



# Unearthing Dissenting Narratives of Love and Agency in Modern Disney Cinema

Zahra Fadia Siti Haliza<sup>1\*</sup>, Ghanesya Hari Murti<sup>1</sup> , Denny Antyo Hartanto<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Jember, Jember 68121, Indonesia  
zahrahaliza04@gmail.com

**Abstract.** Disney Live-action movies, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015), are acknowledged for shaping contemporary conceptions of womanhood. In the story of *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), love is depicted as a dialectical process that unfolds over time through interaction and character transformation, in which Belle and the Beast develop a love dynamic that transcends physical appearance and social status. In contrast, *Cinderella* and the prince represent love through visual impressions and attraction to the power. Thus, these two films present different love archetypes, implicating the function of love in the narrative structure. Through the lens of Greimas's Actantial Model, this study examines how film narration produces meaning within the actantial scheme. Furthermore, the exploration of the love dynamic is grounded in Badiou's concept of the Truth-procedure of love, which involves the work of the Scene of Two and Fidelity. Wollstonecraft's feminist theory is used to analyze the underlying agenda of the love story by investigating the female protagonists' agency in the film, with a primary focus on the educational backgrounds that lead them to find true love. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, drawing on scenes from the Disney films *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015) to examine the dynamics of love and the agency of female protagonists. Through the lenses of Greimas, Badiou, and Wollstonecraft, the results indicate that Belle embodies a positive female archetype who asserts her agency through curiosity. Simultaneously, *Cinderella* portrays a vulnerable woman who begs a prince for protection against another woman.

**Keywords:** Disney Princess Movie, Greimas Actantial Model, Truth-procedure of Love, Women's Empowerment.

## 1 Introduction

The narrative text of folklore is one of the instruments used to shape societal values, particularly regarding gender roles and ideas of romantic life across cultures [1], including *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*. In Charles Perrault's *Cendrillon* (1697), *Cinderella* personified the virtues of patience, beauty, and submission through servitudes [2]. Furthermore, her discharge of life lies in her docile marriage to a prince, which represents patriarchal ideals of the "perfect woman" whose worth is perceived

through male validation [3]. Meanwhile, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* (1756) depicts Belle as self-sacrificing, valuing inner qualities over superficial appearances [4]. Despite their didactic portrayals, these characters differ clearly: while Cinderella is passive and externally validated, Belle is more closely tied to mental agency.

Walt Disney Pictures, an American flagship producer of live-action feature films, produced *Cinderella* (2015), directed by Kenneth Branagh, and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) directed by Bill Condon, which departs significantly from the original text. Critical attention has focused on how they capture and challenge traditional archetypes of love and gender, as these stories have been adapted into various forms. The change is not merely a conversion of the medium from text to audiovisual but also splits the archetypes of both narratives, as the production has been adjusted by the producer's intention, primarily through the development of the main character. In *Cinderella* (2015), while there are attempts to deepen the characters, the narrative remains faithful to Perault's traditional archetypes. The character of Cinderella is still portrayed as a woman who believes in fate rather than embracing self-determination. Her love story emerges from a moment of magical transformation, a response to her previous permissiveness towards mistreatment in which beauty and grace are celebrated. This character is associated with postfeminist fantasy: a woman who endures suffering with grace, then is rescued by romantic love based on material substance [5].

In contrast, Bill Condon's *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) offers a more progressive recharacterization of Belle. Presented by Emma Watson, Belle is depicted not only as a literate woman but also as one who resists the social norms of her village, which domesticated women, by questioning the institution of marriage. Her journey in seeking "true love" is more striking for her emotional growth and moral confrontation than for her physical beauty and obedience. This character of Belle reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's (1978) notion that women should be educated for their independence in choosing their lives.

These narrative distinctions reflect broader ideologies regarding the construction of womanhood in the media. Belle's cognitive discernment, which transcends appearances, contrasts with Cinderella's dependence on aristocratic rescue. Thus, this research examines how these films challenge gender norms through the pursuit of true love within the structural narration, applying Greimas's actantial schema, Badiou's concept of the Truth Procedure of love, and Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism.

## 2 Literature Review

The narrative structure of Greimas' analysis framework has gained increasing scholarly attention. For example, a previous study by Haryadi & Kaprisma [6]. This study identifies Andrey *Zvyagintsev's Nelyubov* (2017) as a film that engages with the Greimas actantial framework to explore familial neglect, emotional alienation, and the breakdown of human relationships. This study argues that the actantial model remains relevant even when applied to postmodern narratives across media, enabling a structured

understanding of complex character dynamics in films. This finding suggests that Greimas's actantial framework is not limited to classical storytelling, which typically involves stable characters, but is also applicable to complex and dynamic roles in contemporary cinematic narratives.

