

**Muniba Naz¹, Mazhar Ali¹, Shahana Malook¹**

1. MPhil Scholar (Literature), Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KPK, Pakistan.

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Corresponding Author:**Mazhar Ali**Email: amjid0592@gmail.com**License:**

Abstract: *This research paper conducts a feminist analysis by comparing classic fairy tales and their contemporary retellings from a gender perspective. Fairy tales have long been criticized for reinforcing gender stereotypes and presenting limiting roles for female characters. This study aims to examine how contemporary retellings of these classic tales challenge or perpetuate traditional gender norms. The paper analyzes a selection of well-known fairy tales, such as Little Red Cap, The Adventure of Aladdin and Sleeping Beauty along with their modern adaptations such as The Werewolf, The Forbidden Wish and Maleficent. It scrutinizes the portrayal of female characters, their agency, and their representation in relation to power dynamics. By utilizing feminist theories and concepts, such as patriarchy, intersectionality, and agency, the study explores how these retellings reshape the narratives to provide more nuanced and empowering depictions of women. Additionally, it investigates contemporary adaptations and retellings of fairy tales that challenge and subvert these traditional gender roles. It examines how these adaptations challenge the notions of passive females waiting for rescue and instead highlight female characters who assert their independence, make their own choices, and challenge societal expectations.*

Introduction

Fairy tales have been effective cultural discourses that define social values, moral teachings, and gender beliefs between generations. These stories are traditionally based on oral retelling, and subsequently, they were formalized in written literature, which has had an important role in shaping and reinforcing societal norms, especially gender roles. This paper addresses the image of the female characters in the classical fairy tales and the ways in which these images are re-created in the modern-day retelling taking into account the impact of the feminist idea. Comparing canonical tales like *Little Red Cap*, *The Adventures of Aladdin* and *Sleeping Beauty* (in the versions, mostly, of the Brothers Grimm and other early collectors) with the modern variations, including *The Werewolf* in *The Werewolf* by Angela Carter, to *Maleficent* in Disney, and in *The Forbidden Wish* by Jessica Khoury (2016), the paper explores continuity and change to the women presented in these tales.

The classical fairy tales have tended to put female characters in strict and constrained structures. Women are also usually depicted as submissive, passive and reliant on male characters to survive and

satisfy themselves. As an example, in *Little Red Cap*, the naivety and weak position of the young girl require the intervention of a male huntsman. Likewise, *Sleeping Beauty* builds feminine identity based on the beauty, inactivity, and the notion of romantic redemption that is made possible by an intervention of a prince. The concept of the female character in Aladdin is more than marginalized and appeared as the object of lust or even a token of reward in a male-centric story. These representations support patriarchal ideologies as they place men in the active and women in the passive roles.

Further, women in traditional fairy tales tend to be polarized. On the one hand, the perfect heroine is beautiful, kind, and obedient, however, she does not have agency and independence. Conversely, women who are portrayed as ambitious, powerful, assertive are often portrayed as antagonists, described as witches, step-mothers or even villains, ugly and morally decadent. This polarization does not only reduce the depth of female characters but it also carries along negative stereotypes about femininity and feminine behavior.

The advent of feminist literary criticism has put a major challenge to these stereotypical representations. Modern rekindling of fairy tales attempts to challenge the norms of traditional gender by recreating the female characters as active, empowered, and self in control. An example of such a transformation of the passive heroine of *Little Red Cap* can be seen in the work *The Werewolf* by Angela Carter who portrays her as a brave and clever woman who can protect herself. Likewise, the villain of the *Sleeping Beauty* is reconsidered by *Maleficent* to add some psychological substance and re-align her with being betrayed and a victim of patriarchal violence to make the dichotomy between good and evil look simplistic. With *The Forbidden Wish*, Jessica Khoury creates a super woman genie, Zahra, whose story revolves around freedom, defiance and search of autonomy, which is a challenge to the traditionally patriarchal power structure of the Aladdin legend.

