Gender Roles in Giambattista Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia,* and Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*

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Abstract

This study examined the similarities and differences between two literary works, Giambattista Basile's Sun, Moon, and Talia and Walt Disney's Sleeping Beauty, emphasizing gender roles. The authors examined how both male and female characters were portrayed in the short stories. To analyze this problem, the qualitative methodology was employed. The data sources were acquired through library research. The primary data came from the two short stories, while the supporting data came from other sources such as journals, e-books, and other internet-based material that was relevant. In both stories, male characters are stronger, more powerful, and more dominant than their female counterparts, as indicated by the study's findings. This analysis also found that both stories were presented differently by their respective authors, with *Sun Moon and Talia* depicting the patriarchal structure more explicitly than Disney's *Sleeping Beauty.*

Keywords: Sun Moon and Talia, Giambattista Basile, gender roles, Sleeping Beauty, Walt Disney

1. Introduction

Giambattista Basile (1566–1632), Charles Perrault (1628–1703), and The Brothers Grimm (1700s–1800s), among others, are some of the most renowned authors of the earliest collections of fairy tales. In addition to the oral and written versions, a fairy tale's animation or film version is regarded as the most effective and engaging for attracting readers or viewers. Using special effects and animated images, advanced cinematography makes it possible to convey fairy tales in a more believable manner. The Walt Disney Company has had a significant impact on the evolution of fairy tale animation, as several of its animated films are based on fairy tales, with certain versions being accepted by an all-ages audience.

Giambattista's works include many of Europe's first known written fairy tales (Jones, 1995). *Il Pentamerone*, a collection of Neapolitan fairy tales, is his most well-known work. *The Pentamerone* by Giambattista Basile contains several fairy stories, including *Sun, Moon, and Talia*. In 1697, Charles Perrault reworked *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and renamed it *The Sleeping Beauty*, as did the Grimm Brothers. In 1812, Perrault rewrote the story under the title *Little Briar Rose*. Walt Disney later transformed the story into an animated film titled *Sleeping Beauty*.

In addition to being an American artist, he was also a filmmaker and the creator of Disney Land. Disney began his career as a cartoonist and intended to incorporate both live-action and animation into his films. He co-founded Disney Productions with his brother before making his Hollywood debut with the animated short Steamboat Willie in November 1928. It was his first synchronized sound animation in the world, and he was really impressed. As a result of the success of this animation, he went on to create numerous other well-known cartoons, including *Snow White, Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King, Toy Story, The African Lion, Cinderella, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, The Sleeping Beauty,* and many others.

Cychosz remarked in Asadullah and Nisar that Disney's animated films were created for both youngsters and adults. The majority of his animated films focus on childhood, romance, love and beauty, the connection between happiness and misery, family issues, feminism, gender discrimination, racial portrayal, career planning, religion, and governmental authority, among other topics (Asadullah and Nisar, 2020). Bottigheimer states in Mollet that *Sleeping Beauty* reflects the post-World War II cultural milieu in which women returned to the domestic sphere following a period of liberation during the war (Mollet, 2019). *Sleeping Beauty* is the last animated film based on a fairy tale released by Walt Disney. On January 29, 1959, it was developed and released for the first time in theaters. Disney developed some adaptations of Charles Perrault's fairy tale entitled *La Belle au Bois Dormant*.

In other fields of understanding and conviction*, Sun, Moon, and Talia*, which Giambattista Basile wrote and published in 1632, is one of the oldest versions of *Sleeping Beauty*. Walt Disney adapted it for his animated film *Sleeping Beauty*. Obviously, the purpose of this adaptation was to make it acceptable to the target audience, which in this case is a younger audience or children. Sometimes, fairy tales were written not just for children, but also for adults. The themes explored in *Sun, Moon, and Talia* are rape, adultery, infidelity, cannibalism, murder, and helplessness. The authors argue that Disney modified the film because it was inappropriate for younger audiences. *Sun, Moon, and Talia* is known as the version with the most sexually unsettling content.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast, particularly in terms of gender roles, Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. According to Remak, a comparative literature study is one that considers literature to be something that extends beyond the borders of a single nation and examines the connections between kinds of literature and other fields of knowledge and belief (Masofa, & Sumarsono, 2022).

Blackstone describes gender roles as the duties that men and women are expected to play in society based on their differing sexes (Blackstone, 2003). Additionally, gender roles are defined by the private and public behaviors that men and women exhibit in society. They are societal and cultural expectations that apply to both men and women based on their assignment to a sex category (Tong, 2021). According to the conventional gender norms of a patriarchal culture, females are more subsistence than males; consequently, women should work full-time at home caring for their spouse and children.

