
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond the Cinderella Complex?: Transforming Gender Representations in Disney's Animation and Live-Action Films

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ABSTRACT

The Walt Disney Company has produced both animation films and live-action adaptations of classic fairytales which reflect transforming gender representations. The purpose of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis on the changing gender representations in Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) series as well as its live-action adaptation. In the light of feminism, the 1950 animation film is to be critically re-examined by comparing with the Brothers Grimm fairytale and paying attention to the binary gender roles of Cinderella and the prince. While pointing to the gender stereotypes in the 1950 animation film, this article argues that there are feminist elements in the 1950 animation film. It also examines the influence of feminism in the other two animation films by Walt Disney, *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002) and *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007). Finally, this research investigates the live-action adaptation, *Cinderella* (2015), created by Walt Disney in the light of feminist philosophy that has been influential and ubiquitous in the changing media culture in the world.

KEYWORDS

Cinderella, Cinderella complex, Disney, feminism, gender, patriarchal culture

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 19 July 2025

PUBLISHED: 30 August 2025

DOI: 10.32996/jgcs.2025.5.2.2

1. Introduction

Cinderella (1950) is an American animated musical fantasy film produced by the Walt Disney Company (Walt Disney or Disney) (IMDb. 1990-2025a). The original fairytale of the animated film is *Cendrillon* (1697) authored by Charles Perrault, a French author who wrote other famous fairytales, such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Sleeping Beauty* (Williams, 2016). Later, the Brothers Grimm included the story in their fairytale collection published in 1812 (Brothers Grimm, 1890). Given the similarities of the contents such as the glass slippers and a pumpkin coach (Ashliman, 1998-2024), it is logical to consider that Disney adopted the French fairytale in the filmmaking process of *Cinderella* rather than the German version (Kusumajanti, et al., 2019). Disney's 1950 animated film financially helped the Walt Disney Company that had been affected by the influence of the Second World War, and became the biggest hit since the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) (Susman, 2015). Walt Disney produced two sequels, *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002) and *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007), and a live-action remake in 2015 (IMDb. 1990-2025b, IMDb. 1990-2025c, IMDb. 1990-2025d).

The cultural influence of the *Cinderella* film series has been profound around the globe. For instance, "Cinderella Castle" is a symbolic building at the center of two Disney theme parks: the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World in Florida as well as Tokyo Disneyland at the Tokyo Disney Resort in Chiba. In Japan, the Cinderella story has been read since the Meiji period, and Cinderella has been thought to be a symbol of the ideal woman in the Japanese society (Masuya, 2003). From the feminist viewpoint, however, *Cinderella* (1950) has been critically reviewed, especially in terms of so-called "Cinderella complex", which assumes that "women depend on men in the pursuit of a happy, fulfilling life" (Xu, et al., 2019). Cinderella has been a research topic in the psychoanalytic field, and medical authors tend to utilize the term Cinderology as an academic metaphor (Hazelton & Hickey, 2004).

On the contrary, some earlier research suggested that the 1950 animation film contains feminist elements, and therefore, it has been discussed whether Cinderella is one of the first feminist princesses animated by the Walt Disney Company (Randall, 2016). Following the releases of the animated film sequels, namely *Cinderella II and III*, Disney produced a live-action retelling of the classic 1950 animated film in 2015 (IMDb. 1990-2025d). Moreover, non-Disney filmmakers produced other live-action adaptations, such as *Cinderella: A Feminist Fairy Tale* (2018) by Wine Cellar Productions (IMDb. 1990-2025e), *Cinderella* (2021) by Columbia Pictures (IMDb. 1990-2025f), and *Three Wishes for Cinderella* (2021) filmed in Norway (IMDb. 1990-2025g). In particular, are there any feminist elements in the 2002 and 2007 animated films as well as the 2015 live-action remake by the Walt Disney Company?