These changes can also be further understood in the context of the historical development of fairy tales. Fairy tales have their origins in oral traditions in many cultures, and were then collected by authors, including Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Giambattiste Basile, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. As these early collectors tried to preserve folklore, they were also modifying stories to fit the moral and social requirements of the era and tended to reinforce conservative gender roles. These stories have been reinterpreted over centuries, variously depending on the change in cultural values and ideological systems. The contemporary adaptations, especially those that have been shaped by the feminist theory, are meant to be a criticism and correction of the patriarchal assumptions of the older forms.

Fairy tales are still important as literary works, as well as cultural artifacts that shape children and adults. They assist in the growth of imagination, ethical thinking as well as cultural sensitivity. They may however, reinforce negative stereotypes especially in terms of gender and power structures. It is in this way that critical reading of these texts becomes very important in order to appreciate their greater social implications.

This paper, thus, aims at examining how female characters in classical fairy tales were transformed to become more empowered and complex in modern retelling of the same story. Through a feminist analytic method, the analysis points out modern interpretations as confronting traditional storylines, undermining current gender ideals, and providing other sorts of opinions on femininity, agency, and self.

Statement of the Problem

The main issue the given research is going to focus on is the necessity of a critical comparison and contrast of classical fairy tales *Little Red Cap*, *The Adventures of Aladdin*, and *Sleeping Beauty* with their new variants *The Werewolf*, *The Forbidden Wish*, and *Maleficent* to see how feminist approaches

transformed the image of a woman. The paper seeks to address how contemporary adaptations are challenging, revising or strengthening traditional gender roles and stereotypes in previous stories.

Research Questions

1. How do classic fairy tales portray female characters in terms of gender roles, dependency, and empowerment?
2. In what ways do contemporary retellings of classic fairy tales challenge or subvert traditional gender roles and stereotypes?

Research Objectives

The main aims of the research are:

1. To critically analyze classic fairy tales in terms of gender representation, examining how female characters are portrayed in terms of traditional gender roles, dependency, and empowerment.
2. To examine contemporary retellings of classic fairy tales from a feminist perspective, assessing how these adaptations challenge or subvert traditional gender roles and stereotypes

Significance of the Study

This research helps the readers to understand the differences that took place in female's characters of contemporary version such as *The Werewolf*, *The Forbidden Wish* and *Maleficent* written by feminist writers. Through the lens of feminism, this research investigates how contemporary retellings respond to and reflect the changing dynamics of gender roles and expectations in society. By examining the adaptations, the study provides insights into the ways in which society's understanding and interpretation of gender have evolved over time.

Literature Review

It is proven by the existing body of scholarship on fairy tales and feminism that the narratives are not only entertainment but effective cultural text that constructs and mirrors the values of society, in terms of gender roles in particular. The existence of fairy tales dates back to the ancient times during which they were first created. Written forms of folklore were documented in Egyptian writings as early as 1250 BCE, with other collections of folklore such as *The Arabian Nights*, where the popular folktales of *Aladdin*, *Ali Baba* and *Sinbad the Sailor* were first narrated (Zipes, 1991). Originally spread using the oral traditions, fairy tales changed their form as they were translated into other cultures and historic periods and obtained new meanings and ideological connotations.

These narratives were codified into literary works by European collectors like *Charles Perrault* and the *Brothers Grimm*, among others. *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* were some of the stories that were preserved and popularized by Perrault, *Tales of Mother Goose* (1697) and by the Grimm brothers, in the nineteenth century collections (Warner, 1996). On the same note, Hans Christian Andersen also created original literary fairy tales which are still influential. Nevertheless, researchers like Tatar (2017) have observed that the initial forms of these stories were usually violent, sexual and morally ambiguous and adapted to better align with child audiences. Such adaptation process brings out the fluidity of fairy tales and their responsiveness to the changing cultural norms.

