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Feminist Hypertextuality in Fairy Tale Adaptations: Cinderella, from Docility to Independence

النص التشعبي النسوي في اقتباسات أفلام الحكايات الخيالية: سندريلا، من الانقياد إلى الاستقلال

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Introduction

Serving as the reflective mirror of real life, literature has done its role in reflecting the modes of patriarchy onto the pages of fiction. Since the dawn of literary creations, women's role had been depicted as trivial, marginalized and unsubstantial due to the fact that the literary haven was dominated by men. A plethora of feminists aimed at destroying the stereotypical depiction of women in literature, that is as labelled by Virginia Woolf "the angel in the house" (Showalter, 1992, p. 207). Consequently, literature, as the echo of society, was utilized as a weapon to fight for women's rights and get their voices heard.

Within those literary works, which focused on depicting the docile female in need of men, is the fairy tales' genre. Stories such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and Rapunzel share a similar portrayal of women as damsels in distress who cannot live happily ever after if they do not encounter and marry prince charming. Nonetheless, a many literary works have been remade, adapted and altered sometimes with the purpose of parodying the original work. Hypertextuality, for instance, which was first given name by Michael Riffaterre, functions as that weapon which can construe and reshape a story to transmit different connotations (1994, p. 786). Hypertextuality is not simply restricted to literature for it can also be manifested through adaptations when the adapted version functions as a commentary on the literary work or on a different adaptation.

Accordingly, the hypertextual approach to fiction is to be implemented in this research paper with the aim of investigating the shift in Cinderella between the 20th and the 21st century's adaptations of the original story, along with the alterations of female representations between the two works. Firstly, it is of high importance to shed light on the crux of the female representation

in fiction in order to be able to notice the transferal between different time periods before diving into the analysis of the selected works.

1. Women from Literature to Film

The gentler sex was best known and appreciated for its quietness. Indeed, even the earliest forms of literary artefacts celebrated female silence as a form of submission “in the Arthurian romances, in stories such as Erec and Enyd. This exists in versions by Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1170), in *The Mabinogion* (c. 1300), and in Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (1859)” (Coates, 2004, p. 25). The obedience of women did not cease to impress or dwell within the pages of literature; on the contrary, it even transcended to infect the visual sphere through cinema.

Since the birth of the cinematographic world women were haunted by the male gaze through cameras. According to Laura Mulvey, since the world’s perception was already biased to men, even in films men were perceived as “active” onlookers while women as “passive” pleasurable objects to be beheld. Women’s ultimate role on screen was to epitomise “male desire” (1973, p. 808-809), that is, they are an agreeable distraction of the hero as they are his incentives to act but, individually, they have no actual role. Akin to females in real life, they were expected to follow a certain conduct on which to insure male comfort without care for their own. This male wish to underestimate and reduce women to items is believed to be, according to the Freudian analysis, a male fear of women’s penis envy. Having no masculine power may render women dangerous to men, and as such they are, for their own good, reduced into gratifying male fantasies (Citron et al, 1978, p. 88). As a matter of fact, both writers and film makers reflect their own personal stimuli on their works. They only create what they think will sell best for male viewers, and with enough influence, to female viewers as well.

In retaliation, female authors decided to create an anti-image of women. They introduced women who are educated, smart and certainly not inanimate as men would wish, they might even possess the quality of masculinity. In countless works of literature written by female authors, female characters were endowed with certain qualities only men were supposed to own. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen gifted Mrs Bennet a “resourcefulness” her husband could never own. Just as:

“Edgar Linton in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* is a caricature of manliness; in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters*, an only daughter, Molly Gibson, proves to

be a better child to her father than a son, Osborne Hamley, who fails his parents ; George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* presents Maggie Tulliver as a far stronger, braver and tougher character than her brother Tom. Britomart, Spenser's heroine, though innocent and gorgeous, was masculine as represented by her cross-dressing as a Knight and her magic spear in her adventure, a strong character who very actively fought as a knight and saved lives." (Singh, 2019, p. 40)

Truly, female authors took it upon themselves to mend the shattered image of women because they, just like men, cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity. Equally, in the realm of cinema, feminist filmmakers are tracing the same path as they endeavour to recreate the female persona and destroy the objectified image. They are adapting "subtle cinematic effects, such as lighting and color, to de-code established cinematic practices in regard to the photographing of women's bodies and their relationship to the space around them" (Citron et al, 1978, p. 88). Simply put, women are doing their best to finally release themselves from the shackles of the male gaze.

It would be rather lengthy to tackle the female struggle and representation since the outburst of fiction. Conversely, the purpose of this research paper is to conduct a comparative study between the twentieth and the twenty-first century's depiction of women through fiction, specifically with the aid of hypertextuality. As such a narrower scope of analysis is to be trailed.

