

FISH, GOURDS, AND GLASS SLIPPERS:
HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES TELL THE STORY OF *CINDERELLA*

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

Valerie Carroll

San Marcos, Texas
December 2016

FISH, GOURDS, AND GLASS SLIPPERS:
HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES TELL THE STORY OF *CINDERELLA*

by
Valerie Carroll

Thesis Supervisor:

Diann McCabe, MFA
Honors College

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.
Dean, Honors College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to say thank you to my wonderful thesis supervisor, Diann McCabe. Thank you for taking me in when nobody else would. This thesis would not be possible without you.

To my parents, thank you for everything. Through your love and encouragement I learned that I could do anything I put my mind to. You fostered my love of reading from a young age and always encouraged me to think critically. Thank you for believing in me. I wouldn't be who I am today without you.

Nick, thank you for keeping me sane while I wrote this thesis. Thank you for always being there when I needed to rant, vent, or talk through a chapter I was trying to write.

I also want to thank my teachers and professors from throughout my time in school, including Mrs. Eileen Troncoso, my elementary school librarian, for doing a unit on Cinderella around the world and inspiring this thesis all these years later; Ms. Kristen Mumme and Ms. Veronica Riordan, my AP English III and IV teachers in high school, for always pushing me deeper in my writing and analysis and for giving me the tools I need to succeed in academia; Dr. Katie Kapurch for her inspiring class on fairy tales and mythology; and every other teacher who pushed me and encouraged me to learn, question, and grow. There are too many to name individually, but I appreciate them all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. WICKED STEPMOTHERS AND JEALOUS STEPSISTERS: WHEN GIRLS JUST CAN'T PLAY NICE TOGETHER.....	7
CHAPTER 2. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE: THE FAIRY GODMOTHER AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL HELPERS	24
CHAPTER 3. IF THE SHOE FITS: TESTS OF PERSONAL WORTH	35
CHAPTER 4. GOODNESS GRACIOUS: HOW GIRLS ARE EXPECTED TO ACT, THINK, AND LOOK.....	45
CONCLUSION	58
WORKS CITED	61

ABSTRACT

Stories, especially stories aimed at children, have been used as a tool for socialization in many cultures across time. Fairy tales in particular help disseminate and reinforce social norms and ideas to members of a given culture. *Cinderella* is one of the most common fairy tales with a version found in nearly every culture around the world. This thesis focuses on six versions from different regions: France, Persia, Mexico, China, West Africa, and pre-colonial North America. By using four basic shared story themes as lenses – the heroine’s relationship with her family, the heroine’s benefactor, the heroine’s test to prove she is worthy, and the heroine’s inherent inner and outer goodness – specific details in each story reveal what is valued by each culture. Despite having the same basic plot structure, these different versions could not survive in a culture other than the one in which they originated because of the social values found in the details. In their own culture, however, these stories impart social norms and values onto younger members who traditionally have internalized these lessons to reiterate them in their own retellings of the story.

INTRODUCTION

*"If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales.
If you want them to be very intelligent, read them more fairy tales."
-Albert Einstein*

Cinderella is one of the most popular and widespread fairy tales in the world. To understand how this came to be, a brief historical overview of fairy tales is needed. Contrary to what many assume, fairy tales did not originate with illiterate European peasants who kept the tales alive through oral tradition before popular authors like Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Charles Perrault, or Giambattista Basile wrote them down. In fact, certain fairy tales, *Cinderella* among them, did not originate in Europe at all. While *Cinderella*'s first appearance in Europe was within the Italian storybook *Pentamerone* in 1634, the oldest version explored in this thesis was written in China as early as the Tang dynasty, which lasted from 618-907 A.D. The oldest known version of *Cinderella* in the world, *Rhodopis*, originates from Egypt and was written as early as the first century B.C.

As these old societies began to interact with one another more, trade routes began to emerge. Along with foods, crafts, and other goods, works of literature were introduced to new cultures "through trade, migration, and the Crusades" (Zipes 46). The Silk Road was one of the largest trade routes of its time, passing through what was then known as Persia in order to connect China to Europe. While the route did not stretch all the way to Italy, lesser trade routes brought goods from the Silk Road to Italy, where the first European version of *Cinderella* later emerged. The Chinese *Yeh-Shen* is the likely inspiration behind the Italian version by Basile. The story eventually spread to France through the writings of Charles Perrault, who "got most

of his tales from Italian books” (Bottigheimer 57). French fairy tale authors were highly influential, and their popularity “accounts for the swift spread of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century French fairy tales throughout Europe” (Bottigheimer 56). French fairy tale books were dispersed and translated throughout Europe, adding to their popularity. The French versions reached Germany where the Grimm brothers adopted and altered tales for their own anthologies.