It is a common understanding among scholars that fairy tales are used to reflect the society in which they are created. Sawant (2019) provides an example of various interpretations of *Cinderella*, showing how women characters are depicted differently across different cultures as passive victims or independent agents. Bettelheim (1976) also reinforces the psychological significance of fairy tales and the thesis is that fairy tales allow children to work through emotions, build up imagination and internalize ethics. Meanwhile, though, such stories have also been pointed at as promoting patriarchal views. According to Lester (2019), the classic fairy tales often portray women as passive, submissive, and

reliant on other people of the opposite sex, thus, defining the expectations of the social community and contributing to the gender inequality.

Such representations can be analyzed with the help of the feminist theory. Generally referred to as a movement that promotes gender equality, feminism aims at combating power systems that discriminate women. Its history can be characterized as a successive wave as every wave dealt with a different aspect of inequality. The initial wave prioritized legal rights, including suffrage, the second wave included matters of sexuality and workplace equality, the third wave prioritized diversity and intersectionality, and the fourth wave, which developed in the digital era, is concerned with the issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This changing paradigm has had a great impact on the literary criticism, especially the discussion of gender representation in the text.

Several researchers have studied feminist issues in literature, with the focus on the ostracization of women. Arizah (2020) believes that the movement of feminism was the reaction to the subordination of women that provided them with the opportunity to declare their identity and agency. In the same way, in their feminist examination of *Priya Sufi*, Tiwari (2021) shows that cultural, religious, and social institutions preserve gender inequality and limit women in their autonomy. Mahmoud (2021) explores feminism in Pakistani English literature in the context of a postcolonial country, where there is a progressive inclination to empower women although conflicting ideas of modern feminism and traditional culture clash. Hiliarová (2016) follows the development of feminist ideas in the XIX and XX century literature and explains why female authors were typically using pseudonyms in the early years, because society did not allow them the opportunity to be more open about sexuality and self-sufficiency. Comparatively, Mili (2022) demonstrates that some folktales of indigenous peoples, e.g. of the Mising tribe, feature women as central figures and powerful, which indicates that the concept of gender representation in the stories is culturally determined and not universal.

Jack Zipes is one of the authors whose work is especially important in the interpretation of fairy tales as ideology. In *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (1993), Zipes claims that fairy tales are myths that communicate the common human desires and are also mirrors of the cultural values and structures of power. He argues that most of the classic stories support patriarchal rules through the way women were depicted as being in need of a male rescue. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Zipes also shows how fairy tales may also challenge dominant ideologies offering other images of power and resistance. This twofold role brings out the complexity of fairy tales as both conservative and transformative stories.

These theoretical statements on gender representation are backed by empirical research. In a content analysis of three *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, Wodder and O'Connor (2017) discovered that the active and authoritative characters are those of a man, whereas female characters are the passive and dependent ones. These kinds of representations help in internalizing gender stereotypes in young readers. Meanwhile, researchers also highlight a great importance of fairy tale in cognitive and emotional development of children. Betelheim (1976) believes that such stories allow children to resolve the conflicts of psychology and create the moral reasoning, and Shekhawat and Mishra (2018) emphasize that these stories contribute to the development of the imagination and creativity.

Although these have good contributions, there are possible negative impacts that critics note. According to Bruno (1976), fairy tales can lead to unrealistic expectation of life that promotes false perception of reality in children. In addition, the celebration of the traditional gender roles may affect the attitudes and behavior of children, further supporting inequality. The study carried out by Lester also shows that both modern and traditional fairy tales influence the societal expectations as they advance certain

values, norms, and identities. Although classical stories tend to reinforce traditional roles, modern versions are less and less conservative as they introduce less traditional and empowered depictions of gender.

All in all, it is revealed in the literature that fairy tales are not only dynamic cultural texts but they also reflect and build ideologies in the society. Although classical discourses have generally served to uphold patriarchy, the reinterpretations of the modern era under the influence of feminism aim at undermining these norms and providing new ways of constructing the female agency and the female identity. This literature gives a critical basis upon which the essential nature of how the contemporary versions of retellings have changed the image of the female characters as compared to their classical counterparts.

