dundes, Op. Cit., p. 6.

stepdaughters, who consequently take on the role of innocent martyrs and patient victims.<sup>159</sup> The killing of the first stepmother fulfils the most prohibitive fantasies of the Oedipal complex. As Bettelheim has argued, fairy tales enacting Oedipal conflicts split the mother figure in two: a benevolent biological mother who is no longer around and a superhuman and a diabolical stepmother who stands in the way of the female child's attempts to secure her father's love.<sup>160</sup> Stepmothers stand as an unshakable source of evil in countless fairy tales, taking on all the supposed evils associated with mothers.<sup>161</sup> As Maria Tatar states, "the only way to account for their unnatural behaviour is to assume that they are impostors who have somehow usurped the position of the real parents. The family established at the tale's end come to constitute the hero's true family circle".<sup>162</sup>

Among the rags-to-riches type of fairy tale, caring biological mothers seldom play a central role. Echoing Basile's version, Perrault's version of "Cinderella" begins with the evil second wife and makes no reference to the deceased spouse. It is only mentioned that Cinderella has inherited all her good qualities – the unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper<sup>163</sup> – from her mother.

Perrault's version of "Cinderella" is included in the collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, which was published in 1697. Apart from Perrault's influential rewriting of the Cinderella motif, the French tale is particularly important because most Cinderella tales were first collected in the nineteenth century, "whose two initial decades saw a series of German tales that didn't fully develop the famous fairy tale and

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<sup>159</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 139-140.

<sup>160</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 73.

<sup>161</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 142.

<sup>162</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 75.

<sup>163</sup> Perrault, Charles, "Cinderella", in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. ix-xliv and pp. 130.

instead rehearsed a French-influenced prototype”.<sup>164</sup> There is no doubt that, among the writers of fairy tales during the 1690s, Perrault was the greatest stylist, which accounts for the fact that his tales have withstood the test of time. From his youth he had been a talented and industrious writer, especially in verse; furthermore he wrote prolifically, praising, directly or indirectly, Louis XIV and his achievements. Such writings were an important element in a concerted effort to promote the prestige of the King, seen as personifying the nation, and thus earning rewards in wealth and status.<sup>165</sup> The first of his tales collection, *Contes de ma mère l’oie* (“Tales of Mother Goose”), appeared in 1695 and was dedicated to “Mademoiselle”, the 19-year-old King’s niece. The collection was introduced by a dedicatory epistle, and contained five tales: those of “Sleeping Beauty”, “Little Red Riding-Hood”, “Bluebeard”, “Puss in Boots”, and “The Fairies”.<sup>166</sup>

As happened in Italy, the flourishing of the international power of France during the fifteenth century favoured the development of culture and the internationalisation of French art, music, and literature. The fairy tale genre had propitious conditions in France and bloomed in full force toward the end of the *ancien régime* from 1690 to 1714. The institutionalisation of fairy tales in France was somehow subversive “for it enabled writers to create a dialogue about norms, manners, and power that evaded court censorship and freed the fantasy of the writers and readers, while at the same time paying a tribute to the French code of *civilté* and the majesty of the aristocracy”.<sup>167</sup>

However, up until 1690s, the oral folktale in France had not been deemed worthy enough to be transcribed and transformed into literature. It was part of the vulgar, common people tradition, beneath the dignity of the high class and associated with

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<sup>164</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 153.

<sup>165</sup> Betts, Christopher, “Introduction” in Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xv.

<sup>166</sup> Betts, op. Cit., p. xv.

<sup>167</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 17.

pagan beliefs and superstitions that were no longer relevant in Christian Europe. In fact, with the exception of the significant collections of tales, *The Pleasant Nights* (1550-53) by Giovan Francesco Straparola and *The Pentameron* (1634-36) by Gianbattista Basile, in Italy, most of the European aristocracy and intelligentsia did not consider the folktale as literature.<sup>168</sup>

The transformation of the oral folktale into a literary fairy tale was a complex process. It was only about the middle of the seventeenth century that the fairy tale gradually became accepted in literary salons.<sup>169</sup> These literary salons were formed in Paris in the 1630s thanks to the dedication of highly educated aristocratic women and continued to be popular throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, the majority of the tales published were by women writers, Mme d'Aulnoy foremost among them.<sup>171</sup>

The French fairy tale can be considered representative of the ethos and assumptions of the aristocratic and educated environment in which it had thrived. Heroines of French fairy tales, Cendrillon among others, have been found to be “more sophisticated and worldly than their later German counterparts, but they are also less frequently of royal blood”.<sup>172</sup>

One further essential contrast between the Grimms' version and Perrault's is the role of religion. “Although the Grimms emphasised the Christian undertone of their tales, especially in their final versions, the spiritual background of their storytelling is primarily based on a mixture of animism and Christianity”.<sup>173</sup> Once again, the figure of

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<sup>168</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 33.

<sup>169</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 12.

<sup>170</sup> Zipes, Op. Cit., p. 34.

<sup>171</sup> Betts, Christopher, “Introduction” in Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. xv.

<sup>172</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>173</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 154.

the biological mother is central. The German tale opens with the sentimental image of the pious mother who delivers a moving speech before passing away. The Grimms grant a pivotal role to the spirit of the girl's deceased mother, who comes to be identified with the benevolence of nature, which does not abandon her child even after death, and reassures her that she will support her in the difficult journey ahead.<sup>174</sup> Presented as a wealthy religious woman who instructs her daughter to follow in her footsteps, the dead mother appears as the main agent of the Grimms' tale.

In the shorter and simpler 1812 version of the Grimms' tale, the importance of the maternal speech is fundamental: "Dear child, I must leave you, but when I am in Heaven, I shall watch over you; plant a small tree on my grave and when you wish something, shake it and you shall have it, and when you are in distress, I shall send you help; just remain pious and good."<sup>175</sup> The daughter is given explicit instructions in order to gain her mother's help. In this version of the tale the speech offers a "glimpse backwards to the ancient folk belief in women's inherent power over nature expressed through words."<sup>176</sup> The mother's speech underlines her mystical mutation into a plant, while her warning about the importance of piety appears at its very end.<sup>177</sup>

In the 1819 version, the maternal speech is reduced: "Remain pious and good, so that our dear Lord shall always stand by you and I shall watch over you from Heaven and care for you",<sup>178</sup> to be further modified in the 1857 edition: "Dear child, remain devout and good; then dear God will ever be with you, and I'll look down on you on Heaven

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<sup>174</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 154.

<sup>175</sup> (edited by) Derungs, Kurt, "Aschenputtel", in *Die ursprünglichen Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, Bern: Edition Amalia, 1999, p. 79.

<sup>176</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 119.

<sup>177</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 155.

<sup>178</sup> (edited by) Rölleke, Heinz, "Aschenputtel", in *Die wahren Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, Frankfurt am Main: Fisher, 2003, p. 119.

and be near you.”<sup>179</sup> With the growth of the importance of Christianity in the tale, the mother is confined to a more enigmatic, less explicit role. The act of planting a tree on the mother’s grave becomes a cryptic and spontaneous action. From being the powerful and central character behind her daughter’s salvation, in the later versions the mother transfers her power to God.<sup>180</sup>

Within the Grimms’ collection, silent women are the most praiseworthy characters.<sup>181</sup> Despite the ancient lineage of many of the tales, Wilhelm Grimm’s editorial zeal produced a distinctly nineteenth-century text. As the early collectors of folktales, the Grimms often went beyond stylistic expansion and embellishment, by adapting what they heard to their contemporary culture.<sup>182</sup>

They eliminated erotic and sexual elements that might be offensive to middle-class morality, added numerous Christian expressions and references, emphasised specific role models for male and female protagonists according to the dominant patriarchal code of that time, and endowed many of the tales with a “homey” flavour by the use of diminutives, quaint expressions, and cute descriptions. Moreover, though the collection was not originally printed with children in mind as the primary audience – the first two volumes had scholarly annotations, which were later published separately – Wilhelm made all the editions from 1819 on more appropriate for children, or rather, to what he thought would be proper for children to learn.<sup>183</sup>

His aim was to purge the collection from references to sexuality and of incestuous desire and make Christian references more and more explicit.<sup>184</sup> The question of language and speech was another central problem in the editing process: “men could be

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<sup>179</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p.164.

<sup>180</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 155.

<sup>181</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 117.

<sup>182</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 27-28.

<sup>183</sup> Zipes, Jack, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 78.

<sup>184</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 10.

silent, but women were silenced”.<sup>185</sup> The act of speaking has always been associated to power and in fairy tales, power’s highest demonstration is framed as the capability to cast spells. The overwhelming majority of the characters that successfully invokes natural forces are female figures.<sup>186</sup>

### 2.3.2. The Aid

“Powerful verbalizing women represented something Germans in General and Wilhelm Grimm in particular were not all comfortable within the nineteenth century.”<sup>187</sup> Speech started to be connected with wicked females figures, silence and submission with marriageability.<sup>188</sup>

As previously anticipated, in spite of all the attempts to insert a Christian moral, in the Grimms’ tale the caring spirit of the mother still appears under the aspect of the force of nature. While “Catskin’s degradation is a consequence of her dying mother’s unfortunate impudence, Cinderella’s promotion is due to her dead mother’s watchful care”.<sup>189</sup>

However, apart from her mother’s aid, the ill-treated protagonist of the three tales invariably finds shelter in nature and in nature’s incarnations:

Most fairy tales depicting the fortunes of heroines persecuted by stepmothers portray benevolent female figures in the form of wise women, or, failing that, enact in a deceased mother’s undying love for her child by bringing Mother Nature to the heroine’s rescue. The oppressed female protagonists benefit either from nature’s munificence in the form of animal helpers or from the natural

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<sup>185</sup> Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 118.

<sup>186</sup> Bottigheimer, Op. Cit., p. 119.

<sup>187</sup> Bottigheimer, Op. Cit., p. 119.

<sup>188</sup> Bottigheimer, Op. Cit., p. 121.

<sup>189</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 41.

sanctuaries found in the hollows of trees and in the forest. Yet while the good mother generally appears incognito as a dove, a cow, or as a tree (and then only ever so briefly), the evil stepmother becomes an overpowering presence in the tale. She stands in the flesh and blood embodiment of maternity, and it is this figure of manifest evil that is most openly associated with women as mothers.<sup>190</sup>

The spirit of the mother takes the form of the tree that grows on the mother's grave and in the doves that intervene in many difficult situations. For example, after reciting a magic spell at the presence of the hazel-tree, the doves bring Ashputtle a different beautiful dress for each of the three nights of ball she is attending, together with the famous slippers – first of silk and then of gold. Furthermore, the birds help in completing the meaningless task the wicked stepmother demands Ashputtle to repeat on two distinct occasions, when she begs her stepfamily to go to the ball: “I will throw this dishful of peas into the ash-heap, and if in two hours' time you have picked them all out, you shall go to the feast too.”<sup>191</sup> Once again, as Lüthi explains, repetition is reminiscent of oral culture: the stepmother does not wonder how Ashputtle succeeds in carrying out the task<sup>192</sup> - on the contrary, she puts her through the same challenge a second time: “If you can in one hour's time pick two of those dishes of peas out of the ashes in one hour, you shall go too.”<sup>193</sup> This echo of the Psyche tale does not occur in the Italian or in the French versions.

In Perrault's tale, her godmother, a character that will become famous with Disney's movie, helps Cendrillon. She is a powerful and decisive woman, who plays a central role in the girl's identity:

It is important to note two problematic aspects of this female figure. First, she is a good witch who knows the secrets of magic. Her intervention is a clear

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<sup>190</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 150.

<sup>191</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 165.

<sup>192</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 56.

<sup>193</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 166.

deformation in the natural order of things, as magic is meant to be. The godmother turns a pumpkin in a golden coach and mice into horses. Furthermore, the compassionate lady must compel nature to collaborate in her plan to send the weeping girl to the party. Second the lady's magical powers are at the service of someone else, as if she weren't allowed to use them for herself.<sup>194</sup>

In contrast with Perrault's version, in which the French heroine is a model of a modest, beautiful and simple woman, in Basile's tale *Zeuzolla* appears to have witch-like characteristics. *Zeuzolla* does not act as the good and compassionate fairy godmother of the French tale; she uses her powers for herself. Basile's "Cinderella" is one of the few tales in which "the heroine's fate is clearly her own creation, the result of her plotting and misdeed".<sup>195</sup> She diligently follows the dove's advice to receive help from the fairies in Sardinia and, although nobody gave her instructions on how to use the spade and the golden can with a silken napkin to cultivate the date tree, she succeeds in "giving birth" to a fairy that will help her to go to the ball.

Agency is crucial for the development of the Cinderella's character: Perrault's and the Grimms' "Cinderella" contributed to the creation of the most popular modern version of the tale, in which a heroine does not actively try to improve her passive condition, as *Zeuzolla*, instead, does.

In the German tale, the main active move on Ashputtle's part is to ask her father for a branch from a hazel bush, plant it on her mother's grave, and cry tears to water it. In Basile's version we find a similar scene, but one that grants the young girl a much stronger and more decisive character. When her father leaves on a business trip, *Zeuzolla* asks him to give her regards to "the dove of the fairies" on the island of Sardinia, as a dove had suggested to her at her second stepmother's wedding. In Basile's version,

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<sup>194</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 153.

<sup>195</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 235.

Zezenia voices a menacing warning to her father: “If you forget, may it be impossible for you to go forward or back. Bear in mind what I say: thy intent, thy reward.”<sup>196</sup> When her father forgets about his daughter’s request, his ship can’t move from the harbour. When he finally remembers and travels to the cave of the fairies, a beautiful lady comes out of the grotto, thanks him for his daughter’s kindness, and gives him four gifts for her: a date tree, a hoe, a golden pail, and a silk cloth. Instead of watering the branch planted in the ground next to her mother’s grave with her tears as we read in the Grimms’ version, the Neapolitan girl skilfully cultivates the date tree with the instruments received from the benevolent fairy. She sheds no tears.<sup>197</sup>

### 2.3.3. Living Happily Ever After

If Catskin’s troubles “are brought about by the discovery that a certain ring or dress fits her finger; those of Cinderella’s are brought to an end by the discovery that a slipper fits her foot.”<sup>198</sup> Zezenia seems to have an already predefined plan in her mind when she asks the fairy that came out of the tree for the power to leave the house whenever she wants, without the sisters knowing it. The fairy grants the wish and for three times Zezenia attends the ball, captivating the interest of the King who tries to have her followed by a servant. The third time she flees from the party, Zezenia accidentally leaves a slipper behind, which will be used, as in the famous Disney version, to prove that she is the bride the King wants.

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<sup>196</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 6. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, “La Gatta Cenerentola”, in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 55: «E si te lo scuorde non puozze ire né ‘nanze né arreto. Tiene a mente chello che te dico: arma toia, meneca toia».

<sup>197</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 156.

<sup>198</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 41.

If the foundation is so fair, what must be the mansion? Oh, lovely candlestick which holds the candle that consumes me! Oh, tripod of the lovely cauldron in which my life is boiling! Oh, beauteous corks attached to the fishing line of Love with which he has caught his soul! Behold, I embrace and enfold you, and if I cannot reach the plant, I worship the roots; if I cannot possess the capitals, I kiss the base: you first imprisoned a white foot, now you have ensnared a stricken heart. Through you, she who sways my life was taller by a span and a half; through you, my life grows by that much in sweetness so long as I keep you in my possession.<sup>199</sup>

The female slipper<sup>200</sup> is the most important and complex symbol of the tale, and it is crucial for the Prince's selection of Cinderella as his bride. As hinted in the previous subchapter<sup>201</sup>, the fitting of the shoe might recall the ancient German custom of the groom giving a shoe to his bride as a sign of betrothal.<sup>202</sup> The material in which the slipper is made changes from version to version and still, the glass slipper has become the symbol of Cinderella herself. Tales in general appear to have a strong preference for noble or rare metals such as gold, silver and copper.<sup>203</sup> However, as a symbol of virginity, fragile and breakable,<sup>204</sup> glass is perfectly appropriate for the tale.

Also in the French and German versions the recognition of the future bride happens through the fitting of the shoe. In Perrault, after the godmother's intervention, Cendrillon attends the ball for two consecutive nights and captures the attention of the

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<sup>199</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 9. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, "La Gatta Cenerentola", in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 58: «Se lo pedamiento è cossi bello, che sarrà la casa? O bello canneliero, dove è stata la cannella che me strude! O trepete de la bella caudara, dove volle la via! O belle suvare attaccate a la lenza d'Ammore, co la quale ha pescato chest'arma! Ecco, v'abbraccio e ve stregno e, si non pozzo arrevare a la chianta, adoro le radeche e si non pozzo avere li capitielle, vaso le vase! Già fustevo cippe de no ianco pede, mo site tagliole de no nigro core; pe vui era auta no parmo e miezo de chiù chi tiranneia sta vita e pe vui cresce autrotanto de docezza sta vita, mentre ve guardo e ve possedo».