Many assume that illiterate nursemaids and servants created stories and passed them down from generation to generation and that these fairy tales caught the attention of the literate nobility who eventually wrote them down. The common hypothesis for years was that authors had merely “contaminated the peasants’ simple tales with literary style and borrowed embellishments” (Bottigheimer 54). However, written sources from other cultures indicate that fairy tales were associated more with educated classes, who had to be able to read and translate the stories, than with illiterate country folk. These “listening rustics” would require the stories to be read aloud to them in order to be included in the fairy tale tradition (Bottigheimer 104). In this way fairy tales spread across the world, associated primarily with literate classes and secondarily with the less educated.

As a fairy tale is adopted into a new culture, it changes a little. It can be said that the tale “adapts itself to the environment in which it is produced” (Zipes 131). When a tale first enters a new culture, it must be purged of ideas and references that are not familiar. For example, a story that sends a hero out to sea might not be relevant to a landlocked community. Such extraneous details are taken out and

replaced with concepts more familiar to the new culture, and perhaps the hypothetical hero now journeys into a dense forest instead of out to sea. All fairy tales become “colored by the facts of the time and place in which they were recorded” (Tatar 19). With changes in background detail to make the stories seem closer to home, the stories feel more real to audiences. This familiarity leads to a connection between readers and the text that ensures the story is read and told again and again within the culture.

In addition to changes in simple background details, a fairy tale also promotes different cultural values depending on the region that tells it. Social norms like gender roles or basic etiquette vary from culture to culture, and literature that reinforces these norms is “vital to the survival of a community and the preservation of its values and beliefs” (Zipes 11). In certain instances, literature can be used to promote new ideas and incite change, but most of the time it is used to promote the status quo. Typically, “classical fairy tales tend to be overtly patriarchal and politically conservative in structure” in order to “reflect the dominant interests of social groups that control cultural forces” (Zipes 2). The dominant social or political faction sets the expectations for a society’s behavior, and fairy tales mimic these social expectations.

Fairy tales are especially good at protecting and promoting cultural norms because they are aimed at children. Children’s literature “has openly endorsed a productive discipline” by including morals and lessons within its stories (Tatar xvi). Children learn from the heroes and heroines of stories, who are often little girls and boys just like them, that bad children are punished, sometimes with death, while

good children are rewarded. The offenses committed by the children in fairy tales range from playing with fire to insulting a witch, but the resulting consequences help young children learn right from wrong. Popular children's stories within a culture will promote behaviors and ideas that the culture approves of to ensure their children will retain the right values. Not all cultures share the same values, though, and their literature would promote these different values. A single fairy tale that can be found in separate cultures would reveal key differences in each culture's belief systems. The fairy tale would have a similar enough plot and set of themes across cultural versions to isolate ideas and values injected by each culture.

Versions of *Cinderella* can be found in nearly every country in the world. The themes of the story are universally relatable due to "a great cross-cultural appeal," which makes the tale easy to adopt into a given culture (Zipes 41). Regardless of where they are from, children must confront feelings of abandonment as they grow up and reconcile their desire to be loved and wanted by their parents. The story of an orphan girl rejected by her stepfamily provides a cathartic outlet for the children's own experiences. Rich citizens and poor citizens alike also see their longing for material wealth realized in the heroine's rags to riches story, which remains intact from culture to culture. These universal themes continue to draw people in today, as new takes on the Cinderella tale are being produced every day.

The demographic that *Cinderella* continues to appeal to most is little girls. The story's "appeal to the imagination of the sub-adolescent girl" is the driving force behind its sustained popularity across time and cultures (Dundes 94). Cinderella, Yeh-Shen, or whatever name the heroine becomes something little

girls can sympathize with and relate to. Girls associate their own desires, frustrations, and struggles with that of the heroine and begin to view her as a role model.

Similarly, the demographic that many societies typically try to control the most is young girls. In many underdeveloped nations, women have little or no rights, and all of the power is in the hands of the men. Even in developed countries, expectations of what a woman should be and do continue to govern how young girls are treated. As previously mentioned, dominant groups in a culture control a story's content in regards to social expectations and cultural norms. These power groups are usually made of men who capitalize on *Cinderella's* appeal to young girls by promoting preexisting gender roles within the story. When girls see their role model accept the culture's gender roles without question, and furthermore see her become successful and wealthy by adhering to these gender roles, they do not seek to challenge the cultural norm. The heroine also often embodies traits that the culture views as positive female traits. Since young girls view the heroine as a role model, they model their own behavior after her. Cultures teach and emphasize specific behaviors and ideas to girls by portraying them through the heroine.

