

Symbolism in Three Version Cinderella Stories, an Analysis of Representation (Katharine Pyle, Charles Perrault, and Disney)

Wahju Kusumajanti,
English Department-Faculty of Art and Humanities,
Universitas Islam Negeri Surabaya
Indonesia
wahjukusumajanti@uinsby.ac.id

Arinda Anggana Raras,
English Department-Faculty of Art and Humanities,
Universitas Islam Negeri Surabaya
Indonesia
arinda.raras32@gmail.com

Zulidyana Dwi Rusnalasari
English Department-Faculty of Art and Humanities,
Universitas Islam Negeri Surabaya
Indonesia
zulidyana@gmail.com

Abstract—*Cinderella* is one of the most remarkable short stories of all ages. *Cinderella* was the best-known fairy tale and probably the best-liked in every region in the world. This study tries to analyze the three versions of *Cinderella* stories written by Katharine Pyle, Charles Perrault, and the animation movie produced by Walt Disney. This study focused on the symbols which appear in *Cinderella* stories using Representation theory by Stuart Hall to find out the meanings of the symbols. The method of this research is qualitative research. The data source of this research is the three versions of *Cinderella* Stories. As a result, the researcher finds out the symbols, which dominantly appear are: the slipper, the gown, the pumpkin, the animals, and the main characters. Each of the symbols reveals the meaning which represented the cultural and sociological context of the story.

Keywords: *Cinderella*, *Representation*, *symbolism*, *fairy tale*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinderella is a famous fairy tale. Bettelheim (1976:236) says that *Cinderella* was the best-known fairy tale, and probably the best- liked [1]. Because many writers from different nations have written *Cinderella*. That is why the story has different versions, and every country has a different storyline and even the characters. It has been traced to Asia, India, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America over 4000 years ago and also has over 500 different European versions [2]. The assumption is that the children around the world know the story.

In the modern era, the story of *Cinderella* still exists and has many adoptions in kinds of literature, even songs, and movies. Based on the discussions above, we (the researchers) decide to study 'Cinderella' as the object of the study. While the authors chosen are Charles Perrault, Katharine Pyle, and Disney's animation. Charles Perrault wrote '*Cendrillon*' or '*The Little Glass Slipper*.' It is the accessible version first published in 1697. '*Cinderella*' by Charles Perrault has been translated and adapted over and over through the centuries centuries [3]. Besides, most scholars use this version for the research studies. The popularity of this version is because of the additions of fairy-godmother and the pumpkin[4]. The text is different from the German Grimm brothers, and Walt Disney adapted into an animation version in 1950 and a live-action movie in 2015.

Katharine Pyle is chosen because she is one of the successful author and illustrator in America. Pyle achieved recognition as an author through her short stories, poems, and plays for children. She also compiled and retold several volumes of fairy tales and myths [5]. *Cinderella* story written by Katharine Pyle was published in 1918 in *Mother's Nursery Tales*. The story has the influence of *Cinderella* by Charles Perrault's version that makes the plot and the characters of the story much alike.

We also choose *Cinderella* animation movie (1950) by Walt Disney because it is the adaptation of *Cinderella* by Charles Perrault. The movie became the commercial hit for the studio since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). It also received three Academy Award nominations[6]. Besides its popularity, we choose this version because the

live-action version in 2015 has some feminist message which is related to the social background today.

Every version has the same symbols to represent something. Based on discussions above about the object of the study, this paper tries to find out the symbols that appear in the three versions of *Cinderella* story. We choose Representation by Stuart Hall to reveal the symbols in the three versions of *Cinderella*.

According to Gunther Kress, as quoted by Bearne, literacy is that which is about representation [7]. Because literacy implies something that is mediated through text. By reading a text, the representation of the text itself, it can be concluded what the author of the text wants to share the messages. In other words, representation means the process and the products, that gives signs their particular meaning [8]. Hall says that meaning depends on the relationship between things in the world; people, objects and events, real or fictional [9]. There is a common-sense usage of the term 'Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people'[9].

According to Stuart Hall's argument, representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of cultures [9]. In other words, representation as 'giving the meaning' is giving culture as a central role. For example, in many countries, western societies have associated the word 'black' with everything dark, evil, forbidding, dangerous, and sinful. So, they thought that black people as a darker side, which are barbaric[8]. But, if we take a look from the other culture' perspective, it may also say the opposite of it.

So, representation is a practice which uses material objects and effects. But the meaning depends, not on the material quality of the sign, but its symbolic function. It is because a particular thing stands for, symbolize, or represents a concept that it can function, in a language, as a sign and convey meaning (25-26). Hall argues that there is no finally fixed meaning to any image or any occurrence.