<sup>200</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 255.

<sup>201</sup> 2.2.2. The Wrong Bride.

<sup>202</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

<sup>203</sup> Lüthi, Max, *La Fiaba Popolare Europea: Forma e Natura*, introduction by Giorgio Dolfini, Milano: Mursia, 2015, p. 40.

<sup>204</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 111.

Prince. When the clock strikes midnight, Cendrillon leaves the ball as the godmother has recommended. If on the first night she manages to escape, on the second she accidentally drops her glass slipper. As happens for the tale type AT510B, although Cendrillon's three-fold visits to the ball may symbolise the willingness of a young girl to commit herself both personally and sexually, at the same time it can stand for her fear to do so.<sup>205</sup>

As in Basile's version, the Prince wants to try the shoe on every woman so that he can find the girl he danced with at the ball. In Perrault's tale, Cendrillon is allowed to try the slipper on only after having been judged very handsome by the appointed gentleman. Furthermore, as a stronger proof of her identity, Cendrillon pulls out of her pocket the other glass slipper and even the godmother intervenes to tell everyone the truth.<sup>206</sup>

In the German tale, after the ball, Ashputtle refuses the Prince's offer to escort her home. After the third night, the King covers the stairs with pitch so that Ashputtle's golden shoe remains stuck. With Ashputtle's shoe in his possession, he tries it on every girl to find her. In this version of the tale, when the stepsisters' turn comes, the stepmother tells them to mutilate their feet – the big toe of the first sister and the heel of the second – to make them fit the slipper: “Never mind, cut it off; when you are queen you will not care about toes; you will not want to walk.”<sup>207</sup> The prince falls for this deception until he is made aware by the songs of birds that there is blood in the shoe:

Back again! Back again! Look to the shoe!  
The shoe is too small, and not made for you!  
Prince! Prince! Look again at thy bride,

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<sup>205</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 251.

<sup>206</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 139.

<sup>207</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 170.

For she's not the true one that sits by thy side.<sup>208</sup>

The dove's song brings to the Prince's attention that the stepsister is not the right bride.

Bettelheim argued that the bleeding from the sisters' feet might stand for menstruation:

Cinderella is the virginal bride; in the unconscious, the girl who does not yet menstruate is more clearly virginal than the one who already does. And the girl who permits her bleeding to be seen, particularly by a man – as the stepsisters with their bleeding feet cannot help doing – is not only coarse, but certainly less virginal than one who does not bleed. Thus it seems that this episode, on another level of unconscious understanding, contrasts the virginity of Cinderella with the absence of it in the stepsisters.<sup>209</sup>

The Prince handing the slipper to Cinderella, who patiently waits to be chosen and whose foot perfectly fits and does not bleed, might as well symbolise the acceptance of her femininity, but above all selects her as the right, virginal bride.<sup>210</sup>

Marriage represents an effort to gain independence from the previous generation and to create a new and better family, and if one aim of the story is to illustrate the ascent from low to high status, then Cinderella must meet a man in that social milieu who will free her from her miserable circumstances.<sup>211</sup> Since fairy tales always reflect some aspects of the society in which they are told, the character of Cinderella herself allows for an innumerable quantity of interpretations.

Looking at Basile's version one can claim that Zezolla is not very different from her stepsisters, since "she uses her beauty and her personality to gain material success at the expense of other women".<sup>212</sup> If we consider Perrault's and the Grimms' versions it may be argued that success for the female comes from being beautiful, polite and passive and

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<sup>208</sup> Brothers Grimm, "Ashputtle", in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 170.

<sup>209</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 254-255.

<sup>210</sup> Bettelheim, Op. Cit., p. 256.

<sup>211</sup> (edited by) Zipes, Jack, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: the western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 97.

<sup>212</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 137.

she is ultimately rewarded with marriage. On the other hand marriage can be seen as a way through which the female protagonist escapes the confines of her narrow existence. The Prince can be interpreted as a symbol of her freedom; by entering into marriage, she accepts maturity.<sup>213</sup>

However, time and again in fairy tales, we encounter heroines who are downgraded to tending swine, washing dishes, or scrubbing floors, but who are ultimately liberated from their low condition through a combination of labour and good looks that makes it possible for them to get their Prince.<sup>214</sup>

Social promotion depends primarily on proof of domestic skills – the equivalent of the male’s demonstration of compassion, but it is also based on the receipt of gifts from nature, which endow the heroine with nearly supernatural attractiveness. If the helpers in stories with male leads transfer their strength, wits, and courage to the hero, the helpers in tales with female leads bestow beauty on the heroine. That beauty, symbolised by the gowns, yokes the cosmic and the domestic in that it is the joint product of nature and of human labour. Supernatural beauty and down-to-earth hard work are linked to create the fairy-tale heroine’s passport to success.<sup>215</sup>

Cinderella may have her “happy ever after” in almost every version of the tale, yet her stepsisters rarely fare very well. As the ending is the least stable part of the tale, they either suffer a cruel punishment or, in an outburst of generosity, Cinderella arranges advantageous marriages for them both.<sup>216</sup>

In Basile’s version, Antonella, the narrator of the sixth diversion, starts the tale with the following message:

In the sea of malice, envy always exchanges ruptures for bladders, and when she hopes to see others drowned, finds herself under water or dashed to pieces

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<sup>213</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women’s Folklore, Women’s Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 134.

<sup>214</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 118.

<sup>215</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 118.

<sup>216</sup> (edited by) Zipes, Jack, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: the western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 97.

against a rock. This happened to certain envious girls whose story I intend to tell you.<sup>217</sup>

Thanks to her resourcefulness, *Zeuzola* succeeds in marrying the King while her six stepsisters, consumed with envy, simply accept their fate, and go home to their mother saying, “He is mad who would oppose the stars.”<sup>218</sup>

In Basile’s tale, the sisters are punished because of their envy. This symmetry of victimisation-revenge does not respond to the Christian moral code: *Zeuzola* does not repent to have killed her first stepmother and, above all, she is not punished.

On the other hand, Perrault’s version ends on a conciliatory note. The heroine forgives her stepsisters who throw themselves at her feet and beg for her forgiveness. The French “Cinderella” is not only beautiful but also sweet and meek. *Cendrillon* embodies the model of the well-educated, polite, generous and not at all proud woman. She not only forgives her sisters, but also invites them to join her in the palace and loses no time in marrying them to two high-ranking court officials.<sup>219</sup>

On the other hand, Grimms’ tales, which presented themselves as “folk material”, stage as the sisters’ punishment is much more severe than the French or the Italian one. Although it is the spirit of nature that accomplishes the sister’s punishment, it follows the Christian moral code, Dante’s *contrappasso*: they are blind to *Ashputtle*’s plight and

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<sup>217</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 5. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, “La Gatta Cenerentola”, in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 53: «Sempre la ’nmidia ne lo maro de la malignetate appe ’n cagno de vessiche la guallara e, dove crede de vedere autro annegato a maro, essa se trova o sott’acqua o tozzato a no scuoglio; comme de cierte figliole ’nmediose me va ’mpenziere de ve contare».

<sup>218</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 10. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, “La Gatta Cenerentola”, in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 60: «pazzo è chi contrasta co le stelle».

<sup>219</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 139.

thus blinded by the white doves.<sup>220</sup> Ashputtle is once again the passive spectator of her own good fortune:

When her wedding with the king's son was to be celebrated, the two false sisters came and wanted to ingratiate themselves and have a share in her good fortune. As the bridal couple was going to church, the elder sister walked on the right, the younger on the left. Then the doves pecked out one of each of their eyes. Later, when they came out of the church, the elder was on the left and the younger on the right. Then the doves pecked out the other of their two eyes. Thus for their malice and treachery they were punished with blindness for the rest of their lives.<sup>221</sup>

Ashputtle's initial victimisation is balanced in the end with vengeance.<sup>222</sup> This pattern appears in almost every tale and this may be the reason for the fact that children are attracted to these stories. As Bettelheim argues, most of the time the child is pervaded by a sense of disadvantage in the face of all-powerful guardians. The initial degraded condition is exaggerated beyond the limits of realism, making the fantasy all the more satisfying for the child<sup>223</sup> since this initial state of mystery and vulnerability gives way to unlimited wealth and power. This scheme gives shape to dreams of revenge, which allows the reader to find consolation.<sup>224</sup>

#### 2.4. Cinderella's name and protagonist-identification

Going by name alone, the heroine of these two types of tale – AT510A and AT510B – is called for example, Yeh-hsien in China, Cenerentola in Italy, Aschenputtel

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<sup>220</sup> Brothers Grimm, "Ashputtle", in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 171.

<sup>221</sup> Brothers Grimm, *Op. Cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>222</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 182.

<sup>223</sup> Tatar, *Op. Cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>224</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 73.

(Ashputtle) in Germany, and Catskin in England,<sup>225</sup> or the protagonist is simply referred as “a girl”.<sup>226</sup>

Usually in the fairy tale dimension, if names appear, these are not proper names, but general or descriptive ones, which can stand for any boy or girl. We are told that the heroine of the tale is called “Donkeyskin” because of the donkey’s skin she uses for making her disguise. Only Juleidah, Maria Wood and Maria di Legno have a “proper” first name.

For the tale type AT510A we are told “not only did she change her state, but also her name, and was no longer called Zezolla, but *Cat Cinderella*”<sup>227</sup> or “When she had done all her work, she would go to a corner of the fireplace, and sit among the cinders on the hearth, so that she was commonly known, in the household, as *Cinderbum*. The younger stepsister, though, who was not as rude as the elder one, called her *Cinderella*”,<sup>228</sup> or “in the evening she was tired, she had no bed to lie down on, but it was made to lie by the hearth among the ashes; and as this, of course, made her always dusty and dirty, they called her Ashputtle”.<sup>229</sup> Among these three tales, Zezolla is the only one whose real name is given; she is not only “the gentleman’s young daughter” of the French tale or “her mother’s daughter” of the German tale. It is the stepfamily who names her Cat Cinderella, Cinderella or Ashputtle and in doing so they “symbolically wipe out her real name, banishing her from the family and reducing her to a lower condition”.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. ix.

<sup>226</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 41.

<sup>227</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 6. Originally in Italian in Basile, Gianbattista, “La Gatta Cenerentola”, in *Lo cunto de li cunti, ovvero: Lo Trattenimento de Peccerille*, Milano: Letteratura Italiana Einaudi, Garzanti, 1995, p. 55: «né sulo cagnaie stato, ma nomme perzi, che da Zezolla fu chiammata *Gatta Cennerentola*».

<sup>228</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. ix-xliv and pp. 130.

<sup>229</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p.165.

<sup>230</sup> Carter, Angela, “Ashputtle or the Mother’s Ghost: three versions of one story”, in *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*, London: Vintage, 1993, pp.110.

This sense of abstraction is stressed by the fact that in fairy tales almost every character remains nameless. The only exception the reader can observe among these three examples is either in Basile's tale where, apart from the father, everyone else has a proper name or in Perrault's, where the only name that appears is Charlotte, one of the stepsisters'. In the Grimms' tale, nobody has a name. To borrow Bettelheim's words, the main namelessness of tale's characters and the almost total lack of physical description may help the identification of the reader with the hero or heroine.

Speaking about the physical description, only in tales such as *Donkeyskin* is the heroine portrayed as a blonde child with blue eyes and in *Catskin* with long dark hair. Considering the child audience, Bettelheim also argues that since children need more abstraction than the adults, namelessness facilitates the process of identification of the reader with the characters, thus allowing satisfaction of inner desires.<sup>231</sup>

Of the two components that shape female Oedipal plots – the fantasy of an amorous father and the fantasy of rivalry with the mother – only the latter has become a prominent, virtually undisguised theme in popular tales depicting the marriage of female protagonists. While the (step) mothers are habitually demonised as nags at home and witches in the woods, fathers qua fathers tend to fade into the background or to be absent from the tale.<sup>232</sup>

In the modern period, since fairy tales are confined to the child's dimension, people are concerned with the moral messages a child can encounter: apparently fairy tales have the power to affect readers deeply, either positively or negatively.<sup>233</sup>

Sexual stereotyping is at the centre of the modern debate regarding fairy tales.<sup>234</sup> Even though scholars such as Bettelheim argue that fairy tales are equally relevant for

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<sup>231</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 41-42.

<sup>232</sup> Bettelheim, Op. Cit., p. 41-42.

<sup>233</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 129.

both boys and girls, and are therefore genderless, tales such as “Cinderella” continue to be relevant for modern girls and women.

It is not always easy to establish the precise cultural period that influenced the moral climate of an entire folkloric text or that gave rise to changes in particular narrative details.<sup>235</sup> Contemporary readers of folk and fairy tales can interpret them in many different ways, frequently finding in older versions “what they wish to find.”<sup>236</sup> However, what seems to be clear is that there is no right interpretation for a fairy tale. They work simultaneously on different levels, and this may be fairy tales’ truest enchantment.

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<sup>234</sup> See for example: Lieberman, Marcia R., “Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”, in *College English*, Volume 34 Number 3, [www.jstor.org/stable/375142](http://www.jstor.org/stable/375142), Dec. 1972, pp. 383-395, 28 Nov. 2018.

<sup>235</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>236</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 160.

### 3. Visual and Ethnical Representations of Cinderella

#### 3.1. The Picturebook

##### 3.1.1. Picturebooks and Illustrated Books

To start with the very term, the compound word “picturebook” implies a combination of pictures and written words as forms of communication.<sup>237</sup> On the assumption that pictures communicate more naturally and more directly than words, picturebooks construct an implied reader, the child.<sup>238</sup> As a matter of fact, children “learn how to read pictures well before they learn how to read words”,<sup>239</sup> and images help young readers understand the texts they accompany.<sup>240</sup> The illustrations accompanying the text are almost always congruent with it, enriching or adding depth to it.<sup>241</sup>

However, differentiation between the illustrated book and picturebook must be done. The very term “picturebook” plays an important role in such a distinction:

While English dictionaries clearly state that the notion should be written with two words as “picture book”, scholars working on the realm of picturebook research suggest writing the term as one word in order to emphasize the inseparable unit of picture and text. Since the wording “picture book” evokes the association of a book that includes illustrations, whether an illustrated children’s novel, a story collection with images, or picturebook – an association still observable in reviews and scholarly articles today – there is often confusion about the designation of the picturebook corpus. This becomes even more

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<sup>237</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 20.

<sup>238</sup> (edited by) Hunt, Peter, and Ray, Sheila, *The International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 111.

<sup>239</sup> Hunt and Ray, Op. Cit., p. 217.

<sup>240</sup> Hunt and Ray, Op. Cit., p. 111.

<sup>241</sup> Hunt and Ray, Op. Cit., p. 217.

complicated in other languages, where a specific notion for “picturebook” does not yet exist.<sup>242</sup>

Scholars have established that the illustrated book is a book in which the text is more dominant than the illustrations. Pictures accompany, but are not essential to the written text; they may improve, embellish, and clarify the text, but the narrative is not reliant on their presence.<sup>243</sup> In contrast, in the picturebook, words and pictures combine to deliver the whole meaning of the book,<sup>244</sup> producing a compound text from words and pictures. Nodelman observes that in picturebooks, “the insistence on illustration confirms an urge to explain things, to have the words account for and reveal the important meanings of the pictures and the pictures account for and reveal the basic significant thrust of the words.”<sup>245</sup>

The interest in picturebooks has increased in the last five decades. Picturebooks might be perceived either as artworks or as a device for literacy, depending on the reader’s interaction with it. Since the picturebook’s characteristics have altered over time, scholars have started to “question the historicity, predictability, and function of the picture-text relationship in our contemporary contexts”.<sup>246</sup> Therefore, the study of picturebooks started to be included in a substantial number of academic volumes as part of children’s literature studies. Researchers such as Nodelman wonder whether the combined action of words and images means that picturebook conventions are

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<sup>242</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 3.

<sup>243</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 281.

<sup>244</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 21.

<sup>245</sup> Nodelman, Perry, “Picture Book Guy Looks at Comics: Structural Differences in Two Kinds of Visual Narrative”, in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 37.4 (2012): p. 444.