With hundreds of versions of *Cinderella* in existence, it would be foolish to attempt to compare all of them. This thesis will instead examine six versions of the *Cinderella* story, one from each major region around the world, to understand cultural differences between these regions. *Yeh-Shen*, the Chinese version, is the oldest one explored in this thesis, dating back to the Tang dynasty. The Middle East is represented by *The Persian Cinderella*, which was inspired by a story from *One*

Thousand and One Nights. The story of *Chinye* was brought from West Africa by the author, who heard the story growing up. *Domitila*, a Mexican adaptation of the Cinderella story, serves to represent Latin American culture. *The Rough-Face Girl* originates from the Algonquin Native American tribe, and it is a portion of a longer traditional story of the tribe. Charles Perrault's *Cinderella*, from eighteenth century France, is perhaps the most popular out of all the versions included in this thesis. It is the inspiration for the Disney movie, and the version most closely aligned with the values of Western culture. For the sake of familiarity, Perrault's version will be used as the baseline that other versions are compared to. The six versions share basic themes that make the story a true Cinderella story. By looking at how each culture approaches and responds to four themes – the heroine's relationship with her family, the heroine's benefactor, the heroine's test to prove she is worthy, and the heroine's inherent inner and outer goodness – one can begin to distinguish cultural values and beliefs that the culture has imparted into the story.

CHAPTER 1.

WICKED STEPMOTHERS AND JEALOUS STEPSISTERS: WHEN GIRLS JUST CAN'T

PLAY NICE TOGETHER

“JOAN CRAWFORD: Did you scrub the bathroom floor today? DID YOU?”

CHRISTINA: Yes, Mommie.

JOAN: Yes, Mommie what?

CHRISTINA: Yes, Mommie Dearest.

JOAN: When I told you to call me that, I wanted you to mean it.”

-Mommie Dearest

In any Cinderella story, the heroine's home life is the main catalyst for the events that follow. It is in the home that Cinderella suffers at the hands of others. If Cinderella had not been abused and mistreated at home, she would not have needed to be saved by her magical friends. She also would not have lost her shoe at the ball in an effort to get home before time ran out and her family discovered her absence. The story would be completely different if the main character had had a pleasant life, which is why, at its core, the Cinderella story is one of “child abandonment and abuse” (Zipes 115). The makeup of the family changes from story to story as does the type of abuse the main character suffers, but the base component of an unpleasant family remains across cultures. However, more often than not, the family has justice served against them by the end of the story. The manner of this justice, whether it comes in the form of punishment or forgiveness, also varies greatly from culture to culture. The chart below helps show Cinderella's family members in each story, as well as how they mistreat her and what punishment they receive in turn.

	Mother figure	Father figure	Sisters	Type of abuse	Justice
<i>Cinderella</i> (France)	Stepmother	Alive, controlled by stepmother	Two stepsisters	Manual labor	Forgiven
<i>Yeh-Shen</i> (China)	Stepmother	Dead father	One stepsister	Manual labor, psychological abuse	Banished then death
<i>The Persian Cinderella</i> (Persia)	Stepmother and aunts	Alive, kind but absent	Many half-sisters and cousins	Neglect, verbal abuse	Death
<i>Domitila</i> (Mexico)	Stepmother	Alive, kind but absent	One stepsister	Manual labor	Banished
<i>The Rough-Face Girl</i> (Native American)	Dead mother	Alive, kind but absent	Two biological sisters	Physical and verbal abuse	Public humiliation
<i>Chinye</i> (West Africa)	Stepmother	Dead father	One stepsister	Manual labor	Banished

The main character's abuse, as depicted in the chart, mainly comes from family members not biologically related to her. Non-biological members of the family would have no reason to care about Cinderella. She is not linked to them by blood, and she is competing with them for resources. In versions where Cinderella's father is alive, he does not partake in the mistreatment of his daughter. He treats her kindly but, in half of the tales selected, is absent from the bulk of the story. In the French *Cinderella*, while he doesn't outright hurt his daughter, the father passively allows his new wife to continue her abuse. The only time that the heroine's full-blood sisters cause her harm is in *The Rough-Face Girl*, turning a case of child abuse into a case of sibling rivalry.