The purpose of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis on the changing gender representations in Disney's *Cinderella* series including its live-action adaptation. In the light of feminism, the 1950 animation film is to be critically re-examined by comparing with the Brothers Grimm fairytale and paying attention to the binary gender roles of Cinderella and the prince. While pointing to the gender stereotypes in the 1950 animation film, this article argues that there are feminist elements in the 1950 animation film. It also examines the influence of feminism in the other two animation films by the Walt Disney Company, *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002) and *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007). Finally, this research investigates Disney's live-action adaptation, *Cinderella* (2015) in terms of feminist philosophy that has been influential and ubiquitous in the changing media culture in the world.

2. Feminism and Gender as Analytical Frameworks

As analytical frameworks, the terms, "feminism" and "gender" are to be employed with a view to examining Disney's *Cinderella* film series in this article. According to *Oxford Reference*, feminism is defined as "the approach to social life, philosophy, and ethics that commits itself to correcting biases leading to the subordination of women or the disparagement of women's particular experience and of the voices women bring to discussion" (Oxford Reference, 2025). Likewise, *Cambridge Dictionary* defines it as "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025a). Some analyst defines the term "feminism" as the "set of beliefs and ideas that belong to the broad social and political movement to achieve greater equality for women" (Fiss, 1994: 413). As a matter of fact, Robyn Muir, a lecturer at Briston University, conducted a "feminist analysis" to examine Disney princesses conceptualizing so-called the "Disney Princess phenomenon" (Muir, 2024).

According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, "gender" is defined as "a group of people in a society who share particular qualities or ways of behaving which that society associates with being male, female, or another identity" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025b). Feminist scholars tend to criticize Disney princess movies in the light of "gender stereotype" as a feminist critique. The term "stereotype" is defined as a "set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong" in *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025c). Karen Boyle, for example, paid attention to the significance of "#Me Too" movement in the light of feminism by examining media coverage of sexual harassment and assault (Boyle, 2024). Hue Woodson sheds light on the meaningfulness of black womanhood from the perspective of a Black Marxist feminism (Woodson, 2024). Researchers of feminism and gender tend to conduct research both perspectives in the field of gender studies (Ingen, et al, 2020). Earlier research on Disney films did focus on the examination of gendered body and gender role of Disney animation characters (Dettmar & Tomkowiak, 2022).

Earlier research examined the fairytale, the animated film, as well as the live-action adaptation, from the perspective of feminism. For instance, Sharmin Sumayah critically reviewed the storyline of *Cinderella* through the lens of feminism, pointing out that there are gender stereotypes as well as the problem of lookism. Indeed, the story of *Cinderella* contains a message that beauty and youth are good, while ugliness and aging are bad and even evil (Sumayah, 2020). Meanwhile, other researchers, such as, Puri Bestari Mardani and Maria Febiana Christanti, pointed out that Cinderella's assertive voice and her demands and active role can be consistent with the idea of liberal feminism (Mardani & Christanti, 2024). Moreover, Huimin Xu, Zhang Zhang, Lingfei Wu, and Cheng-Jun Wang, so-called the Cinderella complex, in terms of gender stereotypes in movies and books of Cinderella (Xu, et al., 2019). Accordingly, it is critical to consider the perspectives of gender and feminism in the re-examination of Disney's animation and live-action adaptation of the Cinderella fairytale.

3. A Feminist Critique of Disney's Animation Film *Cinderella* (1950)

First of all, gender stereotypes of the Cinderella story have been critically investigated in terms of physical appearance, personality traits, and domestic roles or occupations in earlier research (Primono & Nurhayati, 2022). In Disney's animation film, the gender role of Cinderella is delineated as an archetypal, domestic, and obedient woman in the traditional male-dominant culture (Chandran and Shivan, 2019). In particular, some feminist researchers have pointed to "beauty" of Cinderella as a gender representation in terms of so-called "male gaze" theory (Mulvey, 1975). In the field of media studies, the male gaze theory was

conceptualized and theorized by Laura Mulvey as a theory applicable to film studies and gender studies. The male gaze theory describes how a female protagonist is reduced to an object to be gazed by male audience (Media Studies, 2025). Notably, it has been discussed the notion of male gaze is evidently perceived in the 1950 animation film *Cinderella* (Houwers, 2017: 22).