<sup>246</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 25.

“inherently and already didactic even before authors make specific didactic use of them, or, for that matter, even when authors choose not to use them for didactic purposes.”<sup>247</sup>

A number of different approaches to the subject are possible: while some scholars adopt a pedagogical approach by analysing the way children react and connect to the characters portrayed and how picturebooks might promote the child’s developing literacy skills, others have focused on the history of picturebooks or studied the complex correlation between the text and the visuals.<sup>248</sup>

### 3.1.2. Picturebooks and Ideology

Children are the intended audience of picturebooks. Since they are by definition “inexperienced and in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others,”<sup>249</sup> picturebooks are the first significant means by which adults introduce them to the ideology of their culture.<sup>250</sup> Not only does a picturebook advance notions of what is and is not childlike,<sup>251</sup> but also helps children become familiar with the various social and linguistic codes, which will enable them to operate within their society and to become competent members.<sup>252</sup>

Social ideology is composed by what any given society assumes to be “meaningful and valuable in the practices of its social life, and the notions it accepts about how it is structured, about what constitutes proper authority, and about what is a desirable

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<sup>247</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 25.

<sup>248</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 3.

<sup>249</sup> (edited by) Hunt, Peter, and Ray, Sheila, *The International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 148.

<sup>250</sup> Hunt and Ray, Op. Cit., p. 148.

<sup>251</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 20.

<sup>252</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 137.

individual selfhood.”<sup>253</sup> To borrow van Dijk’s words, “ideology functions as a cognitive framework that shapes, among other things, knowledge, opinions and attitudes, and social representations”.<sup>254</sup> Since ideologies are formed by widely shared assumptions and are inserted in the text as an aspect both of the story and its meaning, they may appear somehow hidden:

The significance deduced from a text – its theme, moral, insight into behaviour, and so on – is never without an ideological dimension or connotation. Less overtly, ideology is implicit in the way the story an audience derives from a text is oriented towards the actual world: such orientation resides in the assumptions an author makes about the nature of the world, of good and evil, of what is valuable and desirable human experience, and what kind of a person a child should aspire to be. Even if the story’s events are wholly or partly impossible in actuality, narrative sequences, character inter-relationships, processes of inferencing, aspects of visual modality, and so on will be shaped accordingly to recognizable forms, and that shaping can in itself express ideology insofar as it implies assumptions about the forms of human existence.<sup>255</sup>

Therefore, texts produced for children support, and sometimes redefine or even challenge, social values.<sup>256</sup> Among children’s texts, picturebooks express a society ideology both verbally and visually:

The interaction of the dual semiotic codes can work to produce an ideological conjunction, either because a reader’s action in filling the gaps between visual and verbal discourses or in instantiating the third meaning prompted by the interaction will have an ideological effect, or because where the interaction is ironic the ideological effect will be more marked.<sup>257</sup>

However, it is noticeable how the picturebook and its influence over society have changed over time. Ideology itself is not fluid and, as George Lakoff points out, not everyone has a coherent ideology and an individual may recognise himself in different

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<sup>253</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 138.

<sup>254</sup> van Dijk, Teun A., *Discourse and Power*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 34.

<sup>255</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 137.

<sup>256</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 137.

<sup>257</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 138.

ideological models, for example within nationalism and multiculturalism.<sup>258</sup> To analyse these various changes in the picturebook field of study, scholars have taken into account the fluidity of ideology and the consequent modification of picturebooks' content.<sup>259</sup> To give an example, the idea of the illustrated book for a children audience was established only by the end of the eighteenth century. The first books for young readers were not without pictures, but neither were they illustrated books.<sup>260</sup> Thus the picturebook may appear as a sort of historical document. In a picturebook "words, pictures, and material components suggest much about available technologies and about prevailing definition of childhood in a particular time and place."<sup>261</sup>

### 3.2. How Picturebooks Work

#### 3.2.1. Words and Pictures

As previously argued, picturebooks are made out of a compound discourse of words and pictures, which communicate on different narrative levels (multidiegesis), by simultaneously sharing the space of one page. The represented story may even be multi-layered by presenting more than two visual stories.<sup>262</sup>

Picturebooks demonstrate that the generational codes they contain are influenced by historical context and social/cultural ideology. This may include public education

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<sup>258</sup> Lakoff, George, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, second edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 14.

<sup>259</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 20.

<sup>260</sup> (edited by) Hunt, Peter, and Ray, Sheila, *The International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 219.

<sup>261</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 19.

<sup>262</sup> Nodelman, Perry, *Words about Pictures: the Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988, p. 153.

policy, developmental literacy, industrialisation, globalisation, and even multiculturalism.<sup>263</sup> These combined elements influence and change the picture-text relationship, as well as our culturally determined reading strategies:

The picturebook as an art form can look back on a centuries-old history, with precursors in illustrated encyclopaedias and picture stories for children. Although picturebooks as well as fairy tales are bound to the specific cultural, political, pedagogical, and aesthetic conditions of their time, some picturebooks convey a universal message, which contributes to their virtual longevity, even when they have vanished from bookshops. In order to fully grasp these complex relationships and to appreciate the sophisticated combination of text and images, picturebooks demand specific cognitive, linguistic and aesthetic capacities on the part of the reader. Even picturebooks that seem to be quite simple at first glance reveal an astounding complexity.<sup>264</sup>

Therefore, the intimate interaction between words and images – bringing together different semiotic traditions, methods and histories<sup>265</sup> – creates different levels of meaning, open to different interpretations.<sup>266</sup> Through the combination of both words and pictures (dialogism), the reader can comprehend the whole meaning of the book.<sup>267</sup> The reader needs a specific reading approach to fully understand this intricate interaction between these two modes of communication, even in the case of wordless picturebooks, where the words are implied.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 25.

<sup>264</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 1.

<sup>265</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 13.

<sup>266</sup> Arizpe, Evelyn and Styles, Morag, *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*, with contributions from Helen Bromley, Kathy Coulthard and Kate Rabey, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 22.

<sup>267</sup> Nodelman, Perry, *Words about Pictures: the Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988, p. 153.

<sup>268</sup> Reynolds, Kimberly, *Children's Literature: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 57.

Most picturebooks follow clear linear plots in which every image advances chronologically from one event to the next.<sup>269</sup> Through sustained engagement with the text, the reader can make meaning out of the juxtaposition of text and images:<sup>270</sup>

Making use of semiotic terminology we can say that picturebooks communicate by means of two separate sets of signs, the iconic and the conventional. The sign is a direct representation of its signified. Conventional signs have no direct relationship with the object signified that is we must know what letters stand for, put letters together to produce words, and understand what the words stand for. Conventional signs are based on an agreement among the bearers of a particular language. Both conventional and iconic signs have existed in human culture from its beginning, and have given rise to two parallel types of communication, the visual and the verbal. The function of pictures or iconic signs is to describe or represent. The function of words, conventional signs, is primarily to narrate.<sup>271</sup>

Hence words and images can either be independent from one another, or combine wholly or partially, while at the same time leaving gaps for the readers/viewers to fill with their previous knowledge and experience.<sup>272</sup> Thus the audience will experience a complicated process of decoding, each new reading of either words or pictures creating better requirement for an adequate understanding of the whole message of the book, going more and more deeply into its meaning.

The interaction between the two functions creates numerous possibilities of interpretation. Since individual pictures “do not have grammar, syntax or linear flow, but freeze specific moments in time, rarely presenting more than one event between a single frame, this relationship between text and picture is one between differently constructed discourses giving different kinds of information, if not different

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<sup>269</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 29.

<sup>270</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 20.

<sup>271</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>272</sup> Stephens, John, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*, London: Longman, 1992, p. 164.

messages”.<sup>273</sup> In their book *How Picturebooks Work* (2001), Nikolajeva and Scott have developed an elaborate model, containing five categories that describe the interaction between text and image:

- When both images and words convey the same message, they call the interaction *symmetrical*;
- When pictures fill the gaps left by words and vice versa, the relation is called *complementary*;
- When images amplify or reinforce the verbal story or vice versa, they speak of *enhancement*;
- When images and words provide alternative information, the researchers give the definition of *counterpoint*;
- When text and images take the story in opposite directions, the “counterpoint” appears in its extreme form, *contradiction*.<sup>274</sup>

*Lily Takes a Walk* by Satoshi Kitamura (1997)<sup>275</sup> represents a fitting example of “contradiction”. Here we notice that Lily’s story is the story told by the words, while her dog’s story, Nicky, is told by the pictures. As Lily and Nicky take a walk, the pictures show that the dog encounters (or imagines), horrendous monsters emerging from all around them, while Lily takes a normal walk, not sharing her dog’s visions.<sup>276</sup>

As previously hinted, picturebooks are likely to be the first kind of books that preliterate readers encounter. They may not only offer a powerful tool to become familiar with social ideology and to build literacy, but also to understand one’s own and

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<sup>273</sup> Stephens, John, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction*, London: Longman, 1992, p. 164.

<sup>274</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001.

<sup>275</sup> Kitamura, Satoshi, *Lily Takes a Walk*, London: Happy Cat Books, 1997.

<sup>276</sup> Arizpe, Evelyn and Styles, Morag, *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*, with contributions from Helen Bromley, Kathy Coulthard and Kate Rabey, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 55-56.

other's people emotions.<sup>277</sup> Since images appear to be far more immediate than words in representing interiority, by making connections between the experiencing of an emotion and its visual signifier, they seem to be efficient implements to increase young readers' emotional intelligence.<sup>278</sup>

### 3.2.2. The Setting

Pictures can both help the reader/viewer in the development of emotional intelligence, and have him familiarise with different narrative techniques. The construction of a specific setting can help both the plot development and the creation of mood.<sup>279</sup> In a picturebook, words, pictures, or both can convey settings:

Similar to characterisation, setting demonstrates very well the differences between diegesis (telling) and mimesis (showing). While words can only describe space, pictures can actually show it, doing so more effectively and often more efficiently. In narrative theory, a description is one of the signs of the narrator's presence in the text. The verbal narrator forces the reader to "see" certain details of the setting, while ignoring others. Visual representation of setting is "non-narrated," and therefore non-manipulative, allowing the reader considerable freedom of interpretation.<sup>280</sup>

Nikolajeva and Scott distinguish between different manners of illustrating the setting: minimal and reduced, symmetrical and duplicative, enhanced and expanded, and complex.<sup>281</sup> Visually, the picturebook can describe "spatial dimensions, including both

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<sup>277</sup> Arizpe, Evelyn and Styles, Morag, *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*, with contributions from Helen Bromley, Kathy Coulthard and Kate Rabey, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 110.

<sup>278</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria, "Picturebooks and Emotional Literacy", in *The Reading Teacher*, Doi: 10.1002/trtr.1229, 2013, 67.4: pp. 249-254.

<sup>279</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, pp. 62-69.

<sup>280</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>281</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., pp. 63-80.

indoor scenes and landscape, the mutual spatial relations of figures and objects, their relative size, position, and so on.”<sup>282</sup>

Visual description has unlimited possibilities. The representation of the setting can vary from “no setting at all, either verbal or visual, to a fully depicted setting that may be predominantly visual, predominantly verbal, or a variety of combinations and permutations.”<sup>283</sup> On some occasions, pictures and words can represent the same setting, but this happens only when they are very simple. More frequently pictures will add details to what the text describes, or the setting can be conveyed visually rather than verbally.<sup>284</sup>

As previously hinted, the setting of a picturebook can help create a special mood, helping the reader visualise the circumstances and the nature of the world represented:

At the simplest level, it communicates a sense of time and place for the actions depicted, but it can go far beyond this in establishing the genre expectations of the work (fairy tale, fantasy), in providing a pervasive affective climate that sets the reader’s emotional response in a particular register (grotesque, nostalgic, everyday), in instigating plot development through contrasting or dramatic change in settings (home/away, city/pastoral, war or other disaster), and in commenting upon character. Picturebooks incorporate these functions of setting without limitation, and one book, especially a complex one, may exemplify all of them.<sup>285</sup>

In the case of fairy tales, if we compare a number of picturebooks staging the same story, we can notice how the visual setting can influence our perceptions and even affect our interpretations. If we take Cinderella as an example, the representations of the

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<sup>282</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, pp. 61-62.

<sup>283</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 62.

<sup>284</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 62.

<sup>285</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 61.

settings are countless: it can appear to be either realistic or fantastic, either romantic or dark, either medieval or modern.<sup>286</sup>

### 3.2.3. The Character's Representation

In the case of a novel or of a verbal narration in general, a number of techniques are employed to portray characters:

Narrative description is the most basic, involving both external, visual detail (what do the characters look like, how do they move, what are they wearing) and emotional, psychological, and philosophical characteristics. The description can involve temporal dimension, tracing changes in appearance, situation, and internal or emotional growth or alteration. The narrative may be coloured in a number of ways, depending on the choice of the narrator and the perspective from which the narrator interprets.<sup>287</sup>

In the case of picturebooks, the range of techniques is broader. While physical descriptions appear more immediate thanks to the illustrator's work, psychological description may be suggested in pictures, but it needs the support of words to fully represent feelings and emotions. As we have seen, pictures and words can work with or in contradiction to each other, adding a visual dimension to a narrating voice.<sup>288</sup>

Pictures have a superior ability to convey the spatial position of the character. They can also easily render the mutual spatial relationship of two or more characters, which often reveals their psychological relationship and status.<sup>289</sup> Clothing is also really important, since in picturebooks it is generally used to communicate a great quantity of

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<sup>286</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 75.

<sup>287</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 81.

<sup>288</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 81.

<sup>289</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 83.

information about the character, including class, age, and occupation.<sup>290</sup> The visual discourse has also the potential to multiply narrative information, adding elements or parallel plots to narrative events, and creating additional narrative layers.<sup>291</sup>

As a matter of fact, the main characters portrayed in picturebooks are usually children, and the action and behaviour of child characters, their choices, and their interactions play a central role in the narratives.<sup>292</sup> Picturebooks encourage children to understand literary characters by attributing motivations and personalities to them:

This procedure encourages readers to form expectations about what these characters will do next and why they react in a specific manner, and, in a next step, to emotionally react to them. What children first have to learn is the difference between a person and a (literary) character. While the notion of “person” usually refers to real people, the notion of “character” is allocated to fictional figures that appear in literature and other art forms. Yet, when reading a story about a character, children may accept that the character represents a person, although the latter has a right of existence independently of the literary text, while the former does not. Characters whose appearance and demeanour deviates from common expectations represent a particular cognitive challenge, since they demand that the reader bear in mind social, cultural, and moral values, as well as consider the specific character’s point of view.<sup>293</sup>

However, since in 1984 Jacqueline Rose published *The case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, the representation of childhood in children’s literature has been the topic of much debate. She argued that “(t)here is no child behind the category of “children’s fiction”, other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes”.<sup>294</sup> The publication of her book had a tremendous impact on children’s literature studies. She pointed out that discourses surrounding children’s literature must be seen as

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<sup>290</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 95.

<sup>291</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 82.

<sup>292</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 360.

<sup>293</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 395.

<sup>294</sup> Rose, Jacqueline, *The Case of Peter Pan or: The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 10.

representations of adults' ideas of childhood in a specific culture, at a specific point in history.<sup>295</sup>

Sure enough, since adult authors write these books, the represented childhood may be seen as constructed by adults alone, and text and images themselves may represent a certain idea of the abilities and qualities of the implied child reader.<sup>296</sup>

If a contemporary reader comes across older picturebooks, he or she may be exposed to representations of childhood of different historical periods, and of quite different cultural contexts. Thus he or she will meet a variety of representations of what it meant to be a child. Picturebooks researchers are encouraged to analyse representations of childhood in picturebooks from a historical perspective, based on their knowledge of changing concepts of childhood.<sup>297</sup>

### 3.2.4. The Narrator and Reader Response

In narratology, the term “point of view” is used to indicate the assumed position of the narrator, of the character and of the implied reader:

Most narratologists agree that all verbal texts are narrated, even though the narrator can be covert. The author may deliberately give an impression of a non-narrated text, for instance, by including actual or fictional documents, reports, newspaper clips, or tape-recorder transcripts. Since these elements are by definition verbal, it may seem that they are irrelevant for text-image interaction in picturebooks. The four most prominent features of the narrator's presence in the text are description of setting, the description of character, the summary of events, and the comments on events, or the character's actions. While the two last elements are predominantly verbal in picturebooks, the first two, as already shown, can be both verbal and visual, agreeing or counterpointing in various

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<sup>295</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 360.