1.1. Women in 20th Century Fiction

During the 1900s women's role was often perceived trivial to the society's development in comparison to men's part. Their tasks dovetailed around homely chores, barring children and making sure their husbands were well cared for (Halldorsdortir, 2006, p. 139). As such, feminist activists akin to the suffragettes in Britain and the Feminist American movement thrived at the time (Andersen, 2015, p. 383), in order to fight the standardized image of women. In parallel, like the literatures which proceeded, the literature of the closing century of the second millennia made no difference to the representation of women. Women in literature still "appear not as they are, certainly not as they would define themselves, but as conveniences to the resolution of masculine dilemmas (Griffin Wolff, 1972, p. 207).

For illustration, F. Scott Fitzgerald, one of the 20th century's most celebrated writers, chose to offer another female protagonist "as a victim in the 1920's" (Singh, 2019, p. 39). By the same token, in one of James D. Blooms' all-encompassing books, he mentions a plethora of 20th century authors who

possessed and wielded male gazing, including Ernest Hemingway and James Joyce. In *Ulysses*, for instance, Joyce presents Molly Bloom by focusing on the description of her breasts, “breasts all perfume” in particular, into its surroundings, both natural and human-made—’into an enveloping landscape consisting of both “mountain fowers” and a “Moorish wall.”” (Bloom, 2017, p. 49). Correspondingly, poets such as William Butler Yeats introduced some female characters “who speak and are spoken about during various phases of their lives, in an array of circumstances, recalling their relationships and their experiences as gaze objects” such as in “Crazy Jane” and “A Woman Young and Old” (Bloom, 2017, p. 151).

Clearly, despite the fact that during the 20th century women played a huge role in replacing men who went to fight in both wars, women were still perceived as objects to be controlled and gazed upon for pleasure. Even female writers like Anita Brookner wrote of women characters who were too weak to fight male oppression and who end up side-lined in their respective societies (Button & Reed, 1999, p. 171). Nonetheless, feminist writers of the 20th century defied the current and broke free of the patriarchal tradition. Some of the best examples of female characters which rescind male expectations are Edna from Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* and Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter in Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help*. These characters not only portray the struggle women go through but also showcase the strength of these women as feminists (Funk, 2022, p. 2). Other instances of female strength within 20th century literature include Edith Wharton’s *House of Mirth* (1905) and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), where both Lily Bart and Sethe epitomise female resistance against patriarchy (Martin & Becker, 2017).

As for the 20th century cinema, Claire Johnston postulated in her 1973’s research, on female representation in film, that the Hollywood industry like most industries in the USA and the world followed a “sexist ideology” overseen by a patriarchal doctrine. She also added that all cinematographic works served as a “set of images and narratives that supported and continually reaffirmed the status of women as objects under patriarchy” (ctd in McLean, 2009, p. 145). More precisely, women as objects, denotes the stereotyping of women which did not start to dominate motion pictures until the second half of the 1900s because, formerly, women were almost absent. Women during the first half of the 20th century were mainly portrayed as wives or mothers, or a single woman with one ultimate desire that is to: get married, procreate and appear in the most agreeable manner, such as the case of the famous Scarlett O’Hara and her fellow female characters from *Gone with the Wind*

in 1939 (Carnicero Herrero, 2020, p. 20). In the same vein, even Disney films participated in the homogenizing process of women as dolls, and submissive angels awaiting the patriarch to lead them to safety. Moreover, the influence of fairy tales is crucial since their viewers are at a critical age when to them the difference between “fantasy and reality is blurry” leading to the acceptance of “the stereotypical conventions of fairy tales” which depict imperium women as wicked witches, men as the rescuers and women as passive marionettes (Tonn, 2008, p. 1).

Nonetheless, by the end of the 1950s the female image started to gradually shift seeing the example of *Sunset Boulevard*. This film ignited quite a stir in the Hollywood industry as it portrayed women in a drastically different manner than what preceded. Finally, women were able to occupy the plot centre in a Hollywood film. Women were no longer seen from the angle of a mother or a wife; however this stereotype was replaced by a new more daring one, the Femme Fatale (Carnicero Herrero, 2020, p. 20). The latter became a defining title given to a female character, on screen, known for being “bold, beautiful, and bad to the bone”, and even more atrociously “She is a sexual being and uses her sexuality as a tool or a weapon to get what she wants” (Ross, 1998). This archetype continued till the last decade of the 20th century with more prominence through *Basic Instinct* (Simpson, 2000, p. 211). Furthermore, even when women were not embodied as a Femme Fatale, based on Jill Nelmes lighter insinuations focused on representing women “as passive and relying on their attractiveness” (2003, p. 248), that is using their physical beauty to get what they wanted from men, including securing a future.

