

Is it really a revision? Gendered Compliments and Social Expectations in Cinderella Adaptations

Many fairy tales are filled with female figures that conform to stereotypical gender roles. According to Zipes, children adopt the gender roles illustrated in fairy tale texts (3). Tales, specifically Cinderella tales, endorsed feminine virtue and patience above all other characteristics as well as the importance of waiting for prince charming to save the heroine. These tales are windows into cultural expectations of women.

In this current climate, where women are struggling for agency and a voice, examination of expectations disseminated in children's media is important. Revisionist fairy tale trends seem to remove hegemonic expectations from such stories through gender bending, modern plots, and illustrations. Despite these changes, young girls are still told they need to be beautiful and a good wife in order to succeed. Many gendered expectations persist in adaptations of fairy tales through the language. Fought and Eisenhauer's linguistic analysis of Disney media demonstrated that some of the most popular adaptations uphold characterization of women as patient, beautiful, and passive through language. Appearance-based compliments continue to disseminate the same ideology many revisionists are attempting to subvert.

Building upon Fought and Eisenhauer's research and Rees-Miller's definition of compliments, this study explores how recent picturebook adaptations of Cinderella continue to interpellate young readers into societal views of femininity and masculinity through the types of compliments female characters receive. Preliminary results find though these picturebooks revise gender roles in the illustration, plot, and gender bending the characters, the adaptations ultimately reinforce expectations of femininity and masculinity through compliments.