Women use their emotions, which are weak in their bodies and mine. On the other hand, men are supposed to be responsible for providing for their families, therefore they are expected to work outside of the home. Additionally, men believe they have economic influence over their families. Males are more powerful than females in society; hence, males tend to have more authority in their marriages than females. Males are expected to be physically young, strong, gorgeous, courageous, heroic, and rebellious, while girls are expected to be physically attractive, pure, innocent, meek, assertive, dependent, etc (Koenig, 2018).

The majority of fairy tales share the same perspective on gender roles as a conventional society. The majority of fairy tales, particularly the earlier forms, depict the different genders in a patriarchal manner. Their male characters are always portrayed as handsome, young, powerful, courageous, heroic, and defiant, while their female heroines are portrayed as flawlessly beautiful, naïve, submissive, and reliant on males.

Lieberman critiques fairy tales in El Shaban for depicting women as docile, submissive, and powerless (El Shaban, 2017). The bulk of female characters is valued for their appearance (Kuon & Weimar, 2009). The idea that women should be passive and self-sacrificing, as well as good wives and mothers, is reinforced in a lot of fairy tale literature. There are only two kinds of women in fairy tales, namely the helpless and the malevolent (Patel, 2009). In stories, good women are supposed to be meek, obedient, attractive, and anxious to get married (Nanda, 2014). In contrast, female antagonists are typically depicted as uglier, more active, more rebellious, and stronger than female protagonists. In Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, the patriarchal society is mirrored by the characters of the king, who has absolute power and is immune to punishment when he does an illegal act. The king who raped and fathered Talia never feels remorse and is punished by both society and the court system. Although he has a queen, the king who has committed adultery and infidelity with Talia is exempt from social and religious repercussions and continues to rule the kingdom. A character other than the queen who attempts to save her marriage and place in the kingdom is executed by being thrown into a fire after it is discovered that she attempted to murder Talia and her children.

2. Method

The authors analyzed the study using a qualitative methodology based on library research. The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and Disney's *The Sleeping Beauty*, focusing on the gender roles depicted in both fairy tales. The study was undertaken by watching the Disney film *The Sleeping Beauty* and by reading the text in order to determine the gender roles-related subject. The analysis centered on both the female and male protagonists.

Data come from two different types of sources. The primary sources for the data are Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* whether in an animated film or text format, while the secondary sources are books, essays, and periodicals of literature. To collect the data, firstly, the authors watched the animation, read some books and article reviews and searched the Internet to get more information about the gender roles. Secondly, taking notes and highlighting was done. The authors sorted and filtered the data to obtain the main data. The last step was classifying the data according to the focus of the study.

3. Literature Review

As part of their analysis of the gender roles depicted in these two literary works, the authors also examined a number of similar prior research to gain a variety of perspectives on the topic of the study. Berlianti (2021) concludes in her article titled The stereotypical representation of women in the classic fairy tales *Snow White, Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* that the heroines of the fairy tales *Snow White* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) rely on their beauty as their main quality in achieving their happiness without exerting any effort, but with the assistance of the helper, in this case, the prince who saves and marries to her.

According to the aforementioned fairy tales, beautiful women with nice hearts would find happiness by marrying a young, gorgeous prince. On the other hand, women who are aggressive and ambitious are not regarded as good women. Simply getting married will cure all of the women's concerns. Similar to Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, even though she does nothing but slumber for a hundred years, she can be liberated from her curse and achieve happiness by marrying Prince Phillip, whose kiss on her lips awakens her.

Assadullah (2020) concludes in his study titled *Gender Stereotypes in Walter Elias Disney's Animated Film "Sleeping Beauty"* that 70-year-old gender stereotypes exist in the film, and the female characters are still subservient to the male character. On the basis of this judgment, Aurora's character is weak, gorgeous but unrealistic, bashful, and unable to live freely. The film also demonstrates that the patriarchal system still exists, since Aurora, the film's heroine, has no say in whom she marries because her father, the king, makes that decision. The masculine dominance continues to dominate the feminine existence.

The other study cited by the authors is one done by Shaheen, Muntaz, and Khalid (2019), in which they assert that gender stereotypes are reflected in fairy tales. Males are shown as having authority and an aggressive disposition. The girls are portrayed as meek and physically weak. This stereotyped representation of gender might cause readers, particularly children, to have a rigid mental image of male and female. In *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, the King who committed adultery by raping a sleeping Talia and impregnating her with twins is never punished by society or the law. But he becomes enraged and murders his wife, the queen who questioned him about Talia and her children's existence and attempted to murder Talia and her children. He murders his wife in order to avoid their wrath so that he can live blissfully with Talia.