Methodology

The proposed study follows the qualitative research approach to examine how female characters are represented in the traditional fairy tales and how they are presented in the modern versions of the tales. This methodological framework has the aim of offering an organized way of gathering and analyzing data in a manner that relevant in answering the research questions. The methodology underlines the interpretative aspect of the study, which focuses on the way meanings are constructed in texts and the meanings are able to indicate social and cultural norms. The study is based mostly on textual and dialogue analysis which allows it to study in depth the narratives, the representation of characters and the ideological message behind it in relation to gender and power. The research attempt to introduce a harmonious and critically based interpretation of the chosen texts through logical thinking and close reading.

The research design is descriptive and qualitative research design. This study may be well captivated by qualitative research since qualitative research entails the exploration and interpretation of non-numerical data which include literary works in order to comprehend concepts, views and social reality. According to Creswell (2002) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), through qualitative research, it is possible to have an all-inclusive comprehension of phenomena in their natural settings. Textual analysis is used as the main instrument of analysis in this paper. Textual analysis helps the researcher to study the explicit and implicit meanings that are contained in texts such as themes, symbols and ideological constructs. The chosen data are not only written materials: *Little Red Cap*, *The Adventures of Aladdin*, *The Werewolf*, and *The Forbidden Wish* are written texts whereas the subtitles and dialogues of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent* are analyzed as the visual texts. The paper is based on textual analysis principles suggested by Catherine Belsey (2013), who identifies that meaning is not predetermined but it is created by a reader or a viewer. Belsey states that the meaning of a text can be different to the meaning intended by the author, and thus this enables space to occur in the interpretation of a text. She also highlights the need to focus more on primary texts in comparison to secondary texts because it creates originality and eliminates the biasness in analysis.

The theoretical approach that should be used in this study is feminist literary criticism. Feminist analysis is a critical perspective that allows one to study the gender roles, power relations, and the topic of women representation. This paradigm is especially applicable when it comes to comparison of classical and contemporary stories because it brings out the changes in the depiction of female agency and identity. The paper is dedicated to the major characters in both sequences of readings, including Red Cap, the genie and Aurora in the traditional adaptations, and their analogs in modern retellings, including the lead character of *The Werewolf*, Zahra in *The Forbidden Wish* and *Maleficent*. With this theme, the study is able to analyze how these characters either uphold or defy the traditional gender norms especially on empowerment, independence and resistance.

The secondary sources, which are chosen literary texts and film dialogues, are used to gather the data on this research. The analysis is supported with the help of relevant excerpts, the lines, scenes, and interactions of characters. These passages can be available as primary sources of reading the tendencies of representation and thematic working.

The analysis of the data is presented by a thorough analysis of the texts chosen and the analysis of the content and the dialogue. The close reading is done to written texts like *Little Red Cap*, *The Werewolf*, *Aladdin* and *The Forbidden Wish* whereas the dialogues and subtitles of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent* are done as a visual reading. The evaluation centers on determining the trends regarding the presence of the female gender especially how the passive has become the empowered in various historical backgrounds. Using feminist analysis, the study brings out the way modern re-tellings are re-constructing female characters as active agents and thus contesting the patriarchal order of the classical fairy tales.

Analysis and Discussion

A comparative analysis of selected traditional fairy tales and their modern feminist versions is presented in this chapter to understand how the image of the female character and the genders changed. The chapter examines how contemporary writers use feminist literary criticism to disrupt and reimagine the patriarchal ideology that is present in classical texts, and to assert the agency, power, and autonomy of female characters. The focus of the analysis is on three pairs of texts: Brothers Grimm's *Little Red Cap* and Angela Carter's *The Werewolf*; *The Adventures of Aladdin* and Khoury's *The Forbidden Wish*; and Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent*, Disney's retelling of the tale. The chapter examines the portrayal of female characters, their autonomy, their interactions with male power, and how they defy gendered norms, using textual analysis. The main focus is on the use of modern versions of fairy-tales to challenge traditional fairytale elements, including passivity, reliance on rescuers, who are usually male, and the connection between being feminine and being beautiful and obedient. The discussion shows how in the classic fairy tales there are messages about the roles of men and women, but in modern retellings there are other images of women as brave, competent, and independent. Overall, this chapter suggests that feminist retellings of popular stories not only reveal new meanings but also question dominant cultural discourses on gender, power and identity, providing a more alternative and empowering understanding of what it means to be a woman.