As a matter of fact, Cinderella as a female protagonist of the 1950 film is depicted as a young and beautiful woman, and for this reason, a prince falls in love with her at first sight. Still, the love at first sight is another source of criticism by feminists, because of the gender stereotype on the basis of the male gaze theory. Needless to say, the male gaze is embedded in the patriarchal culture which is another gender representation of the 1950 film as critically reviewed in earlier research (Hani, et al., 2024). The beauty of the protagonist in this film has been critically reviewed in earlier research. For instance, the 1950 animation film contains traditional gender stereotypes regarding the young, pure, and beautiful protagonist and old, evil, and ugly antagonist (Sumayah, 2020).

From a feminist perspective, moreover, "passivity" as one of the Cinderella's most essential characteristics has been critically discussed in earlier studies. Indeed, the passivity is a common nature of the other two classic Disney heroines, namely Snow White and Aurora. Hence, it can be argued that the passivity is an essential element of the classical Disney princesses (Ladies of Disney, 2025). The lyrics of "A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes" symbolizes the passivity of the protagonist. The song suggests that as long as someone keeps on believing, the dream will come true. Cinderella sings:

A dream is a wish your heart makes
When you're fast asleep
In dreams, you will lose your heartaches
Whatever you wish for, you keep
Have faith in your dreams and someday
Your rainbow will come smiling through
No matter how your heart is grieving
If you keep on believing,
The dream that you wish will come true

Oh, that clock!
Old killjoy
I hear you! "Come on, get up," you say!
"Time to start another day!"
Even he orders me around
Well, there's one thing
They can't order me to stop dreaming
And perhaps someday...

The dreams that I wish
Will come true

No matter how your heart is grieving
If you keep on believing
The dream that you wish
Will come true (Disney Fandom 2025a).

The passive princess as a protagonist in the 1950 film, however, stems from the original fairytales. Although there are several literary variations with different contents of *Cinderella* by Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm (Hohr, 2010), the passive nature of Cinderella is one of the consistent characteristics portrayed in the original literary contents. Indeed, it has been observed that Grimm's fairy tales, including *Cinderella*, are permeated with the ideology of patriarchal culture, which portrays the female figure as it is defined by patriarchal culture" (Wang, 2023). Therefore, it is not necessarily Walt Disney's fault to depict the passive and helpless heroine, but it is fair to argue that Walt Disney reflected and animated the image of fairytale princess in the past and gender role of woman in the postwar era as well.

More critically, the depiction of Cinderella in the film influences the young female audience in a negative way, leading to so-called "Cinderella complex". The terminology, Cinderella complex, as an academic analytical framework, was first employed in a book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence* (1981), authored by Colette Dowling. Dowling contended that women tend to possess a "wish to be saved", retreat from challenge, and choose to become a good woman in marriage entrapped in dependency on men (Dowling, 1981). Dowling noted that:

Personal, Psychological dependency – the deep wish to be taken care of by others – is the chief force holding women down today. I call this “The Cinderella Complex” – a network of largely repressed attitudes and fears that keeps women in a kind of half-light, retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity. Like Cinderella, women today are still waiting for something external to transform their lives (Ibid: 21).

Indeed, Women’s dependency on men had been taken for granted in a patriarchal society, because it has been traditionally believed that household chores are the work of women rather than men. For this reason, women have tended to be financially and psychologically dependent on men, forming a state of the Cinderella complex as a psychological syndrome (Saha & Safri, 2016). It has been argued that the Cinderella complex could be a negative influence or hindrance to the personal growth, self-realization, and social status of women in general (Joseph, et al., 2021). Therefore, a feminist critique targets the movie, *Cinderella* (1950), as a source of the Cinderella complex on the basis of traditional gender stereotypes.