Whether the docile female, the mother, the wife or the seductive dangerous woman; females could not escape the formulaic image. Still, the impact of feminism in the United States acquired many of women’s rights (Bullock & Stephen, 1999, p. 314). As a reflection of these victories, the portrait of women in films, majorly by the late 1970s, transformed to mirror the autonomous woman and her individual successes. The best example of this new female is Woody Allen’s Annie in *Annie Hall* (1977). She is decisive and adamant on achieving her goals as she is independent and opinionated (Carnicero Herrero, 2020, p. 22). Annie also paved the way for 21st century’s new depiction of women in fiction.

1.2. Women in 21st Century Fiction

The coming of the 21st century brought numerous changes to the world, among which changes for women are the most prominent. The third wave

of feminism or the post-feminist movement still endeavours to strengthen the new female to be as independent and as equal as men. As for female portrayal, in literature and in cinema, it appears female characters nowadays fare much better than they did in the previous centuries despite the negative fixed platitudes.

Fairly said, the depiction of women in literature, by men, had changed considerably since the previous decades. Men no longer write women to serve as a surrogate for the male desire. A many male authors have started to gradually destroy the held image that men are unable to write female characters as should be. John Green's *the Fault in Our Stars* (2012), Jeffery Eugenides's *the Marriage Plot* (2011), and Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2008) are some of the most extraordinary works which were able to reflect the complexities of young women and their own struggles as individuals and not in relation to men (Ihnadi, 2020, p. 1). These works portray the ability of men to write the female gender properly, though these men may serve as the exception and not the rule, the rule being men stereotyping women or still following the same pattern as their predecessors by creating female personas which are weaker based on their gender.

With that being stated, twenty-first century's fiction is believed to have started insinuating a reversal in roles status. Despite the factual existence of reversal of roles in societies, it is still considered a rare and unusual incident due to its defiance of the natural course of life, docile women at home and dominant working men in the public world. Still, many pairs nowadays especially in the western world tend to go through a reversal of role stage, whether intentionally or involuntarily they find themselves compelled to experience it (Pilcher, 1998). Likewise, many female characters in literature appear to take the lead instead of men such as the case of Katniss Everdeen from *the Hunger Games* series and Tris from *the Divergent* series (Murphy, 2015, p. 8). Women in Literature, especially those written by women started to be authentically portrayed. They are no longer pliant, utterly good and weak. Women are finally represented as strong and beautiful yet flawed, good yet could also be evil and malignant because they are human, just as men. This flawed variance is seen in novels such as *the Paying Guests*, and *Gone Girl* (O'Reilly, 2019). As such, in spite the remaining existence of gender stereotypes, the horizon for women characters, in literature, looks brighter than ever.

As for cinema, the Hollywood industry is divided into two spheres, the film makers who decided to empower women, and those who kept them in

the margins as accessories only. Despite the presence of imperium female leads in Hollywood, women are far from being equal to men in the industry. The negligence of women's great role is witnessed in various works, whereby Martha Lauzen postulated that films with strong female characters served only as 15%. She also discovered that female characters are almost never represented as official leaders, and they are most of the time chosen to be much younger than the male characters on which they star with (ctd in Murphy, 2015, p. 8). That is, women, though more inculcated in the essence of the plot, still dwell in the side-lines in most of Hollywood's productions.

On the other hand, Lauzen assures that owing to the few strong female characters who gained great fame in recent years, "there is a growing disconnect ... between what we might perceive as being the current status of women in film and their actual status" (p. 8). In a sense, the empowerment of women in cinema might be somehow misleading to the true condition in which women live. Having said that, since the latest years of the 1990s till nowadays, there is a good number of extraordinary female characters which conquered the silver screen from shows like *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) *Grey's Anatomy* (2005 – present), *Scandal* (2012–2018) and *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014–2020). Such series "contributed to the normalisation of female representation as something that is and should be multifaceted" and also depicts females in these series as career independent women (Keating & Murphy, 2015 p.3-4). Clearly, thanks to such shows, women were able to see the freedoms they can reach, along with the success and also the failures they could endure.

To decide whether the 21's century's fiction depicts women authentically or not is out of the question because an author or a film maker reflects what his own personal perception is governed by, being personal incentives or societal ones. That is why women nowadays can be both depicted as strong and self-governing as they could be represented as weak and dependent on men. Thus, it seems women are unable to escape the harsh value judgments of patriarchal societies no matter how far they reach success in their feminist quest.

2. Hypertextuality and Adaptation

It is quite essential to clarify that the term hypertextuality cannot be fully grasped if not put in parallel to the original notion which aided in bringing it to existence. Before hypertextuality, the relation between different texts and the way they correlate to create new meaning was known as intertextuality.