Symbolism is a technique used in literature when some things cannot be understood literary[10]. A symbol is a mark, sign, or word that indicates as representing the idea, object, or relationship. Tyson says that a symbol is arbitrary, which is decided on by the agreement of some group or community [11]. Symbols allow people to go beyond what is known or seen by creating a relation between other very different concepts and experiences. People used symbols for expressing their feelings and thoughts about phenomena, life, and death [12]. The symbol, according to Peirce, which is quoted in Noth's *Handbook of Semiotics*, is the category of arbitrary and conventional signs, as we can see in the quotation below;

"A symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by law, usually an association of general ideas. Any ordinary word as 'give', 'bird', and 'marriage' are the examples of symbols. Every symbol is necessarily a legisign."(40).

Symbolism can give literary work more richness and color and can make the meaning of the literary work more profound. It can take different forms. Usually, symbols always represent the meaning of the object or might be given a very different sense, which is more intelligent or more significant. Sometimes it can be an action, event, or a word spoken by someone.

II. DISCUSSION

This paper deals with the three versions of *Cinderella* stories. The stories are the two short stories which are *Cendrillon or The Little Glass Slipper* (1697) by Charles Perrault, and *Cinderella* (1898) by Katharine Pyle, and *Cinderella* (1950) animation movie by Walt Disney. There are some items which always appeared in *Cinderella* stories. The items are expressed dominantly and mostly have the connection to *Cinderella*, as they are tools in *Cinderella* stories. Some of them become the symbols, which are the glass slipper, the gown, the pumpkin, the animals, and the main characters.

The Glass Slipper

The glass slipper is considered as the vital element of the story. The stories always have a relation with the slipper, as it is an icon for *Cinderella*. Some people may say that the glass slipper is the media for *Cinderella* to be identified by the Prince. But, it is more than just a tool of *Cinderella*. Based on Merriam Webster Dictionary, glass means any of various amorphous materials formed from a melt by cooling to rigidity without crystallization, such as a usually transparent or translucent material consisting typically of a mixture of silicates. From the definitions of Merriam Webster Dictionary, we assume these transparent object reflected the mirror or the glass which is used in the window. The glass itself, it can be seen that glass is something transparent object. Even though it is classified as a hard substance, it is also so fragile. So, the glass slipper represents about *Cinderella's* true identity, gentleness, purity, and natural beauty. The glass slipper represents true identity because it is the media for *Cinderella* to reveal her identity as the one the Prince is looking for. While it can be symbolized as gentleness because the glass is breakable and fragile, but *Cinderella* wore the glass slipper without any trouble. Because the glass is a transparent object, it is clear to see through it. So, it represents the purity of *Cinderella*. And because of the beauty of the glass slipper, it represents about *Cinderella's* natural beauty, as no one can deny her beauty. Those are positive symbolisms which add the good *Cinderella*. While we also found some negative symbolisms that represent the bad side of *Cinderella*, which are opportunist and beauty pain. The glass slipper can be symbolized as opportunist because it represents that *Cinderella* is an opportunist girl. She went to the ball after she had someone who could help her. In Perrault's version, she offered her stepsisters to taste the oranges that the Prince gave her. She even showed the other glass slipper that she kept to everyone when the glass slipper had already fit to her feet. The other negative symbol is beauty pain. The glass slipper is made from a glass, which is actually a hard substance. It makes the glass slipper uncomfortable to use,

and it might hurt Cinderella's feet for dancing all night long with wearing that slipper.

The Gown

In the stories, the gown is described differently with Perrault's or Disney's version. Pyle, Perrault, and Walt Disney describe the gown with different materials and colors. Pyle uses satin and pearls for the gown, and the color of the gown is white. In Perrault's version, the gown is described with gold and silver color, all decked with jewels. Perrault does not define what is the material the gown that Cinderella used, but he uses the color of gold and silver. In the animation version, Cinderella's gown is silver, and it is as glossy as glass, just like the glass slipper itself. It is combined with a headband in her hair with the same color as the gown. But, the gown always expressed as the transformation of Cinderella. The transformation represented that Cinderella changes from rags girl to beautiful woman. The transformation also brings another representation, which is double identity. This double identity may reveal in the satin fabric used by Cinderella. Based on Merriam Webster Dictionary, satin is a fabric (as of silk) in satin weave with lustrous face and a dull back. From the definition above, we assume that satin is a shiny fabric, but on another side, it looks a bit dull. While the gown also represents the marriage and goodness, it is because of the color of the gown in Pyle's version. Anna A. Hasan et al. (2011) quotes Houghton that white usually means humility, innocence, youth, goodness, and marriage[13]. While gold and silver always have a relation with luxury, elegance, wealth. Because gold and silver are the colors of the precious metals that usually made for jewelry.