Moreover, the term Cinderella complex then became a keyword which indicates a gender stereotype on women in a negative meaning. In the field of psychology, this term is defined as a “psychological concept that has been the subject of study in modern psychology, particularly as it relates to the development of identity and self-esteem in women” (Gómez, 2023). Furthermore, the existence of the antagonist necessitates the rescue by a handsome and strong prince (Sumayah, 2020). In the animation movie, the role of Cinderella is to wait for a rescue by the prince, consistent with the Cinderella complex which has been researched overtime. In relation to the Cinderella complex, the Cinderella story has a didactic message for female audience, because “glass slippers” which play a significant role in the storyline have been regarded as a sexual metaphor of chastity of women (Edwards, 2015). In fact, it has been considered to be a common sense that the glass slippers of Cinderella have been regarded as purity with a sexual connotation, as observed by Midori Wakakuwa, an honorary professor of gender studies at Chiba University (Wakakuwa, 2003: 126-129). Thus, earlier research on the 1950 animated film commonly argue that archaic gender stereotypes can be seen in the film, and hence, *Cinderella* (1950) by Walt Disney has been critically examined by feminist scholars.

4. Disney’s Animation Film *Cinderella* (1950) as a Feminist Film

Despite the earlier research on the gender stereotypes represented in Disney’s *Cinderella* (1950), there are feminist researchers who point out that the 1950 animation film contains feminist elements, and hence, it is not an anti-feminist movie (Mardani & Christanti, 2024). In fact, the Cinderella story as a folk tale passed orally from household to household, which has always been a “feminist” text, as pointed out by Alexander Sergeant, a lecturer in film and media studies at the University of Portsmouth (Sergeant, 2021). There are hundreds of variations of the Cinderella story (Cox, 1893), and therefore, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm as male authors are not necessarily originators of the Cinderella fairytale. Instead, there are untold variations by female storytellers like Marie-Catherine D’Aulnoy and the Comtesse de Murat, behind the hundreds of variants (Sergeant, 2021). In other words, the Cinderella fairytale was revised by male authors in a non-feminist manner, so to speak (Ibid).

For example, the 1950 animated film passes the so-called “Bechdel test” and the number of named female characters is four, which means that female characters account for 67 percent in this film. Therefore, the 1950 film could be categorized as a feminist film for its female representation in this sense (Randall, 2016). A female mice takes the needle from a male mice, Jacq, saying “Leave the sewing to the women” on the basis of the typical gender stereotype that women are good at sewing than men. However, the purpose of the sewing is to release Cinderella from the domesticity and household chores (Ibid). Moreover, Cinderella in the 1950 film does not merely sit down and takes the abuse by Lady Tremaine, but she survives and overcomes it by her actions with help of her friends. For this reason, it can be observed that Cinderella in the animation film deserves to be called a feminist princess (Rana, 2018). In addition, the audience can learn feminism by watching the 1950 movie, because feminism does not mean “choosing pants instead of skirts” (Thapar, 2023). It is still possible to embrace “feminine” traits as well as a progressive mindset at the same time (Ibid). In fact, Cinderella wears a whitish blue dress rather than a pink one, yet she does not choose to put on pants instead of the skirt in the 1950 film. In the 2015 film as well, the color of Cinderella’s dress is transformed from pink to whitish blue by a magical power of the Fairy Godmother, symbolizing the changing gender representation.

It is true that Cinderella as one of the three classical Disney princesses is depicted as a weak and obedient figure, but at the same time, she exhibits her activeness, positivity, and toughness with a strong will and dream in spite of her adversity. Although Lady Tremaine, her two daughters, and a mean cat seek to prevent Cinderella from attending a ball organized at the castle, Cinderella does not give up on it. Compared to the other two classical princesses, Snow White and Aurora, Cinderella, therefore, is undoubtedly active and tough with considerable perseverance. Although some critics described Cinderella as an opportunist at the mercy of her fate (Shaban, 2017), her strong will and desire for a dream summons the Fairy Godmother who saves Cinderella with her magic. Therefore, Cinderella in the 1950 film is not necessarily a passive person who only waits for a dream come true, but she actually takes action to make her dream come true with a pride and strong will, as pointed out by Tetsuo Arima, a professor

at Waseda University (Arima, 2003: 95-96). In comparison with the princess image of Snow White, that of Cinderella is "updated" with more autonomy and independence as a protagonist of the Disney princess story (Ogiue, 2014: 94-95).