It is both a technique and a reading mechanism which was first coined by Julia Kristeva in her “Word, Dialogue and Novel” and “The Bounded Text” in 1966 (Zengin, 2016, p. 300). Kristeva, nonetheless, only reached intertextuality due to Mikhael Bakhtin’s studies on double voicedness, which he called polyphony and later on became to be known as dialogism. Duly, in order to fathom hypertextuality, dialogism and intertextuality need to be put into perspective.

Upon scrutinising human speech, the Russian philosopher and literary critic, Mikhael Bakhtin discovered that human utterances just like human deeds are meaningless unless witnessed and reacted to by an *other*. In “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, Bakhtin emphasised the role of the receiver of the act or speech because without their reaction, the original utterance holds no significance, nor meaning, hence, the essentiality of having an opposite side in order for words to obtain denotation (ctd in Dentith, 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, such a discovery led Bakhtin to further scrutinize how utterances function in contact with others that is through dialogue and reach the conclusion that the clash between two distinct linguistic entities, on the same level of meaning, result into a dialogized interaction (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 117). He, then, was able to examine literature and more importantly the novel, since it teems with dialogue more than any other literary medium, making it the most suitable ground for studying dialogism (Pechey, 1987, p. 62). Within his literary quest, Bakhtin acknowledged that dialogism could also manifest itself in the author’s language and the texts he fashions or borrows from other writers to cast his own new sense (ctd in Alcorn Jr, 2002, p. 34). Henceforth, dialogism in a textual context transforms into intertextuality.

Accordingly, once the writer implements other texts in his own work whether consciously or not, he is implying intertextuality as a technique of writing. Literature, as a result is an artistic intertextual patchwork, as Kristeva pointed out, the literary creation is “an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings” (ctd in Alfaro, 1996, p. 268). Kristiva also suggested that any literary creation is comprised of the correlation between a new intertext and other texts which “rewrites, transforms or parodies them”. This insinuates that intertextuality could function in various ways through “quotation, citation, allusion, echo, reference, imitation, collage, parody, pastiche, literary conventions, structural parallelism and all kinds of sources” being intentional or involuntary by the author (Zengin, 2016, p. 300). More so, owing to the great endeavours of

other researchers, including Gerard Genette, new textual techniques surfaced. Gerard Genette's impressive familiarity with structuralism allowed him to understand the correlation between texts through a higher level allowing him to discover transtextuality. The latter is a broader notion which refers to five textual techniques including intertextuality along with, architextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality and hypertextuality (Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2015, p. 533). Each of these four techniques is devoted to a certain branch of literary creations, but the most essential and convenient technique for this particular research is hypertextuality.

The term hypertext when first came to being was associated with computer science (Reilly, 2003, p. 124), however in Gerard Genette's analysis, the hypertext is the new created text based on an original one known as the hypotext. Most of the time, the hypertext serves as a "commentary" on the hypotext, in a sense, the new text gives meaning and closure to the original one (ctd in Achour & Bekkat, 2002, p. 109). Such a relationship between a text and its hypertext denotes an unbreakable relationship between past and present. The original text, being made in the past, would certainly be modified and altered when recreated in the present into a hypertext because of the temporal shift. Similarly, as women were portrayed as docile inanimate objects in a past time, nowadays they are more prominent and opinionated in recent representations. As such, the relationship between the original text and its recent version "are a sign of the past and the present as a unity of meaning" (Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2015, p. 536). This relationship denotes that hypertextuality serves as a "sequel, prequel and retelling", wherein the retelling of any particular story proves that the present gives termination to the past and that "the present is different from the past" (p. 536). But how does hypertextuality and adaptation meet in a middle ground?

The adaptation of literary texts and works of art had been explained differently by various scholars. In a compass Brown and Lev saw adaptation as the act of interpreting, inverting, and retelling a written work into ingenious filmic creations (ctd in Rahmoun, 2020, p. 223). That is, hypertextuality and adaptation share the act of remaking a literary work. Nonetheless, similarities are not restricted to this particular instant because adaptation also allows the cinematographic makers to "reread a narrative from another age through the lens of their own time and to project onto that narrative their own sense of the world" (Belton, 2003, p. 195). Hence, intentionally or not, the filmmaker implements hypertextuality when he craftily uses his present influences to remake a past literary creation and alters certain elements within the story. In

the case of *Cinderella* the 2021's adaptation is a retelling whereby it recreates a different unwinding for the original storyline based on the temporal shift between the first adapted version in 1950 and the early 2020s.

