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Happily ever after? Comparative analysis of a
modern version of *Cinderella*, by James Finn Garner

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ABSTRACT

The fairy tale of Cinderella has always been considered one of the classic stories narrated to children over and over again. The heroine overcomes the problems of sibling rivalry, eventually marrying the prince and the villains remain punished. Then what has changed from a former version to a more modern one? This paper focuses on the study and analysis of the source text and one of its adaptations towards a modernization of the traditional story. In order to do so, an analysis of the structure and the symbolic elements of both texts will be provided. From this analysis I will conclude how the tale has been modified.

Keywords: fairy tale, primary text, adaptation, symbolism, function, alteration.

RESUMEN

El cuento de cenicienta siempre se ha considerado como uno de los clásicos narrados a los niños una y otra vez. En él la protagonista supera los problemas asociados a la rivalidad fraternal y se casa finalmente con el príncipe, recibiendo los villanos su merecido. Pero, ¿qué ha cambiado de la versión antigua a otra más actual? El presente trabajo se centra en el estudio y análisis de la obra origen y una de sus posteriores adaptaciones hacia una modernización de la historia tradicional. Para ello, se lleva a cabo un análisis de ambos textos, tanto a nivel estructural como a nivel simbólico de los elementos. Las conclusiones derivadas de tales análisis mostrarán los cambios sufridos en el cuento.

Palabras Clave: cuento maravilloso, cuento origen, adaptación, simbolismo, función, modificación.

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1. INTRODUCTION

‘If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.’

-Albert Einstein

Since human beings have memory we have been told and fantasized with bedtime stories, which have provided us hours and hours of entertainment and imagination. They are not only a resource to spend an afternoon, but also something didactical since they help children –and also adults, to whom tales were originally addressed – build their own identities. These stories also contribute to the development of their creativity since the readers are able to continue the plot, to imagine several endings for one story, and to build new anecdotes or narratives and make up their own dreamed reality from the tales that children had already read.

It is true that the old tale has preserved its originality through centuries (despite the fact that most of the production comes from oral tradition so we cannot establish a particular date for its creation) with some little changes or added details. The step towards more modern times and the contemporary period has seen new versions produced; these might provoke a shocking reaction in the reader. Indeed, “the sum of its versions” (Jones 2002: 4) is what really sets up the projected image of a tale. The original writings were not written but oral; still, we will consider Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault’s, the brothers Grimm’s or Hans Christian Andersen’s the former tales. I have decided to call the new texts “adaptations” because they were written with the purpose of adapting or matching up the traditional story with the current social, economic and political situation. Adaptations are indeed the representations of a concrete kind of reader, and those representations are historical, social and faithful to the ideologies of a culture in a concrete period of history. For instance, the people who have changed their minds in relation to sexist themes do not want to read male chauvinist literature anymore. Instead, we may find authors whose writings claim for gender equality. These revolutionary ideologies in the world of fairy tales are sometimes expressed by means of satire, a powerful device which will amuse and educate people at the same time (if

the audience is the appropriate one since the reader has to take the whole issue with a great deal of humor).

In the present paper I intend to observe how the adaptation has evolved from the traditional tale and how it has adapted and made its way into the current times, through a change in the elements and symbols used and the structure that makes the story the way it has been always known. All these modifications might lead the plot into a differentiation which would differ even at the ending of the story.

First of all, I will discuss on the tradition and the main features of fairy tales to set the reader on the matter. Then I will provide a framework of a number of writers who previously deliberated on the issue or similar topics to the one in question. Some of those studies will be taken as the theoretical bases upon which this paper will be built. After the framework an individual analysis of each version will be made for the subsequent comparative analysis, which will conclude the study.

It can be concluded that the prime objective of this paper is to carry out a comparative analysis between the original writing and a modern adaptation to find the similarities and the differences. The study of the structure and the symbols will point out that the newer story not only has suffered major alterations in the language and the way it is narrated, but also that the author has transformed and redone the traditional ending in favor of a new and revolutionary one which may lead to a major change.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Fairy Tale

Traditionally, tales (also called fairy tales, wonder tales, or bedtime stories) were orally transmitted, so their real origins are still a mystery. Fairy tales belong to the folk narrative, as well as legends and myths. Fairy tales emerge from a society where people were usually peasants who worked for a fief. It was in that type of agrarian society ruled by classes where the current looks of tales have been built. Therefore we can find princes, princesses, knights, servants, and other archaic characters in their pages. Tales describe a story within an indefinite and non-specific place, and the time when the story occurs is not either a concrete historical moment. The tale is timeless, being able to have phrases such as Once upon a time or There one lived X – being X a king, a little girl, or

an animal – so that the reader may have his own thoughts and recreate a time or just focus on the story rather than worrying about the lack of time concretion.

Tales comprise a series of actions or functions and it is through their fulfillment that they help the reader mature and ponder on his development towards his interior person, so it is a matter of the individual's evolution. The reader might see himself reflected in the hero or any character of the story, and may empathize with him or her. For example, the protagonist is a child who has lost his mother and has to make a journey as a consequence of that loss, not only a physical one but also a psychological progression of his person through the events. Consequently, all the quests that he or she does (and the emotions derived from them, such as joy, anger, or despair) could be echoed on the person that is experiencing the reading. The fairytale is then a mirror whose shine or shadows may have repercussions on the human being on the other side of the page.