Furthermore, regarding the exploration of the applicability of Badiou's Truth-procedure philosophy to film analysis, the study by Öztürk & Ahad represents a significant and methodological contribution to the development of Badiou's truth-procedure of love within cinematic discourse is made by examining Akira Kurosawa's movie, focusing on love and friendship as a truth-procedure [7]. Employing Badiou's concept of Truth-procedure of love, the study demonstrates how cinematic encounters in Kurosawa's film generate ethical subjectivity that ruptures with the established social situation and demands sustained commitment over time. Through close reading of *The Hidden Fortress* (1958), *Yojimbo* (1961), *Dersu Uzala* (1975), *Ikiru* (1952), *Red Beard* (1965), *Madadayo* (1993), *One Wonderful Sunday* (1947), *Seven Samurai* (1954), and *No Regrets for Our Youth* (1946) films, the authors find that the ethical meaning of fidelity or betrayal varies according to historical setting, narrative focus, and sociopolitical constraints. Nevertheless, his study opens a productive passage for further research that interrogates how the cinematic representation of the truth procedure of love may also reproduce broader ideological formations.

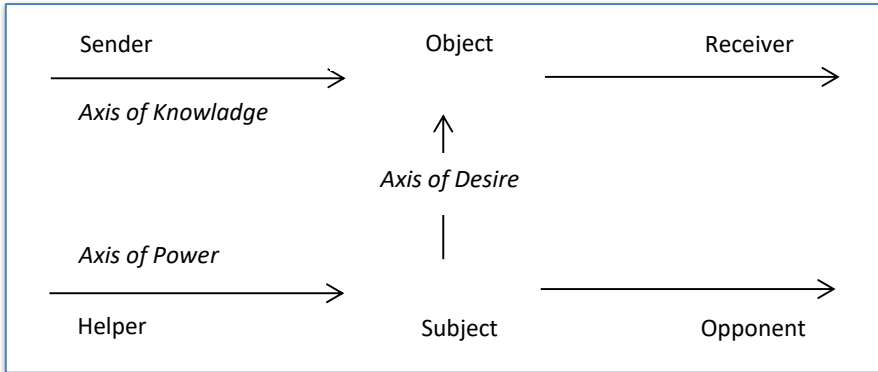
Given the increasing number of studies that question gender, agency, and feminist rearticulations of Disney's live-action films, Wang's study offers a focused thematic analysis of how contemporary Disney princess films renegotiate empowered princesshood within the feminist discourse [8]. This study contributes to the identification of a discursive transformation of princesshood, where empowerment is no longer defined solely through romantic narration but through the princes' capacity to negotiate institutional power, particularly patriarchal structures. The results of this study allow further research to situate Disney's movie adaptation within broader ideological shifts, particularly the influence of media activism associated with women's empowerment. Hence, the study conducted by Wang contributes to Disney studies by bridging film analysis with feminist critique [8].

According to prior research, the Greimas Actantial Model approach, combined with Badiou's philosophy of love and gender empowerment within liberal feminism, remains relevant for analysing contemporary media adaptations, such as *Cinderella* (2015) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). While these adaptations are often framed as progressive reinterpretations, a deeper structural analysis using Greimas's model, the exploration of the love dynamic in Badiou's truth-procedure of love, and Wollstonecraft's feminist notion, can reveal whether these films truly subvert traditional gender roles or continue to reproduce them in subtler ways.

## 2.1 Greimas Actantial Model

Narratology is the study of narrative as it is integrated within texts, images, events, and other cultural artefacts, in which a particular story is delivered in a logical, chronological order shaped by the agent's experience [9]. A.J. Greimas's Actantial Model is one of the most influential frameworks in structural narratology. The Actantial model offers

a formal apparatus for identifying the deep narrative analysis that lies beneath the surface of literary, cinematic, and cultural texts, allowing for the categorisation of relational structures of meaning rather than cataloguing characters [10]. Hence, Greimas's actantial theory is an appropriate tool for analyzing the text's structure. Greimas's structural theory is grounded in the notion that narrative texts are constructed from structural dyadic analogies derived from Saussure's linguistics and Propp's folktale narration. However, this framework simplifies Propp's 31 functions to 20 [11]. Greimas divides the elements into six actants as follows [12]:



**Fig. 1.** Actantial model diagram

1. The Subject is the element that takes action to achieve the goals
2. The Object is the goal that is achieved by the Subject
3. The Sender is the element that motivates the Subject to take an action
4. The Receiver is the element that reaps the benefit from the Subject's achievement
5. The Helper is the element that helps the Subject to achieve the goals
6. The Opponent is the element that hinders the Subject from achieving the goals

Greimas's actantial notion is grounded in the conception of meaning as a relational and differential principle inherited from Saussurian linguistics [13], emerging from a structured relation within a system. Hence, these actants are attracted to each other when placed in opposite positions within the narrative text system. According to Hebert, as cited in [10], those relations are functioned by three different axes of actantial as follows:

- The axis of desire is the relationship between the Subject and Object. The term 'junction' denotes a positive relationship in which the subject co-occurs with the object. In contrast, 'disjunction' refers to the negative relationship between them.
- The axis of power speaks of the relationship between the Helper and the Opponent. The helper's role is to ensure that the goal is achieved, even when the opponent presents otherwise.

- The knowledge axis connects the relationship between the Sender and Receiver. The Sender leads the Subject in achieving a junction with the Object, while the Receiver gains profit from the enactment of the intersection.

One of the primary strengths of the Greimas Actantial Model is its trans-textual applicability across genres, media, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the model provides a tool for revealing implicit ideological structures. Hence, by combining appropriate theory, this research aims to identify the functions of actants in exposing narrative values, following the Greimas Actantial Model.

## 2.2 Alain Badiou's Concept of Love

This study employs Alain Badiou's concept of love as an analytical tool to understand the motives behind the agendas of love. Badiou argues that love always begins with an unpredictable moment, allowing two subjects to embrace their solitary perspectives and initiate a long-term process of developing a shared truth [14]. The truth proposed by Badiou here is not an existing reality but a process that emerges as the gate to entering a shared world between two subjects that did not exist before, which he calls the Event [15]. To retain the Event, the truth procedure of love demands the concepts of the Scene of Two and Fidelity. The Scene of the Two is the act of love that creates a new world from the Event, enabling subjects to view the world from a Two perspective. The Two mentioned do not equal 2 in the logic of  $1+1=2$ , which portrays the sum of two separate desires, but it is the collection of a different world that produces another world from it [15].

Moreover, the commitment to sustaining a new existence is achieved only through the work of Fidelity, driven by the creative labour in co-inventing a world over time [16]. However, the notion of Fidelity is fundamentally opposed to the concept of endurance in the face of silence, abuse, or sacrifice; it refers instead to an egalitarian practice that requires the work of both active subjects [14]. If Fidelity eliminates subjectivity, it becomes a form of power imbalance, leading to structural oppression. Thus, employing Badiou's concept of Truth-procedure of Love, this research aims to explore the dynamic negotiation of power within Disney's live-action movie *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015).

## 2.3 Mary Wollstonecraft's Framework of Feminism

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the archetypal roles of female characters in both films, this study employs Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist theory as a lens for analysis. Wollstonecraft argues that the principle of 'gender roles' was constructed by society, which assumed that women are less rational than men [17]. She argued that women and men share the same intellectual capacity if society treats them equally in education. Using the analogy of a caged bird, Wollstonecraft also declares that a woman without the freedom to access education ultimately pleases a man. Since they have no memory of the world outside the house, their autonomy towards themselves is being raped [17].

Furthermore, she believed that it might also happen to men if such conditions trapped them. They would become less rational because the lack of rational capacity is not a matter of gender but of chance. Therefore, in her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary consistently argued that both women and men should have equal access to education. Hence, both can develop their reasoning capacities equally. Furthermore, women should free themselves from oppression, which has led them to be emotionally and logically weak in their capacity for reason [17]. Wollstonecraft in 1792 insists that women are not merely an instrument for men's pleasure, they are an 'Intent', an agent to reason, whose self-esteem is valued by themselves.

Drawing on the lenses of Greimas's Actantial Model, Badiou's Truth-procedure of Love, and Wollstonecraft's feminism, this study aims to develop an understanding of the romantic narrative beyond the screen. Greimas's Actantial Model provides the formal logic of character function by revealing how love quests are structured within the movie. Furthermore, Badiou's concept of love helps us understand the ideological stakes within romantic narratives. Mary Wollstonecraft's framework served as a tool for defining the value of the film's main female characters, who serve as messengers of its values to the audience.

### 3 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the data. This approach enables the researcher to present the data comprehensively and understand social concepts, history, ideology, and social phenomena through their meanings [18]. The primary data are grounded in scenes from the Disney films *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015) in relation to Greimas's Actantial Model, Badiou's Truth-procedure of love, and women's liberal empowerment. Other relevant publications discussing the love dynamic within the movie, social construction, and theoretical exploration were used as secondary data for the research.