To encapsulate, hypertextuality is not simply a textual approach or technique but it is also an adaptive utensil used by movie makers in order to criticize a past notion, strengthen it or alter it all together. One of the best examples of the usage of hypertextuality in adapting literature is Guillermo del Toro's "Pan's Labyrinth", which is considered by many a "fairy-tale film hypertextuality" which symbolizes a form of resistance against "some of the constructs assumed in the 'canonical' literary fairy tales penned by Perrault and the Grimms as well as some early twentieth-century fairy-tale films like Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950)" (Kotecki, 2010, p. 236). Likewise, post-analysing the hypertextual influence of the 21st century's adaptation of *Cinderella*, one is to discover the reasons behind retelling such a story.

3.Cinderella

3.1. Fairy tales: a cultural heritage

Fairy tales are professed as some of the most famed stories around the world that they have been constantly remodelled throughout history, *Cinderella* is one of such tales. It is the story of a young beautiful girl who loses her parents and finds herself forced to servitude by her stepmother and stepsisters, until she encounters her Fairy Godmother who leads her to prince charming. *Cinderella*, having to return to reality, endures much sufferance before finally the prince finds and rescues her from her evil stepmother and they live happily ever after.

The original story of *Cinderella* akin to most fairy tales cannot be exactly pinpointed in history. Fairy tales started as oral literature and have been adapted and reshaped multiple times across Europe and the world and even carried different names (Lundberg, 2013, p. 9). Concerning *Cinderella*, the first recorded version is believed to go back in time and place to 9th century China, while the most renowned in the western world are 17th century *Cendrillon* by Charles Perrault and the 19th century's German version by the distinguished Grimm Brothers (p. 10). Yet, *Cinderella*'s true allure was the result of its first adaptation to the screen by Disney in 1950. Disney's adaptation of *Cinderella* was based on the French version by Perrault. As previously mentioned, fairy tales belong to those stories which aided in the stereotyping of women as submissive and in need of saving, while

independent strong women are portrayed as evil and eventually meet their demise (Shahen et al, 2019, p. 28). Disney's adaptations are no different.

Having been adapted by Disney in mid-20th century meant that a woman's story such as that of Cinderella had to abide by the norms of society. Women at the time were appreciated for being quiet and docile (Coates, 2004, p. 25) their only focus had to be home chores and obedience (Halldorsdorttir, 2006, p139). In *Cinderella*, the lead character is shown as the perfect beautiful feminine young girl wherein she is forced to clean and cook and take care of all the house work, during the majority of the animated movie, yet she remains compliant and does not show her discontent instead she remained "ever gentle and kind" (Geronimi et al, 1950, 3:00- 3:07). Perchance, even the onset of the Disney version of *Cinderella* is an indication of how the story shall proceed. The female narrator when describing the kingdom, states that it is "rich in romance and tradition" (Geronimi et al, 1950, 1:45 1:50) and what is more traditional than gender roles.

Likewise, as mentioned previously, women in 1900s fiction were often depicted as victims (Singh, 2019, p. 39), and Cinderella is no exception, she is the victim of her evil stepmother and stepsisters who force her to the confinement of the house and not have any freedoms of her own just like a patriarchal society restricted women to being wives, mothers, or single women in the hunt for a husband (Carnicero Herrero, 2020, p. 20). In Cinderella's case, the husband is prince charming whom fate, through the Fairy Godmother, enables her to encounter and bewitch by her feminine beauty. Evoking Nelmes theory on female representation in cinema, in *Cinderella*, the beauty of the protagonist plays the only and the most crucial role in securing her suitor. Without having any previous knowledge about Cinderella and without speaking a word, once the prince beholds her he is instantly drawn and enchanted by her beauty (Geronimi et al, 1950, 50:28-50:50). Indeed, her slender hour-glass figure, her golden hair and big bright blue eyes instantly render the prince enamoured in fact "madly in love with her" after a brief encounter and some dancing, as reported by the stepmother (Geronimi et al, 1950, 1:01:15- 1:01:22).

Proving that Cinderella's encounter with the prince was not enough for him to fall in love with her is the fact that the grand duke and the prince needed the glass slipper in order to identify her, instead of the prince simply looking for her. Nonetheless, eventually, Cinderella was identified and her exceptional beauty won her prince charming. As for her position, she cannot

be any more delighted of this outcome since women's ultimate wish was to secure a well-established husband such as prince charming.

3.2 Feminist Hypertextual Shifts in Cinderella (2021)

There is an overabundance of adaptations made for *Cinderella*, the most recent one and the most appropriate for this paper is written and directed by Kay Cannon. This version was released in 2021 and though it was criticised by the viewers, it hypertextualized the previous versions and accordingly carries a very strong message about the shift in female status from 20th to 21st century film adaptations. The main character is played by the singer Camila Cabello who instantly sets this *Cinderella* as different from all others, along with the fact that this version is a musical.