Little Red Cap and The Werewolf

One can see a stark change in the depiction of the female character in *The Werewolf* by Angela Carter, as compared to *Little Red Cap* in the Brothers Grimm. In Grimm's version the girl is innocent, naive, helpless for protection by males, while in Carter's version the character is instead strong, self-reliant, able to fend for herself. In this metamorphosis, Carter challenges the patriarchy's assumptions, and offers a feminist alternate vision of the female self. Carter begins her story with a strong characterization of the setting:

“It is a northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts.
Cold; tempest; wild beasts in the forest.”

The cold and hostile atmosphere represents a male-dominated society with danger, hardship and emotional isolation. Carter's world is very different from the typical fairy tale in which everyone washer and washer is a romantic figure for the heroine to admire, as her survival is more dependent upon

courage and resilience. The setting itself illustrates the problems faced by women in the oppressive social system. Grimm, on the other hand, presents the main character in the form of an appearance:

“Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her...”

The focus is on beauty and attractiveness - this is a traditional way of portraying women in fairy tales. *Little Red Cap* is appreciated most of all for her looks and innocence. Carter intentionally disregards this rule. Her female protagonist has no name, nor is she physically described. Carter's focus on beauty takes the attention away from the girl's actions and skills. Its anonymous protagonist is not simply a model of a beauty in a fairy-tale but a symbol of contemporary women. The difference between the two heroines is more noticeable based on their mother's guidance. Grimm's version has the mother give her daughter food to take to her grandmother and instruct her to act well and stay on the path. However, in Carter's version, the mother says:

“Here, take your father's hunting knife; you know how to use it.”

It is Carter's feminist revision in the context of this quotation. The hunting knife is a symbol of strength, autonomy and self-protection, traits that are traditionally related to the masculine. Carter arms her daughter and leaves her with the task of using it, which disrupts the gender norms and implies that women can fend for themselves without men. This contrast is accentuated in the encounter with *The Wolf*. *Little Red Cap* in Grimm's tale divulges information to someone she doesn't know and puts herself at risk. She's vulnerable because she's innocent and trusting. But Carter's heroine is very aware of the risks she faces:

“She knew the forest too well to fear it but she must always be on her guard.”

This is the statement that shows her experience, intellect and awareness. She knows the dangers that lie before her, and she is not complacent. She is not as naive as Grimm's heroine, she sees the dangers ahead of her and she is alert. Carter's portrayal of a woman who is willing to face threats instead of falling victim to them is very appealing. Feminism's shift takes its peak when the wolf attacks:

“When she heard that freezing howl of a wolf, she dropped her gifts, seized her knife and turned on the beast.”

The girl doesn't run away or wait for help; she faces the danger straight away. In this version of the damsel-in-distress story, Carter's damsel takes on the role of protector, rather than protector, of her own life. The young girl's bravery is even more evident when she wounds the wolf:

“It went for her throat, as wolves do, but she made a great swipe at it with her father's knife and slashed off its right forepaw.”

This act represents empowerment and resistance of the woman. The main character's physical strength,

determination and survival skills are usually associated with male heroes. After she slays the wolf, she is able to show great control over her emotions and self-confidence, and she cleans her knife and resumes her journey.

Though strong, Carter is not devoid of traditionally feminine attributes. When she arrives at her grandmother's house, she immediately tries to take care of the sick woman:

“She felt the forehead, it burned.”

This scene demonstrates that strength and compassion can coexist. Carter's protagonist is nurturing and independent, rejecting the patriarchal notion that women are supposed to be feminine or strong.

One key distinction between the two texts is the way in which the conflict is settled. *Little Red Cap* is the victim in Grimm's tale:

“The wolf had scarcely finished speaking when he jumped from the bed with a single leap and ate up poor *Little Red Cap*.”