<sup>296</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 360.

<sup>297</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 369.

ways. Dialogue is generally regarded as a non-narrated form, and indeed, pictures cannot convey direct speech. Since the pictures cannot directly convey dialogue, the discrepancy between verbal and visual levels is especially palpable.<sup>298</sup>

In a picturebook, both the verbal and the visual narrator will usually be extradiegetic-heterodiegetic (“omniscient” and not participating in the story). It is commonly assumed that this narrator is an adult, therefore indicating a deliberate distance between the narrator and the implied reader. Since most picturebooks “use or pretend to use a child’s perceptual point of view, the discrepancy between this visual point of view and an adult, didactic or ironic narrative voice can become the most significant point of tension in the book.”<sup>299</sup> Moreover, the picturebook’s narrator can also be defined as unreliable since pictures can provide an ironic counterpoint to words, showing the reader/viewer something different from the text.<sup>300</sup>

Recently picturebooks have started to use an intradiegetic-homodiegetic (first-person child) verbal narrator, apparently in an attempt to narrow this distance. However, this first-person child point of view may be perceived as complex since it can either reflect the child’s inexperienced perceptions, or once more offering an authoritative adult point of view.<sup>301</sup>

In the picturebook, the narration becomes multi-layered, polyphonic, and interactive. As Nodelman has argued, verbal narrative in a picturebook may be subjective, using a first-person, autodiegetic, perspective.<sup>302</sup> Pictures, on the other hand, rarely convey the effect of an autodiegetic first person narrator. In a visual text, internal focalisation is considered to be quite impossible since pictures cannot directly express thoughts and

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<sup>298</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 118.

<sup>299</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 119.

<sup>300</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., p. 119.

<sup>301</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., pp. 119-120.

<sup>302</sup> Nodelman, Perry, “The Eye and the I: Identification and First-person Narratives in Picture Books”, in *Children’s Literature* 19, 1991, p. 29.

feelings, but should be supported by words. However, the illustrator may use different techniques in order to convey the inner world of the character.<sup>303</sup>

While verbal text can be non-focalised (which is often referred to as “omniscient, omnipresent perspective”), externally focalised (following one character’s perceptual point of view only; “objective, dramatic, perspective”), or internally focalised (penetrating the character’s thoughts and feelings; “introspective”), pictures for obvious reasons lack the possibility of internal focalisation, at least in a direct sense – the character’s feelings may naturally be conveyed by facial expression, position in the page, tone, colour, and other graphic means. While the introspective narrator has, together with the first-person narrator, become one of the most common narrator types in contemporary psychological children’s novels, the picturebook is essentially restricted in its use of introspection. It does, however, have its specific ways of conveying a “subjective” point of view. On the other hand, pictures have unlimited possibilities of conveying literally an “omnipresent” perspective by giving a panoramic view of the setting, such as depicting several parallel events or several characters at different places, that is, expressing something that the verbal text only can express indirectly.<sup>304</sup>

Thus, perspective in picturebooks is perceived in a more fixed sense: the reader/viewer observes the picture from the fixed point of view imposed by the artist.

Whether the picturebook is read by an adult, or by a child, or together, one of the primary goals of psychologists, scholars and picturebook researchers consists in analysing the readers’ response. Their aim is to gain a better awareness of what children may learn by looking at picturebooks. To give an example, an early observational work from a psychological perspective identified “picturebooks’ reading interaction between parent and child as an especially rich context for children’s oral language development.”<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 126.

<sup>304</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott, Op. Cit., pp. 118-119.

<sup>305</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 382.

Age and children's different gained experience play a central role in the analysis of the reader response.<sup>306</sup> As previously hinted, children – including preliterate children – are influenced by general factors such as class, sex, and education; their social dimension affects how young readers make meaning and respond to social issues in their reading, for example sexual equality and racism.<sup>307</sup>

As far as the representation of gender is concerned, its strongly normative schemas and scripts are acquired in early childhood through both verbal and visual representation. For example, boys and girls are usually visually coded by their size – with males almost always being larger than females –, by the colour of their clothing, or by the absence or presence of features such as jewellery or even prominent eyelashes, which usually stand for female characters.<sup>308</sup> The problem with these sex-associated attributes is that they are often presented as ordinary and inevitable.<sup>309</sup> Furthermore, as far as character's elements are concerned, young readers are often presented the same models: a passive young female prized for her physical beauty; an evil and ugly older female; and an active, skilful male. Indeed, women throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been actively seeking to challenge limiting stereotypes and gender schemas.<sup>310</sup>

In the last decades, feminist theorists have been trying to gain a better knowledge on how children acquire such binary gender schemas and whether and how they might be revised. As a matter of fact, while in children's literature there is a long tradition of girls transgressing gender norms, "there is no similar tradition for boys behaving in ways that

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<sup>306</sup> Reynolds, Kimberly, *Children's Literature: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 51.

<sup>307</sup> Reynolds, Op. Cit., p. 52.

<sup>308</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 121.

<sup>309</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 121.

<sup>310</sup> Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 125.

have traditionally been coded feminine.”<sup>311</sup> Therefore, scholars such as Stephens conclude that even though schemas and scripts in picturebooks can “function as transformative instruments”,<sup>312</sup> it seems that with regard to gender, the matter still remains challenging.

Along with gender and sexuality, literary and cultural studies have commenced to include and represent different ethnic groups and minorities. Starting from Rose’s poststructuralist position, scholars have started to question and analyse children’s literature from a postcolonial perspective.

### 3.3. Picturebooks as Fairy Tales Adaptations

#### 3.3.1. Representation of Cultures in Fairy Tales

Fairy-tale picturebooks are perhaps the most popular among children’s literature texts. Easy to understand, pictures enrich rather than limit the child’s imagination. In addition, since the authorship of fairy tales is often debatable, many translators feel free to adapt the tales – further shortening or adding parts – in order “to fit their own, their audience’s, and/or the illustrator’s needs.”<sup>313</sup>

Theoretically, every tale type appears to follow the same narrative scheme, however, they vary from one culture to the other, acquiring different specific meanings. “People use to structure and express their experience conceptually so that belief, knowledge, or

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<sup>311</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 125.

<sup>312</sup> Stephens, John, “Schemas and Scripts: Cognitive Instruments and the Representation of Cultural Diversity of Children’s Literature”, in (edited by) Mallan, Kerry and Bradford, Clare, *Contemporary Children’s Literature and Film: Engaging with Theory*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>313</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 473.

information can be transmitted from one generation to the next,<sup>314</sup> and consciously or not, authors and illustrators follow this process in order to publish a picturebook that is understandable by its audience, using what Iser calls “mental images”,<sup>315</sup> or “frames.” Frames are identified as the “mental structures that shape the way we see the world”<sup>316</sup> or, in López’s words, “structures of knowledge that represent the worldview of a particular society, that is, its beliefs, values, and emotions”.<sup>317</sup> As we saw as well in the previous subchapter,<sup>318</sup> well-known collective frames, which include ideas connected to the concepts of culture, are widely shared assumptions that together form the ideology of a specific society. Ideology, in turn, forms the basis of a specific culture or society.

The concept of “culture” is often confused with the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity”. To avoid confusion, in their book *Ethnic Literary Traditions in American Children’s Literature*, Pagni Stewart and Atkinson distinguish between these different terms:

We are aware of the complexities of defining the terms race, ethnicity, and even culture as well as how the definitions of these words are connected to history, hegemony, and colonial thinking. The term “race” has been closely associated with blood. The terms “ethnicity” and “race” have become analogous because of the belief that somehow blood is the essence of ethnicity, while ethnicity and culture have been, over time, generally conflated to refer to the characteristics of a people who share a common and distinctive culture, religion, and/or language. The word “culture” refers to the shared knowledge and values of a society, and “ethnicity” refers to that which is derived from a culture, race, or religion, as well as linguistic traditions of people.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> (edited by) Hunt, Peter, and Ray, Sheila, *The International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 655.

<sup>315</sup> Iser, Wolfgang, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974, p. 178.

<sup>316</sup> Lakoff, George, *Don’t Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004, p. xv.

<sup>317</sup> López, Ana María Rojo, “Applying Frame Semantics to Translation: A Practical Example”, in *Meta* 47 (3), 2002, pp. 312.

<sup>318</sup> 3.1.2. Picturebooks and Ideology

<sup>319</sup> (edited by) Pagni Stewart, Michelle and Atkinson, Yvonne, *Ethnic Literary Traditions in American Children’s Literature*, New, York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 1.

The analysis of fairy tales should consider how they form part of the societies and cultures that created them,<sup>320</sup> in order to comprehend them more deeply:

Fairy tales are used ideologically by presenting desirable models of human personality, human behaviour, interpersonal relationships, social organisation, and ways of being in the world. Since ideologies tend to be taken for granted, it is interesting to investigate whether the illustrations used in the various Cinderella versions support this tendency to socialise children in this way. Because fairy tales are so widely distributed and have been translated, adapted, and illustrated time and again, they may be expected to provide us with many clichés and to perpetuate social standards.<sup>321</sup>

With respect to picturebooks the analysis of the visual images may help researchers of different areas of expertise in identifying different cultural aspects. For example, historians, art historians and anthropologists can look for culturally related items, such as clothes, furniture and so on. As concerns literary analysis, scholars have been trying to interpret specific elements of the tales – such as the action of the characters or the moral message – in terms of cultural differences.

However, as Maria Tatar argues, “determining national rankings for the degree of violence and cruelty in fairy tales is like one of those impossible tasks posed in the tales”.<sup>322</sup> If we compare “Cendrillon” and “Ashputtle,” many scholars were tempted to define the end of the tales by simply referring to “French charity and German cruelty.”<sup>323</sup> The contrast between the two tales could not be more evident; and, the contexts in which they were written could not be more different.<sup>324</sup> Nonetheless, while in the French tale, Cendrillon forgives her stepsisters, invites them to join her in the

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<sup>320</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 374.

<sup>321</sup> (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, p. 277.

<sup>322</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 190.

<sup>323</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 189.

<sup>324</sup> 2.3. Literary Tradition.

palace and marries them to two high-ranking court officials;<sup>325</sup> the white doves blind Ashputtle's stepsisters,<sup>326</sup> balancing Ashputtle's initial victimisation with the final vengeance.<sup>327</sup>

The victimisation/retaliation pattern that appears in almost every version of the tale “invites the depiction of heartless behaviour and merciless punishment,”<sup>328</sup> and as already quoted in the first chapter,<sup>329</sup> the appeal of fairy tales has a “great deal to do with utopian transformation and the desire of a better life, and the manner in which we make it relevant in our mental representations will be in reaction to the outside stimuli and to moral codes instituted by hegemonic groups within a respective society.”<sup>330</sup>

What sticks out is that until recently, children's literature was “almost exclusively produced in and about those Western countries that had a strong tradition of publishing for children”.<sup>331</sup> If we consider British Empire, the colonies were economically unable to produce their own children's literature and reading materials were imported from the home country, which, in the nineteenth century, was also the center of industrial power.<sup>332</sup> Thus, imperialist England's ideologies were also reproduced. As argued by McGillis in his book *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*:

English racial superiority was closely allied to the concept of the “manly boy” that was one of a complex of ideological features which were the driving force behind the public schools and the public school story. Girls, in general, were schooled in a supportive role, and the endless tales of middle-class benevolence

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<sup>325</sup> Perrault, Charles, “Cinderella”, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 139.

<sup>326</sup> Brothers Grimm, “Ashputtle”, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, London: Harper Press, 2013, p. 171.

<sup>327</sup> Tatar, Maria, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 182.

<sup>328</sup> Tatar, Op. Cit., p. 190.

<sup>329</sup> 1.1.1. From Folklore to Literature.

<sup>330</sup> Zipes, Jack, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: the Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 106.

<sup>331</sup> Reynolds, Kimberly, *Children's Literature: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 3-4.

<sup>332</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 71.

that provided a staple diet for them in the last decades of the nineteenth century can be seen as a direct reflection of colonisation. In the Victorian epoch was underlined that idea of woman as the stable (and essentially passive) center from which men could explore the exotic (and erotic) Empire.<sup>333</sup>

These main axioms affected all the literature of the time, from the stories addressed to the boys who would ensure the grandeur of the Empire, to girls' stories, school stories, religious stories, and fairy tales.<sup>334</sup> At its peak, imperialism affected every type of literature, from hymns to children's magazines, and every class in society.<sup>335</sup>

The general belief was that the home country was racially superior to the colonised one. Indeed, in Western ideology, culture and civilization are always opposed to nature and primitivism:

Culture refers to norm, canon, and modernity; nature designates whatever is unwholesome, irrational, coarse, uncultivated, remote, and anthropologically unfamiliar. This culture/nature opposition was redeployed in the confrontation between European metropolis and non-European peripheral countries in the nineteenth century. Just as culture is to conquer nature, so Enlightenment Reason is to conquer barbarity. This is how Western modernity justifies its supremacy over indigenes in the world.<sup>336</sup>

In children's literature as well as in the other genres, non-Western societies have been often characterised as primitive. One of these indicators is a lingering belief in myth, magic, and the use of ritual. On the other hand, Western nations have been represented as progressive, emergent, and modern.<sup>337</sup>

Sometimes authors have used "race" as a literary expedient, to set characters apart from each other. For example, many children's books, which include a black character, show him in generally stereotyped ways, while the White children are nothing less than

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<sup>333</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 44.

<sup>334</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 40.

<sup>335</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 43.

<sup>336</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 5.

<sup>337</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 264.

cherubic.<sup>338</sup> The first stereotype usually portrayed is the black character as a humble servant or slave, or a migrant worker, while the second one, defined as “counter stereotype,” is always good, generous, and smiling in spite of difficulties.<sup>339</sup> Fortunately, “during the centuries the Negro in fiction has changed from the ridiculous stock character to the emerging individual”.<sup>340</sup>

Even though many authors have used the identification of certain races as victims as an attractive theme,<sup>341</sup> scholars such as Rudine Sims argue that just because a book has a different ethnic character in it, it does not mean that that book describes that character and its culture authentically.<sup>342</sup> Sims’ theory was “quickly reduced to a now familiar dictate: only persons from a particular cultural group may write about that group. (...) In the case of the response to Sims, the children’s book world accepted that the identity of the author matters in the authenticity of the story.”<sup>343</sup>

Within this debate, the emergence of postcolonial narratives marks a complex historical moment. On the one hand, it is the symbol of both the increasing independence gained by the ex colonies and of the increasing tolerance and understanding of ethnic and cultural difference,<sup>344</sup> on the other, it mirrors a world soaked with imperialist stereotypes and texts.<sup>345</sup> Such historical experience of cultural otherness calls for a rehabilitation of that difference that has been marginalised as inferior. In McGillis’ words:

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<sup>338</sup> Larrick, Nancy, “The All-White World of Children’s Books”, in *Saturday Review*, 11 September (1965), p. 65.

<sup>339</sup> Larrick, Op. Cit., p. 64.

<sup>340</sup> Larrick, Op. Cit., p. 64.

<sup>341</sup> Hade, Daniel D., “Reading Children’s Literature Multiculturally”, in *Reflection of Change: Children’s Literature since 1945*, edited by Sandra Beckett, London, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 116.

<sup>342</sup> Sims, Rudine, *Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children’s Fiction*, Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982.

<sup>343</sup> Hade, Daniel D., “Reading Children’s Literature Multiculturally”, in *Reflection of Change: Children’s Literature since 1945*, edited by Sandra Beckett, London, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 115.

<sup>344</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children’s Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>345</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 1.

The critical mind's recent turn to postcolonialism aims to rethink, recuperate, and reconstruct racial, ethnic, and cultural others that have been repressed, misrepresented, omitted, stereotyped, and violated by the imperial West with all its institutions and strategies for dominating the non-Western. Indeed, the world over the last four hundred years has been dominated by an asymmetry of power relations between West and non-West. Only recently have those other peoples and cultures begun to make their voices heard. Following the postmodern dissolution of the West, postcolonial narratives or counter narratives have emerged in large numbers, interrogating and investigating the history of encounters between metropolis and periphery, colonizer and colonized, and dismantling imperial structures of knowledge and feeling the realm of culture.<sup>346</sup>

Politically speaking, however, even after becoming independent nations, the majority of former British colonies have entered an era of neo-colonialism. Countries such as India and Australia remain deeply marked by their ex-colonial status in their cultural and governmental structures. In addition, most African countries continue to be dependent on the presence of European countries through their large-scale debt, political instability, and economic weakness.<sup>347</sup>

Children's books published within the ex-colonies are sometimes seen as potentially subversive. English, for example, remains the dominant world language. Thus, some writers that live in former colonies are forced to use English if they want to be published also outside their country.<sup>348</sup> However, in his collection of essays *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), the Kenyan novelist and postcolonial theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, offers a distinctly anti-imperialist perspective on the role of language in both fighting and perpetrating imperialism. Even though Ngũgĩ focuses on the conditions of neo-colonialism in African nations, his questions about the writer's linguistic medium (indigenous language, or hegemonic language such as French or English), the writer's intended

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<sup>346</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>347</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 42.