The first hypertextual element which can be noticed from 2021's adaptation is that the departure of the film is quite different, instead of describing the romantic traditional kingdom; the beginning displays the villagers, both men and women, working harmoniously together. There is no division where men work outside and women inside (Cannon, 2021, 1 a.m. – 1:51 a.m.). Additionally, the villagers are of different races, women are of different colour, which reflects a less stereotypical type of kingdom than what is usually found in fairy tales. Likewise, the lead character playing Cinderella, or more particularly Ella, is not blond or Caucasian she is a Hispanic actress. The latter instantly sets this adaptation as non-conformist to the female stereotype of the perfect woman. On the contrary, her stepmother and stepsisters are Caucasian which reflect that the white race oppressed other races.

Similar to the original Cinderella, the 2021's version begins the film with a song, yet quite different from the original one. The part of the song sang by Cinderella recites:

[Verse 1]

Listen as your day unfolds

Challenge what the future holds

Trying keep you head up to the sky

All thes may cause you tears, go ahead release your fears

Stand up and be counted, 'cause you wanna let you try

[Chorus]

You gotta be, you gotta be bad, you gotta be bold, you gotta
be wiser

You gotta be hard, you gotta be tough, you gotta be stronger

You gotta be cool, you gotta be calm, gotta keep it together

All i know, all I know love will save the day
 All i know, all I know love will save the day
 (Cannon, 2021, 3 :06 a.m. – 3 :37 a.m.)

The lyrics of the song, specifically given to Ella, show that she does not belong to the typical female loved for her docility and silence. This new Cinderella is brave, she has fears but she strives to be strong. In the 20th century depictions of women, they were never described or associated with the words *strong* or *strength* but as postulated by Sally O'Reilly a century later women in fiction are no longer depicted as pliable feeble creatures, instead they are shown to be potent and resourceful too (2019). Hence, Cinderella's new representation simply reflects the influences of the time in which the character was conceived. Based on hypertextuality the film makers endowed Ella with a stronger character which reflects the influence of feminism on the female status.

In comparing between Disney's Cinderella and Kay Cannon's Ella, it is apparent that Cannon's version is not as meticulous in her house work as her predecessor. Since Ella has different interests other than household chores her tea-making skills are criticized by her stepmother, Vivian, along with her ragged look and uncombed hair which according to Vivian will repulse Ella's future husband (Cannon, 2021, 6:11 a.m. – 6:52 a.m.). This incident documents that the new Cinderella does not aim to use her attractiveness to gain a suitor. Shortly after the tea scene with Vivian, Ella is shown in the basement where her true passion is revealed to be sewing dresses. The scene accompanied with a song clearly visualizes her ambition to be the most renowned seamstress "the one" to be known by all (Cannon, 2021, 8:45 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.). If the hypotext is Disney's Cinderella's wish to marry prince charming, the hypertext is 21st century's Ella's dream to become a woman with a career. On that note, feminists endeavoured to highlight the role of cinema in revealing female ambition and success in the public province, many examples were seen in cinema as mentioned earlier, examples which depicts females as multi-layered successful beings (Keating & Murphy, 2015, p. 3-4).

On the opposite side, prince charming is also inversely represented. Though in Disney the viewers cannot see much of the prince, it is known that he wishes to find a bride to continue the lineage of the royal family. Yet, in the film, prince charming is revealed to be a bad boy whose only interests are partying and hunting. He is also portrayed as highly immature while he quarrels with his friends during a meeting with a probable bride. The bride, as a matter of fact, alludes that the prince is ignorant when she shows

him a map and insists saying “this is a world map” as if he could not have recognized it simply from beholding it (Cannon, 2021, 12:20 – 1:03 p.m.). Transforming the prince from the status of a saviour for Cinderella to an immature young man evokes the reversal of role policy in fiction which denotes women taking the lead and men stepping to the margin (Murphy, 2015 p; 8), this process, in itself, is a hypertextual allusion to role reversal and female advancement in society.

More so, Ella attempts to shatter the male gaze or the objectifying eye of the social order. Once asked by her stepsister Narissa if she looked pretty, Ella replies that her opinion or anyone else’s opinion for that matter is irrelevant and trivial. In regards to Laura Mulvey, women in cinema have been objectified by the camera as a male gazing object for so long (1973, p. 808-809) including in Disney works where Cinderella’s major aim was making a dress to look beautiful for the ball, yet for Ella, her masterpiece of a dress was made in order for her to become known as a seamstress. Equally, her reply to her sister also reflects that Ella refuses to abide by the demands of society to look beautiful for others and not ones’ self. Hypertxtuality, in this sense, manifests itself by attacking male gazing and instead celebrating Ella’s hunger for success.