The huntsman saves both her and her grandmother, and her life is hanging in the balance. However, in the ending the values of patriarchy are reinforced by the idea that male guardianship is the source of protection and salvation.

In contrast, Carter eliminates the male savior. The protagonist learns that her grandmother is a werewolf and raises the alarm:

“The child crossed herself and cried out so loud the neighbors heard her and come rushing in.”

The heroine is an active contributor to defeating and unveiling the threat. She is no damsel to be waited upon. This conclusion focuses on the importance of women's agency and self-determination.

The overall impression of Carter's *The Werewolf* is a feminist retelling of Grimm's *Little Red Cap*. The book's original story encourages the reader to be obedient, innocent, and to rely on the protection of men; Carter's book gives her a strong, resourceful heroine, who can be heroic and take control of her own destiny. The protagonist is transformed, the male rescuer is eradicated and female strength and independence are highlighted, all of which challenges the traditional gender stereotypes and reconstructs the fairy-tale heroine as a symbol of modern female empowerment. In doing so, *The Werewolf* both re-writes the original story and redefines the role of women in fairy tales and patriarchy in general.

The Adventure of Aladdin and The Forbidden Wish

The similarity of *The Adventures of Aladdin* to the feminist-influenced retelling by Jessica Khoury, *The Forbidden Wish*, exemplifies the effect of the feminist view on modern re-tellings of the fairy tale. The classical version focuses on men and assigns women little roles, whereas the modern version puts a female character at the center of the story and highlights the themes of free will, agency and empowerment for women.

In the original story, Aladdin is a very average little poor boy:

“Once upon a time, a widow had an only son whose name was Aladdin. They were very poor and lived from hand to mouth, though Aladdin did

what he could to earn some pennies, by picking bananas in faraway places.”

Similarly, in the modern version, Zahra describes him as:

“He is just a common human boy. He cannot hear the cry of a jinni, a lamp spirit, a granter of wishes.”

In both, Aladdin is depicted as a normal human being who is not a magician. Similarly, when Aladdin goes into a magically magical cave both versions show his astonishment at the treasure. “Trees are dripping with glittering jewels” is the classical version, and Khoury writes:

“The boy walks as one in a dream, not blinking, not breathing.”

These similarities indicate that the retelling preserves important elements of the original narrative while reshaping its ideological focus.

A significant difference appears in Aladdin’s characterization. Zahra observes:

“I stare at him a moment, conflicted. He carried me. He took an arrow for me. I've had few kind masters in my long, strange life.”

Aladdin treats Zahra with compassion and respect, unlike in traditional fairy tales, where women are generally regarded as prizes. This reflects the switch in attitude towards gender relations and indicates a more gender balanced representation of men and women.

The most significant change has to do with the genie. In the classical story, the genie is a male servant who proclaims:

“You've set me free, after centuries! I was a prisoner in the lamp, waiting to be freed by someone rubbing it. Now, I'm your obedient servant. Tell me your wishes.”

His existence revolves around serving Aladdin. In contrast, *The Forbidden Wish* introduces a female genie:

“You're a—you're a—‘a girl!’”

This is a very important shift from the feminist standpoint. Zahra is not just a magical helper; she's the protagonist with her own desires and ambitions. She's strong, but she's stuck:

“I am smoke in the lamp, and I curl and stretch, shaking off the lethargy of five hundred years.”

Her imprisonment is a metaphor for the limitations historically placed on women. Thus, her greatest

desire is for freedom:

“Freedom. It's a dream I never dared to dream.”

Her determination reaches its peak when she declares:

“I won't let anything stop me—not human or jinn.”

The Adventures of Aladdin, therefore, upholds traditional gender roles, while *The Forbidden Wish* undermines the traditional conception of the male leader through Zahra's efforts for freedom and self-determination. The retelling gives women a voice, allowing them to have strong characters that can influence their own fates.

Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent

Maleficent (2014) is a direct retelling of *Disney's Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and that can be seen as an evolutionary change in the depiction of women. The classical version reinforces traditional patriarchal values by portraying women as passive and dependent and needing to be saved by men, while the contemporary version re-creates female characters as complex and powerful, independent of male salvation. The retelling's *Maleficent* defies the standard dichotomy of heroine and villain and offers a feminist representation of womanhood, power and agency.

The classic version starts with the celebration of the birth of Princess Aurora, who is gifted with magical gifts at the occasion by three fairies. As a story, this is a kind of passive figure whose destiny is in the hands of others, Aurora. She is destined to be determined by magic, her parents and ultimately by a prince who comes to save her. This passive description is in line with the norms that are traditional in society, as it is assumed that women are beautiful, obedient, and dependent.

The turning point occurs when Maleficent arrives and declares:

"Listen well all of you the princess shall indeed grow in grace and beauty and will be loved by all those who know her but before sunset, on her sixteenth birthday she will prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and die"

This curse immediately automatically makes Maleficent the bad guy of the story. In the traditional fairy tale, the powerful woman is often a threatening and evil figure. Feminist commentators say patriarchal narratives tend to equate female power with evil since a female who is not under a man's control is a challenge to male rule. Maleficent is a threat to the patriarchy embodied by King Stephen and his kingdom for her magical power, confidence and authority.

The same curse is also found in Maleficent:

“Hark, all ye, the princess shall grow in grace and in beauty, And be loved of all that pass by, And in her sixteenth year she shall prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, And fall into a sleep-like death before the sunsets on her year.”

The text has been very similar but with the context entirely different. The audience is shown a reason behind Maleficent's actions, unlike in the original film. The curse isn't the unscrupulous lady; it's her betrayal and emotional wounds. King Stephen cuts off Maleficent's wings and becomes king, due to his thirst for power. King Stephen is thirsty for power, and cuts off *Maleficent's* wings to acquire it. This act represents the patriarchy's violence towards women from the feminist point of view. Maleficent loses her freedom, identity and freedom of body to a man who wants to advance in politics.

The loss of her wings is very symbolic. Wings are symbols of freedom, strength, and individuality. Stephen takes them off, metaphorically trying to control and lessen her. This is a scene that has been seen as an example of how the voices of women are ignored and their independence limited in a patriarchal society by feminist scholars. Thus, Maleficent's drive for revenge is not evil per se, but the result of deep emotional and psychological pain.

The biggest change in the retelling is the character of Maleficent. She is more than just a one-dimensional character as the original, she is multidimensional and able to grow and reflect.

This change is apparent when she admits:

“I cannot ask you for forgiveness because what I have done to you is unforgivable, I was so hated and revengeful that I could not imagine loving you that much.”

Here, Maleficent is being aware of herself and learning to express her emotions in her own way. She is aware of the implications of her decisions and takes responsibility for them. Unlike the stereotypical Maleficent that is evil until defeat, Maleficent is a character who changes through the story. Feminist criticism does not like such complexity, since it avoids the stereotypical evil or good images of women. The statement also illustrates the ability to grow and redeem oneself emotionally. The transformation of Maleficent is through the eyes of Aurora. She is not consumed by hatred, but is taught in compassion and empathy. This development goes against conventional fairy tales, which implies that women can change, discover and develop themselves.

But the classical version also puts a lot of focus on the female reliance as Merryweather changes the curse:

But the fateful prophecy you shall keep, Not in death, but in sleep, And from this slumber, you shall wake, When true love's kiss, The spell shall break.

The phrase 'true love's kiss' only serves to strengthen a traditional patriarchal message. Aurora can only survive if someone helps her. She can't save herself and has to wait for a prince to save her. This is a typical depiction in which women are depicted as passive and men as active rescuers.

Moreover, Prince Phillip also plays the role of the perfect male protagonist. He slays Maleficent, faces challenges and rescues Aurora with a kiss. Throughout the story, men are shown to be doing things and women are shown to be relying on the decisions of men and protection by men.