<sup>348</sup> McGillis, Op. Cit., p. 49.

audience, and the writer's purpose in writing, can be theoretically applied in the case of every former colony.

What still remains apparently inevitable, however, is the meaning or value that a society places on differences of culture, ethnicity, class, and gender. In order to fight this tendency, scholars such as Hade argue that a possible solution might be critical multiculturalism:

Critical multiculturalism has three aspects. First, critical multiculturalism is a systematic critique of the ideology of westernness. This means challenging the domination of assumptions held by Western culture. Second, critical multiculturalism is the challenge of living with each other in a world of difference. Multiculturalism means searching for ways to affirm and celebrate difference while also seeking ways to cooperate and collaborate across different groups of people. Third, critical multiculturalism is a reform movement based upon equality and justice. Goods and privileges are concentrated with white, wealthy males; they are not distributed justly across race, class and gender. Critical multiculturalism is about naming this injustice and struggling toward social change and social justice.<sup>349</sup>

Following this line of reasoning, children's literature representing different ethnicities should be promoted to avoid the underrepresentation of one specific ethnic group while favouring another. Since considering a text as a "discourse" means to emphasise that textual characteristics are linked directly to the context in which a work emerges, we may bear in mind that these tales are literary works that speak to their own cultural context.<sup>350</sup> And still, these books provide children with an understanding of another culture in a manner that might encourage them to shift their own view of the world.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Hade, Daniel D., "Reading Children's Literature Multiculturally", in *Reflection of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, edited by Sandra Beckett, London, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 116.

<sup>350</sup> (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, p. 96.

<sup>351</sup> (edited by) McGillis, Roderick, *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York and London: Garland, 1999, p. 226.

In the case of picturebooks, there are many version of the Cinderella tale that contemporary children are not familiar with. In the following subchapters, I analyse seven different picturebooks representing the Cinderella tale. The first five follow the model of tale type AT510A (*Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China*, *The Korean Cinderella*, *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, and *Cendrillon: a Caribbean Cinderella*) and the remaining two represent the Cinderella tale type AT510A intertwined with AT480, *Kind and Unkind Girls* (*Chinye: a West African Folk Tale*, and *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: an African Tale*).

### 3.3.2. Representing Cinderella

As geneticist James King has remarked, “both what constitutes race and how one recognises a racial difference are culturally determined”.<sup>352</sup> Thus, “races”, like ethnic groups, are social constructs, products of human perception and consequent classification, rather than naturally established.<sup>353</sup>

As Cornell and Hartmann argue,

We decide that a certain physical characteristics – usually skin colour but perhaps also hair type, stature, or other bodily features – will be primary markers of group boundaries. We invent categories of persons marked by those characteristics. The categories become socially significant to the extent that we use them to organise and interpret experience, to form social relations, and to organise individual and collective actions. In other words, the categories become important only when we decide they have particular meanings and act on those meanings. The characteristics that are the basis of the categories, however, have

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<sup>352</sup> King, James C., *The Biology of Race*, second edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 156.

<sup>353</sup> Cornell, Stephen and Hartmann, Douglas, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2007, p. 24.

no inherent significance. We give them meaning, and in the process we create races.<sup>354</sup>

None of these characteristics has empirical grounds, but they nevertheless command belief inside and outside particular populations.<sup>355</sup> As a matter of fact, societies are often guilty of “racial essentialism”,<sup>356</sup> a concept whereby people tend to “regard members of racial groups as unified around some trait, behaviour, or attitude”.<sup>357</sup> Consequently, this generic classification can lead to the belief that one group is superior to another, therefore constructing a “hierarchy” of “racial” superiority.<sup>358</sup>

If we accept that literature is ideological, that it reflects and actively constructs a society’s system of beliefs,<sup>359</sup> the question of where are the people of colour in children books becomes a pressing one. In contemporary children’s literature,

It is no indication that all voices are represented equally, or that the same attention is given to issues of quality, accuracy, and/or ‘authenticity’. Culture, however, is revealed in many ways in children’s books. In novels, the dense or elaborate descriptions of characters and settings in the plot attune readers to a particular culture. In picture books, the pictorial representations provide a concrete image of these characters’ perceived physical features, their surrounding environment, and how these shape their daily reality as a people. But culture in children’s literature can be unsettling to those who want to retain certain hegemony, especially when the culture in question contradicts the stereotypes we already have of others.<sup>360</sup>

Thus, illustrations are far more than subsidiary to the text, since “they orient the reception and message of the tale, and constitute a visual interpretation of its

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<sup>354</sup> Cornell, Stephen and Hartmann, Douglas, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2007, p. 24.

<sup>355</sup> Di Leonardo Micaela, “Racial Fairy Tales”, *The Nation*, December 9, 1991, p. 752.

<sup>356</sup> Pyke, Karen, “What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don’t We Study It? Acknowledging Racism’s Hidden Injuries,” in *Sociological Perspectives*, 2010, 53 (4): 563, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sop.2010.4.551>, 31 Nov. 2018.

<sup>357</sup> Pyke, Op. Cit., p. 563, 31 Nov. 2018.

<sup>358</sup> As explained in: 3.3.1. Representation of Cultures in Fairy Tales.

<sup>359</sup> Papazian, Gretchen, “Colour Multiculturally: Twenty-First-Century Multicultural Picturebooks, Colour (ing) Beyond the Lines”, in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 46 (2018): p. 169.

<sup>360</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 233.

significance, from the scenes chosen for illustration in early woodcuts to the present day.<sup>361</sup>

As dismissed at the beginning of this chapter,<sup>362</sup> in picturebooks representing fairy tales, illustrators provide visual representations to what the tale texts describe. Furthermore, they try to make tales commercially attractive for their designated audience.<sup>363</sup> As Kümmerling-Meibauer explains in her study *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*:

The vast number of fairy tale picturebooks that are available on the market indeed provide a unique corpus to make children aware of the various approaches that different illustrators can apply to the same story by selecting certain scenes, shaping characters and settings in a certain way, highlighting interpretations or using different styles and techniques. With the differing accents that illustrators put on the tales, their fairy tale illustrations contribute to the reception of this genre, making it relevant again for each new age.<sup>364</sup>

In picturebooks representing fairy tales, the gaps between words and pictures are much wider than in other illustrated books because descriptions in fairy tales' texts are generally kept to a minimum. The illustrator's task is to provide the reader with a detailed visual representation of the tale, thus interpreting it before the reader.

As concerns "Cinderella", one of the many textual gaps that grant illustrators almost complete freedom of creation<sup>365</sup> is her appearance. Almost none of the countless versions of the tale provide us with a detailed description of the protagonist. However, if we consider the tales analysed in the previous chapters, we can find a few

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<sup>361</sup> (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, p. 6-7.

<sup>362</sup> 3.2. How Picturebooks Work

<sup>363</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 473.

<sup>364</sup> (edited by) Kümmerling-Meibauer, Op. Cit., p. 482.

<sup>365</sup> (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, p. 278.

exceptions.<sup>366</sup> In *Donkeyskin*,<sup>367</sup> for example, Perrault describes the heroine as a blonde child with blue eyes; in the Italian tale *Maria di Legno*,<sup>368</sup> and in *Catskin*,<sup>369</sup> the protagonists are said to have their hair neatly parted in two beautiful black braids; while in Perrault's *Cinderella*,<sup>370</sup> she is simply described as far more beautiful than her stepsisters. Another element that is hardly found within the texts is a description of Cinderella clothes. Consequently, Cinderella's frock, as well as her ball gowns, looks quite different depending on the year of the tale's publication and, of course, on the culture in which the tale is told.<sup>371</sup>

Even though the Cinderella tale (AT510A) can be found in almost every society's folk repertoire, children's literature has only recently begun to reflect the world's countless cultures. Yet, some scholars argue that in contemporary children's literature white Western cultures are represented more than others.<sup>372</sup> As a matter of fact,

When children think of fairy tales they immediately imagine stories with white princesses, stories with girls who are either eaten up by big, bad wolves and/or stories where girls marry handsome princes. These images of white, vulnerable girls whom in some tales become princesses remain fixed in the minds of female children regardless of their race. One image that seems to persist more so than the others is the dream of marrying a prince charming – someone who would whisk them off to a castle far away from the drudgery of their daily lives. But this dream, as unrealistic as it is, seems possible only for white girls, as most Disney movies have demonstrated (until the recent release of *The Frog and the*

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<sup>366</sup> As already hinted in: 2.4. Cinderella's name and protagonist-identification.

<sup>367</sup> Perrault, Charles, "Donkeyskin", in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 52-77.

<sup>368</sup> Calvino, Italo, "Maria di Legno", in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, pp. 437-441 (Rome).

<sup>369</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, "Catskin", in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, pp.122-125.

<sup>370</sup> Perrault, Charles, "Cinderella", *The Complete Fairy Tales*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 130-141.

<sup>371</sup> (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, p. 279.

<sup>372</sup> Bishop, Rudine Sims, *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African American Children's Literature*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing, 2007.

*Princess*). This, nevertheless, has not deterred girls of colour to fantasise about a ‘happily- ever-after’ life just like their white peers.<sup>373</sup>

This chapter examines seven culturally different Cinderella picturebooks as counter-narratives and/or multicultural adaptations in order to raise consciousness on the problems that can derive to the generalisation of ethnicity.<sup>374</sup>

### 3.3.3. AT510A

#### 3.3.3.1. *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China*

Among the picturebooks taken into consideration, *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China* (1999),<sup>375</sup> is inspired by what is believed to be the oldest version of the Cinderella story. The original tale appears in a book from the T’ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), Duan Chengshi’s (c. 800-860) *The Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*,<sup>376</sup> republished in 2012 in a collection of miscellanies titled *You yang Zazu*.<sup>377</sup> The *You yang Zazu* is divided into thirty volumes, containing four types of literature: the informative piece, the anecdote, and the tale. It is a collection of Chinese and foreign reports on natural phenomena, short anecdotes of historical people and events, as well as legends and hearsay, and tales of supernatural creatures and events.<sup>378</sup> The *Ye Xian* (or *Yeh-Shen*) tale appears in Chapter 21. In the text, Duan declares that it is his servant

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<sup>373</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 238.

<sup>374</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 234.

<sup>375</sup> (retold by) Louie, Ai-Ling, *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China*, illustrated by Ed Young, New York: Puffin Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1999.

<sup>376</sup> The English version: (edited by) Reed, Carrie Elizabeth, *Youyang Zazu: Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*, Washington: University of Washington, 1995.

<sup>377</sup> The Chinese version: Chengshi, Duan, *You yang Zazu*, Beijing: Shangaiguji Chubanshe, 2012.

<sup>378</sup> Reed, Carrie Elizabeth, *A Tang Miscellany: An Introduction to Youyang Zazu*, New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2003.

Li Shiyuan the one who reports the story, setting it during the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>379</sup> *Yeh-Shen* belongs to tale type AT510A; it narrates the rags-to-riches story of an orphan girl mistreated by her stepmother and stepsister, who escapes her servitude with the magic intervention of a fish, and finally marries the local Prince.

The first thing a reader can notice is the picturebook’s page layout. The page is divided into (usually two) red-boarded columns either containing text or image. The layout recalls the Chinese manner of writing in columns. As further “demonstration”, on the first page of the picturebook, Ai-Ling Louie proposes the original text of the Chengshi’s tale:

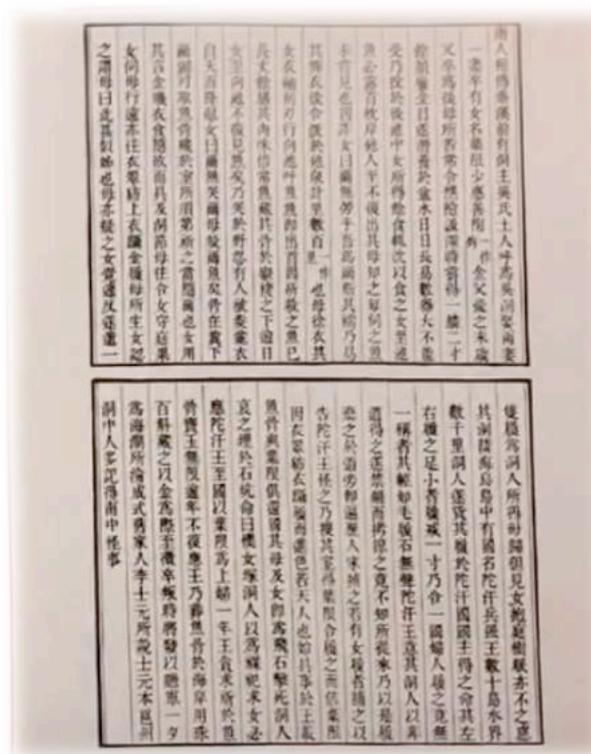
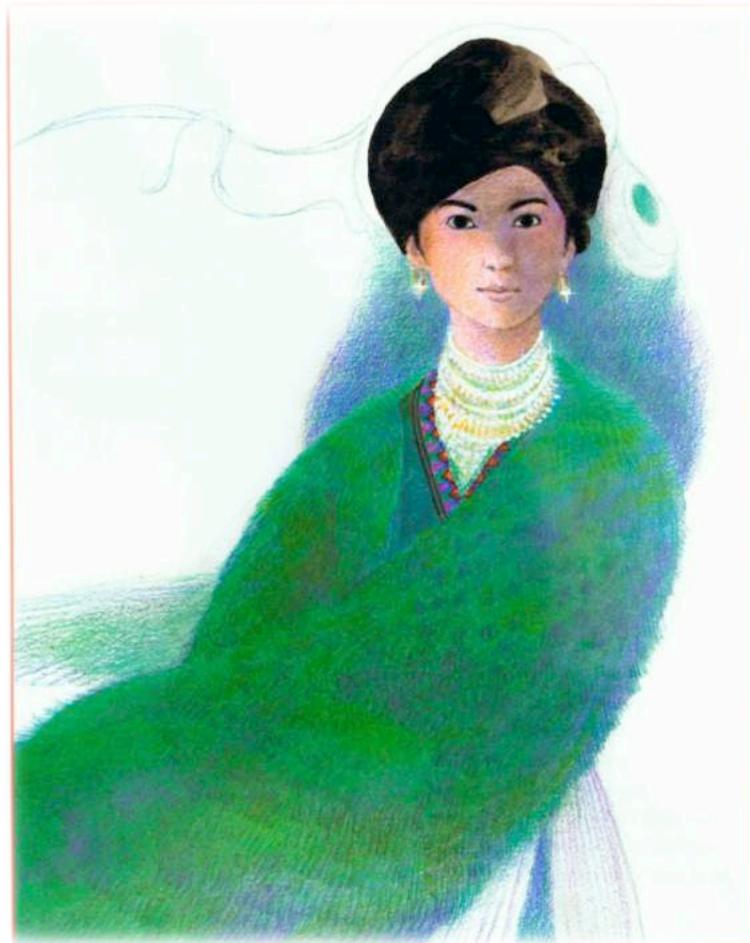


Figure 1: Original text in *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* by Ai-Ling Louie

As in other Cinderella tales, the story opens with the death of both Yeh-Shen’s parents. The protagonist is left in the hands of her wicked stepmother and stepsister,

<sup>379</sup> Reed, Carrie Elizabeth, *A Tang Miscellany: An Introduction to Youyang Zazu*, New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2003.

who, jealous of Yeh-Shen's beauty and good nature, mistreat her. Like Perrault's *Cendrillon*, Yeh-Shen's inner and outer beauty correspond: "She was a bright child and lovely too, with skin as smooth as ivory and dark pools for eyes".<sup>380</sup> In his illustrations of the tale, Ed Young visualises Yeh-Shen as a young woman, with a fine figure, a slim face, almond-shaped eyes, and with her dark hair tied back. The characters hairstyle, jewels, and clothes recall Chinese fashion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>381</sup> The illustrations are not extremely defined. On the contrary, the images are even slightly blurred, recalling the ancient Chinese painting style.<sup>382</sup>



**Figure 2: Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China by Ai-Ling Louie**

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<sup>380</sup> (retold by) Louie, Ai-Ling, *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China*, illustrated by Ed Young, New York: Puffin Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>381</sup> Chunming, Gao, *Chinese Dress and Adornment Through the Ages: The Art of Classic Fashion*, London: CYPI Press, 2011.