The justice that the heroine's families receive at the end of each story also follows a pattern. Most of the abusers are punished in various ways including public humiliation, banishment, and death. With the first audiences of fairy tales, "should a villain get off the hook, there is disappointment all around" (Tatar 31). Audiences expect retribution to be taken against the villains in a fairy tale, which explains why the forgiveness found in "Perrault's ending was the exception rather than the rule" (Tatar 7). Perrault's practice of cleaning up stories in his retellings of them was not uncommon. Many distributors of folk and fairy tales would try to make their material less violent or take out any blasphemy or remove suggestive language. However, with the previous dirtier versions already spread across the country and across the world these cleaner versions didn't always take root in the culture and survive.

Beginning with the odd one out, Perrault's *Cinderella* is the version that influenced the Disney movie most of us know and love, so it is also the most familiar already. In the French version, Cinderella's mother is dead, and her father is recently remarried to a woman with two daughters of her own. Cinderella's new stepmother is "the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen" and her daughters are "exactly like her in all things" (Perrault). The trio simply cannot stand Cinderella and her goodness since it makes them look worse in comparison. In their jealousy, they force her to do "the meanest work of the house" while her stepsisters lounge around the house all day (Perrault). Cinderella is treated like a maid in her own home while her stepsisters enjoy luxury after luxury. It is easy to see why the stepmother has put Cinderella in this situation since Cinderella is not her biological

child. She wants her own two daughters to succeed in society and is willing to place a young girl she cares nothing about at a disadvantage to improve her own daughters' social standings. Cinderella is reduced to the position of a servant, unseen and unappreciated, while her stepsisters are given opportunities to make a name for themselves in society. Cinderella's family most likely belongs to the upper class, as evidenced by the fact they are invited to a ball thrown by the prince. During this timeframe, young girls of the gentry were expected to become respectable and accomplished in order to secure a good marriage. The stepmother sees Cinderella as nothing more than a threat to her own daughters' futures. She readily admits that Cinderella's goodness "made her own daughters appear the more odious" (Perrault). Cinderella would shine in all areas when compared to her stepsisters and would gain everything her stepmother is trying to attain for her own children. What suitor would possibly look at either of her daughters when the lovely Cinderella stands next to them, so the stepmother eliminates Cinderella as a threat by reducing her to a servant. The two girls take after their mother and are brought up to believe that they are better than their stepsister. It is only natural that they follow the example set forth by their mother and torment their poor stepsister.

Cinderella's stepfamily as a whole has no reason to be kind to her. They are proud and vindictive, they are competing with her for suitors, and they have no biological ties to her. Her father, however, has a more obscure role in her abuse. He is never mentioned as contributing directly to her distress. He never orders her around or even seems to be present during her suffering, but Cinderella still "dared not tell her father" about the work her stepmother and stepsisters put her through

“for his wife governed him entirely” (Perrault). If Cinderella has to tell her father the extent of her suffering, then he has no idea of what his daughter goes through. It might be difficult to believe he does not know what is going on in his own household, but it is very plausible. Men and women operated in different spheres in seventeenth century Europe. Women stayed at home and took care of all things domestic while men went out and worked to provide for their family. Men were the head of the household without ever having to spend much time at home. As lady of the house, Cinderella’s stepmother has full control over how the affairs of the house are conducted. She makes all decisions regarding treatment of servants and how the children are brought up, “which also determines the availability and desirability of daughters” (Tatar 137). The stepmother has certainly taken advantage of her domestic power by constantly punishing her stepdaughter. It is very possible that Cinderella’s father would come home from being away on business and find his daughter sitting in her corner only to be told by his wife that Cinderella had been naughty earlier in the day and was being punished. It would be easy for him to believe his wife, the adult, over his daughter, the child. It was well within the stepmother’s rights to punish Cinderella if she had misbehaved, and the father was never home to see if Cinderella misbehaved or not. As far as he knew, his wife was keeping his unruly daughter in check. Cinderella’s story would not hold up against her stepmother’s story, so she kept quiet about her abuse.