The Pumpkin

It is not a coincidence that the fairy godmother used pumpkin as the coach. There is a symbol of the pumpkin itself. Besides being so suitable for a coach, it brings some meanings beyond it. According to Cirlot in his *A Dictionary of Symbols* [14], pumpkin means it is a symbol of the link between the two worlds—the upper and the lower—and of the principle of inversion regulating the ordered pattern of events of cosmic phenomena, that is, night and day, life and death, infamy and sublimity, sorrow and joy. From this definition, we assume that the pumpkin which is changed into a coach is somehow a gate for Cinderella to enter. So, the pumpkin represents the transition of Cinderella.

The Animals

There are several animals which are used in the stories; mice, rats, and lizards. Those animals are considered as dirty animals. Rats usually are found in the water tunnel, in the gutter, and even in some disgusting places. Mice and lizards are the same. In the stories, the fairy godmother changes them into some horses, servants, and even a coachman. They still become the characters that serve Cinderella to go to the ball. So, it can be assumed that the animals represent the lower class.

The Main Characters

There are five main characters in Cinderella stories which categorized as symbols, such as Cinderella, The Fairy Godmother, The Prince, The Stepmother, and the Stepsisters. In the three versions of Cinderella stories, the characters also appeared in Pyle, Perrault and. Every characters represent their own meanings. The character of Cinderella itself represents about mourning. In Pyle's version, there is an explanation that the main character, Ella, was being called Cinderella because she is always covered by ashes. Based on Merriam Webster dictionary, cinders also mean ashes. While ashes always have the relation with death. So, Cinderella gets her name not just because she is a servant, but she is still all mournful about her mother's death. The second of the main characters is the fairy godmother. In this story, the fairy godmother represents God itself. Even though the stories are based on European's and American's perception, the story does not mention any religions in it. The fairy godmother can do some magic and make Cinderella's dream come true. She comes when Cinderella needs her the most and knows what best for her. This kind of acts are the acts of God to us, and it is the same with that the fairy godmother did in the stories. The fairy godmother fulfills Cinderella's wish to come to the ball because Cinderella is considered as a good kid who follows the orders of the fairy godmother. Besides of this symbol, fairy godmother also represents temporary pleasure. In Disney's version, the fairy godmother warned Cinderella that the magic only lasts until midnight and after that everything will go back to normal like before. It means that the fairy godmother also symbolizes as a temporary pleasure because just like magic, it only lasts for some hours.

The next main character is the Prince. The Prince symbolizes about the dream because it represents about Cinderella's wish to go to the ball. While it is impossible for Cinderella to do that, as she only wore rags clothes and being a servant in her own house. The period that Cinderella came to the ball and danced with the Prince is short and limited. That is why the events with the Prince is like a dream for her. After the magic was gone, Cinderella is like to wake up in her own dream. The last main characters are the stepmother and the stepsisters. In the three versions of Cinderella stories, the stepmother and the stepsisters were always rude and cruel to Cinderella. In Pyle's and Perrault's versions, they are described that they were not pretty enough as Cinderella. So, even though they always wore beautiful dresses, they still mock Cinderella for being a servant and covered in ashes. Thus, the stepsisters' treatment of Cinderella represents about jealousy. Even though they already had everything, it was not enough for them. They also stole Cinderella's house for their own and made Cinderella to be a servant in her own house. So, it means that they are greedy, which represent about greedy in the stories.

III. CONCLUSION

The three versions of Cinderella stories have the same symbols that are found. The symbols are found because Pyle, Perrault, and Disney use the dominant items, and

mostly have the connection to Cinderella. The discussion leads to several meanings of the symbols. Each item has its meaning to represent something. The symbols are: the glass slipper represents about true identity, gentleness, purity, and natural beauty; the gown represents about the transformation, double identity, marriage, goodness, wealth and luxury; the pumpkin represents about the transition of Cinderella; the animals represent the lower class; and the main characters represent about mourning, God, temporary pleasure, dream, jealousy, and greed.

Thus, this paper examined the meanings of the symbols in the short stories of Cinderella. Every symbol has a lot of meaning behind it. Even in a fairy tale, a lot of symbols that can be looked for.

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