The stereotypical representation of women in the classic fairy tales Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty

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Abstract

The stereotype that emerges from some classic fairy tales is a princess who has a beautiful face and an angelic heart, a prince on a white horse who is handsome and charming, and a happy ending forever. These three sweet things are generally always the main menu served in bedtime fairy tales, including the classic fairy tales Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty. Besides sounding beautiful, the plot and characterization presented in the classic fairy tale represent a woman through feminine standards packaged through stereotypes. This research uses qualitative research methods and narrative analysis. The research results found details of the seven functional characters of the characters in the fairy tale. It can then be seen that various stereotypical representations aimed at women in the three tales, ranging from the obsession with natural beauty, misconceptions about the meaning of ambition, and marriage, are the solution for all the problems of a woman.

Keywords: representation of women; stereotypes of women; classic fairy tales; narrative analysis of Vladimir Propp

Introduction

A story cannot be called a fairy tale if it fails to fulfill two conditions (Mutmainna 2015). First, there must be a female main character with a beautiful face who suffers physically and mentally. A princess is always depicted as just a decoration with a weak, submissive character and unable to defend herself. Second, the prince appears to save the princess from a life filled with pain and replace her with a happy ending.

Women's representation in popular culture facilitates stereotypes of women thinking simply, emotionally, and domestically (Maity 2014). In the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in 1937, Snow White is depicted as a naive princess who depends on seven dwarves and a prince to survive (Garabedian 2014). Cinderella's life full of suffering could only end after she married the prince (Joshi 2017). A new Aurora can wake up from the curse of a long sleep because she got a kiss from a prince. That gives the impression that women are always dependent on men and cannot protect themselves (Sawyer 2013). Under a patriarchal system, a woman must be passive, inferior, and do not take much initiative (Filimon 2012).

Then, a beautiful face is always associated with good behavior. The majority of female characters are considered valuable because of their beauty (Kuon & Weimar 2009). Beauty has become more important than relationships, humanity, and other things in the world (Joshi 2017). Physical appearance is considered an indicator of a woman's happiness in the future (Fadlia 2018).

Passivity is also described as a good quality in a woman (Hynes 2010). Happiness and status were associated with beauty, passivity, and helplessness, while aggressiveness and ambition were

associated with crime, punishment, and death (Louie 2012). The best thing a woman can do is to be beautiful, polite, obedient, and helpless. The princess is always depicted with extraordinary beauty, without mentioning other qualities such as intelligence, intelligence, courage, or independence. This study will further examine women's representation through stereotypes contained in the classic fairy tales Snow White in 1937, Cinderella in 1950, and Sleeping Beauty in 1959.

Methods

The method used in this research is a qualitative research method with a type of narrative analysis research. The concept to be examined in this study is the stereotypical representation of women through narrative. Representation is how a person, a group, ideas, opinions, reality, or certain objects are displayed in a text (Eriyanto 2001), while stereotypes are a way of looking at a social group where this perspective is used in each of these groups (Mufid 2012). Stereotypes can be positive or negative, true or false, and relate to an individual or a group. In this study, stereotypes are representational practices that describe something full of prejudice, negative connotations, and subjective.

In this study, the object of research was the entire film Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959). Researchers will use the narrative analysis method of Vladimir Propp: Morphology of Folktale (1968) to analyze women's representation in the three films.

Researchers classified the elements of characterization in the three films into seven environments of action described by Vladimir Propp. According to Propp (1968), a fairy tale consists of 31 functions that can be simplified into seven spheres of action. The seven acts include; (1) villain or criminals; (2) donor or helper; (3) helper or assistant; (4) the princess and her father or daughter and father; (5) dispatchers or intermediaries; (6) heroes or heroes; and, (7) false heroes (Propp 1968). Then, the author will describe the stereotypical representations of women contained in the films Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959).

Results and Discussion

Related to this research, the following researchers show tables 1 to 3 about the analysis of character functions in the films Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959).

Table 1.
The functions of the seven characters in the film Snow White (1937)

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Villain (A character who fights a hero)	Queen	Queen has the ambition to become the most beautiful woman by getting rid of Snow White. Queen starts by ordering the hunter to kill Snow White to disguise himself as an old granny and give a poisoned apple to Snow White.
Donor (A character who supports a hero with agents or magical powers)	Hunter	When he was ordered to kill Snow White, he instead helped Snow White by leaving Snow White alive, telling about the queen's evil intentions, and telling Snow White to go as far as possible.