2.2 Framework

Bedtime stories are a matter of general mass interest since they are involved in the growth of children; tales are an important factor in the child's emotional development. Together with the education received at home and the interaction with other children, fairy tales are a good inducement for moral values. Consequently, research has already been carried out on related topics, being able to find dissertations such as an analysis of the psychological aspects hidden in the depths of the characters.

To make the present paper, I have carried out a search for previous studies on the morphology and the structure of the folk tale and also on psychological books which deal with the symbolism in fairy tales. In her book called *Los Cuentos de Hadas para Adultos*, Gabriela Wasserziehr (1997: 13. Translation mine) describes the “whole set of the psychological development according to Jung's ideals on the collective unconscious inside fairytales in all its phases, by means of a straightforward and intelligible language and a close set of tales”. Wasserziehr decided to choose Grimms' Fairy Tales in order to reflect on the psychological sense; the magical side of tales works through symbols as a direct link with children's unconscious, who are usually the readers of this type of narrative (although they were not the original addressee). She states that fairy tales are like dreams because both of them leave many things for our imagination, having the

story several perspectives. They do not provide a solid image or a concrete point in a timeline, leaving the path open to new interpretations. She also believes that in the evolution of the character towards the process of individualization, the person has to face and fight against the evil, which is represented by one of the parents in the majority of cases. We usually deal with the figure of the step-mother, who might happen to be a cruel witch (this would reinforce the feeling of negativity and therefore it would lead the child towards a rejection against the character, which is actually the aim). Due to this bad person, the main character is forced somehow – inside – to escape and look for something better which makes him or her happier.

For the theoretical part related to symbolism I focused on the work of Bruno Bettelheim, an Austrian psychologist, who devoted his life to the study of childish problems. He applied Freud's theory to the analysis of fairy tales, writing the book *The Uses of Enchantment*. Regarding the section of *Cinderella*, Bettelheim talks about some of the different versions throughout history: the old texts dealt with the Oedipus complex while the later ones (not the Chinese or Basile's) show the sibling rivalry. This would take the place of the desire for the father, who is substituted by the prince in these modern versions. At the end Bettelheim makes a comparison between Perrault's and Grimms' texts, highlighting self-degradation in opposition to degradation.

Due to the great success of the books of bedtime stories written by Garner, it would be completely logic and normal that someone had carried out a research and made a paper about it. After a little search, I found an article written by Lisa Gring-Pemble and Martha Solomon Watson which at first sight seemed to deal with the usages of satire in some renovated tales. It was called *The Rhetorical Limits of Satire: An Analysis of James Finn Garner's Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*. The article's intention is to find out which profits we can obtain from satire and how far it can go. The authors provide a review on how politically correct language arose in history and claim that Garner uses satiric humor to take political correctness to the extreme. The usage of humor would help people embrace the ideas he wanted to disseminate: to accept political correctness but to a certain extent which is moderate. In fact, Garner opposed to this type of language since people are kept away from the message of eradicating the wrong and immoral thoughts instead of receiving it directly to be aware and fight it.

In order to make a comparison and see the existing parallelisms between the versions of Cinderella we are dealing with in this paper, one has to be able to distinguish the different stages or events that build the fairy tale in itself. Therefore it is so important to analyze the plot and the structure to have the contrastive results; it is Vladimir Propp who can give us a hand with his *Morphology of the folktale*. The Russian formalist – who studied and analyzed the tradition and patterns behind a hundred tales belonging to folk culture – states that every tale displays the same structure that comprises a series of events which he names the functions of dramatis personae. After an analysis of the tales, “[i]t turned out that the other plots were also based on the recurrence of functions and that all wondertale plots consisted of identical functions and had identical structure.” (Propp 1984:70) This means that each tale has different characters and its plot suffers a variation, but many of those functions are fixed – for example, the death or spacing out of a beloved family member. Stories have different clothes (the plot, the characters) but all keep the same body (the internal structure, the functions).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out the comparative analysis of two versions of Cinderella, I selected one primary text among the old versions of Cinderella tale upon which I would work with. The explanation for the selection is provided in the section 4 of this paper. In the search for a modern adaptation, I found J. F. Garner’s story; after a first reading I decided to use it for the study because of its originality, not only to modernize the tale but also to focus the plot on a different perspective and ending.

Having chosen the texts, I will proceed to make the analysis. It will consist of a breakdown of the original version, to look for the patterns and the symbols or elements that play their role in the traditional fairytales, and an analysis of Garner’s adaptation, to seek the structure and observe how the story is built. I will apply Vladimir Propp’s structuralist methodology on the morphology of the folk tale and its traditional functions and Bruno Bettelheim’s approach to psychology by means of symbolism associated to sibling rivalry in fairy tales. I will make, consequently, an eclectic or multiperspective analysis focusing on several aspects due to the belief that both are very important in the comparison of the two versions or texts.

As an outcome of this comparative analysis, my conclusion of the similarities and the contrasts between the two versions will point to a change in the story of Cinderella, its structure and to the genre it belongs.

4. CORPORA ANALYSIS

Generally, the habit in society is to pass the time of childhood hearing astounding stories about a princess who was cursed or kidnapped by an evil witch (who is usually the step-mother) and then saved by a charming prince or a knight on a white horse. Those tales we were told were magical and always involved some kind of evil forces (such as the witch, the step-mother, and other allies) fighting against the good ones. Children have always liked these stories because they are like a dream where the impossible things of life can take place. Times move on and so do literary works, so what about those tales? How have they changed? Have they really adapted to the new generations, cultures, movements, ideologies, or thoughts of our hectic times?