<sup>382</sup> Barnhart, Richard, Xin, Yang, Chongzheng, Nie, Cahill, James, Shaojun, Lang, and Hung, Wu, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Unlike Perrault's *Cinderella*, it is not the godmother who helps Yeh-Shen, but a fish. In Chinese culture, the fish is considered a lucky symbol. The Mandarin word for fish 魚 (pron. "yu") shares a similar pronunciation as 余 that means abundance. Hence, due to the homophony, in Chinese culture, the fish is usually connected with propitious traits.<sup>383</sup>

In the tale, the fish is Yeh-Shen's only friend. It lives in the pond behind her house, and she visits and feeds it daily. Angry at discovering that Yeh-Shen has kept a secret from her, the stepmother kills the fish and cooks it. In Ai-Ling Louie's picturebook, the illustrator makes the fish appear as almost incorporeal, visually bigger than Yeh-Shen as if it has revealed its true spiritual nature. Its unnatural size is also suggested in the text. At the beginning of Chengshi's tale, the fish is about 2 cùn long (one cùn being a unit of length of about 3 cm),<sup>384</sup> and it is more than ten feet long when the stepmother kills it.<sup>385</sup>

While crying after the disappearance of the fish, Yeh-Shen receives the visit from an unknown old man, who informs Yeh-Shen of the magical nature of the fish bones. Thus, she collects the bones and uses their gifts to have more food to live day by day. In many retellings of the tale, (as in Donna Jo Napoli's *Bound*<sup>386</sup>) it is made clear that the fish stands for the reincarnation of the deceased mother. However, it is not so in Chengshi's tale. Although the connection might seem obvious, nothing is said about the identity of the fish and of the old man who appears to Yeh-Shen after the fish is

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<sup>383</sup> Christie, Anthony, *Chinese Mythology*, Feltham: Hamlyn Publishing, 1968.

<sup>384</sup> The English version: (edited by) Reed, Carrie Elizabeth, *Youyang Zazu: Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*, Washington: University of Washington, 1995.

<sup>385</sup> (edited by) Tatar, Maria, "Yeh-hsien", in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999, p.107.

<sup>386</sup> Napoli, Donna Jo, *Bound*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

killed.<sup>387</sup> Yeh-Shen then uses the bones of the fish to obtain resplendent clothing and golden slippers in order to join the upcoming spring cave festival; an occasion where “young men and young women from the village hoped to meet and choose whom they would marry”.<sup>388</sup> However, she is forced to run away from the celebration because her stepsister recognises her. In her rush, she loses one of her magic golden slippers, which is then found by a villager. The villager then sells it to a merchant, who in turn sells it to the king of the neighbouring kingdom.

Once more, the shoe plays a decisive role in the Prince’s selection of his wife. It is tried on the foot of each woman of the kingdom, but it magically fits only Yeh-Shen. As the Chinese text reads: “The cave people sold the shoe to the Tuo Hang kingdom, which was obtained by the king. This latter commanded his subject to try on the shoe, but the shoe became a cùn smaller when even the smallest feet tried it on”.<sup>389</sup>

With respect to the magic shoe, it is a common belief that the importance given to the tiny size of Cinderella’s feet derives from Chinese culture and from the foot-binding tradition. As a matter of fact, for a long time in China, the ideal of beauty was a foot so small that its size resembled that of a lotus blossom.<sup>390</sup> There is a lack of precise archaeological evidence on the beginning of foot binding in China, therefore scholars base their studies on “textual records such as Chinese myths, poems, and painting that appear during the late Tang and early Song dynasties”.<sup>391</sup> Twelfth-century author Zhang

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<sup>387</sup> Vaz da Silva, Francisco, “Blood” in *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of Folk Tales and Fairy Tales*, edited by Donald Haase, 3 vols., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008, 1:127-28, p. 201.

<sup>388</sup> (retold by) Louie, Ai-Ling, *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China*, illustrated by Ed Young, New York: Puffin Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1999, p. 8.

<sup>389</sup> Chengshi, Duan, *You yang Zazu*, Beijing: Shangaiguji Chubanshe, 2012, p.124. Translated by Hughes, Roxane, “Connecting East and West in Napoli’s *Bound*”, in *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, note n. 15, p. 250.

<sup>390</sup> Wang, Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*, New York: Anchor Books, 2002, p. 31.

<sup>391</sup> Hughes, Roxane, “Connecting East and West in Napoli’s *Bound*”, in *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, note n. 6, p. 248.

Bangji, for example, situated the beginning of foot binding at the end of the Tang dynasty at the court of the Emperor, and poet, Li Yu (r. 961-75).<sup>392</sup>

At the end of the tale represented in the picturebook, Yeh-Shen marries the king while flying stones to kill her stepmother and stepsister. Curiously, in Chengshi's tale, the narration does not end with Yeh-Shen's marriage and the death of her persecutors. Rather, we are told that the king uses the fish bones to grant his wishes, but that the magic ends after a year. Thus, the king buries the fish bones by the sea and the tale ends "with the burial place being looted by the king's troop and washed away by the waves".<sup>393</sup>

### 3.3.3.2. *The Korean Cinderella*

In 1993, Shirley Climo published *The Korean Cinderella*. As she declares in the Author's Note, there are many hundreds of Cinderella stories around the world and only in Korea, there are half a dozen versions.<sup>394</sup> This picturebook includes Korean words into the text, and the illustrations were inspired by the patterns – *Tangchōng* – painted on the eaves of Korean temples. They are symbols of good luck, protection and of the cycle of reincarnation.<sup>395</sup>

In this version of the tale, the protagonist is Pear Blossom, the daughter of an old gentleman and his wife. As illustrator Ruth Heller explains, the horsehair hat Pear

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<sup>392</sup> Wang, Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*, New York: Anchor Books, 2002, p. 31.

<sup>393</sup> Hughes, Roxane, "Connecting East and West in Napoli's *Bound*", in *Cinderella across cultures: new directions and interdisciplinary perspectives*, (edited by) Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, Lathey, Gillian, and Wozniak, Monika, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016, note n. 5, p. 248.

<sup>394</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, Author's Note.

<sup>395</sup> Climo, Op. Cit., Illustrator's Note.

Blossom's father is wearing in the drawings was the mark of Korean gentlemen.<sup>396</sup> Furthermore, in this picturebook we can observe how all the women wear the *Hanbok*, the traditional women's dress that consists of two pieces, a skirt tied under the arms by long ribbons, and a short jacket. As the illustrator specifies no hooks or buttons are used on either male or female dress.<sup>397</sup>

At Pear Blossom's birth, the old gentleman plants a pear tree in the courtyard. The tree grows lovelier with each passing season, and so does Pear Blossom:

In spring white flowers frosted the tree, and Pear Blossom wore a white ribbon on her long, black braid. In summer, when the tree bent with ripening fruit, Pear Blossom's mother wove a band of rosy gold into her hair. In the autumn, when leaves from the tree blew about the courtyard like scraps of sunshine, her mother dressed Pear Blossom in a yellow gown. But on one winter day, when the branches on the pear tree were still bare sticks, the old woman died.<sup>398</sup>

Left a widower, the old man arranges his second marriage thanks to the village's matchmaker, who recommends him to a widow with a daughter of her own, Peony, of the same age of Pear Blossom. However, even though Pear Blossom calls the stepmother *Omoni*<sup>399</sup>, she is far from motherly towards her, and Peony is said to be worse than no sister.<sup>400</sup> Unlike other versions of the Cinderella archetype, where the father simply disappears from the scene, Pear Blossom's father grows too feeble to pay attention to his daughter's troubles.<sup>401</sup> Pear Blossom is turned into the house servant by her stepmother and stepsister, jealous of her beauty and good nature.

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<sup>396</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, Illustrator's Note.

<sup>397</sup> Lee Kyung Ja, Hong Na Young, Chang Sook Hwan, *Traditional Korean Costume*, Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2005.

<sup>398</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 4.

<sup>399</sup> In Korean, the word "Ōmōni" (어머니) means "mother". The definition can be found in: (edited by) Sohn Ho-min, *Korean Language in Culture and Society*, United States of America: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>400</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 5.

<sup>401</sup> Climo, Shirley, Op. Cit., p. 6.



Figure 3: Pear Blossom in *The Korean Cinderella* by Shirley Climo

Reminiscent of the Grimms' *Ashputtle*, Pear Blossom is given impossible tasks to pass. The first one consists of filling a pierced jar with water. Witnessing her despair, a *togkabi*, a goblin<sup>402</sup> in the form of a gigantic frog, comes to help. The second task consists of collecting each of the rice grains that the stepmother has scattered on the floor. Like *Ashputtle*, a flock of sparrows comes to peck at the rice, separating husk from the kernel and piling it in a corner. The third and most important task is to weed the rice paddies, a chore that would have normally taken some weeks.<sup>403</sup> In this case, a huge red ox comes to help the protagonist. The frog, the sparrow, and the ox are important animals in Korean folklore and symbolism. They also appear in Korean mythology as guide animals, symbols of loyalty, hard work, and patience.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Won-Oh Choi, *An Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology*, Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2008.

<sup>403</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 22.

<sup>404</sup> P'ae-gang Hwang, *Korean Myths and Folk Legends*, Fremont, California: Jain Publishing Company, 2006.



**Figure 4: Pear Blossom in *The Korean Cinderella* by Shirley Climo**

In this version of the tale, the magistrate attending the village festival is struck by Pear Blossom's beauty and scares her unwillingly. In her rush, Pear Blossom forgets her sandal from which she was shaking out a stone.<sup>405</sup> The magistrate orders his men to fish her sandal from the stream. He then goes back to the village with the sandal, where he finds Pear Blossom and, to the stepmother and stepsister's humiliation, asks her to be his wife.

In this picturebook, the protagonist is never represented as looking directly towards the reader; on the contrary, she is almost always pictured with her face hidden in fear or modesty, or as looking downwards as only concerned about her chores (Fig. 3). On the contrary, her stepmother and stepsister are represented as proudly looking at the protagonist or as scornfully exit the scene, leaving Pear Blossom behind.

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<sup>405</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 26.

To help the reader visualise the foreign and ancient context in which the tale is told, not only the picturebook portrays traditional Korean dresses, such as the *Hanbok* and the *Kirogi* (traditional wedding bows)<sup>406</sup> but also traditional festive decorations such as the long white ribbons attached to the hats of men performing a traditional Farmer Dance.<sup>407</sup>

### 3.3.3.3. *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*

*The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* (1998) is a picturebook based on an Iraqi folktale, *The Little Red Fish and the Clog of Gold*.<sup>408</sup> The tale is set in an unspecified country of the Middle East and the reader can here observe characters dressed in traditional Middle Eastern clothes together with the typical local setting.<sup>409</sup> The tale opens with Maha, a beautiful and modest young girl, begging her father to take their neighbour as a second wife. Reminding us of Basile's tale, the neighbour takes care of Maha as if she was her own child but, as soon as she marries Maha's father, begins to mistreat her, pushing forward her own daughter. Jealous of the fisherman's lovely and clever daughter, the stepmother gives Maha more and more work to do.<sup>410</sup> As in its Chinese counterpart, a fish helps the protagonist. As a popular religious

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<sup>406</sup> Lee Kyung Ja, Hong Na Young, Chang Sook Hwan, *Traditional Korean Costume*, Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2005.

<sup>407</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Korean Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, Illustrator's Note.

<sup>408</sup> The tale refers to "The Little Red Fish and the Clog of Gold", that can be found in *Arab Folktales* by Inea Bushnaq, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.

<sup>409</sup> Scarce, Jennifer M., *Women's Costume of the Near and Middle East*, UK: Taylor&Francis, 2014.

<sup>410</sup> Hickox, Rebecca, *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, New York: Holiday House, 1998, p. 4.

symbol, “the fish was worn as an amulet, which was supposed to bring happiness, affluence, and prosperity”.<sup>411</sup>

One day, when Maha is walking home with a basket of fish, she hears a voice: “Luckless girl! Have pity on another unfortunate. Spare my life”.<sup>412</sup> Maha releases the fish that rewards her by saying: “Allah says a kindness never goes unrewarded. Call for me any time and ask what you want”,<sup>413</sup> and as the years went by, the fish always helps Maha through difficult times.<sup>414</sup>



**Figure 5: Maha in *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* by Rebecca Hickox**

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<sup>411</sup> Sarami, Arefe, and Mokhtarian, Bahar, “A Structural Analysis of Iconographic Symbols and Metaphorical Expressions of Bicorporal Fish Pattern”, in *Studies in Visual Arts and Communication: an International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2015, on-line: [www.journalonarts.org](http://www.journalonarts.org), p. 2, 12 Dec. 2018. Other references can be found in: Busenbark, Ernest, *Symbols, Sex, and the Stars in Popular Beliefs: An Outline of the Origins of Moon and Sun Worship Astrology, Sex Symbolism, Mystic Meaning of Numbers, The Cabala, and Many Popular Customs, Myths, Superstitions and Religious Beliefs*, San Diego, California: The Book Tree, 1997, p. 174 and p. 259; and in: Dunnigan, Ann, “Fish”, in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones, New York: MacMillan Reference Library, 1987, p. 3122.

<sup>412</sup> Hickox, Rebecca, *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, New York: Holiday House, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>413</sup> Hickox, Op. Cit., p. 5.

<sup>414</sup> Hickox, Op. Cit., p. 9.

The narrator tells us that, with the passing of the seasons, Maha's beauty increases, while her stepsister grows selfish and mean. Once more, the illustrations help the reader visualise the nature of the characters. Maha's features are fine, with long, straight black hair. She is often portrayed with a submissive look, or with a peaceful expression on her face. On the other hand, both the stepmother and the stepsister are represented as uglier than Maha, with uncombed hair and with her noses proudly pointed at the sky.

An upcoming wedding at a merchant's house represents the tale's turning point. According to tradition, all the women in the town gather to celebrate and watch while the bride's hands and feet are painted with henna. One of the interesting cultural aspects of this story is the bride's henna ceremony. Women in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa use henna in a paste to make intricate temporary tattoos that decorate their hands and feet. The bride's henna ceremony is a chance for young girls to meet the mothers of a young man they might marry.<sup>415</sup> Therefore, in this version of the tale the suitor's mother plays a central role. There is no Prince Charming making every woman in the city try on the slipper, on the contrary, it is the "Prince's" mother that looks for the future bride instead of her son.<sup>416</sup>

With the fish's help, Maha attends the henna ceremony dressed in a silk gown, with a pearl comb and a pair of golden sandals as ornament. As recommendation, the fish warns her to leave the henna party before her stepmother does. Nevertheless, in her rush of leaving the party, she drops one of her golden sandals into a river. Several days after the wedding festivities, Tariq, the bride's brother, discovers the sandal. Awed by its beauty and elegance, Tariq sends his mother to try it on all women in the town.<sup>417</sup> At Maha's house, Maha's stepmother hides her in the bread oven, and, as in the Grimms'

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<sup>415</sup> Miczak, Marie Anakee, *Henna's Secret History: The History, Mystery and Folklore of Henna*, Indiana: iUniverse, 2001.

<sup>416</sup> Hickox, Rebecca, *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, New York: Holiday House, 1998, p. 12.

<sup>417</sup> Hickox, Op. Cit., p. 16.

version, tries to force her own daughter's foot into the sandal. Just as Tariq's mother is about to leave, a rooster flies on the top of the oven crowing:

Ki-ki-ki-ko, ki-ki-ki-ko,  
The one you seek is hidden below.<sup>418</sup>

After proving that Maha is the correct possessor of the sandal, and after seeing the beauty and kindness of the girl, Tariq's mother is convinced to have found a worthy bride for her son and gives the stepmother a bag of gold. The wicked stepmother uses the money to buy foul-smelling oil that should make Maha's hair fall out. However, when Tariq lifts her veil, she is more beautiful than ever. Tariq's brother asks his mother to arrange a wedding with Maha's sister, and, hoping to beautify her daughter, the stepmother buys the same potion again. However, the hair of Maha's sister falls out and the groom refuses to marry her. As for Maha and Tariq, they were "blessed with seven children and lived their days in great joy and good fortune".<sup>419</sup>

The Middle Eastern world represented in this picturebook has always been subjected to sexual stereotypes. As Said explains throughout *Orientalism*,<sup>420</sup> Middle Eastern women were seen as the most passive creatures, silent, and chaste, subservient even to the point of lacking personal will.<sup>421</sup> On the other hand, men were pictured as eloquent, wily and virile.<sup>422</sup> Curiously, in the last centuries scholars almost exclusively focused on other countries' derogatory way of picturing women. Indeed Western writers have, consciously or not, adopted this pattern of description. More precisely, one can argue

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<sup>418</sup> Hickox, *The Golden Sandal: a Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, New York: Holiday House, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>419</sup> Hickox, Op. Cit., p. 28.