To understand how the characters and plotlines function within the narrative, this study examines the structures of the two films in several stages. First, data analysis involves identifying plotlines within the movie that relate to the character dynamics in developing the love story, thereby enabling the researchers to classify the data according to Greimas's Actantial Model and Badiou's concept of the Truth-procedure of love. Furthermore, the researchers present the data analysis in two parts: first, an exploration of Greimas's Actantial Model to reveal the movie's narrative structure. Second, the comparative analysis examines Badiou's Truth-procedure of Love towards Beauty with the Beast and Cinderella with the prince to analyze the agenda behind the act of love and the agency of Beauty and Cinderella through Wollstonecraft's liberal feminism to enrich the discussion of the implications of women characters' dynamics on the social issue of women's empowerment. Images from the selected scenes related to the love dynamic were included to strengthen the data analysis. The scene selection process is grounded in the categorization of the actant and comparative analyses using Badiou's and Wollstonecraft's frameworks.

## 4 Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Greimas’s Actantial Model in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015)

#### **Beauty and the Beast (2017)**

Bill Condon directed the movie *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) by emphasising the journey of Belle, an intelligent and independent young woman living in a provincial French town, where she is viewed as an unconventional person due to her love of reading and resistance to traditional gender expectations, which limit women to household work. When Belle’s father is imprisoned in the Beast’s enchanted castle, Belle sacrifices herself to secure her father’s freedom. The Beast is portrayed as a cursed prince who is transformed into a monstrous figure as punishment for his cruel behavior.

Over time, Belle and the Beast develop a relationship grounded in mutual understanding and shared vulnerability. Belle’s self-value gradually softens the Beast’s inner self, leading him to learn kindness and responsibility, while Belle comes to see beyond his physical appearance. As their bond deepens, Gaston, a man whose proposal Belle rejected, manipulates the townspeople into fearing the Beast, enforcing a violent attack on the castle. The Beast loses the will to fight but regains strength through Belle’s return from her father’s visitation and her confession of love. This declaration breaks the curse, restoring the Beast and the kingdom’s people to their human forms.

Based on the narrative explanation above, the analysis of Greimas's Actantial Model proceeds through the following table and axes analysis.

**Table 1.** Greimas’s actantial analysis in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017)

Type of Actants	Elements	Role
Subject	Belle	One who played the protagonist of the story
Object	Love and living life outside Belle's village	The core of the developing stories
Opponent	Gaston and the patriarchal ideology in the village	Hampering Belle's ability to achieve her goal to feel free as a woman
Helper	Belle's father, household tools, and Belle's intellectual capacity	Enable Belle to have intellectual value and realize her love for the Beast
Sender	Belle's curiosity, empathy, and ambition to live outside her provincial life	Pursuit of Belle to enter the dreadful castle, which led to Belle and the Beast developing a love story
Receiver	Belle, Beast, and all the kingdom's villagers who are being cursed	Being released from their obstacle

*Axis of Desire (Subject - Object)*

As a Subject, Belle's desire to pursue her love of life is not structured by a romantic narrative that primarily embodies feelings like Gaston's towards Belle; instead, it emerges from intellectual engagement and moral discernment. Bill Condon, in developing the love story between Belle and the Beast, is not driven by pity and appearance-based attraction, but rather through dialogue, shared reading, and philosophical encounter, which means across all sites of intellectual compatibility.

Furthermore, in contrast to patriarchal models of male dominance and female submission, Belle's love story with the Beast develops as a journey towards ethical equality, as proved by the scene where the Beast's transformation in the meaning of breaking the curse only happens after he recognizes Belle's intellect and offers her autonomy, allowing her to leave the castle to help her father. This act of ethical equality lies in the Beast's manner of respecting Belle's agency. Moreover, the Beast adopts this manner from Belle's capacity for empathy, which manifests during their interactions.

*Axis of Power (Helper - Opponent)*

Bill Condon developed the relation between the Helper and the Opponent through Belle's father figure in providing the sphere for Belle to develop her curious capacity, Household tools in encourage Belle to open herself to the Beast and vice versa, also Belle's life values to living a life contrary with ordinary people on the village which adopted patriarchal value in one side, and Gaston's patriarchal figure whose marrying Belle for her beauty only and his obsession towards the Belle which forced him to kill the Beast in other side. Furthermore, Belle's opponents are not only external but also social structures that restrict women's freedom and intellectual agency.