As I have said before, tales not only stimulate the creative face of a child but also provide a great help to overcome his or her insecurities and emotional struggles by means of a symbolic language. This device, which is hidden behind the straightforwardness of fairy tales, is used in the explanation of the child's problems and circumstances that may arise through some symbols projected into the unconscious part of the human brain. That way, children are offered a variety of options without having the knowledge of it. Thanks to the usage of this language, children can perceive their interests and concerns in a way that may distract them. As said by Wasserziehr (1997: 11-12. Translation mine) "it is necessary to work on the stimulation of the symbolic understanding of tales since perceiving and appreciating the symbols will open the door to new things".

If we have a look at the historical diagram of literature, we will be able to see that many writers have versioned and modified the traditional tales. Some people may have probably renovated them to make a contemporary adaptation (there are a lot of films for the modern version of any traditional tale for instance), but others have focused on making criticism to the values reflected in the original version (whether it is the one by Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, or the brothers Grimm). James Finn Garner's

words are evidence of the desire to remake the classic stories and to deride the offensive elements and ideologies conceived from the past:

When they were first written, the stories [...] certainly served their purpose – to entrench the patriarchy, to estrange people from their own natural impulses, to demonize “evil” and to “reward” an “objective” “good”.

Today, we have the opportunity – and the obligation – to rethink these “classic” stories so they reflect more enlightened times. (Garner 1998:13)

Among all the writers who have produced the different adaptations of the most known and transmitted fairy tales, I would like to point out Garner for his incredibly well written comical stories, which offer quite astonishing endings instead of the traditional happy ones. Garner is an American writer devoted to the field of satire. He has updated and re-written the most famous fairytales (i.e. *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *The Three Little Pigs*, or *The Emperor’s New Clothes*) in a satirical way. He has put together all of them in an edition called *Politically Correct, the Ultimate Storybook*. To enjoy his work, the reader should better have a good sense of humor since this author laughs at every moment of the tale, supplying it with current data and mocking at inequality situations.

As I was very interested in this issue, I proceeded to seek information about him, finding an intriguing interview made by the NBC Today Show. In it he was asked the reason for his choice of adapting the traditional tales to our days. He answered “I came up with the idea after reading about a educators group--an educator’s group that advised teachers not to read "Snow White" and "Rumpelstiltskin" because they're inherently sexist and—and would warp our children beyond recognition, so.” (Ford 1994) This means he decided to change the conventional view of this type of stories into something that could eradicate the existing inequalities, which are major topics in the current situation. Derived from the desire and need to be able to speak in a way that did not suppose a threat to certain social groups (referring to gender, race, etc.) a new language was born: the politically correct language. It defends the words, terms and expressions that do not involve a direct or indirect attack to some sectors in the population. Its usage increased very fast; however, the line between the good use of it and the ridicule was

not very clear so that leads Gring-Pemble and Solomon to state that Garner may have wanted people to embrace the good use of the politically correct language, and that it is why he promoted the use of satire in the traditional tales.

The collection of tales is exceptionally extensive; therefore the best idea was to choose one of them to work with. I decided to select the tale of *Cinderella* in order to make a comparison between the old story and the adaptation written by Garner since it is a story that most of us were told when we were very little – although it was the Disney’s, a more sweetened version – but we never thought if it could have implications or repercussions in our personal growth. Children generally have a straight and innocent understanding of the tale without looking for further content, while adults can see the other meanings, the ones that lie under the surface. In order to carry out the analysis, one of the “earlier” versions (impossible to tell which was the first although the general belief points to Giambattista Basile’s) had to be chosen. I did not like Disney’s since it is already very famous and it leads too much to the success in life and the rise in the social position by marrying an idealized charming prince. For me, this male figure cannot be a fair representative of the times we are nowadays at because of his exaggerated perfection. The prince in the adaptation in question might result very shallow, but at least he is getting on for a more realistic view of the situation. I think that children do not need so much censorship in fairy tales since, as well as adults, they also have to face life and go through hard experiences. Furthermore, in opposition to Disney’s, the former versions written by Perrault and the brothers Grimm hide much more the sibling rivalry and the strong attempt to marry the prince and substitute Cinderella, of whom it is made a fool.

I decided to analyze the brothers Grimm’s version of *Cinderella* (*Aschenputtel*, meaning ashes) due to three reasons: in the first place, Perrault invented some elements which were not in other versions (such as the pumpkin). He also changed the shoe, making it of glass; the prince would have seen the blood and big feet of the step-sisters. In the second place, Perrault’s Cinderella shows self-degradation (she wants to stay near the ashes) while Grimms’ sisters degrade her. This external humiliation is important for sibling rivalry. Lastly, the brothers Grimm punish the sisters at the end of the tale, providing a valuable lesson. All these facts were fundamental in my decision.