<sup>420</sup> For further analysis see: Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.

<sup>421</sup> Colm Hogan, Patrick, *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crisis of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa and the Caribbean*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>422</sup> El Guindi, Fadwa, and Eicher, Joanne B., *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*, Edition 1, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003.

that the Cinderella archetype itself is not only a rags-to-riches story, but that is also subjected to the same sexual stereotypes, regardless of the country where the tale is told.

#### 3.3.3.4. *The Egyptian Cinderella*

The tale of Rhodopis (*ra-doh-pes*) and the rose-red slippers, retold in *The Egyptian Cinderella*, can be first found in Herodotus' *The Histories*.<sup>423</sup> There, however, the tale of Rhodopis is only marginal to the reported historical facts.<sup>424</sup> What *is* fact is that the Greek hetaera (prostitute) Rhodopis, married her master Charaxus, brother of Sappho. It is reported that Charaxus ransomed Rhodopis from slavery for a large sum of money.

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<sup>423</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, translated by George Rawlinson, Moscow, Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2013, Book 2, 134-135, pp. 153-154.

<sup>424</sup> Herodotus, Op. Cit., pp. 153-154:

[134] He too left a pyramid, but much inferior in size to his father's. It is a square, each side of which falls short of three plethra by twenty feet, and is built for half its height of the stone of Ethiopia. Some of the Greeks call it the work of Rhodopis the courtesan, but they report falsely. It seems to me that these persons cannot have any real knowledge of who Rhodopis was; otherwise they would scarcely have ascribed to her a work on which uncounted treasures, so to speak, must have been expended. Rhodopis also lived during the reign of Amasis, not of Mycerinus, and was thus very many years later than the time of the kings who built the pyramids. She was a Thracian by birth, and was the slave of Iadmon, son of Hephaestopolis, a Samian. Aesop, the fable-writer, was one of her fellow-slaves. That Aesop belonged to Iadmon is proved by many facts - among others, by this. When the Delphians, in obedience to the command of the oracle, made proclamation that if any one claimed compensation for the murder of Aesop he should receive it, the person who at last came forward was Iadmon, grandson of the former Iadmon, and he received the compensation. Aesop therefore must certainly have been the former Iadmon's slave.

[135] Rhodopis really arrived in Egypt under the conduct of Xantheus the Samian; she was brought there to exercise her trade, but was redeemed for a vast sum by Charaxus, a Mytilenaeon, the son of Scamandronymus, and brother of Sappho the poetess. After thus obtaining her freedom, she remained in Egypt, and, as she was very beautiful, amassed great wealth, for a person in her condition; not, however, enough to enable her to erect such a work as this pyramid. Any one who likes may go and see to what the tenth part of her wealth amounted, and he will thereby learn that her riches must not be imagined to have been very wonderfully great. Wishing to leave a memorial of herself in Greece, she determined to have something made the like of which was not to be found in any temple, and to offer it at the shrine at Delphi. So she set apart a tenth of her possessions, and purchased with the money a quantity of iron spits, such as are fit for roasting oxen whole, whereof she made a present to the oracle. They are still to be seen there, lying of a heap, behind the altar, which the Chians dedicated, opposite the sanctuary. Naucratis seems somehow to be the place where such women are most attractive. First there was this Rhodopis of whom we have been speaking, so celebrated a person that her name came to be familiar to all the Greeks; and, afterwards, there was another, called Archidice, notorious throughout Greece, though not so much talked of as her predecessor. Charaxus, after ransoming Rhodopis, returned to Mytilene, and was often lashed by Sappho in her poetry. But enough has been said on the subject of this courtesan.

The Italian version can be found in Erodoto, *Storie*, Introduzione di Filippo Càssola, Traduzione di Augusta Izzo D'Accinni, Premessa al testo e note di Daniela Fausti, Volume Primo (libri I e II) con testo greco a fronte, Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2011, libro II, 134-135, pp. 472-477.

The hetaera in question is also addressed with the name of Doricha in Athenaeus's *The Deipnosophists*.<sup>425</sup> Furthermore, Doricha was the name Sappho used to satirise her brother in her poem.<sup>426</sup>

During the first century B.C. Strabo, the Roman historian, recorded the tale in his *Geography*:<sup>427</sup>

On proceeding forty stadia from the city, one comes to a kind of mountain-brow; on it are numerous pyramids, the tombs of kings, of which three are noteworthy; and two of these are even numbered among the Seven Wonders of the World, for they are a stadium in height, are quadrangular in shape, and their height is a little greater than the length of each of the sides; and one of them is only a little larger than the other. High up, approximately midway between the sides, it has a movable stone, and when this is raised up there is a sloping passage to the vault. Now these pyramids are near one another and on the same level; but farther on, at a greater height of the hill, is the third, which is much smaller than the two, though constructed at much greater expense; for from the foundations almost to the middle it is made of black stone, the stone from which mortars are made, being brought from a great distance, for it is brought from the mountains of Aethiopia; and because of its being hard and difficult to work into shape it rendered the undertaking very expensive. It is called "Tomb of the Courtesan," having been built by her lovers — the courtesan whom Sappho the Melic poetess calls Doricha, the beloved of Sappho's brother Charaxus, who was

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<sup>425</sup> Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, translated by C.D. Yonge, book13, 1854, pp. 589-599, <http://www.attalus.org/old/atheneaus13c.html>, 15 Dec. 2018:

[69] Naucratis also has produced some very celebrated courtesans of exceeding beauty: for instance, Doricha, who became the mistress of Charaxus, the brother of the lovely Sappho, when he went to Naucratis on some mercantile business. Sappho accuses Doricha in her poetry of having stripped Charaxus of a great deal of his property. But Herodotus calls her Rhodopis, being evidently ignorant that Rhodopis and Doricha were two different people; and it was Rhodopis who dedicated those celebrated spits at Delphi, which Cratinus mentions in the following lines: Poseidippus also made this epigram on Doricha, although he had often mentioned her in his *Aesopia*, and this is the epigram:

Here, Doricha, your bones have long been laid,  
Here is your hair, and your well-scented robe:  
You who once loved the elegant Charaxus,  
And quaffed with him the morning bowl of wine.  
But Sappho's pages live, and still shall live,  
In which is many a mention of your name,  
Which still your native Naucratis shall cherish  
As long as any ship sails down the Nile.

Archedice also was a native of Naucratis; and she was a courtesan of great beauty. "For some how or other", as Herodotus says [2.135], "Naucratis is in the habit of producing beautiful courtesans".

<sup>426</sup> (edited by) Smith, William, "Rhodopis", in the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. 1, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867, p. 682.

<sup>427</sup> Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, Vol. VIII Book XVII of the Loeb Classical Library edition, No. 267, translated by Horace Leonard Jones, Harvard: William Heinemann, 1932.

engaged in transporting Lesbian wine to Naucratis for sale, but others give her the name Rhodopis. They tell the fabulous story that, when she was bathing, an eagle snatched one of her sandals from her maid and carried it to Memphis; and while the king was administering justice in the open air, the eagle, when it arrived above his head, flung the sandal into his lap; and the king, stirred both by the beautiful shape of the sandal and by the strangeness of the occurrence, sent men in all directions into the country in quest of the woman who wore the sandal; and when she was found in the city of Naucratis, she was brought up to Memphis, became the wife of the king, and when she died was honoured with the above-mentioned tomb.<sup>428</sup>

Unlike Herodotus, who simply reported historical facts, Strabo added some details to the tale of Rhodopis, mixing both fact and fable. Hence, unlike the other protagonists analysed in this thesis, the figure of Rhodopis is the only one based on a real person. Her story evolved through the years, turning into what became a famous tale. The tale contained in this picturebook takes inspiration directly from the story reported by Strabo.

To help the reader visualise the historical period and the setting, the illustrator represents the vegetation typical of the region close to the Nile; the characters wear the traditional makeup and are dressed in the ancient fashion of Egypt (4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), with long white tunics and colourful jewels.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, the drawings – with the sideways position of the characters and the stylised setting – recall the ancient Egyptian graffiti that can be found in ancient Egyptian tombs or temples or in archaeological findings.<sup>430</sup>

Since the tale follows the plot line of tale type AT510A, the role of the envious stepsisters is taken over by the fellow household servant girls, which, jealous of her

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<sup>428</sup> Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, Vol. VIII Book XVII of the Loeb Classical Library edition, No. 267, translated by Horace Leonard Jones, Harvard: William Heinemann, 1932, p. 95.

<sup>429</sup> Vogelsang-Eastwood, Gillian, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing: Studies in Textile and Costume History*, Vol. 2, Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1993.

<sup>430</sup> Cortese, Valeria e Guidotti, Cristina M., *Antico Egitto: Arte, Storia e Civiltà*, Firenze: Giunti Editore, 2017.

beauty, give her extra work. The narrator tells us that Rhodopis looks different from the other Egyptian girls:

Their eyes were brown and hers were green. Their hair hung straight to their shoulders, while the breeze blew hers into tangles. Their skin glowed like copper, but her pale skin burned red beneath the sun. That was how she got her name, for Rhodopis meant ‘rosy-cheeked’ in Greek.<sup>431</sup>

One evening, her kind master sees her dancing with the animals she befriended, and he is so charmed by her grace that he decides to give her a pair of dainty slippers, with soles of real leather and the toes gilded of rose-red gold. Since “ancient Egyptian gold was sometimes mixed with iron, which gave it a reddish hue”,<sup>432</sup> the existence of rose-red slippers is possible. The presence of the slippers set Rhodopis more apart than ever, leading the servant girls to give her more chores, thus preventing her from dancing at night. As Shirley Climo tells us “in those days, a fortunate slave might live far better than a hired servant. The servants, although free, were poor and lived in mud huts, while a chosen slave enjoyed the comforts of the master’s villa.”<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, first Harper Trophy Edition, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>432</sup> Climo, Op. Cit., Author’s Note.

<sup>433</sup> Climo, Op. Cit., Author’s Note.



**Figure 6: Rhodopis in *The Egyptian Cinderella* by Shirley Climo**

In this version of the tale, Rhodopis does not ask for help, nevertheless, a falcon comes to her aid. Although some references identify the bird as an eagle, Climo tells us that in retelling the story, she preferred to have the gilded slippers stolen by a falcon.<sup>434</sup> As a matter of fact, Horus, the Egyptian sky god and deity of the living pharaohs, was believed to appear on earth as a falcon.<sup>435</sup> The falcon brings the slipper to the city of Memphis, where the Pharaoh is holding court, an occurrence that Rhodopis was previously not allowed to join. When the falcon drops the rose-red slipper into Pharaoh Amasis' lap, he believes it is a sign of the god Horus. To find his future queen he decides to make every maiden in Egypt try on the slipper, which however appears to be so small that it would fit none.

At the end of the tale, Rhodopis is successfully recognised as the legitimate owner of the rose-red slippers. The servant girls contest the Pharaoh's decision because of Rhodopis' cultural and social background ("But Rhodopis is a slave!"; "She is not even

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<sup>434</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, first Harper Trophy Edition, 1992, Author's Note.

<sup>435</sup> Hart, George L., *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 70.

Egyptian.”<sup>436</sup>). However, the Pharaoh answers “She is most Egyptian of all, for her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus, and her skin the pink of a lotus flower.”<sup>437</sup> The tale ends with Amasis leading Rhodopis to the royal barge, “and with every step, her rose-red slippers winked and sparkled in the sun”<sup>438</sup>



Figure 7: Rhodopis in *The Egyptian Cinderella* by Shirley Climo

### 3.3.3.5. *Cendrillon: The Caribbean Cinderella*

As we can understand from the very title, *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella* is set in the Caribbean, more precisely in Martinique.<sup>439</sup> San Souci constructs a hybrid tale that acknowledges the island’s colonial connection to France and how this affects their history. Known for his adaptations of Creole tales, the author asserts that, *Cendrillon* is

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<sup>436</sup> Climo, Shirley, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, illustrated by Ruth Heller, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, first Harper Trophy Edition, 1992, p. 28.

<sup>437</sup> Climo, Op. Cit., p. 28.

<sup>438</sup> Climo, Op. Cit., p. 28.

<sup>439</sup> San Souci, Robert, D., *Cendrillon: a Caribbean Cinderella*, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, an imprint of Simon&Schuster, 2002, Author’s Note.

Loosely based on the French Creole tale “Cendrillon” in Turiault’s nineteenth-century *Creole Grammar*. That version follows the basic outline of Perrault’s *Cinderella*, while incorporating elements of West Indian culture and costume. The decision to tell the story from the godmother’s point of view arose over the course of rewriting. She seemed a natural storyteller for a narrative that grows out of Creole oral tradition, and her unique perspective allowed me to add a fresh wrinkle to this timeless tale.<sup>440</sup>

Since the godmother to whom Cendrillon is attached is the narrator of the tale, Martinique voice is fully represented; however, as an old and magical Martinique, she also reminds the reader of the ambiguous “subservient” status of the Caribbean island, in contrast with the French colonial heritage.<sup>441</sup> In making the narrator an eyewitness of the events, San Souci tries to recreate a tale that is both reflective of Perrault’s but that, at the same time, takes into account Martinique’s reality.<sup>442</sup> As we know from history,

Colonial contact disrupts indigenous culture, often radically. For many people, it renders traditional ideas uncertain and ends the easy performance of traditional practices. In doing this, it makes cultural identity a problem. While questions about one’s relation to tradition may arise at any time, in any context, they arise with unique force and scope as colonial contact intensifies, the degree of severance increases, internalisations of idea and act fade or shift between antagonistic cultures, coming to rest fully in neither one nor the other. In short, under colonialism, in the region of contact, the conflicts are so strong and pervasive that they constitute a challenge to one’s cultural identity, and thus one’s personal identity.<sup>443</sup>

As a matter of fact, in this version of the tale French heritage is important, not only because of Perrault’s tale but also as concerns France as the Caribbean’s coloniser nation. Cendrillon’s stepmother, Madame Prospèrine, is said to be “a cold woman who

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<sup>440</sup> San Souci, Robert, D., *Cendrillon: a Caribbean Cinderella*, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, an imprint of Simon&Schuster, 2002, Author’s Note.

<sup>441</sup> San Souci, Op. Cit., p. 241.

<sup>442</sup> San Souci, Op. Cit., p. 242.

<sup>443</sup> Colm Hogan, Patrick, *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crisis of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa and the Caribbean*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000, p. 9.

puffed up because her grandfather had come from France”.<sup>444</sup> Furthermore, the name “Cendrillon” itself is sufficient to recall the tale’s French heritage. The interesting point is that in this tale the protagonist is given the name “Cendrillon” from the beginning. On the contrary, her stepsister (here the second natural daughter of Cendrillon’s father and her stepmother) is not only given a name but a positive one: Vitaline.

The reader can notice the presence of some French words in the text. San Souci declares that he preferred the use of proper French, rather than Creolised, spellings in order to reflect the parents’ pretension and concern with their French ancestry. For example, he chose to use the French spelling of “Cendrillon” and “Monsieur”, since they are more familiar. As a matter of fact, in island Creole, “Cinderella” would be spelled “Sandriyon”, though pronounced “Cendrillon”, and “Monsieur” would be “Missié” (pron. MIH-seeyh).<sup>445</sup>

*Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella* can be also classified as a counter-narrative. While scholars as Bhabha have classified counter-narrative as “disturbing”, because it disrupts the ideological manoeuvres through which “imagined communities” are given essentialist identities,<sup>446</sup> San Souci’s narrative discourses “confirm the hybridity of the culture to recreate a unified entity, albeit the contradictory cultural reality of the people of Martinique as local, foreign, ancient, modern, and a combination of these and more.”<sup>447</sup> From dialogue, text and illustrations the reader can notice how people closer to the coloniser in skin colour, education, and class are located in a high social position.<sup>448</sup> What sets the story apart from Perrault’s version are the references to the

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<sup>444</sup> San Souci, Robert, D., *Cendrillon: a Caribbean Cinderella*, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, an imprint of Simon&Schuster, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>445</sup> San Souci, Op. Cit., Author’s Note.