In contrast, Belle's father figure affirms her perception of the world by providing her with access to the development of rationality. As an inventor, he indirectly influences Belle to maintain her curiosity. He also never forbids Belle from heading to the library, unlike other men in the village who prohibit women from even having reading ability, as portrayed by the headmaster, who punishes Belle for teaching a young girl how to read.

Later, the Beast also contributes to Belle's goal of a life beyond her provincial sphere, thereby enabling marginalized women to develop their intellectual capabilities by providing them with access to his vast library and a reading environment.

*Axis of Knowledge (Sender - Receiver)*

In this film, Belle's curiosity, empathy, and ambition to live beyond the provincial world influence the story's development. Belle embodies the ideal of the woman reader: voracious reading, questioning authority, and upholding ethical standards even when placed in danger and conflict. Through her curiosity and empathy, Belle visits the unknown palace, which leads her story towards the Beast.

Moreover, her conversations with the Beast are often dialectical, challenging his anger, resisting his demands, and insisting on being treated with respect. Thus, her moral values are akin to those of the Sender in this narrative movie, which tells the story of the castle's transformation from a space of isolation into one of emotional resonance.

Belle's intellectual capacity fosters a connection with the Beast. Her strong principles enable her to break the Beast's curse and remove obstacles. Through Belle's influence, the Beast acquires empathy, vulnerability, and intellectuality. This transfer of knowledge shifts their relationship from captor and captive to dialogical partners. Thus, their love story begins, and the recipients who take advantage of their union are Belle, the Beast himself, and all the creatures who are freed from the curse.

### **Cinderella (2015)**

Kenneth Branagh opens the film with a narration that describes Cinderella's moral principle of "having courage and being kind" as her mother's final words. She is surrounded by a harmonious family whose parents provide compassionate care before the death of her parents. All her necessities are entirely supplied by them, both externally and internally. As a child, Cinderella was taught to believe in miracles. This always awakens her hope. However, after the death of her mother, Cinderella's father remarries Lady Tremaine, a woman who brings her two daughters into Cinderella's family. When Cinderella's father dies unexpectedly, her stepmother and sisters control the household and reduce her role to a life of servitude.

Despite enduring the emotional pain from her stepmother and sisters, Cinderella remains committed to her mother's final words of "having courage and being kind." Her life changes when she encounters a kind stranger in the forest riding a horse, who is later revealed to be a prince. With the magical assistance of her Fairy Godmother, Cinderella manages to attend a royal ball conducted by the king to find a bride for the prince. However, she must leave before midnight, leaving behind only a single glass slipper. Determined to find the woman he loves with no other clue except the remaining glass shoe, the prince searches the kingdom using the slipper as a clue. Although Lady Tremaine prevents Cinderella from being discovered, Cinderella ultimately reveals herself as the slipper's valid owner, helped by her song and the kingdom's guard. At the end of the story, Cinderella marries the prince and becomes a queen, leaving her cruel family.

Based on the narrative explanation above, this section aims to investigate the story using Greimas's Actantial Model. In Greimas's frame, the Subject of the story is clearly ruled by Cinderella, whose narrative trajectory centers on the pursuit of love. Therefore, Kit's love is the object. However, the Object of the enterprise is not merely romantic love but rather a legitimization of aristocratic power through the union of Cinderella and the Prince. From these analyses of the Subject and Object, the other elements are broken down into the following table of actants and the analysis of the axes:

**Table 2.** Greimas's actantial analysis in *Cinderella* (2015)

Type of Actants	Elements	Role
Subject	Cinderella	One who played the protagonist of the story
Object	Love and Free from the mistreatment of Cinderella's stepmother and her daughters	The core of the developing stories
Opponent	Lady Tremaine and her daughters	Repressing Cinderella within the domestic order and marginalizing her from her social position
Helper	The Fairy Godmother, Royal Captain, and internalized maternal ethics	Enable Cinderella's survival of physical and moral
Sender	Cinderella's mother's wisdom of "Have courage and be kind"	Cinderella's moral compass to deal with all her obstacles
Receiver	Cinderella, Monarchy	The beneficiary of the union of Cinderella and the Prince

#### *Axis of Desire (Subject - Object)*

The axis of power captures the narrative's role of Cinderella, as a Subject, pursuing love as an object. Her way of achieving love does not merely appear as an emotional event; rather, it is mediated by a class agenda. Although their first meeting takes place in the forest, which blurs the lines between classes, Kenneth Branagh develops the story through Cinderella's transformation into a luxurious ball gown.