Moreover, Cinderella like other Disney princesses possesses a special ability to communicate with animals, and it is possible to perceive that Cinderella's femininity stems from her ecological feminism. Thus, the 1950 film contains both feminist perspectives and gender stereotypes in a mixed manner. In sum, it has been considered that the 1950 animated film is to be blamed for the establishment and propagation of the traditional gender stereotypes in the world, but at the same time, it reflects the influence of feminism, and the characteristic of Cinderella as a protagonist is not as passive as critics have argued for a long time. If anything, it has come to light that Cinderella possesses both active and feminine characteristics with perseverance to make her dreams come true, albeit with important help from her animal friends, the Fairy Godmother, and the prince.

5. Disney's *Cinderella* (2015) as a Feminist Revision

There exists some criticisms against Disney's live-action remake of *Cinderella* (2015) dubbing it "anti-feminist" (St. James, 2015), and pointed out that "have courage and be kind" as a message in the 2015 live-action remake is an anti-feminist mantra (Le Vine, 2015). However, it is fair to argue that *Cinderella* (2015) is a product of feminist revision on the basis of the introspection of the previous animation version that contains gender stereotypes which led to the conceptualization of the Cinderella complex. Prior to the release of the live-action film, Disney produced *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002), which could be regarded as a feminist revision. In fact, the 1950 animated film has been criticized that it strengthens a gender stereotype that Cinderella's life full of sufferings terminates owing to a marriage with a prince (Berlianti, 2021). Yet, the 2002 animated film attempts to overcome the traditional norm of the Cinderella story and the gender stereotype, i.e. "happily ever after" by depicting Cinderella's hardships after the marriage. Therefore, it has been accessed that the 2002 animation film granted "Cinderella far greater authority to bring changes in the conventional ways of thinking and doing things in her new home after marriage" (Parashar, 2022: 6236).

Furthermore, the 2002 animated film challenges the issue of "lookism" by visualizing the romance of Anastasia who falls in love with a local baker who has a humble family background as opposed to a prince. Whereas Cinderella is depicted as a beautiful young lady, Anastasia is illustrated as an ordinary woman who has a complex with her appearance. However, it is noteworthy that the 2002 film emphasizes the significance of "inner beauty" rather than "external beauty". The lyrics of a song "It's What's Inside That Counts" shows how "what's inside" is more important than "what's outside" as follows:

Make me look good
Make me look swell
Make me look fine
We're pourin' it on
You just sit back
Cause' baby, you're mine

You send me into a spin
Make a splash when you walk in
Those eyes, so rare,
The lips, the hair

You're a breath of fresh air
Brushing the fur
Comb the hair out
Trim up the toes
Give me the dress
And the shoes
And the jewelry
And clothes

You can judge your books
From how the cover looks
Wear make-up by the ounce
Oh, didn't they tell you?
It's what's inside that counts (Disney Fandom 2025b).

Likewise, Cinderella is depicted as a positive and active woman who does not give up in the face of disturbance by Lady Tremaine in *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007). This way, Disney attempted to overcome the Cinderella complex by which Women tend to escape from a harsh reality to marriage, but the 2002 film depicts that the marriage is not a goal, but more efforts are necessary for the happily ever after.

James Finn Garner's Cinderella story in *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories: Modern Tales for Our Life and Times* (1994) can be seen as a feminist revision based on the idea of political correctness, in which Cinderella listens to a song by a leftwing feminist folksinger (Garner, 1994). Likewise, Serena Valentino authored a feminist novel, *Disney Princess Cinderella: Cold Hearted* (2021), in which Lady Tremaine, an evil stepmother, who is an antagonist in original fairytales and Disney's animation film as well. In the first place, Lady Tremaine is depicted as a strong, greedy, and evil antagonist who has anti-feminist elements, but a feminist revision granted reasonable explanations why she ended up with the antagonist in the 1950 animation film. According to the novel, Lady Tremaine turns into a wicked stepmother of Cinderella because of her relationship with a man, the father of Cinderella (Valentino, 2021). Here, a feminist revision can be perceivable because the female protagonist became a wicked stepmother because of the man in the patriarchal culture. Valentino's feminist revision is not an exception and other retellings of the modern Cinderella story has effectively deconstructed the traditional binary gender roles in the end, as observed by Linda T. Parsons, an associate professor at the Ohio State University (Parsons, 2021).