Despite tormenting Cinderella for the better part of their time together, the stepsisters receive Cinderella’s forgiveness. The moment they find out Cinderella is the beautiful lady they saw and admired at the ball they beg her for forgiveness. The

stepsisters equate social standing with respect. When Cinderella was a servant she deserved their scorn and abuse, but when Cinderella became the beautiful lady at the ball, she was someone to be respected and admired. The stepsisters cope with Cinderella's new status by trying to erase her previous servant identity and asking for forgiveness for their treatment of her in that previous position. There is no hesitation in Cinderella's reaction; she "took them up, and, as she embraced them, cried that she forgave them with all her heart, and desired them always to love her" (Perrault). Cinderella instantly forgives years of torment and teasing at the promise of her stepsisters' acceptance. But she doesn't just stop at simply letting bygones be bygones. She goes so far as to give "her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the Court" (Perrault). Perrault instilled a moral into the oral fairy tales he adapted, often one that was not in the story before. Here he promotes forgiveness and good character. If Cinderella had refused to forgive her stepsisters, her kind and sweet personality would have been ruined. However, other recorded versions of Cinderella in Europe, even in France, show the stepsisters being punished for their actions. Perrault advocated for forgiveness over vengeance. However his ideas did not catch on in the storytelling tradition.

Most other Cinderella stories end in retribution. In *The Rough-Face Girl*, the main character's sisters are knocked from their metaphorical pedestal. The once "proud and hard-hearted" girls are publicly humiliated by the tale's end (Martin 6). Tradition holds that the woman who can see the Invisible Being will be the one to marry him. After claiming to be able to see the Invisible Being and spending the

night in his wigwam to see him come in, the sisters are forced to go home empty handed, proving that they lied. This very public walk of shame is a major blow to their pride. The very same tribe members who first called them beautiful and asserted that they would marry the Invisible Being later witness their fall from grace as they are forced to display to the rest of their village that they lied about being able to see the Invisible Being. The public shame the girls are put through serves as punishment for their many transgressions. The girls were able to hide their lies, arrogance, and cruelty behind their physical appearance for some time, but their outer beauty is not enough to cover their inner ugliness forever.

The two girls' treatment of their youngest sister is perhaps the most shocking out of all the stories reviewed in this thesis simply because they are biologically related to her. This story is the only one in the collection in which the heroine's own full blood sisters torment her. The sisters also are more damaging than the stepsisters in the other stories. They do not stop at giving all the difficult chores to their sister, also making her sit so close to the fire that she becomes "burnt and scarred" (Martin 4). They cause her to become physically deformed and then mock her for it. The heroine's name is Rough-Face Girl because of her appearance. Native American naming traditions differed from tribe to tribe, but for the most part revolved around descriptions, gender, character traits, and nature. It would not be uncommon for a person to have several names throughout his or her life based on the emergence of new traits or due to a special ceremony. The Algonquin tribe especially based names for their people on physical descriptions. For the heroine to be called the Rough-Face Girl by everyone in her tribe means being rough faced is

seen as her most distinguishing characteristic. She is defined by her abuse, which in turn lends power to her abusers. The older sisters are able to use “violence as a form of empowerment” and as a way to keep their younger sister under control (Tatar 169).

One begins to wonder where the Rough-Face Girl’s parents are during all of this. The mother is never mentioned and can be assumed to have long since passed away. The father, however, is still alive, yet he makes an appearance only once in the story. During this scene, the old man is shown to be very caring towards his youngest daughter, not at all like her two sisters. Despite being very poor, he makes it a point to give his daughter everything he can so that she may visit the Invisible Being like her sisters. He gives her “little broken shells” and his “old, worn, cracked, and stretched-out pair [of moccasins] from last year” so that she can make herself a new outfit (Martin 14). He gives his daughter everything at his disposal, but he never offers her protection from his other daughters.

A parent who cares deeply about his child, as the Rough Face Girl’s father does, should protect his child from harm, especially if the threat comes from within the family. However, the older girls may be far out of the father’s control at this point. The older sisters are portrayed again and again as rude, arrogant, complaining, and spoiled. They have gotten everything they have ever wanted for years. Single parents often experience guilt over not doing enough, providing enough, or simply being enough for their children. Additionally, they are dealing with their own grief from losing their partner. They may try to give their kids everything or let them get away with anything to “make up” for the fact they don’t

have that second parent. It is highly possible that this is what happened to the Rough Face Girl's family. The older girls got everything they demanded, and as they kept demanding more they made sure to get rid of the only other competitor in the house that might take the food, clothing, and other resources their father brought home. The father quickly spoiled his older daughters and was never around to correct their behavior. Just like the well to do French father in Perrault's *Cinderella*, the poor Native American father of *The Rough Face Girl* was always preoccupied with providing for the family, leaving his youngest daughter to fend for herself against her malicious older sisters.