<sup>446</sup> Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 213.

<sup>447</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 241.

<sup>448</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 242.

local fauna and flora, to traditional martinican clothes, represented in illustrations by Brian Pinkney, and to the allusions to martinican colonial connections to France.



**Figure 8: *Cendrillon: The Caribbean Cinderella* by Robert San Souci**

From the narration, the reader can also notice how the local community tends to imitate lifestyles typically attributed to the colonising country.<sup>449</sup> One fitting example can be the night of the ball at Monsieur Thibault's for the birthday of his son Paul. From the illustrations one can notice how the protagonist and her godmother (that in this version of the tale is accompanying Cendrillon to the ball) are dressed in typical Martinique fashion, while the men attending the ball are wearing typically Western suits.<sup>450</sup> Following the plot line of tale type AT510A, Cendrillon and her godmother rush back home at midnight, and, on the run, Cendrillon leaves the pink embroidered

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<sup>449</sup> Fanon, Franz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated from French by Richard Philcox, New York: Grove Press, 2004.

<sup>450</sup> San Souci, Robert, D., *Cendrillon: a Caribbean Cinderella*, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, an imprint of Simon&Schuster, 2002, p. 24.

slipper behind. Paul retrieves the pink slipper and orders all the unmarried women on the island to try it on in order to find the beautiful stranger he danced with. To complete the colonial heritage and discourse, at the end of the tale San Souci makes the Queen and King of France attend Paul and Cendrillon wedding.

### 3.3.4. Kind and Unkind Girls

Among the numerous variants of the Cinderella tale, a further distinction sees the fusion of the Cinderella archetype with the tale type AT480 (“Kind and Unkind Girls”). As hinted in the second chapter of this thesis<sup>451</sup>, this type of tale stages a real daughter and a stepdaughter, one kind and one unkind. As in tale type AT510A, the kind girl is mistreated by her stepfamily and is forced to undertake a journey where she is assigned impossible tasks. In the course of the journey, she is kind to the characters she meets (animals or old man/woman) who reward her. On her return, her sister learns of her success and attempts to have the same adventures. However, she is unkind and disobedient and is punished by disfigurement.<sup>452</sup>

As it happens with the Cinderella tale, this type of tale can be found in different cultures’ folkloric repertoire. For example, in his collection *Fiabe Italiane* Italo Calvino reports “L’acqua nel cestello”,<sup>453</sup> or in *Cinderella: a Casebook*, Alan Dundes reports “Āsh-e Bībī Murād, Soup for the Lady of Wishes”,<sup>454</sup> a tale widely known and performed in eastern Iran and western Afghanistan. Contrarily to “L’acqua nel cestello”,

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<sup>451</sup> 2.1. The Differentiation of the Plots.

<sup>452</sup> Aarne, Antii and Thompson, Stith, *The Types of Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, p. 164.

<sup>453</sup> Calvino, Italo, “L’acqua nel cestello”, in *Fiabe Italiane*, Milano: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1956, pp. 409-411, (Marche).

<sup>454</sup> Dundes, Alan, “Āsh-e Bībī Murād, Soup for the Lady of Wishes”: courtesy of Rafique Keshavjee, Dīzbād, Khorāssān, Iran, November 10, 1978, in *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

this second tale plays a central role in a religious ritual. It is told in an all-female Muslim ceremony in which women prepare a food offer to Bībī Fātimeh (“The Lady of Wishes”), the Prophet’s daughter.<sup>455</sup>

Among the analysed picturebooks, two are the ones reporting tale type AT480, *Chinye: A West African Folk Tale* and *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*. Both tales come from the millennial storytelling tradition of the Africana region. In these tales race, gender, and class issues remain central themes, and each author “illuminates the regional and/or national differences that set the Black communities apart”,<sup>456</sup> unsettling the stereotyped notions a European reader may have. As a matter of fact, they analyse cultural ethnocentrism, colonialism, and institutional racism along with classism and sexism. In the Shona and Igbo villages of Steptoe and Onyefulu the narrated conflicts remain at the local level, in settings that may be regarded as pre-colonial.<sup>457</sup>

#### 3.3.4.1. *Chinye: A West African Folk Tale*

Onyefulu’s *Chinye: A West African Folk Tale* is set in an Igbo village in Eastern Nigeria. The tale narrates the experiences of an impoverished orphan girl, Chinye, who is mistreated by her stepmother, Nkechi, and stepsister, Adanma. As some popular traditional versions, the “rags to riches” motif drives the plot. However,

In this variant the material success is not connected to marrying a prince, a king, or an important male figure. Rather, it revolves around the desperate need for material independence to free oneself from the indignities that are usually

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<sup>455</sup> Dundes, Alan, *Cinderella: a casebook*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 181-182.

<sup>456</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 239.

<sup>457</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 239.

attributed to, or that emanate from poverty, but not necessarily through marriage. In this regard it could be conceived as a counter-narrative.<sup>458</sup>

Confirming the verbal narrative, the illustrations depict Nkechi, Adanma, and Chinye as three desperate females living dangerously close to a precarious forest, and psychologically traumatised by the lack of basic material needs.<sup>459</sup>



**Figure 9: *Chinye* by Obi Onyefulu**

In this version of the tale Chinye, the protagonist, has to enter the dangerous forest to fetch the water that her stepfamily needs to cook dinner. In the forest she succeeds to pass, unharmed, a snake, a hyena and a lion, which in Igbo culture symbolise the connection with ancestors and gods.<sup>460</sup> Chinye then follows the suggestions of an old woman (the reincarnation of the spirit of the forest) and enters a hut where the floor is covered in gourds. Chinye chooses the smallest as the old woman recommended, and

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<sup>458</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 240.

<sup>459</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 240.

<sup>460</sup> (retold by) Onyefulu, Obi, *Chinye: a West African Folk Tale*, illustrated by Evie Safarewicz, London: Frances Lincoln Children’s Book, 1994, Author’s Note.

for her obedience, she is rewarded with all sort of supplies that can help her in regaining her family's wealth. Jealous of Chinye success, the stepmother pushes Adanma to take the same path, but she eventually fails, causing a great wind to blow away all hers and the stepmother's belongings.<sup>461</sup>

Contrarily to all the previous picturebooks and tales analysed, *Chinye* does not end with a marriage. Set in a population where generosity and communal life is valued,<sup>462</sup> the tale ends with Chinye using her wealth to help the people of her village, while Adanma and Nkechi proudly leave the community.

#### 3.3.4.2. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: an African Tale* is considered one of the most popular Africana "Cinderella" tales in the United States.<sup>463</sup> The story is set in a Shona village in Zimbabwe and the protagonists are kind Nyasha and unkind Manyara, Mufaro's beautiful daughters. In this tale, the two sisters have to prove to be worthy of the king and they must face a series of culturally relevant challenges.<sup>464</sup> The negative attitude and the excessive self-centeredness of Manyara make her fail all the challenges. At first she refuses to share food with a hungry child, and then, she is impolite to an elderly woman. At the end, she meets a five-headed monster, while kind Nyasha marries the king.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> (retold by) Onyefulu, Obi, *Chinye: a West African Folk Tale*, illustrated by Evie Safarewicz, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Book, 1994, p. 22.

<sup>462</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, "Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum", *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 240.

<sup>463</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 239.

<sup>464</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 240.

<sup>465</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Op. Cit., p. 240.



**Figure 10: Nyasha and Manyara in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe**

As we saw in the previous subchapters,<sup>466</sup> as African females, Nyasha and Manyara are racialised types; one of the girls is perpetually selfless and the other is vain, aggressive, rude, and manipulative. From the picture we can see how the two girls contrast in aspect, jewellery, and posture. Nyasha appears in simpler clothes, with less jewellery than Manyara, often looking downward in displayed shyness; on the other hand, Manyara is pictured as vain and proud, often with an angry expression on her face.

As Hickey and Wylie argue, this binary racialised consciousness can be tracked back to travel logs of early European and American explorers. They claim that these travellers successfully introduced binary opposite images of Africans and Africa into the Western readers' consciousness. These images presupposed that Africans either are primitive, barbaric, and live in a capricious jungle, or they are noble savages who live in an uncontaminated paradise.<sup>467</sup> These binary stereotypes have been applied also to

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<sup>466</sup> 3.3.1. Representation of Cultures in Fairy Tales.

<sup>467</sup> Hickey, Dennis, and Wylie, Kenneth, *An Enchanted Darkness: The American Vision of Africa in the Twentieth Century*, East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1993.

childhood: black children either are primitive, ugly and even violent, or they are spiritual and forgiving in spite of their constant struggles with poverty and injustice.<sup>468</sup>

### 3.4. The heroine's name and protagonist-identification

As already analysed in subchapter 2.4.,<sup>469</sup> the name of the protagonist plays an important role in the construction of the tale. If we consider the previously analysed picturebooks, Cinderella's name varies depending on the nation in which the tale is told, contrarily to the tales analysed in Chapter 2 where, if names appear, these are general or descriptive ones, which can stand for any boy or girl.<sup>470</sup>

In the analysed picturebooks, we can observe how the protagonist has a proper first name, which does not change with the stepfamily's abuse of power. Among these tales, Pear Blossom is the only one whose real name is changed to "Pigling". However, while in tales such as *Ashputtle* the protagonist does not *have* a proper first name, it is interesting to notice how in *The Korean Cinderella* Shirley Climo does not change the way she addresses Pear Blossom, continuing to call her by her real name. In so doing, the author takes distances from the stepfamily's misdeeds. At the same time, Cendrillon of *The Caribbean Cinderella* constitutes a different case of absence of a "real" name; in this tale "Cendrillon" is not a derogatory name, but a proper one given to her by her dying mother.

The visual representation of the tales throughout picturebooks is another important element of characterisation. Even though Bettelheim argues that in fairy tales a sense of

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<sup>468</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, "Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum", *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 235.

<sup>469</sup> Cinderella's name and protagonist identification.

<sup>470</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010, p. 41.

abstraction is necessary, in order to favour the reader's identification with the protagonist, this is almost absent in the realm of picturebooks. However, specifically because of the visual representations of both characters and setting, in picturebooks there is less margin of interpretation.

Confined to the child's dimension, picturebooks' authors are concerned with the moral messages a child can encounter,<sup>471</sup> and sexual and cultural stereotyping is at the center of the modern debate regarding fairy tales.<sup>472</sup> As we saw in this last chapter, children's literature representing different ethnicities should be promoted. This would contrast the underrepresentation of some ethnic groups and the consequent maintenance of superficial stereotypes associated with them. Literature that explores diversity in its complex forms would enrich children's cultural backgrounds and help them understand the complicated nature of human experiences.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 129.

<sup>472</sup> See for example: Lieberman, Marcia R., "Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale", in *College English*, Volume 34 Number 3, [www.jstor.org/stable/375142](http://www.jstor.org/stable/375142), Dec. 1972, pp. 383-395, 28 Nov. 2018.

<sup>473</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, "Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum", *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 234.

## Conclusion.

Sexist and cultural stereotyping afflicts and limits both men and women. However, within patriarchal societies women are the ones that are relegated to a subordinate position, and for centuries women were defined as available, passive and accommodating to the judgements of the dominant male observer.<sup>474</sup> As women, children were, and still are, subjected to the same detached gaze. In order to help them become successful adults, children have become the subject of studies, and children literature and child's psychology helped adults in reaching this goal. However, as Perry Nodelman theorises, in the act of speaking for the child, its voice is silenced.

As children literature is concerned, the fairy tales tradition is the most interesting genre. Initially considered as literature for adults, its audience shifted to children. Hence, suddenly scholars became concerned with the moral message and the models of behaviour a child could encounter while reading them. Scholars have argued that fairy tales as a genre were unsuitable for an audience composed exclusively by children, not only because of occasional crude events, but also because they reinforce sexist stereotyping for both boys and girls. Even though some scholars argue that fairy tales challenge such stereotyping, being fundamentally neutral,<sup>475</sup> depending on the age/gender/culture of the audience, they might not be perceived as such. As scholars as Kay Stone claim, fairy tales continued to be relevant for women even in their adult lives, finding there an echo of their own struggles.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Nodelman, Perry, "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children's Literature", in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, XVII (1992): p. 29.

<sup>475</sup> (edited by) Jordan, Rosan A. and Kalčík, Susan J., *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 125.

<sup>476</sup> Jordan and Kalčík, Op. Cit., p. 144.

As I have analysed in this thesis, the behavioural models proposed in fairy tales are limited to two. Female protagonists tend to be passive and pretty, but also patient, respectful, conscientious, and quiet. These heroines are required nothing beyond beautiful features or a pleasant temperament. On the contrary, heroes succeed not because of their appearance or inherent sweet nature but thanks to their ability to overcome obstacles, even if these obstacles are defects in their own characters.<sup>477</sup>

This representation of the passive protagonist, who eventually succeeds in marrying the prince and in freeing herself from her pitiful condition has been harshly criticised by feminists. As emerged from countless of studies, millions of women declared that on fairy tales they based their primordial ideas of what sort of behaviour would be rewarded, of what they could or could not accomplish, and of what kind of reward they deserved.<sup>478</sup>

Cinderella as a protagonist has been accused of perpetrating this model of passive behaviour, a behaviour that eventually helps her in reaching her only goal: marriage with the prince. However, as discussed in the first chapter, fairy tales should be contextualised. They indeed are the primary example of the principal values of a society, but it is important to notice how every epoch reacts to fairy tales in a different manner, projecting their struggles on them, trying to find answers to their main problems and questions. Thus, Cinderella as a protagonist should not be accused of simply “ending with the Prince”. The marriage with the Prince should be contextualised as the main goal for a woman at that epoch and can be nowadays seen as a symbol of liberation and of gained independence. Furthermore, as analysed in the second chapter, Disney’s Cinderella (the version everyone can easily recall) is not the official version. In tale type AT510B, the protagonist is not at all passive; on the contrary, she cleverly

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<sup>477</sup> Stone, Kay, “Things Walt Disney Never Told Us”, in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol.88, No. 347, University of Illinois Press on Behalf of American Folklore Society, (1975), p. 45.

<sup>478</sup> Stone, Op. Cit., p. 48.

fights for her independence. Or in tale type AT480 the marriage with the Prince is not at all important for the scope of the tale, whose moral message is that of being kind to the unfortunates and to have respect for elderly people.

However, it is true that some topics, such as the AT510B's topic of incest, are not considered suitable for very young children. What is true is that we deprive the child of a resourceful heroine as a model of behaviour. Thus, it might be an idea to "temporarily" change or transform the theme of incest until the child is not ready to cope with it. This transformation or slight alteration of crude themes is not new for tales such as the Grimms', where some topics were adapted in order to suit children's ears. However, if it is true that most of fairy tales content is not as innocent as we would like it to be for innocent children, we must bear in mind that most of the times children do understand that what is represented in fairy tales stands as a symbol for something else. The child, more than the adult, knows what he wants or needs to be told.<sup>479</sup>

Furthermore, the ethnic aspect is important to consider. In the third chapter, I have analysed seven culturally different Cinderella tales underlining how the drawings could help the child visualise a different ethnicity than his or hers. As we saw, in the modern epoch, Western children literature still dominates the markets. This is due to colonialism and to Western studies on the ex-colonies that led to the formation of stereotypes associated with the foreign cultures. Stereotypes that regard different cultures than ours are not that news, however, we can notice how ex-colonies were highly affected. Considered inferior and primitive they were also deprived of their own voice. It is not a case if Said opened *Orientalism* with a quotation from Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "They cannot represent themselves; they must

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<sup>479</sup> Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantments: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books Edition, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2010.

be represented”.<sup>480</sup> Reading a different and “foreign” Cinderella tale, can only benefit the child. Once again, children tend to visualise Cinderella as a Western blond and passive girl, not knowing that there are many more models and many more ethnicities that characterise the heroine. While promoting children literature representing different ethnicities, we help the child in fighting the maintenance of superficial stereotypes associated with ethnic groups to which he or she does not belong. If race, class, and gender are important in children’s tales, adults should teach the child how to read those tales, supplying alternatives to what they read if worried that their vision might be too restricted.

Literature that explores diversity in its multifaceted forms would enrich the child’s cultural background; moreover, it helps him or her understand the immensity of human experience, making children become tolerant and open-minded adults.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.

<sup>481</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian, “Black Cinderella: multicultural literature and school curriculum”, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22:2, 2004, p. 234.

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