Therefore, it is logical to infer that Disney adopted the feminist revision perspective in the filmmaking process of the live-action film, *Cinderella* (2015). As a matter of fact, whereas Lady Tremaine as an antagonist is portrayed as a cruel and evil person in the 1950 animation film, her personal background and psychological weakness are depicted in the 2015 live-action remake. In particular, Lady Tremaine overhears that her husband as Cinderella's father still misses his first wife. This is how Lady Tremaine feels jealous of the first wife of her husband, and why she treats Cinderella in mean and cruel manners. Therefore, it is understandable that the audience cannot help but sympathizing for her situations unlike the one in the animated version. This can be regarded as the influence of the feminist revision.

Likewise, the depiction of romance between Cinderella and the prince in the 2015 live-action remake is rather different from the 1950 animation version. As discussed previously, feminist critics pointed out that Cinderella and the prince fall in love at first sight in the 1950 animation film, placing too much emphasis on the looking and beauty rather than personality and the process of romance. In the 2015 live-action version, however, there exists a process for romance between Cinderella and the prince. Lady Tremaine mistreats Cinderella so much that Cinderella decides to go out of the house and ride a horse into the woods. Then, Cinderella meets the crown prince who disguises himself as a palace apprentice. Here, both Cinderella and the prince seem to have developed infatuation for each other, and it could be nearly regarded as the love at first sight. Yet, the 2015 live-action remake added the process toward romance and love between Cinderella and the prince. This too can be regarded as the influence of a feminist revision. Furthermore, Cinderella in the 2015 live-action film eventually forgives her stepmother who mistreats her, but this is a sign of transformation of the princess image of Cinderella from a tragic heroine who wishes to escape from the sufferings to a victorious princess who can offer a word of forgiveness to the antagonist (James, 2016: 152). Here, Cinderella's forgiveness symbolizes a triumph over Lady Tremaine not by masculine violence but by a feminist non-violence.

From a feminist perspective moreover, woman empowerment can be seen in lyrics of a song "Strong" of the 2015 live-action remake. This song is heard after Cinderella and Prince Kit are married and live happily ever after, as follows:

In a perfect storybook, the world is brave and good
A hero takes your hand, a sweet love will follow
But life's a different game, the sorrow and the pain
Only you can change your world tomorrow

Let your smile light up the sky
Keep your spirit soaring high

Trust in your heart and your sun shines forever and ever
Hold fast to kindness, your light shines forever and ever
I believe in you and me
We are strong

When it 'once upon a time' in stories and in rhyme
A moment you can shine and wear your own crown
Be the one that rescues you

Through the clouds, you'll see the blue

Trust in your heart and your sun shines forever and ever
Hold fast to kindness, your light shines forever and ever
I believe in you and me
We are strong

A bird all alone on the wind can still be strong and sing
Sing
Trust in your heart and your sun shines forever and ever
Hold fast to kindness, your light shines forever and ever
I believe in you and me
We are strong (Disney Fandom 2025c).

Evidently, this song indicates that Cinderella is as "strong" as the prince. It can be also observed that the song symbolizes the end of the "Cinderella complex" by emphasizing that "only you can change your world tomorrow" rather than "something external" transforms the life of Cinderella.