Moreover, her transformation follows the standard of the ball attribute, such as the carriage and its coachman, footman, lavish ball gown, and the exclusive glass shoe, which only fits Cinderella's foot, indicating her desire to be valued among aristocrats. Cinderella's attendance at the royal ball also represents an ideological performance in which she must conform to the aesthetic and behavioural norms of nobility. Therefore, the desire for love echoes a capitalist narrative in which emotional success is rewarded through material elevation.

### *Axis of Power (Helper - Opponent)*

The axis of power mediates the elements associated with Cinderella's journey in pursuing her love. In the *Cinderella* (2015) movie, the foremost Helper is the Fairy Godmother. She enables Cinderella to attend the royal ball by transforming her appearance into glorious elegance. This transformation helps Cinderella become the main attraction at the ball. Furthermore, Cinderella's striking appearance dazzles the prince, prompting them to develop their feelings in the palace garden. However, the royal ball reveals Kit's true identity, thereby enabling them to get to know each other despite the limited time allotted by the Fairy Godmother.

Additionally, Cinderella's union with the prince could not have happened if she had not participated in the glass slipper match. Kenneth Branagh developed this scene with the help of the Royal Captain. While Cinderella's stepmother exiles her to the attic on the day of the glass shoe match, the royal captain encourages Cinderella to resist her stepmother. This is evident in the dialogue when the royal captain adopts a royal-order tone: "I forbid you to forbid her! Who are you to stop the officer of the king? Are you an empress?" Cinderella then demonstrates her resilience by stating that Lady Tremaine has no right to control her life as a mother, since she has never treated her like one. In fact, in the days before that, Cinderella had always behaved submissively since she had been handed her mother's wisdom to "Have courage and be kind."

### *Axis of Knowledge (Sender - Receiver)*

According to the narrative developed by Kenneth Branagh, the relationship between the Sender and the Receiver is grounded in Cinderella's mother's wisdom: to have courage and be kind. This line encourages her to behave like one, allows her to endure her stepmother and stepsisters' mistreatment, captures Kit's attention in the forest, and leads her to meet the Fairy Godmother. These agendas lead her to earn her union with the prince.

In contrast, the receiver of the resolution narrative in *Cinderella* is Cinderella herself, as she is finally rescued from her stepmother and stepsisters' mistreatment. At the end of the story, she becomes a queen after her foot fits into the glass shoe. Through the narrative voice of her Fairy Godmother, she explained that the prince's accession to the throne continued his father's legacy. This line signifies not only the union of the alley but also the maintenance of the monarch line, as they became the next rulers of the kingdom.

## **5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Comparative Analysis of True Love in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *Cinderella* (2015)**

Applying Greimas's framework, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) clearly portrays Belle as the Subject, who achieves her love story through her curiosity, supported by her father and the Beast's transformation of his personality. On the other hand, the opponents of the narrative primarily rely on Gaston, who embodies patriarchal ideology. Bill Condon

developed the character of Belle by emphasising her pursuit of a life beyond her provincial neighbourhood, a context that marginalised women's access to education.

This portrayal aligns with liberal feminist ideals, particularly as articulated by Mary Wollstonecraft, that women can achieve a higher social status if society provides equal access to education [19]. Belle's intelligence, autonomy, and resistance to social expectations reflect this spirit. Not only does she present her intellectual values to develop emotional bonds with the Beast, but she also employs her intellectual capacity to challenge the patriarchal ideology in her neighborhood by teaching a young girl to read. Furthermore, her refusal of Gaston's proposal indicates her passionate commitment to her autonomy and her decisiveness. She is aware of the consequences of marrying Gaston, which leads her to abandon her dream despite his higher social status.

Moreover, within Badiou's framework, the connection between Belle and the Beast reveals an Event of love that links two worlds within the enchanted palace, with Belle as the Beast's prisoner's daughter [14]. The Event within their encounter originates from a reasoned decision to exchange Belle's life for her father's freedom. Instead of running away and seeking help from others, she is aware of the consequences of sacrificing her life for her father and manages to arrange her liberation. Hence, Belle's capacity to assess responsibility and moral obligation reflects Wollstonecraft's notion that women must be educated to adapt to moral agents rather than emotional dependents [17].