4. Finding and Discussion

Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* is based on *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, a story repeated or revised by Charles Perrault. It is about a princess who is cursed to sleep for 100 years by an evil spell and is subsequently awakened by a handsome prince's kiss. *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* is the primary source for *Sleeping Beauty* by Disney. *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* is an adaptation of the older tale known as *Sole, Luna e Talia*, which was originally written in Italian and translated as *Sun, Moon, and Talia*.

The *Sun, Moon, and Talia* version is the most disputed. This is why the authors are interested in comparing it to Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. The authors explore the parallels and differences between the story and the animated film, focusing on the gender roles in each.

The depiction of men and women in *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and *Sleeping Beauty* is viewed as a picture of gender roles in society at the time the stories were written. Women were portrayed as unheard and unrecognized during the time these stories were written. The culture felt that the ideal women were those who were beautiful, docile, and subservient. The majority of fairy tale heroines are always shown as gorgeous, passive, seemingly lifeless, or sleepwalking (Harries, 2000).

Comparing *Sun Moon and Talia* to Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, the first thing that the authors can say is that the first title is not presented to children, since it is not appropriate for children. The story contains adult content. Basile with his *Sun Moon and Talia* wanted to inform his readers about the gender roles and conflict of men and women experienced by the society at his time. The society followed the patriarchal system in which the masculine domination could enforce their authority upon women. Basile through the female protagonist, Talia, tried to capture society assigned a certain characteristic to a specific gender. Talia in the fairy tale is described as beautiful, weak, passive and dependent to male. Her function in the story as the sexual object who can give pleasure to fulfill what men need. She is presented as a character who does not have any strength and any right to give her opinion. She is oppressed both by his father and the king who raped and impregnated her.

> At last, he came to the room where Talia was lying, as if enchanted; and when the King saw her, he called to her, thinking that she was asleep, but in vain, for she still slept on, however loud he called. So, after admiring her beauty awhile, the King returned home to his kingdom, where for a long time he forgot all that had happened (Basile, 2015).

Aurora in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* is presented similarly as Talia in Basile. Aurora is portrayed as beautiful girl, but she is weak, passive, and dependent to male, just like Talia. She does not have any strength under the domination of the male. Her marriage is arranged by her father when she was still an infant. She is dependent to male since she does not do anything to recover herself from the curse that she gets. She just lays down on the bed waiting for her savior to save her from a long sleep. Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* has experienced some adaptation. It does not have any adult and vulgar content that is not suitable for children, but it still put the female characters in negative stereotype of gender.

> Their royal highnesses, King Hubert and prince Phillip. Fondly had these monarchs dreamed one day their kingdoms to unite. Thus today would they announce that Phillip, Huberts son and heir to Stefan's child would be betrothed. And so to her his gift he brought, and looked, unknowing, on his future bride (Reitherman, et.al, 1959, 04.28 - 04.51).

There are two kinds of women in fairy tales, the good one and the ugly one. The female protagonists in these two tales are presented almost similarly. They are presented as good women who have beautiful face and body, obey and never have an objection to whatever the male characters decide. Society, at that time, believed that a good woman must have beautiful face, has no ambition, obey the male and wait until a hero who is described as handsome, strong, brave and wealthy comes to marry her. The different is that Talia is presented as the sexual object to please the king's sexual drive, although both of them are the victims of the oppression by men. Talia is oppressed by the king who becomes both as her rapist and savior, while Aurora is oppressed by his father who has arranged her marriage with Prince Phillip since she was an infant. When Talia knows that the King who raped her and made her pregnant, she does not try to attack him but she falls in love with him.

Male characters in both *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, and *Sleeping Beauty* are depicted as being young, powerful, attractive, and commanding. In *Sun Moon and Talia*, the king is extremely powerful and dominates his queen. The King has two different functions. First, he is presented as a man who have immorality since he rapes Talia until she gets pregnant and has two babies. He is not only a rapist, but also an adulterer. He betrays his queen by hiding the fact that he has a lover and two children. The second function is that he is presented as the hero, a savior, the representation of morality and justice when he saves Talia and her children from the queen who wants to kill them. It is the contradiction that takes place in society; how the same man can have two different functions, in one time as the presentation of the immorality and on the other time he is the representation of the immorality. The social norms tend to take a side at the men's side. It can be said that it is acceptable for men to conduct the immorality to the women, and the women have to accept their destiny. The king has

raped and made Talia pregnant and have two babies.