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Helper (A character who helps the hero complete difficult missions)	Seven dwarves	Seven dwarves provide a place to stay for Snow White, in which Snow White will do household chores such as sweeping, washing, and cooking.
	Prince	The prince who has fallen in love at first sight with Snow White comes and saves Snow White's life and breaks the poisoned apple's curse by giving a true love's kiss.
The princess (The character sought)	Snow white	She is a daughter who is also the main character. Snow White has a beautiful face. Unfortunately, he lives with an evil queen who tries to kill him out of jealousy of her beauty. Snow White has a dream to meet her true love.
Dispatcher (The character who sends the hero on his mission)	Hunter	After not killing Snow White, he ordered Snow White to run as far as he could until Snow White ran into the forest.
	Snow White's animal friends	Further in the forest, Snow White's animal friends show where the dwarves live.
Hero (Main character who searches for something and fights villains)	Snow white	Snow white is the main character or the daughter who becomes the target of the queen's hatred. In the story, she did not show any resistance when the queen tried several times to kill her. The ultimate goal or mission is to survive and find true love.
False Hero (A character who pretends to support the hero)	Queen (disguised as an old grandmother)	The queen pretended to show kindness to Snow White by giving an apple that contained poison.

Source: research data

Table 2.
The function of the seven characters in the film Cinderella (1950)

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Villain (A character who fights a hero)	Stepmother (Lady Termaine) and Cinderella's two step-sisters (Grizella and Anastasia)	They hated Cinderella's good nature and beauty, which always put Cinderella in a position of oppression, from ordering Cinderella to do all

Character	Figure	Function in the story
		the housework to blocking Cinderella from going to the dance. Cinderella's two stepsisters have the ambition to marry the prince and enjoy wealth by living in the palace. That is also fully supported by Cinderella's stepmother.
Donor (A character who supports a hero with agents or magical powers)	Fairy Godmother	Fairy Godmother helps Cinderella to go to the dance. With her magic, the fairy godmother turned Cinderella into a princess overnight, who wore a beautiful dress and glass shoes. The magic only lasted until midnight, so Cinderella had to return before that hour.
Helper (A character who helps the hero complete difficult missions)	The two mice, friends of Cinderella (Jack and Gus)	The stepmother locked Cinderella in her room when royal servants came to find the glass slipper owner. Jack and Gus, the two mice who are Cinderella's friends, took the key from the stepmother's pocket so that Cinderella could come out and be found by royal employees.
	Prince	When Cinderella returned in a hurry and left one of her glass shoes, the prince who had fallen in love with Cinderella, at first sight, ordered all the royal servants to look for Cinderella. After the prince found Cinderella, he married her. Then, he invited her to live in the palace, away from his mother and stepsister.
The princess (The character sought), and her father	Cinderella	Cinderella is a daughter as well as the main character. She always accepted the oppression of his mother and two stepsisters with resignation. She has a beautiful face and a kind heart and strongly believes that every strong dream will come true.

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Dispatcher (The character who sends the hero on his mission)	Fairy Godmother	The fairy godmother gave Cinderella a pretty dress and glass shoes to still go to the dance even though her dress had been damaged.
	Cinderella's animal friends	Cinderella's animal friends are turned into a vehicle that Cinderella uses to go to the dance party.
Hero (Main character who searches for something and fights villains)	Cinderella	Cinderella is the main character or daughter who is the target of hatred by the mother and her two stepsisters. Besides having a beautiful face, she is also patient and kind, so that she only accepts her oppressed fate until finally, the prince comes to find her. His goal or mission is to get out of his life filled with suffering and fulfill his dream of living happily with his true love.
False Hero (A character who pretends to support the hero)	-	There is no false hero because no character hides evil intentions in this film by pretending to be good.

Source: research data

Table 3.
The functions of the seven characters in the film Sleeping Beauty (1959)

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Villain (A character who fights a hero)	Witch	The witch gives Aurora a curse on the day of her birth because she was furious when she found out that she was not invited to the royal party. He also tried to block the prince's attempt to break the curse spell.
Donor (A character who supports a hero with agents or magical powers)	Three Fairy Godmothers (Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather)	Flora gives a gift in the form of beauty, Fauna gives a gift in the form of singing ability, and Merryweather weakens the spell of the evil witch's curse, namely Aurora will not die because of the curse, but only sleep long until she gets a kiss of her true love.