4.1 Analysis of the Primary Text: Grimms' *Cinderella*

The opening of the version by the brothers Grimm is *Once upon a time* (use of the traditional beginning with no specification of time), starting with Cinderella, the main character who is a beautiful girl whose mother is about to die. The tale can be classified within the group of fairy tales which begins with the Starting Point that Wasserziehr (1997: 27. Translation mine) calls “the existence of an incomplete family situation”. Her name, which means to lie and clean the ashes, is the first symbol of degradation. She is made feel inferior by her step-sisters. Cinderella’s mother was very ill; sickness is a traditional negative element connected to death, and it faces the child to the basic human conflict. This passing is the function number one: the absentation of the mother, a very recurrent theme in the traditional tale. In this case, it is “an intensified form of absentation [...] represented by the death of parents” (Propp 1968: 26) The break-up of the family unit and the lack of a positive feminine figure will lead the protagonist to work harder and try to keep the unit close again. However, the story changes when a new woman is introduced: the step-mother, who we could almost consider equal to the devil himself. This character substitutes the figure of the biological mother from an opposite perspective. Biological mothers provide love and take care of their offspring, while the step-mother is a cruel person that mistreats the poor Cinderella and forces her to do the household chores in order to favor her daughters. The step-sisters have the gift of beauty. However, they are unattractive and black on the inside, and they push down and degrade Cinderella, building up a good depiction of “the miseries of sibling rivalry.” (Bettelheim 2010: 237) They are symbolic of the envy and stand as the stain on her character.

With the arrival of the new family members, the father is very busy and seems not to pay attention to his own daughter. Cinderella is not given enough attention and that is what enhances the sibling rivalry. This, together with the fact that he has to go to do some merchant business, clearly reflects the distance between he and his daughter and her subsequent loneliness since the other three characters do not represent an emotional or affective support at all. They force her to clean everything, to wear old clothes, and to sleep by the chimney and the cinders – a symbol of the suffering and despair because of her loss. She constantly suffers abuse and humiliation by being at such conditions.

Bettelheim states that the child feels completely identified with Cinderella in relation to the position she occupies under her siblings. All the work she does is described in terms that imply long periods of work, hard tasks and meanness. The word which best describes Cinderella's life is torment.

At the father's departure, she only asks for a hazel twig, which symbolizes an attempt to be closer to her father again. Her humbleness runs counter to those of the black-hearted sisters, who ask for jewelry and other material goods revealing greediness and their mere interest in wealth. This relationship between wealth and black hearts, which stand for mean and condemned souls, teaches children about the importance of not becoming materialist people.

One of the main overt messages of the various "Cinderella" stories is that we are mistaken if we think we must hold on to something in the external world to succeed in life. (Bettelheim 2010: 258)

When the father comes back from his trip, Cinderella receives the longed-for twig and plants it on her mother's grave. This function is the reception of the magical item or agent, a twig from which a tree will grow thanks to Cinderella's tears. These symbolize the water bringing new life and reviving old forces, the spirit of her mother in this case. I share the belief, like Bettelheim, that the tree and the hazel twig are symbols related to the real mother's spirit. Both elements belong to nature, where larger life is created; the tree grows from the twig that the father brought with him. The mother is the biological one and her loss would have a purpose afterwards when she comes back under the form of a plant. The aim of her return would be the need to fulfill the promise of protecting her daughter. Thanks to the growth of this plant (what allows the personal development of the heroine), it gives shelter to some birds which brought "what she had wished for." (Grimm 2013:82) They are not any color but white, color of purity and nobility and they represent the spirit of the protective mother, who advised Cinderella to be good and pious.

We are taken into a moment of transition with the dissemination of the festival which will be celebrated at the king's palace. This type of celebrations involved massive costs afforded by the powerful inhabitants of the society and the obligation for the lower villagers to take part in. Cinderella enters into the action when she asks the step-mother

for permission to attend the fancy festival. The step-mother will not allow this due to her mean personality so she deludes and sends our protagonist to clean some lentils she dropped in the ashes instead. This is the function in which the heroine is made a request based on the promise of letting her go to the ball. The fact that dropping and cleaning the lentils are useless proves the abuse of the protagonist, who is willing to leave so, to pass the proof, she asks the birds for some help. Her helpers turn out to be doves, which are a symbol of freedom, justice, and help. Once the work is done she is tricked again; it is a never-ending story of lentils in which the step-mother only desires to demean the girl. She is so innocent that falls again into the trap and calls the doves, which carry out the task even quicker this time. Despite having accomplished every requirement, she is left at home because of the lack of proper clothes. The dirtiness is attached to the rejection she experiences from the family. Besides she is in a low social status; she is considered the slave of the house.

The heroine reacts again and goes to visit the tree in order to ask for help. As a reward for her virtues she gets the aid of the birds which give her nice clothes and shoes made of gold, silver and silk. She manages to attend the ball with success; she is not recognized due to the quality of her clothes. Sibling rivalry is taken to the extreme by the step-sisters, but in this scene they do not realize that the lady is Cinderella. Elegance and cleanness thus take her out of the situation she is at home and to be well-dressed is representative of success and wealth. The prince comes to dance with her and, seeing him deeply, he does not seem to be very charming but extremely possessive instead. He keeps on claiming that she is his partner. She then escapes through a pigeon-house but the father is urged to look for the maiden (Cinderella). He is sure his daughter is at home so he cuts and destroys the structure. Luckily she was not there; otherwise the story would have had a quite shocking ending.

In the second ball the lines of the first are repeated: there is the help from the birds which give her a more astonishing dress than the previous one. The aid provided by the helpers is one of the functions that prevail in the traditional tale. Without it, the protagonist would not be able to move on the story and progress towards the individualization and affirmation of her identity. We shall remember that the success of the character will be reflected on the child (the idea that the tale is a mirror). Cinderella

goes as well to the palace and impresses everyone without being recognized. The prince hurries to empower her again and she runs away because she wants to go home. The escape is achieved through a pear tree this time. Her father employs his force again to knock down the tree but, as usual, she has disappeared.