The modern retelling purposely throws out this narrative construct. Prince Phillip tries to wake up Aurora, but he kisses her and doesn't get her. This is especially important because it is an assault on the fairy tale notion that romantic love is the most potent and, consequently, the most elevated form of love.

Rather, it is the genuine love and kiss of Maleficent that awakens Aurora. As Maleficent is saying this, Aurora is waking up:

“You stole what was left of my heart and now I have lost you forever.”

Maleficent's love for Aurora is evident in this declaration. Their bond goes beyond biology and society. Maleficent is the protector, mentor and mother of Aurora. The film breaks the norms of the fairy tale and broadens the concept of worthwhile human relationships by the notion of maternal love as the source of salvation.

This is indeed a revolutionary change from the feminist standpoint. Women were no longer to be found waiting to be saved by men. Instead, women's relationships become sources of strength, healing and transformation. The film is thus challenging the masculine belief that women's fulfillment and happiness lie in finding a man to love.

A second distinction has to do with the representation of power. Power is mostly connected to males' authority in *Sleeping Beauty*. There are a king and a prince, and men make major decisions. There are female characters who have some authority, but are also subordinate to the male authority.

However, in *Maleficent*, females are prominently placed in positions of power. Maleficent possesses immense magical power, defends the Moors, and is ultimately responsible for the fate of the kingdom. Aurora begins to mature as a caring and competent leader of the human and magical races.

Maleficent's declaration:

““You took what was mine, and I will take what is yours”

In this work, she is seen to defying her victimization. She doesn't take it lying down, but speaks out against the injustice she has faced. Her techniques are ethically dubious, but her defiance is a repudiation of servile femininity. She is no longer someone acted upon by others, but rather someone who acts.

Maleficent's ending further emphasizes feminist messages. The classic version has a male protagonist who establishes social order while the modern version settles the dispute by means of females. Maleficent wins over King Stephen, regains her wings and her identity. Aurora then becomes queen, and brings peace between the human kingdom and the Moors.

This ending represents the return of the power and independence of women. When Maleficent's wings are recovered, her freedom, dignity and her own self are regained. She empowers herself through self-realization and personal transformation instead of relying on the validation of men.

Overall, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent* illustrate a tremendous shift in ideology from a male perspective to a female one. While the classical version of the story depicts women as passive, dependent and subordinate to their men, the modern version depicts them as strong, complex and independent. The re-imagining of Maleficent breaks with the traditional gender stereotypes, reinterprets the concept of male heroism and celebrates women's agency, self-determination, and emotional strengths.

As a result, *Maleficent* is a feminist remake of *Sleeping Beauty*, a tale of men saving women from passivity to one of women asserting themselves, resisting oppression, and asserting their role in

deciding their own fate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper explores the comparison between classic fairy tales and their contemporary retellings from a feminist perspective. The study aims to examine the portrayal of female characters and the influence of feminism on these characters in modern adaptations of traditional fairy tales. By analyzing classic tales such as *Little Red Cap*, *Aladdin*, and *Sleeping Beauty* (in the Brothers Grimm versions) alongside their contemporary retellings like Angela Carter's *The Werewolf*, the film *Maleficent*, and Jessica Khoury's *The Forbidden Wish*, the researchers seek to identify similarities and differences in the depiction of female characters. The findings of this research shed light on the transformation of female characters in contemporary retellings influenced by feminist perspectives. Traditional fairy tales often depicted women as submissive, weak, and dependent on men. The concept of true love was primarily associated with male characters, and positions of power were typically reserved for men. Female characters were often polarized, either portrayed as perfect, beautiful, and kind-hearted but helpless and naive, or ambitious women were depicted negatively. However, contemporary retellings infused with feminist ideals have challenged and subverted these traditional gender roles. Authors like Carter, through her postmodern feminist version of *Little Red Cap* titled *The Werewolf*, present female characters as independent, capable, and defying the stereotypical image from the original tale. The research also examines the impact of feminism on other contemporary retellings, such as the film *Maleficent* and Khoury's novel *The Forbidden Wish*, highlighting the reinterpretation of female characters and the exploration of gender equality.

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