Character	Figure	Function in the story
Helper (A character who helps the hero complete difficult missions)	Three Fairy Godmothers (Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather)	After receiving a curse from an evil witch, the king and queen decided to exile Aurora until her sixteenth birthday. In that exile, Aurora was raised by the three fairy godmothers who hid their magical powers. The three fairy godmothers also help the prince in his quest to find Aurora.
	Prince	Previously, the prince had fallen in love with Aurora since they first met in the forest and danced together. Furthermore, in the end, after fighting the witch, the prince broke Aurora's curse by giving her a kiss of true love.
The princess (The character sought), and her father	Aurora	Aurora is a daughter as well as the main character. She has a beautiful face and kind heart and is helpless in determining her destiny. Her father was a king who decided to protect Aurora by exiling her until her sixteenth birthday to prevent the witch's curse from becoming a reality. He even destroyed all sewing machines in the entire kingdom, especially in the palace. Unfortunately, her daughter still has to live up to her curse.
Dispatcher (The character who sends the hero on his mission)	-	There is no dispatcher. The witch directly directs Aurora to touch a sewing needle for the curse to work.
Hero (Main character who searches for something and fights villains)	Aurora	Aurora is the main character who becomes the target of the witch's curse. He was condemned to sleep forever if his finger touched the sewing needle. However, the curse can be broken with a kiss of true love. He cannot do anything to save himself.

Character	Figure	Function in the story
False Hero (A character who pretends to support the hero)	-	There is no false hero because no character hides evil intentions in this film by pretending to be good.

Source: research data

Analysis of the similarity of character functions in the stories of Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959)

The similarities in the stories of Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959), are that the three heroes who are at the same time become female characters do absolutely nothing to complete their mission or goal. Their goals were achieved as a result of the efforts of other figures. Their achievement is in the form of marriage to princes, which they can do because they have beauty and kindness. They just had to wait for the prince to come to them. Their passive nature is opposite to the villains' ambitious nature, and their happy ending depends on the prince's presence as a helper. The prince who seems to be present is no longer a character who helps the hero solve the difficult problems the hero's faces but instead solves all the hero's problems.

The stereotypical representation of women based on the analysis of the function of the characters in the stories of Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959)

Obsession with natural beauty

Propp's narrative structure shows the subordinate position of women among men. Women's image is often constructed into ideal beauty, where media and entertainment producers bring this ideal concept through films with female main characters depicting women with physical appearances that are considered the standard of beauty by the media, starting from hair, body shape, and skin color. The physical image is even indirectly used as a measure of female beauty.

In the fairy tale Snow White, the princess's appearance is described with an almost perfect description. Snow White is said to have lips as red as a rose, hair as black as ebony, and skin as white as snow (Suciu 2015). Beauty is represented as the source of the highest strength (Skeggs 1997). Snow White's natural beauty makes the Queen even more obsessed with her physical appearance because her strength comes from her beauty (Dam 2014). Her obsession with the physical appearance also made her look hopeless and sad. That is illustrated in the film's opening scene when the Queen consults the magic mirror to find out if she is still the most beautiful. Here is the dialogue from the 1937 film Snow White:

> "Queen : Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?
> Mirror : Famed is thy beauty, majesty. But hold a lovely maid I see. Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Queen: Alas for her! Reveal her name.
> Mirror : Lips red as the rose. Hair black as ebony. Skin white as snow.
> Queen : Snow White!"

The mirror is given a masculine personality and plays a role in determining a woman's beauty standards (Inge 2004). Personifying the mirror as male is the same as giving men the power to judge a woman as beautiful or not. That also dictates that they should be considered beautiful by a man subliminally. Suppose they are deemed not to meet the qualification standards of beauty. Then they are deemed unfit (Parks 2012). The Queen did not think that she was any less beautiful, but because her magic mirror said she was not beautiful, she believed it.

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Furthermore, instead of thinking that she was already beautiful, she did not stop thinking of ways to make herself more beautiful. It also mobilizes a moral discourse as if making beauty is everything to a woman. In addition to being considered very important, beauty can create embarrassment and insecurity if beauty is not a natural beauty, but the beauty that must result from effort and hard work (Black & Sharma 2001). Women try to construct natural beauty as the ultimate goal of all their efforts (Griffin & Clarke 2007).

A similar depiction is also found in character Cinderella. The Fairy Godmother turns Cinderella into a beautiful girl who is not her. Cinderella's two stepsisters and all the girls who attend the dance spend much time making themselves look attractive because a woman has to look attractive to win someone's heart due to the perception that love is biased towards women's physical appearance (Joshi 2017). As one of the princess characters in classic fairy tales, it is very clear that Cinderella represents that women are often judged only by the ideal standard of physical appearance through the media. The media attaches these ideal standards to women, starting from perfectly styled hair, thin and slender bodies, and flawless writing textures.