It is now the turn of the third ball; there have been three of them so far. The number three – the repetition of an action three times – symbolizes the will to fulfill oneself as a person, both personally and sexually. However, this fulfillment also carries fears and frustrations, which are showed by means of running away towards home, where the birds always come to her aid in order to hide the clothes so that she can pretend to have stayed at the kitchen all night. That desire to mark one self's identity grows stronger each time she escapes so that the prince can meet and accept her just as she is – humble and modest in goods. Cinderella asks for help once again and receives a more beautiful dress and shoes made of gold. She goes successfully to the dance and stays with the prince, who keeps showing his authority. When it is time to leave, she sets out for home but the prince is prepared this time. The mark received by the hero becomes patently clear since the stairs had been smeared with pitch so that the lady would be trapped. The plan works and her golden shoe gets stuck to the floor. This way the prince can initiate the proof in which he will look for the delightful woman. It is decided that he will marry the woman whose foot fits in. All the women in the kingdom have the shoe fitted, without exception. Now comes probably the most shocking and part of the story that crossed the minds of the brothers Grimm: self-harm and amputation (the sisters' jealousy and ambition know no limits). The false heroines present false claims to occupy the position. The first sister tries the shoe and it does not fit since it is made of gold and this material does not neither bend nor adapt to anything. However, she insists and the mother asks her to cut the toe off. Who needs to walk when you are named queen and carried everywhere? She is so eager to marry that does so and holds the pain.

The charming prince, showing his intelligence off, does not realize of the tremendous cut and bleeding. But the helping birds exercise their justice and sing to him about the wrong choice. He discovers the blood on the shoe and sends her back. Then he repeats the action with the other sister, who has to take off part of her heel. Despite all their effort to occupy Cinderella's position because of their greedy hearts, their bad intentions

come to light and they are finally exposed. Therefore we find the final functions in this section of the tale: the sisters have deceitful aims which are uncovered thanks to the helpers. The false heroines are exposed. After all their amputations are useless since their blood gives them away. Bettelheim claims it is due to the purity of Cinderella, but I will not enter into the debate about whether the blood is the menstruation or the shoe represents the virtue of the woman. Then the heroine is recognized as the good person after resolving the task imposed by the prince (the proof with the shoe). The recognition of the hero is usually connected to the exposure of the villain. As expected, the sisters are full of rage derived from the jealousy and ambition. In the way back to palace, the two pigeons that were on her mother's grave came to perch on her shoulders. They locate at both of her sides as the way to protect her and also to give her support. Although she has experienced a personal development, the spirit of her mother is still present. At the end of the story, there is "the emphasis of the wedding, the union between the masculine and the feminine", (Wasserziehr 1997: 38) which is the final reward and the new appearance of Cinderella, who had worked hard and humble to overcome her sadness. After this, the aggressors or step-sisters are punished: the sisters come to the wedding, brazenness in hand, and the birds take their eyes. Rather than vengeance, it is the aim for the lesson that they were left blind for their wickedness. This is a clear message that you cannot stand out by humiliating the others. Consequently, both sisters lose their eyes for all the harm made and the attempt to substitute the heroine.

What these stepsisters do to Cinderella justifies whatever nasty thoughts one may have about one's siblings: they are so vile that anything one may wish would happen to them is more than justified.
(Bettelheim 2010: 240)

Good always prevails and evil is uncovered, this is what children learn with the reading of this tale. They see the mean actions and empathize with the hero in the search for recognition and self-identity.

4.2 Analysis of the Adaptation: Garner's *Cinderella*

Garner's *Cinderella* also begins with the saying *There once lived...* in order to preserve the initial formula characteristic of fairy tales. The biological mother is already absent; therefore the protagonist is not given any kind of comforting or protective message. The story goes on with the marriage between the father and a woman, the "mother-of-step", who brings with her the "sisters-of-step". They are said to treat her very cruelly and make her work very hard. It is necessary to pay attention to the adverb "very", which is an intensifier of all the harsh tasks she was forced to do. From this moment it can be noticed how sibling rivalry plays its role in this story: Cinderella is degraded to the degree of being the "personal unpaid laborer" of the house. As her humiliation is a bit extreme, Garner uses an extremely adaptation of the concept as well; it is what we understand as a slave (someone who works but does not receive any kind of compensation in exchange) into political correctness.

The next part in the story is the transition to the invitation to the ball, described as an "exploitation of the dispossessed and marginalized peasantry" and "a fancy dress ball". (Garner 1998: 45) This celebration is understood as a manifestation of the exploitation of the poor people, who have been and are still a massive part of the population. Garner uses the word fancy to refer to something which was unnecessary and costly, just like the clothes of the sisters. They get all the attention and expensive gifts of the family, taking the place of Cinderella to accentuate their position. The protagonist has still other tough quest before she is left at home to enjoy her loneliness; she has to fit the three impious ladies into the tight dresses.

Garner's modern Cinderella does not fulfill the function of action and thus does not ask for permission to attend the ball. Instead she stays alone at home listening to Holly Near, an American singer famous for her songs of protest and her commitment to feminist activism. Immediately afterwards the "godperson" makes his appearance. He is what we know as the fairy godmother (the magical agent), but this person does not represent anything symbolic that leads us to think of the real mother's spirit. He defends the stance that she should not attend the ball to surrender to men's pleasure. After his speech and the importance of his message, Cinderella does not seem to have understood a single word and she only wishes to attend the ball. That is why he decides "to put off

her political education till another day” (Garner 1998: 47) in which she might listen to reason. In response to her reaction, he creates beautiful clothes – he is after all the magical helper. This is the replacement for the magical item.