Following this Event, the Scene of Two emerges between Belle and the Beast through a profoundly pedagogical space. Unlike traditional fairy tales, in which the female protagonist adapts herself to male authority, Bill Condon portrays Belle as actively interrogating the Beast's behavior and refusing to normalize his cruelty, thereby upholding the intellectual tradition of questioning phenomena. Therefore, the shared world between them existed because of Belle's critical thinking, which enabled dialogue rather than submission, aligning with Badiou's notion of the Scene of the Two, which emphasises the negotiation rather than fusion between two [14]. In building the bond, Belle operates as a rational companion rather than a passive object of desire, as appears in the dining, library, and environment exploration scenes, allowing Belle's role as a full subject rather than merely an object in breaking the curse. Their interaction demonstrates that their distinct backgrounds served as a bridge, fostering the expression of their feelings through a shared vision of life and a mutual understanding.

Moreover, following Badiou's sense of fidelity, which is supposed to appear within an ongoing commitment to the truth revealed by the Event, rather than a desire to eliminate others [14], aligns with the developing world between Beauty and the Beast. Belle remains faithful because she recognises the Beast's monstrosity without reducing him to it, echoing Wollstonecraft's critique of women being pushed to value surface quality over reason [19]. On the other hand, the Beast's fidelity appears not as a matter of desire but of self-reformation, allowing the curse to be broken as the symbolic confirmation of an internal transformation rather than a magical reward. Hence, the love story between Belle and the Beast fully conforms to Badiou's notion of the truth procedure of love, which produces a new way of perceiving and inhabiting the world from the perspective of Two.

Meanwhile, *Cinderella* exemplifies a different archetype for achieving the goal of love. According to Greimas's Actantial Model, Cinderella is a Subject pursuing dignity and belonging within an aristocratic-capitalist symbolic order. Her family, as the Sender, through the value of "Having courage and be kind," becomes an incantation that legitimizes the oppression of her stepmother and stepsisters as the Opponent. Besides, the Helper in achieving Cinderella's goal appears as a Fairy Godmother who facilitates her quest through a magical transformation into the aristocratic class. This symbolizes Cinderella's integration into royalty, which reinforces aristocratic statues rather than deconstructing them. Thus, her Object evolves from personal redemption to a marital union within an aristocratic capitalist ideology.

In Badiou's terms, unlike Belle's dynamic, Cinderella's Event is integrated with a class symbol of the high class. Branagh portrays their first meeting in the middle of the forest, with both characters riding horses, allowing them to establish their shared social class. This encounter undermines Badiou's notion of the world's construction through difference [14]. Moreover, the work of the Scene of Two operates across merchant and monarch worlds, embodying the logic of transaction for dealing with social mobility. Cinderella captures Kit's existence as an opportunity to rescue her from domestic captivity, as portrayed in her desire to attend the royal ball.

The Scene of Two, which should emerge as a sustained shared space in which different beings actively negotiate their world, as Badiou proposes, remains underdeveloped within the love narrative because Cinderella enters Kit's world through an aristocratic symbol, such as attending the royal ball and wearing a luxurious gown. Instead of negotiating their worlds, it is Cinderella who fuses her world into the prince's. Consequently, love in this archetype becomes the mechanism through which Cinderella is transferred from one social order to another, rather than a process through which both subjects reconfigure their understanding of the world from the standpoint of difference.

Furthermore, in Badiou's notion, Fidelity means the active labour through the commitment of both subjects in overcoming the consequences of the Event over time, revealing and constructing a new truth [14]. However, in *Cinderella* (2015), the concept of fidelity relies on a network of mediating agents, including the Fairy Godmother, royal messengers, and institutional authority. Consequently, the narrative of love in *Cinderella* (2015) functions as a symbolic reward structure rather than a truth procedure. The Event initiates possibility, but the Scene of Two never fully appears, and the external system and authority delegate fidelity. Following Badiou's notion, rather than producing a new world from the perspective of the Two, love accommodates Cinderella's relocation within an existing social hierarchy.

In this matter, the unmentioned educational background of Cinderella reinforces Wollstonecraft's statement on academic matters. Since she has not shown any courage to confront the mistreated situation she faced from her stepmother and sisters and rupture the social institution, as Belle did to Gaston and patriarchal society, an analogy of "caged bird" as mentioned by Wollstonecraft is embodied within Cinderella's inner self [17]. She has no other imagination except remaining submissive and dependent because of her confinement to domestic work. Through Wollstonecraft's lens, Cinderella's inadequacy in breaking her stepmother and sisters' cruelty through self-empowerment is

identified as a condition where women lose self-agency due to a lack of liberty as rational human beings [19].

## 6 Conclusion

Through the lens of Greimas's Actantial Model, Alain Badiou's concept of love, and Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminist ideals, Belle's narrative portrayal emerges as characterised by intellectual capacity. Refusing to submit to patriarchal ideology in her neighborhood, she reflects Wollstonecraft's vision of women as active moral agents capable of reshaping the conservative norms that tend to oppress women.