Meanwhile, the mother and her two stepsisters who do not have Cinderella's beauty are described as greedy, power-hungry, and blinded by the jealousy of Cinderella's beauty. While the beautiful Cinderella is also described as having a kind heart, Cinderella's mother and stepsister are depicted as selfish and cruel. Of course, they do not have a physical appearance that is prettier than Cinderella. Cinderella is portrayed as a beautiful figure inside and out. In contrast, her two stepsisters are depicted as ugly both inside and out (Parks 2012). This kind of beauty competition creates a rift between women's relationships with other women and causes conflict and jealousy. Ussher (1997) describes this as envy and the desire to compete among women who perpetuate the suspicion that those who are not beautiful have evil intentions.

The depiction of beauty and the emphasis on physical aspects is also found in the film Sleeping Beauty. It is told that Aurora, the princess in the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, is a princess who has extraordinary beauty. He is described as having a tall and slender body, long blonde hair, and fair, flawless skin. This beauty is a gift from the fairy godmother on the day of her birth. Compared to intelligence or proper moral values, beauty is the first gift to be given, as if the emphasis on these superficial qualities is all that can be offered to a woman (Shamna 2018).

Apart from the beauty he possesses, there is no mention of other aspects such as intelligence, toughness, or independence. These further influences gender ideology by encouraging an obsession with physical appearance. This personal gender ideology is also indirectly a product of cultural ideals that are integrated with strong personal feelings and will then impact the formation of gender strategies (Nelson 2006). As a result, various perceptions say that compared to being considered intelligent, it is more important for a woman to be considered attractive (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz 2003).

Misconceptions about the meaning of ambition

What Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora have in common, namely, they have a soft speaking style, graceful body movements, often show physical activity to sing, and have friendly interactions with their animal friends. They also display feminine traits according to society's standards, including being meek, compassionate, obedient, and helpless. Naive Snow White did not put up any resistance when the Queen tried to kill her. All she did was run to the forest then depend on seven dwarf friends and a prince to survive. Likewise, Cinderella did nothing when being bullied and forcibly and ordered to do all the housework by her mother and two stepsisters. Even when she almost failed to go to the dance, all she did was cry until finally, the fairy godmother helped her with magic. In contrast, when Aurora received a curse, all she can do is live hiding in exile. In the end, whether she wants it or not, she still has to live her destiny, which is a curse that makes her fall asleep when she touches a sewing needle.

On the other hand, in stark contrast to this, the Queen is a figure who has a strong ambition to become the most beautiful woman. The Queen tries in any way to realize this ambition, including by ordering people to kill Snow White to give Snow White a poisoned apple with both her own hands. Cinderella's mother and stepsister have a greedy nature and have a desire to live in the palace. Therefore, supported by Cinderella's stepmother, Cinderella's two stepsisters tried in such a way as to marry the prince, from trying to thwart Cinderella when she was about to go to the dance to forcing glass shoes to fit on their feet. Then, the witch figure is depicted as an aggressive figure by showing his strength and giving a curse to Aurora due to his anger at not being invited to the big party celebrating the birth of the princess at the palace. Queen, mother and stepdaughter, and witches as antagonists have something in common: always doing something to get what they want, contrary to the passive and resigned nature represented by Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora.

The evil woman represented by the queen, mother, and stepsister and witch is depicted as ugly, cruel, and unwanted. Female characters in fairy tales fail to meet feminine standards, namely passive, resigned, and depend on someone to get something in their life. In the end, what they get is the end of suffering and punishment in the form of losing power and all the things they have (Zipes 1983). Fairy tales establish social roles that limit women and perpetuate misconceptions about punishment and rewards (Rowe 1999). Wealth and status are associated with passivity, beauty, and helplessness. In contrast, women who are self-conscious, aggressive, and powerful are associated with punishment and death (Louie 2012) because strength and ambition are equated with crime. These characteristics serve as warning examples to deter women looking for a position incompatible with the patriarchal structure.

Marriage is the solution to all problems of a woman

Based on Vladimir Propp's analysis method, it can be seen that the selection of female characters contains elements of stereotypes. The three princess characters in the fairy tale Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959) get the role of being saved because the beautiful princess has no ambition to change her fate, so what she does is wait for her prince. They cannot get a happy ending if the prince does not come to find them. Therefore adolescent girls are often socialized on feminine values and behaviors associated with passivity, obedience, and dependence.