The next paragraph of the story is devoted to the description of the ball: the palace was full of carriages, what indicates that no one was up for “carpooling”. This ingenious idea, typical of our times, is useful to save the costs of transportation and also to create a favorable atmosphere for the sharing between high and lower social classes. But it would not be fashionable if the characters in a tale shared means of transport of course. Meanwhile Cinderella’s carriage was pulled by horse-slaves, she wore clothes for which it was needed to steal the precious silk from the silk-worms and her hair decoration was made up of looted pearls. Undoubtedly several species were harmed so that she could sport her wonderful look, which she rounded off by wearing crystal shoes, a dangerous complement to walk with. She suffered humiliation at home due to all the work that she was forced to do, but she also degraded the animals, from which she needed their services.

At the ball everyone turned to look at Cinderella and admire her astonishing gorgeousness. Men gazed lecherously at her because she “captured perfectly their Barbie-doll ideas of feminine desirability” (Garner 1998: 47) while the women in the room envied that perfect body. Girls usually grow with standards of beauty that comply with certain measures and a concrete hair color. Consequently those who do not or cannot approach to that model, start despising their bodies at an early age because they do not look like the doll. Many children learn mistaken lessons from that stereotype, and as Garner (in Gring-Pemble and Solomon, 2003: 135) states, they grow “sexist because of how they were raised and what they see in society around them. They didn’t get it from silly little stories—they got it from Barbie.” One of the keys and an addition in the adaptation is the remark of sexism: the prince does not fall in love at first sight because of her beauty, but he wants to get his prey only because of Cinderella’s perfect genes and body to have appropriate offspring, her blond hair, and the fact that she can be used as a sex object to make other princes jealous. This demonstrates the real nature and intentions of the prince, who was portrayed as a charming and perfect man but who is in fact full of shallowness.

However, the matter goes off the rails because all the men want her but the prince is exceedingly possessive and not willing to share. This is the right moment where the story takes a sudden and unexpected turn of events. The men desire causes a huge fight for Cinderella described in terms of pushes, kicks, and a pile of human animals – men are more animal than human at this point. She tries to escape, not to reinforce her identity, but to run away from the women who want to hit her because she is the motive of the fight. The crystal shoe does not let her run away, forcing her to stay; it is not an item used to find Cinderella but something useless. Midnight comes and, due to the impossibility to escape, her clothes suffer the transformation into the old rags. Everyone is shocked by the change except Cinderella, who has been released from the tight gown and whose words “Kill me now if you want, sisters, but at least I’ll die in comfort” (Garner 1998: 50) show her final relief. Not only her step-sisters are jealous, also the rest of the woman, this time of her bravery. This proves that they completely display a lack of self-confidence and envy everything that strengthens the personality of Cinderella. The women take off their clothes in what seems to be an affirmation of their identity, freeing themselves from the stereotypical looks imposed by the society.

The men, blinded by anger and their eagerness of winning the trophy, kept on fighting until there was not any left (they all died), which happens to be very drastic. The important thing we can get from Garner’s words is that human beings go on arguing and fighting until the end with no apparent reason, and this can be applied to any situation in society: diversity of opinions that ends up in arguments, threats, quarrels, wars. After the storm comes a calm and that is what happened: the women put their clothes to the corpses as vengeance for all the suffering and the attitude promoted among the whole population. In the last place, a co-operative is founded when we would expect the marriage between the protagonist and the prince and the punishment of the wicked sisters. The women together create an autonomous association – men free – for the production of cozy clothes and lived happy for the rest of their lives. The personal development of the protagonist – completed at the end – makes way to the achievement of individualization of every woman in the story.

5. CONCLUSION

Now that a separate study of each text has been conducted and that we have seen the diverse symbolic elements and the functions that make up the skeleton of the primary text and its adaptation, a contrastive analysis of the main points will be provided so that the key similarities and differences between them can be noticed and that we can reach some conclusions. Despite being the “same” fairy tale (the story of an innocent girl mistreated by her step-family members), these two texts are completely different in the usage of elements and the sequence of its functions. I make emphasis on the word same because we are dealing with one tale but in fact the adaptation has suffered a lot of variations, being the plot reversal the most shattering one. This contributes to the feeling that we are reading something else which is not the Cinderella we used to know. Each text has logically its own register and vocabulary, and the latter denotes the passing to modernity and to new cultural values and ideologies. E.g. the old thought that marriage is taken as a means to happiness for women completely disappears; there is a co-op in which only women take part instead. However it is the major alterations what provide a new twist.

In the comparison of the symbols existing in the story, we have to look at those related to the real mother’s spirit and to sibling rivalry, a key theme of the primary text. Regarding the initial situation, the Grimms’ story begins with the scene of the biological mother’s death (she is still alive) and her words of protection towards her daughter. Her advice is to be pious since life will recompense you afterwards for your good and unselfish actions. The mother represents goodness and safety both in the material world (considered the one we live in) and the eternal or spiritual world (after her death). Nevertheless, in Garner’s adaptation the narrator talks about the father’s second marriage so we start from a situation in which the mother is already dead; the protective element is lost. The brothers Grimm do not use a person to play the role of the fairy godmother, but an element from nature: a hazel twig. It grows into a bush or little tree which symbolizes both the mother’s spirit and the personal development. This way she will be always able to help her daughter thanks to the animals that live in the bush. We can say that the mother never leaves Cinderella alone in the primary text. On the contrary, Garner introduces a fairy godperson who looks like a lawyer so I do not see any connection to the mother’s spirit. This symbol is lost therefore in the adaptation,

and it leads to the loss of the internalization of the mother (spiritual relationship and progression) that Bettelheim talked about.