Furthermore, in building her relationship with the Beast, Belle engages in mutual recognition. This path of developing the love story aligns with Badiou's philosophy of love as a transformation within the world of the Two. Thus, Belle's transformation from marginalization to subjecthood is achieved by questioning and redefining oppressive social norms rather than conforming to them.

In contrast, the Cinderella narrative archetype demonstrates a subtle negotiation with power. Though she functions as the Subject, her Object is achieved not through structural challenge but through graceful submission. Her transformation from marginality to subjecthood depends on her assimilation into aristocratic and capitalist structures, particularly through royal recognition, as the narrative's climax centers on the ballroom, where Cinderella appears in luxurious attire. From Badiou's perspective, their love story embodies hedonism, safety, and compatibility. Thus, by integrating structural narrative, love's philosophical, and feminist frameworks, this study advances a critical intervention in princess tale cinema and the philosophical discourse on love. This study reveals the ideological implications of representing women's love not merely as a feeling or fate but as an ethical and cognitive practice, highlighting the significance of education in contemporary cultural analysis towards women's empowerment.

## References

- [1]. C. Hajisoteriou, P. Panaou, and P. Angelides, "Empowering children to speak up and act on social justice issues: The use of folktales and collaborative storytelling as tools of social imagination," *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 253–271, 2022, doi: 10.1002/berj.3765.
- [2]. L. T. Parsons, "Cinderella's transformation," *Study & Scrutiny: Research on Young Adult Literature*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 207–231, 2025, doi: 10.15763/issn.2376-5275.2025.7.1.207-231.
- [3]. J. Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*. Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 2012, doi: 10.23943/princeton/9780691153384.001.0001.
- [4]. N. Puškar Mustafić and N. Mulahmetović, "Shaping perspectives through narrative and visual adaptations: A comparative study of Beauty and the Beast," *Educational Role of Language Journal*, vol. 12, pp. 106–115, 2025, doi: 10.36534/erlj.2024.02.13.
- [5]. R. Gill, "Postfeminist media culture," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 147–166, 2007, doi: 10.1177/1367549407075898.

- [6]. J. D. Haryadi and H. Kaprisma, "Actantial model in the Nelyubov movie," *Capture: Jurnal Seni Media Rekam*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 160–175, 2021, doi: 10.33153/capture.v12i2.3252.
- [7]. S. Öztürk and W. Ahad, "Philosophy of 'truth ethics': Love/friendship through Kurosawa films and Badiou's philosophy," *Philosophies*, vol. 9, no. 4, Art. no. 113, 2024, doi: 10.3390/philosophies9040113.
- [8]. C. Y. Wang, "Re-imaging empowered princesshood against the rise of the fourth-wave feminism: A thematic study of Disney's princess live-action remakes," *International Journal of Disney Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 33–51, 2025, doi: 10.1386/ijds\_00003\_1.
- [9]. K. Y. Karnanta, "Struktural (dan) semantik: Teropong strukturalisme dan aplikasi teori naratif A.J. Greimas," *ATAVISME*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 171–181, 2015, doi: 10.24257/atavisme.v18i2.113.171-181.
- [10]. R. Saraswati, "Greimas's actantial model in the Hunger Games movie," *Akrab Juara: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, vol. 7, no. 3, p. 314, 2022, doi: 10.58487/akrabjuara.v7i3.1913.
- [11]. R. Selden, P. Widdowson, and P. Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. London, UK: Routledge, 2013, doi: 10.4324/9781315835358.
- [12]. A. J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. Lincoln, NE, USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- [13]. D. Chandler, *Semiotics*. London, UK: Routledge, 2022, doi: 10.4324/9781003155744.
- [14]. A. Badiou, N. Truong, and P. R. Bush, *In Praise of Love*. London, UK: Serpent's Tail, 2012.
- [15]. R. Naderi, "Love - scene of the two," *PoliÉtica: Revista de Ética e Filosofia Política*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 164–190, 2024, doi: 10.23925/politica.v12i4.68062.
- [16]. P. Shmugliakov, "The evental conception of love," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 2, pp. 325–339, 2023, doi: 10.1111/sjp.12488.
- [17]. M. Wollstonecraft and M. B. Kramnick, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. London, UK: Penguin, 1978.
- [18]. J. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: SAGE Publications, 2017.
- [19]. R. Tong and T. F. Botts, *Feminist Thought*. London, UK: Routledge, 2024, doi: 10.4324/9781003016939.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