Similarly, filmmakers other than the Walt Disney Company produced live-action films of Cinderella, such as *Ever After: A Cinderella Story* (1998) by Fox Family Films (IMDb, 1990-2025h), *A Cinderella Story* (2004) by Dylan Sellers Productions (IMDb, 1990-2025i), and *Another Cinderella Story* (2008) by Warner Premiere (IMDb, 1990-2025j). Same as Disney's Cinderella film series, these non-Disney live-action adaptations also reflected the influence of feminist philosophy as examined in earlier studies (Brock-Servais, 2023). Although there are criticisms that these films ultimately suggest that most female characters are dependent and male characters possess physical power, it is undeniable fact that these non-Disney live-action adaptations depict Cinderella as more active, powerful, and even independent than passive, helpless, and dependent Cinderella in the 1950 animated version (Ibid). In other words, it can be argued that a feminist revision can be seen in the characteristic of Disney's live-action film *Cinderella* (2015), and it is a part of the history of the feminist movement.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined Walt Disney's animation film *Cinderella* (1950), *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002), *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007), and the live-action remake *Cinderella* (2015) from the perspective of feminism and gender representations. First, it has been discussed that the 1950 animation film shows the binary gender roles on the basis of the patriarchal culture. From a feminist perspective, it reaffirms that the original fairytales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm contain typical gender stereotypes on the binary roles. Based on the Cinderella stories, especially the one authored by Charles Perrault, Disney created the Cinderella story as the 1950 animation film. In this sense, although it has been reviewed that the 1950 Cinderella movie has been criticized as an "anti-feminist film" by feminist critics, the gender representations, especially passivity and obedience of Cinderella in the animated film, stem from the novel versions. Significantly, it was confirmed that the 1950 film is a cause of the conceptualization of the so-called "Cinderella complex" as argued by Colette Dowling. In sum, this research reconfirmed that the 1950 film has been regarded as an anti-feminist film that led to the notion of the Cinderella complex in general.

Second, this article also pointed to the positive side of the 1950 film as a "feminist film" at the same time. As opposed to the feminist critique of the 1950 film in terms of its gender representations based on the binary gender roles as well as the Cinderella complex, other feminists have regarded the 1950 film as a feminist film from which the audience can learn about the femininity of the protagonist and the ideal of feminism in the character of the protagonist as well as the connotation of the storyline. For instance, the personality of Cinderella in the 1950 film is relatively active in comparison with the two other classical princesses, Snow White and Aurora who end up with the deep sleep that necessitates a help of a prince and the true love's kiss as well. Despite the continued mistreatment by Lady Tremaine and her daughters, Cinderella does not lose her dream and takes action to attend a ball. Cinderella's positive attitude with a strong will caused a miracle with a help from the Fairy Godmother and her animal friends, despite the fact that she is occasionally described as an opportunist. From the feminist perspective, the storyline of the 1950 film implies the changing gender role of Cinderella from a housekeeper to a partner of the prince. The color change of Cinderella's dress from pink to white or blue also symbolizes the transformation of the gender norm. In this respect, it is possible to categorize the 1950 film as a feminist film as feminist scholars have argued as an objection to the negative reviews by other feminist critics.

Finally, this article has argued that the 2015 live-action film was influenced by feminist philosophy and the film can be seen as a feminist revision. It was examined that *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002) and *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007) were already influenced by feminist philosophy, and the 2015 live-action remake is in the same line with the feminist revision in this sense.

Compared to the 1950 animation version, the 2015 live-action remake made two important revisions as discussed in this article. In the 1950 animated film, Cinderella and the prince fall in love at first sight, and it has been critically reviewed by feminist observers. However, there is a romantic process which develops into a true love in the live-action film. Of course, both Cinderella and the prince are attracted to each other in their first encounter, but their first encounter is not at a ball in the castle, but in the woods, and they developed their romantic feelings toward each other afterwards. Another important feminist revision is on the character and background narrative of Lady Tremaine. As opposed to the 1950 animated version, the 2015 live-action adaptation provides reasons why Lady Tremaine becomes a cold-hearted woman with icy attitudes toward Cinderella. This feminist revision can be seen in Serena Valentino's *Disney Princess Cinderella: Cold Hearted* (2021) as well. In conclusion, both the animation film and the live-action adaptation of the Cinderella story exhibit the dual nature of feminist and anti-feminist elements. This research, moreover, made it clear that the influence of feminist philosophy has been represented and empowered in the 2015 live-action version. The Cinderella story has been so popular that Disney's *Cinderella* film series will continue to influence gender representations of the future literary and film works in the changing media culture in the world.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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