On the other hand we have the step-sisters who stand for sibling rivalry. The sisters in the primary text represent that sibling jealousy; they are a menace to Cinderella since they monopolize all the attention and their ambition is to take her place next to the prince. However, their plan is discovered and they are punished for their greed, putting an end to the rivalry with the real heroine. Both sisters represent the evil with a nice appearance. That is why their description is pretty on the outside but dark black-hearted. Garner's portrait of the sisters goes straightly to the point and deprives them of any kind of beauty: they were very ugly and there is nothing to be added to that description. His adaptation does not deepen too much in sibling rivalry; the sisters treat Cinderella as a slave but there is not such degree of humiliation or degradation.

Other alteration, derived from the modification of the elements, is the change of the essential theme. It can be deduced from the analysis of the first text that the prime topics in this wonder tale are submissiveness and obedience. The fulfillment of tasks and the capacity for patience faced with suffering will lead children towards the goal or interests they may have. Their lost happiness (caused by the early death of the mother or a close relative or any other misfortune) will be restored – in the story Cinderella gets married and manages to be content again. Meanwhile, the adaptation shows the current ideologies of a society where women have achieved the same rights and power to decide what they want to become. Garner provides a transformation of the prototypical characters, who are “transmogrify[ied] into caricatures of themselves” (Gring-Pemble and Solomon 2003: 142) In brief, the primary text is about the agonies of sibling jealousy and the overcoming of that situation while the adaptation shows the heroine's strength and capacity to stand on her own, overcoming her personal obstacles without needing the figure of a man anymore.

However, there is a similarity on the heroine's character: in the primary text she leaves the ball because she wants to. This indicates us that she has enough power to decide when to go. In the adaptation this power is reinforced with the plot reversal in which she frees herself of the clothes and founds a co-op with the women. What the child learns from both texts is that thanks to “her own efforts [...] Cinderella is able to transcend

magnificently her degraded state, despite what appear as insurmountable obstacles.” (Bettelheim 2010: 243) Both the primary and the adaptation deal with the progression to individualization and self-improvement from a low state. In that process of individualization, the person has to face and fight against the evil, which is represented by one of the parents in the majority of cases. We usually deal with the figure of the step-mother, who is cruel to the heroine and wants to get some benefit (favor her daughters). Due to these bad characters the heroine is forced to escape and look for something better which makes him or her happier.

Undoubtedly it has been the following modification the responsible for the different view of the tale; the sequence of functions has been drastically altered. This is the reason why we read *Cinderella* with new eyes, adopting a new perspective. The primary text complied with the most relevant functions that are characteristic in fairy tales: the absence of a close relative, the mother; the assignation of a magical agent or item, which is the hazel twig and its future bush; the request, made by the step-mother to clean the lentils; the hero's reaction, when Cinderella accepts the gifts and attends the ball; and the final functions. These are what define a proper fairy tale; without the following happy ending there would be no wonder tale. The transgressors are uncovered, giving way to the recognition of the hero so when the birds warn the prince about the step-sisters, Cinderella tries the shoe, passes the difficult task and is revealed as the heroine. Then she marries the prince and ascends to the throne with a new appearance. Lastly the step-sisters are punished; this is the end of Grimms' tale. Garner keeps the functions of the absence of the mother; the assignation of a magical agent, which is a modern fairy godmother; the request of helping the villains with their dresses; and the reaction of the heroine. On the contrary, his plot reversal omits all the final functions. Instead of the traditional ending, we find one in which Cinderella is uncovered and seen naturally, the men are punished for their greediness and the recognition is not only for the hero, but for all the women who have decided to be in charge of their lives and their own fate.

In my study of the *Cinderella* tale in two of its many and many versions it became clear that they are similar respect to the former functions and events, such as the initial situation or the suffering and humiliation. It is necessary for the adaptation to keep

essential shades so that we can recognize the fairy tale. But the important and remarkable thing is the symbolic alteration and the deletion of Propp's traditional functions. In a common tale the ending is something fixed; the order of functions may vary but the punishment to the aggressors and the hero's ascension to the throne is always present. There are no such functions in the adaptation, what leads me to a major alteration rather than symbolic or structural ones. The tale has been modified to its roots, involving its genre as well. We cannot classify this *Cinderella* in the category of wonder tale anymore because it does not even comply with the traditional functions.

In the end, it is just a realist modern tale whose surface displays a story that we relate to the old and primary text due to the hero's name, the cruel sisters, the shoe and not much else. Despite its modifications this new tale preserves the essence of a good tale: a happy ending which teaches a valuable lesson and that "attains an emotional quality of 'truth' for the child." (Bettelheim 2010: 237) Children, who feel intensively connected and identified with the hero since the plot is taken as something personal, will follow the hero's steps into their own individualization and capacity of judgment.

ANNEX

Garner's *Cinderella* (Garner 1998: 45-51)

There once lived a young woman named Cinderella, whose natural birthmother had died when Cinderella was but a child. A few years after, her father married a widow with two older daughters. Cinderella's mother-of-step treated her very cruelly, and her sisters-of-step made her work very hard, as if she were their own personal unpaid laborer.