From the very beginning, the only dream that Snow White had was to be found by a handsome prince (Maity 2014). The idea that all Snow White does to make her dream come true is to sit back and wait for her prince to come to find her constitutes a romantic wish that does not match reality (Parks 2012). Then, when Snow White almost died from eating a poisoned apple, the only thing that could save her life was true love's kiss. It seems that Snow White cannot continue her life without the prince's presence in an explicit way. In this classic fairy tale, the Snow White character does not teach that women have to be strong, strong, and independent. All they need to do is wait and depend on a man. Like Snow White, who is just waiting, her prince will come to her (Inge 2004). That results in the naive idea that only by being patient and waiting, a woman will be saved by the man of their dreams. From this, it can be concluded that women are represented as unable to save themselves (Maity 2014).

Cinderella's character is also a representation of an oppressed woman whose whole happiness hinges on the handsome prince who will come and find her, kneel at her feet, and save her from her miserable life. The dream of a better life and her prince emphasizes the idea that if someone has a strong dream, then that dream will come true (Maity 2014). That can be seen from the opening song sung by Cinderella, namely "The Dream is a Wish our Heart Make," which suggests every woman believes in her dream because one day that dream will come true. When Cinderella accidentally dropped a glass shoe, all she did was wait for the prince to come to find her (Lieberman 1972).

Then a similar pattern is also found in the classic fairy tale Sleeping Beauty (1959). Aurora is an obedient, beautiful, and helpless princess when it comes to her destiny (Henke, Umble, & Smith

1996). She is depicted as a princess who despairs when she falls under a curse, and just like Snow White, the curse spell can only be destroyed when she gets a true love's kiss. The princess does not even have a real role in her own story. All he does is touch a sewing needle, then fall into a deep sleep due to a curse, while others struggle to decide their future (Henke, Umble & Smith 1996). Until finally, the prince came to give a true love kiss. Then they lived happily ever after. Aurora is no different from the two previous princesses because to solve the problems she faces. She relies on a prince's presence to save herself. The social mentality that sets the standard that women are fragile and unable to save themselves is again represented through this film. The next striking similarity in the stories of Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959), namely the thing that made the prince willing to bend his knees for the princess, was none other than physical appearance.

These three classic fairy tales depict that a beautiful woman is in the upper hierarchy. The princess born beautiful will eventually get the privilege of love and protection from the prince, which ultimately ensures the princess's future, which will be happy forever (Fadlia 2018). In Snow White's story, the prince falls in love at first sight when he sees Snow White's beauty. This concept of love, at first sight, is also found in Cinderella's story, where it can be concluded that the only reason the prince fell in love with Cinderella was that she was the most beautiful girl at the dance. The prince did not even know the name Cinderella, but he knew that he loved her.

Similarly, in Sleeping Beauty's story, the prince's character is immediately fascinated by Aurora's beauty when they first meet. They sang and danced together, and for sixteen years of exile, in an instant, Aurora fell in love with the prince. However, until the end of the story, they do not talk and get to know each other. A princess immediately concludes that she is in love with a prince because he is a prince, while a prince immediately concludes that he is in love with her because of her beauty. The representation of the female characters in the three classic fairy tales confirms Cheu's (2013) statement regarding physical images, which states that:

> "Perhaps most tellingly, in this regard are Disney's princesses, who with excesses of femininity, an innate connection with nature, impossible thinness, beautiful flawless skin, and perfect hair, attire and poise, always manage to get the prince and live happily ever after".

From the story of Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty, it is represented that women who have beautiful and obedient, and submissive to the patriarchal structure will have the ending in the form of a happy life forever. The dependence that a princess has on a prince in a fairy tale also has a strong influence in shaping the concept of femininity. The construction of habits and the physical appearance of a woman seems to show what is considered good by men (Trousdale & McMillan 2003). According to Rowe (1999), classic fairy tales from Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty perpetuate the patriarchal status quo by women's subordination. That way makes women feel wanted romantically. In return for this beauty and obedience, the princess will get a prince and a marriage that is considered social and financial security (Rowe 1999) because the message is repeated repeatedly, indirectly forming the idea that only beautiful and passive women can get the reward.

Conclusion

The classic fairy tales Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Sleeping Beauty (1959) have similar character functions, namely Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora, who are hero and princess figures, relying on beauty as the main quality that is emphasized. Within them. However, they did not play many roles in solving problems and achieving their goals, and these two things were largely transferred to the prince as the helper. That represents that assessing a woman's figure based on

physical appearances, such as beauty, or having a passive nature and always depending on other people to solve their life problems. Furthermore, they think that they will achieve a happy life if they can marry someone. The three fairy tales also represent several stereotypes aimed at women, including that a beautiful woman is often considered a good heart. Vice versa (a form of obsession with beauty), ambitious and aggressive traits are not good for a woman (a form of the misconception of ambition). Women can solve all of their problems in life just by getting married (a form of the assumption that marriage is the solution to all women's problems).

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