He is both a rapist and an adulterer. He must have got punishment from society since he breaks the social and religious norms, but he didn't. In the patriarchal society like presented in the tales, men are more superior than women. Phillip in *Sleeping Beauty* is shown as strong, handsome, courageous, and heroic in *Sleeping Beauty*. He is the savior of Aurora from Maleficent's curse. The King, Aurora's father, holds his authority to arrange her marriage with Philip. The two fairy-tales portray the superiority that men have to control the women.

The second type of woman in the fairy tales is the bad woman. The bad woman is presented as an ambitious woman who is active, strong and has any courage to fight the male domination. The antagonistic characters in both *Sun, Moon, and Talia* and *Sleeping Beauty* are ambitious, emotion-driven, cruel, and extremely aggressive in the pursuit of their goals. The antagonist in Basile's *Sun, Moon and Talia* is the Queen. The Queen is presented as a bad woman since she is not afraid to disobey and betray her husband, the King. The Queen, is portrayed as wild and illogical, vicious and malicious, driven more by her emotions and physical hunger, uncivilized, and possessed by a witch. Since her husband is unfaithful and conceals his second family from her, she should be the recipient of our sympathies. Both Talia and the Queen have the right to be upset with the king, but only the Queen expresses her rage and seeks retribution in order to keep her position. Unlike Talia, she is not upset with the monarch who raped and pregnated her; instead, she is pleased with the rapist because she would be able to marry the king. The audience and readers then view the Queen as the antagonist. The bad woman must be punished, while the good one must be appreciated. The queen is punished when it is discovered that she attempted cannibalism by attempting to slaughter Talia's children for the king's feast. She is punished by being thrown into a fire by the king. It is not fair, when a man commits an adultery is free from any punishment, but when a woman makes mistakes although what she does is just to protect what she possesses, she must be punished.

> King came up, and seeing the spectacle he demanded to know the whole truth; and when he asked also for the children, and heard that his stepmother had ordered them to be killed, the unhappy King gave himself up to despair. He then ordered her to be thrown into the same fire which had been lighted for Talia, and the secretary with her, who was the handle of this cruel game and the weaver of this wicked web (Basile, 2015).

In Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, the antagonist is the old fairy who curses Aurora to sleep for 100 years. She is portrayed as a woman who cannot fulfill the society standard, so she is punished. She is to end up being ugly, dark and unneeded. According to Louie, the virtues of self-awareness, assertiveness, and strength are corrupted in death and punishment, while the correct social standing for women is firmly related with beauty, passivity, and defenselessness (Louie, 2012).

> Flora: Now sword of truth fly swift and sure, That evil die and good endure!

> [Phillip throws the sword at the dragon, which is hit deadly and collapses] [Phillip and the fairies get inside the castle and up to the tower, where Aurora lies on her bed. Phillip slowly walks towards her and gives her a faint kiss on the lips. Aurora awakens, sees Phillip and begins to smile] (Reitherman, et.al, 1959, 01.10.15 - 01.10.25)

Although Disney has conducted some adaptation, but still Disney portrays the female characters with common stereotypes that beauty is more important than being intelligent and active. Women do not need to do anything, just wait until their men come and save them. Disney still makes his female characters dependent to the male ones. The male characters are still more dominant and superior than the female ones. It is not good for the young audience who will think that being male can dominate the female. Modern fairy-tales should present equality between different genders.

5. Conclusion

In these two tales, the masculine characters are portrayed as more powerful and valiant than their female counterparts. Throughout the story, the male character is also depicted as heroic and courageous. In these fairy tales, women are portrayed as inert and unmotivated to achieve their ambitions. Both of the female protagonists in these two works are portrayed as delicate women with typical feminine characteristics, such as innocence, passivity, obedience, and dependency on males. Both female characters are portrayed as being unable of resolving their difficulties on their own. Women are not independent, as they rely on males to solve their problems and can do little to ensure their own safety. These two fairytales demonstrate the importance of women's appearance or beauty in the pursuit of happiness. Ladies who are ambitious and aggressive in the pursuit of their goals and who display their intelligence are not considered to be good women. Although Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* attempted an adaptation, the adaptation seems to have been made solely for the purpose of making the story more suitable for a younger audience, especially by removing the king's raping and adultery, but it retains the traditional gender roles into which the animation sees women or female characters from the patriarchal system. The patriarchal system depicted in these fairy tales will have detrimental consequences for the readers or audience, particularly children. Modern fairy tales should encourage gender equality among their viewers or readers. People should be treated fairly by society.

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