One day an invitation arrived at their house. The prince was celebrating his exploitation of the dispossessed and marginalized peasantry by throwing a fancy dress ball. Cinderella's sisters-of-step were very excited to be invited to the palace. They began to plan the expensive clothes they would use to alter and enslave their natural body images to emulate an unrealistic standard of feminine beauty. (It was especially unrealistic in their case, as they were differently visaged enough to stop a clock.) Her mother-of-step also planned to go to the ball, so Cinderella was working harder than a dog (an appropriate if unfortunately speciesist metaphor).

When the day of the ball arrived, Cinderella helped her mother- and sisters-of-step into their ball gowns. A formidable task: It was like trying to force ten pounds of processed nonhuman animal carcasses into a five-pound skin. Next came immense cosmetic augmentation, which it would be best not to describe at all. As evening fell, her mother- and sisters-of-step left Cinderella at home to finish her housework. Cinderella was sad, but she contented herself with her Holly Near records.

Suddenly there was a flash of light, and in front of Cinderella stood a man dressed in loose-fitting, all-cotton clothes and wearing a wide-brimmed hat. At first Cinderella thought he was a Southern lawyer or a bandleader, but he soon put her straight.

"Hello, Cinderella, I am your fairy godperson, or individual deity proxy if you prefer. So, you want to go to the ball, eh? And bind yourself into the male concept of beauty? Squeeze into some tight-fitting dress that will cut off your circulation? Jam your feet

into high-heeled shoes that will ruin your bone structure? Paint your face with chemicals and make-up that have been tested on nonhuman animals?"

"Oh yes, definitely," she said in an instant. Her fairy godperson heaved a great sigh and decided to put off her political education till another day. With his magic, he enveloped her in a beautiful, bright light and whisked her away to the palace.

Many, many carriages were lined up outside the palace that night; apparently, no one had ever thought of carpooling. Soon, in a heavy, gilded carriage painfully pulled by a team of horse-slaves, Cinderella arrived. She was dressed in a clinging gown woven of silk stolen from unsuspecting silk-worms. Her hair was festooned with pearls plundered from hard-working, defenseless oysters. And on her feet, dangerous though it may seem, she wore slippers made of finely cut crystal.

Every head in the ballroom turned as Cinderella entered. The men stared at and lusted after this wommon who had captured perfectly their Barbie-doll ideas of feminine desirability. The womyn, trained at an early age to despise their own bodies, looked at Cinderella with envy and spite. Cinderella's own mother- and sisters-of-step, consumed with jealousy, failed to recognize her.

Cinderella soon caught the roving eye of the prince, who was busy discussing jousting and bear-baiting with his cronies. Upon seeing her, the prince was struck with a fit of not being able to speak as well as the majority of the population. "Here," he thought, "is a wommon that I could make my princess and impregnate with the progeny of our perfect genes, and thus make myself the envy of every other prince for miles around. And she's blond, too!"

The prince began to cross the ballroom toward his intended prey. His cronies also began to walk toward Cinderella. So did every other male in the ballroom who was younger than 70 and not serving drinks.

Cinderella was proud of the commotion she was causing. She walked with head high and carried herself like a woman of eminent social standing. But soon it became clear that the commotion was turning into something ugly, or at least socially dysfunctional.

The prince had made it clear to his friends that he was intent on "possessing" the young woman. But the prince's resoluteness angered his pals, for they too lusted after her and wanted to own her. The men began to shout and push each other. The prince's best friend, who was a large if cerebrally constrained duke, stopped him halfway across the dance floor and insisted that he was going to have Cinderella. The prince's response was a swift kick to the groin, which left the duke temporarily inactive. But the prince was quickly seized by other sex-crazed males, and he disappeared into a pile of human animals.

The women were appalled by this vicious display of testosterone, but try as they might, they were unable to separate the combatants. To the other women, it seemed that Cinderella was the cause of all the trouble, so they encircled her and began to display very unsisterly hostility. She tried to escape, but her impractical glass slippers made it nearly impossible. Fortunately for her, none of the other women were shod any better.

The noise grew so loud that no one heard the clock in the tower chime midnight. When the bell rang the twelfth time, Cinderella's beautiful gown and slippers disappeared, and she was dressed once again in her peasant's rags. Her mother- and sisters-of-step recognized her now but kept quiet to avoid embarrassment.

The women grew silent at this magical transformation. Freed from the confinements of her gown and slippers, Cinderella sighed and stretched and scratched her ribs. She smiled, closed her eyes and said, "Kill me now if you want, sisters, but at least I'll die in comfort."

The women around her again grew envious, but this time they took a different approach: Instead of exacting vengeance on her, they stripped off their bodices, corsets,

shoes, and every other confining garment. They danced and jumped and screeched in sheer joy, comfortable at last in their shifts and bare feet.

Had the men looked up from their macho dance of destruction, they would have seen many desirable womyn dressed as if for the boudoir. But they never ceased pounding, punching, kicking, and clawing each other until, to the last man, they were dead.

The womyn clucked their tongues but felt no remorse. The palace and realm were theirs now. Their first official act was to dress the men in their discarded dresses and tell the media that the fight arose when someone threatened to expose the cross-dressing tendencies of the prince and his cronies. Their second was to set up a clothing co-op that produced only comfortable, practical clothes for womyn. Then they hung a sign on the castle advertising CinderWear (for that was what the new clothing was called), and through self-determination and clever marketing, they all – even the mother- and sisters-of-step – lived happily ever after.

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