Yet another tale explored in this thesis with a well meaning yet constantly absent father is *The Persian Cinderella*. In this tale, Settareh's father inhabits a completely different portion of the house from that of the female relatives with which his daughter grows up. Persian custom dictated a strict separation between genders in many aspects of life, public and private, which led to women living in different quarters from the men of the household. As caregivers, the women shared their living space with their children, and they all shared one region of the house. When Settareh's mother died, the task of caring for the young girl fell to her father's other wives and extended female family, who had children of their own. Settareh was often neglected by her surrogate mothers and aunts and teased by her cousins and half-sisters because, as we have seen in previous cultures' versions, "rivalry flourishes... where siblings are of the same sex" (Tatar 68). Settareh's father leaves her very much alone and defenseless in the women's quarters while he is "busy in the world of men" (Climo 1). He very seldom has the chance to "[honor] the

women's quarters with a visit" to see Settareh (Climo 4). With his minimal visits he has no idea of the neglect and torment his daughter faces every day, which means the father unwittingly "contributes to the abuse by absenting himself from his daughter's side" (Zipes 115). However, the father's abuse is done unknowingly, so, as in the versions previously explored in this chapter, he is not punished with his daughter's newfound status.

Settareh's stepsisters do not get off as easily as their father, however. The two girls, Leila and Nahid, experience a far harsher punishment than other stepsisters in other stories, but the punishment seems to suit the crime. Leila and Nahid start out with basic, petty insults such as calling Settareh's star shaped birthmark a "dirty spot" (Climo 3). The verbal torment is also occasionally paired with small physical acts like pinching. After Settareh becomes engaged to the prince, however, the stepsisters do not become filled with sisterly love and beg for forgiveness as Cinderella's stepsisters did. Nor do they slink out of town, their pride deflated like the sisters of the Rough-Face Girl. Instead they become "more jealous and vengeful with every passing day" (Climo 24). For thirty-nine days Leila and Nahid stew in their anger, absolutely livid that they did not receive Settareh's good fortune. Their grand solution is to murder their sister in an effort to take her spot as the prince's bride. They use Settareh's own helpful *pari*, or fairy, to facilitate the murder. They receive six hairpins from the *pari* that they stick into Settareh's head, turning her into a turtledove instead of killing her. With their sister out of the way, Leila and Nahid throw themselves at the prince, but the prince is too distraught over Settareh's disappearance to notice. Similar fairy tales where the bride-to-be

vanishes show the groom sadly going along with another marriage to another bride until the original girl is revealed to still be alive, thus bringing an end the second wedding. However, in this tale the girls' plan does not work in their favor. Prince Mehrdad never looks in their direction after Settareh disappears. This indicates the Persian culture's intolerance for cheating and deception. Leila and Nahid use false means to get closer to the prince and their efforts are for naught, but failing in their plan is only the beginning of their punishment. Settareh visits Prince Mehrdad in her turtledove form, and he eventually discovers the hairpins in her feathers. The moment he pulls them all out the spell is broken and she returns to human form. The two are finally able to enjoy their wedding day as Leila and Nahid watch and become "so filled with rage that their hearts simply burst" (Climo 30). The harm that they tried to bring to Settareh has been swiftly brought back to them.

We should remember that these are not grown women who have attempted murder and subsequently died of rage but young girls, teenagers at best, who are still under their mothers' control. While it does take some time to digest, we must understand that the time during which this story was being shaped was a time in which violence was an unquestioned part of everyday life. Famine, infanticide, plague, violent crime, and public displays of corporal punishment were all right outside for children to see. Being "exposed on a daily basis" to these types of things, people of this time would have a "higher tolerance" for the violence and suffering around them (Tatar 46). Settareh and her peers are obviously exposed to such violence, which Leila and Nahid have internalized and refocused onto Settareh. Death was everywhere in Persia, and it was not hidden from children. In fact, it was

used as a scare tactic to get children to behave. In *The Persian Cinderella*, death is used as a punishment twice. The first time Settareh's stepsisters try to punish her for being better than them. The second time the stepsisters are punished for their wickedness and for trying to kill Settareh. The message that the children hearing this story receive is that wickedness is rewarded only with death, a message that reinforces good behavior. Settareh is good, so even when she is killed she does not die.