Another minor, yet, ambitious character is a new addition to the story of *Cinderella*. Apparently, in the 2021’s version the prince has a sister named Gwen, and Gwen does not solely has a short haircut which does not fit a fairy tale princess, but is also quite interested in the matters of the kingdom that she attempts to advise the king to change their source of energy from burning coal to using the power of the wind (Cannon, 2021, 8 p.m. – 8:09 p.m.). On another scene, at the beginning of the ball, she also tries to voice her solutions for poverty in the kingdom (Cannon, 2021, 54:25 – 54:34). Since adaptations can also welcome additions, the hypertext in this case aimed to display that Ella is not the only female with a brain and talent, but there are many others who are simply not allowed to make their opinions heard, similar to the queen Beatrice. By the end of the film, the viewers discover that even the queen is an artist when she is very briefly shown painting her own portrait (Cannon, 2021, 1:36:15-1:36:18), and funnily she also gets to declare that the king is wrong, for once, publically. As for Gwen, by the end, she is finally chosen as the first successor to the crown after her brother abandoned it, which in itself sends an important message, especially that her father says: she” will be the greatest leader the realm has ever known” (Cannon, 2021, 1:38: 50 – 1:38:35).

Contrastively, Queen Tatiana is a female addition with a voice. One of the first things she says is that, she killed someone, most likely her husband, to take his crown (Cannon, 2021, 59:45 – 59:55). Surprisingly, Vivian, the stepmother, who is often portrayed as evil and the reflection of those women who accept confinement to secure a life, has a hidden truth, a past when she herself was a woman with talent and ambition. Vivian played the piano, professionally, and was passionate about it, yet she had to give it up to fit to her husband and the society's expectations of her as a wife (Cannon, 2021, 1:20:25 – 1:21:23). It is believed endowing the stepmother with such a back story transmits an essential message concerning female representation. It hypertextually reveals that all women have ambitions even those who pretend to promote femininity and refuse feminism while in truth they were forced by patriarchy to abandon their passions.

Another important alteration to Cinderella is the reason for which the prince feels attracted to Ella. He does not fancy her for her exceptional beauty. He first sets eyes on her when she acts silly while sitting on the statue of the former king. He instantly notices that she is different from the girls of the kingdom. Correspondingly, once he steps into the village, in disguise, he sees her in an endeavour to sell a self-made dress. In the prince's attempts to approach her he gets a glimpse of her passion and independent character and so he does not use the prince to allure her to attend the ball, instead, he promises her fame through the international comers to the ball who will get to see her marvellous creations (Cannon, 2021, 33:35 – 37:08)

Moving to the gist of the film, the end is an epitome of hypertextuality. Cinderella's ultimate aim for ages had been securing a suitor through her charms at the intended ball. However, for Ella, the ball is indeed a place to secure her future yet not as the wife of the prince but as a seamstress. At the closing of the ball, the prince reveals his emotions and proposes to Ella where she refuses. The ultimate hypertext lies in the lead female refusing to be confined to a marriage no matter how gilded for freedom and independency as a career woman (Cannon, 2021, 1:10:00 – 1:11:00). Inspired by Cinderella, Prince Robert refuses the crown and decides to choose his own path. If this is an indication of anything, it is a sign of role reversal when the female saves the male; Ella saves the prince from the agony of fulfilling his father's dream despite his. More so, it is not Ella who sacrifices her life for the prince, it is him who gives up the crown to be with her no matter where (Cannon, 2021, 1:34:45 – 1:35:35 a.m.).

It is a delight to see how women's representation has shifted from passivity to ambition and strength. It is apparent that hypertextuality was greatly manifested in the final remake of *Cinderella*. The story, the characters, and the winding up seem to have been remoulded in order to fit the 21st century's shift for women. Young girls no longer aspire to get married on the expense of their personal dreams. Akin to Ella, they desire to be career women, independent and autonomous and, why not, also be rewarded by true love.

Conclusion

Since the dawn of human existence, human life was recorded through written testaments. As time progressed, humans found more creative ways in which to echo their everyday incidents and struggles. The most avowed form of self-expression is literature. The latter served and still serves as an echo of human life. It discusses all types of subject matters including those of gender roles. The issue of men's superiority and women's inferiority has been discussed for ages on the papers of fiction and still continue to be discussed.

Distinct genres of literature tackled the issue of women, and though most were male-made works, they still brought women to the spotlight. Male-written female characters were endowed by meekness and apathy leading women writers to reply with stronger female characters. With time, and with the rise of cinema, literature started to be adapted to the screen. Most of the time, literary adaptations were being altered, first to fit the visual medium and second to fit the mind-set of the new audiences of the time. This fact meant that even women's representation in fiction had to be altered to fit a new century when women acquired many of their rights through feminist movements. It meant that female depiction had to meet the expectations of 21st century women. Purposefully or not, film makers implemented what Rifatterre termed as hypertextuality. That is, a technique used to alter events and most importantly the winding up of a fictional work from past to present (Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2015, p. 536), with the aim of parodying it and still preserving the general frame of the story.

In the scope of this paper, the focus was on the story of *Cinderella* which was adapted during different time periods. The 1950's Disney version reflected the status of women at the time as acceptant of their passive status, while the 21st version was hypertextualized to reveal the new perception of women. Nowadays, they are career seekers, business tycoons, successful and

influential members of society and hence Cinderella must be an epitome of that, and not an out-dated version of how women once were considered.

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Abstract

The notion of "Hypertext" is most commonly used as a reference to different links in computer science, however, within literature it was adopted by Gerard Genette, to denote a distinct type of intertextuality used to scrutinise fiction. In a broader sense, hypertextuality refers to the process of re-writing a text with adding a satirical touch. The new created text, which is the hypertext, serves as a commentary to the original one to transmit a particular message. As for Cinderella, it is famous for its many reworks, though the focus will be on a comparative study between Cinderella, the Disney movie, and its 2021's Hollywood adaptation of the same title. The story gained enough traction due to its allure for young girls which personifies the perfect princess story eventually saved by her true love, the prince. Yet, during the 21st century the female perspective of the dream has shifted from dependency to autonomy. Hence, this paper aims at probing into the 21st century's film adaptation of Cinderella as it epitomizes: the functionality of hypertextuality and, more importantly, how society's gaze towards women is altered within different time periods.

Keywords

Women, literature, reversal of roles, adaptation, hypertextuality, *Cinderella*.

مستخلص

تم استخدام مفهوم "النص التشعبي" بشكل شائع كمرجع إلى روابط مختلفة في علوم الكمبيوتر، ومع ذلك، في الأدب تم تبنيه من قبل جيرارد جينيت ، للإشارة إلى نوع مميز من التناص المستخدم لفحص الخيال. بمعنى أوسع، يشير النص التشعبي إلى عملية إعادة كتابة النص مع إضافة لمسة ساخرة. يعمل النص الجديد الذي تم إنشاؤه، وهو النص التشعبي،

بمثابة تعليق على النص الأصلي لنقل رسالة معينة. أما بالنسبة لسندريلا، فهي مشهورة بالعديد من التعديلات، على الرغم من أن التركيز سينصب على دراسة مقارنة بين فيلم ديزني سندريلا واقتباسه في هوليوود عام 2021 بنفس العنوان. اكتسبت القصة جاذبية كافية بسبب تأثيرها على للفتيات الشابات التي تجسد قصة الأميرة المثالية التي أنقذها في النهاية حيا الحقيقي، الأمير. ومع ذلك، خلال القرن الحادي والعشرين، تحول المنظور الأنثوي للحلم من التبعية إلى الاستقلالية. ومن ثم، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى التحقيق في فيلم القرن الحادي والعشرين لسندريلا لأنه يلخص: وظيفة النص الشعبي، والأهم من ذلك، كيف تتغير نظرة المجتمع تجاه النساء خلال فترات زمنية مختلفة.

كلمات مفتاحية

المرأة، الأدب، انعكاس الأدوار، الاقتباس، النص الشعبي، سندريلا

Résumé

La notion d'«hypertexte» est le plus souvent utilisée comme référence à différents liens en informatique, cependant, dans la littérature, elle a été adoptée par Gérard Genette, pour désigner un type distinct d'intertextualité utilisé pour scruter la fiction. Dans un sens plus large, l'hypertextualité fait référence au processus de réécriture d'un texte en y ajoutant une touche satirique. Le nouveau texte créé, l'hypertexte, sert de commentaire à l'original pour transmettre un message particulier. Quant à Cendrillon, il est célèbre pour ses nombreuses retouches, même si l'accent sera mis sur une étude comparative entre Cendrillon, le film Disney, et son adaptation hollywoodienne du même titre en 2021. L'histoire a gagné suffisamment de terrain en raison de son attrait pour les jeunes filles qui personnifie l'histoire de princesse parfaite finalement sauvée par son véritable amour, le prince. Pourtant, au cours du XXIe siècle, la perspective féminine du rêve est passée de la dépendance à l'autonomie. Par conséquent, cet article vise à sonder l'adaptation cinématographique de Cendrillon au XXIe siècle tel qu'elle l'incarne : la fonctionnalité de l'hypertextualité et, plus important encore, la façon dont le regard de la société envers les femmes est modifié au cours de différentes périodes.

Mots-clés

Femmes, Littérature, Inversion des rôles, Adaptation, Hypertextualité, Cendrillon