Storytellers of *The Persian Cinderella* may have gotten their punishment from the tale of *Yeh-Shen* from China. The daughter of a chief, Yeh-Shen is orphaned at only a few days old. Her mother and her father die of an illness within days of each other, leaving the young girl in the care of the chief's second wife, who has a daughter of her own to care for. The stepmother is so vile towards Yeh-Shen, giving her the hardest chores and keeping her from having any friends. Yeh-Shen's "only friend" is a fish that she raises in the pond next to their cave (Louie 1). Her stepmother is furious when she learns of Yeh-Shen's fish and resolves to kill it. She despises this child so much that she is determined to kill the only thing in her life that brings her joy. The stepmother doesn't stop at killing the girl's pet though; she intends "to cook it for dinner" (Louie 4). Certain variations of the story add that the stepmother feeds the fish to Yeh-Shen before telling her what she is eating. The psychological damage that Yeh-Shen sustains at the hands of her stepmother is astounding. Yeh-Shen's stepsister is hardly mentioned throughout the text and seldom interacts with Yeh-Shen, but it can be assumed that she modeled her behavior after her mother. While Yeh-Shen is never physically harmed at the hands

of her stepmother and stepsister, the damage to her comes from isolation, neglect, and enslavement.

In the end, Yeh-Shen finally escapes from her imprisonment with the help of her fish bones and eventually marries the king. However, the stepmother and her daughter are never able to leave their cave. Perhaps Yeh-Shen would have been kind enough to invite her captors to the palace with her, but “since they had been unkind to his beloved, the king would not permit Yeh-Shen to bring them to his palace” (Louie 28). Because the king cuts off this opportunity, the reader does not know whether Yeh-Shen would take her stepmother and stepsister with her and bestow her forgiveness on them. Uninvited to live in the palace, the stepmother and stepsister remain in their tiny cave home until one day they are “crushed to death in a shower of flying stones” (Louie 28). One of the major religions during the Tang dynasty when this text was produced was Buddhism. One of the beliefs of Buddhism is that of karma, the idea that one’s actions determine one’s future fate. The stepmother and stepsister’s death is not technically directly related to their treatment of Yeh-Shen, nor do they bring their end upon themselves like the stepsisters in the Persian tale. Their demise is brought about solely by a natural rockslide. With the deaths being separated by a significant yet vague period of time from Yeh-Shen’s departure, followers of Buddhism during this era could easily recognize the violent deaths as a karmic response to their mistreatment of Yeh-Shen. The entire story reflects the Buddhist concepts of reaping what you sow.

While inhabitants of West Africa do not adhere to the principles of Buddhism, they still subscribe to the idea that greed and laziness should not be rewarded. The

title character of *Chinye* is a hardworking girl who lives with her demanding stepmother, Nkechi, and her “spoiled and lazy” stepsister, Adanma (Onyefulu 1). Both of Chinye’s parents are dead, leaving her in the care of her stepmother. When Nkechi demands that Chinye fetch water on the other side of the jungle after dark, Chinye reluctantly obeys. On her journey she comes across an old woman who tells her to take the smallest gourd out of the next hut she comes across. She makes sure to emphasize that the large gourds calling out to be taken are “full of evil things” (Onyefulu 10). Chinye, being a “quiet, obedient girl,” does as she is told and takes home the smallest and quietest gourd from the hut (Onyefulu 1). When she is finally able to break the gourd open, she finds that it contains enough treasure to fill her father’s old hut.

Nkechi is filled with greed when she learns of Chinye’s new fortune and sends her own daughter out to bring home a gourd. Adanma goes out, encounters the same old woman, and finds the hut filled with gourds. However, Adanma does not pay attention to the old woman’s advice as Chinye did. She immediately goes for the biggest and loudest gourd, rationalizing that “the bigger the gourd, the greater the treasure” (Onyefulu 21). Unfortunately, this is not the actual effect of the gourd. Where the small gourd gives, the large gourd takes away. When she opens the large gourd “a great whirlwind sprang up, gathered all their belongings, and flung them out through the window” (Onyefulu 21). Through their greed Nkechi and Adanma lose everything – their clothes, pots, pans, and the cowrie shells that serve as money in the village. With pride added to their greed, the two leave the village empty handed, too proud to ask for help. Had their thoughts not been ruled by greediness

they would have prospered, but their quest to always have more destroyed them. West African culture seeks to reward hard work and to punish greed, especially unjustified greed. Nkechi and Adanma never did enough to deserve wealth; and in making Chinye do all of their work for them, they proved that laziness and greediness were a poor combination in a person. These fatal flaws prevented them from obeying the old woman's advice and earning their own fortune. Hard work and obedience is the only way to make a good living.

Domitila also promotes the idea that hard work brings prosperity while laziness earns nothing. The Mexican tale has one minor difference from other Cinderella type stories though. In this story, both of Domitila's parents are alive during her childhood. She has a warm and caring upbringing, and her mother teaches her to "do every task with care, and always add a generous dash of love" (Coburn 2). It is not until Domitila is grown and working in the Governor's house that her mother falls ill and passes away. Domitila leaves the governor's house following her mother's death, but before she leaves, her hard work and wonderful cooking catch the attention of the Governor's son, Timoteo. He is impressed with her cooking and feels guilty for ridiculing her for making peasants' food. Timoteo vows to find Domitila again to apologize for offending her at their first meeting and to learn the secret behind her hard work. As Timoteo searches for Domitila, he comes across a lady named Malvina. Malvina assumes that the man intends to marry Domitila upon finding her and plots to get him to marry her own daughter instead by giving him wrong directions. While Timoteo is lost because of Malvina's bad directions, Malvina takes her daughter, Pereza, and travels to Domitila's father's

house with stolen food. The pair sympathize and offer to feed the poor, grieving widower, and in due time he marries Malvina. At this point, Malvina's grand plan is to wait until Timoteo finally makes his way to the right house on his own and then pass off Domitila's cooking as Pereza's. Unfortunately for Malvina, Timoteo arrives during the town's Fall Festival, and the scent of Domitila's cooking leads him straight to her. As the two speak, Timoteo learns that the secret to Domitila's hard work is love, which makes him fall in love with her. Malvina and Pereza never had a chance at Timoteo and flee town when their plan is foiled.

The structure of *Domitila* is quite different from other Cinderella stories. Domitila meets her "prince" before acquiring a stepmother and stepsister. When she finally does have a stepfamily, they play a very minimal role in the story. They refuse to help with work around the house, just like in other cultures' stories, but Domitila is used to hard work. The only downside is now she must "work without laughter and without her mother's encouraging words" (Coburn 19). Domitila's life is certainly less enjoyable with the addition of Malvina and Pereza, but it is not unbearable or harmful. The diminished role of Malvina and Pereza allows Domitila's goodness to shine through on its own. Other stories illustrate the heroine's virtuousness by emphasizing the stepsisters' immorality. However, this story does a good job of letting Domitila's virtues speak for themselves, establishing her good traits well before Malvina and Pereza ever enter the story.

There is no doubt that the stepsisters in each of the stories are evil even though they manifest in different ways and receive different penalties. The French stepsisters are forgiven for their petty taunts and laziness while the father is

generally given a pass for being absent; forgive and forget is the theme here. The sisters in the Algonquin tribe who physically harm and ridicule their littlest sister are shamed out of the tribe for their arrogance. The Persian girls who try to murder their lovelier and luckier cousin end up dying from rage and jealousy. Karmic retribution is brought down upon the Chinese stepmother and stepsister for isolating a little girl and killing her fish. The greed of the stepmother and stepsister in West Africa becomes the pair's downfall when they become fixated on the heroine's good fortune. And the Mexican stepmother and stepsister prove that laziness and deception will get you nothing.

CHAPTER 2.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE: THE FAIRY GODMOTHER AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL HELPERS

"It's important to remember that we all have magic inside us."

-J. K. Rowling

The concept of a fairy godmother is a popular one in Western culture today because of Cinderella. Most other fairy tales, however, have a surprising lack of fairies. In fact, many variations of Cinderella do not incorporate fairies. Of course the heroine would not have been able to succeed without a little outside magical help, but not every helper is a fairy. No matter what form the helper takes, it is maternal in nature, looking out for the heroine in her time of need. The main point of the fairy godmother, in whatever form she may take, is "to assist the downtrodden girl and make her feel loved," since she obviously is not getting this love from her family (Zipes 120). The heroine's need for a strong, caring female figure is great, given that the primary women in her life are neglectful, cruel, and abusive. This figure takes the form of something important and unique to the culture it hails from and provides the heroine with the tools that she needs to transform her own life and leave her malicious family behind.

Fairies did not appear in either *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty* until Perrault got his hands on the tales in the seventeenth century. As "a skilled reformulator" Perrault had a habit of changing and introducing new ideas into all of the stories he rewrote (Bottigheimer 58). By incorporating the fairy godmother into his version of *Cinderella*, he was able to provide a simple explanation for the magic involved as

well as give Cinderella a physical being to comfort her in her time of need. Cinderella's fairy godmother does not enter the story until Cinderella "fell a-crying" after watching her stepsisters leave for the ball, leaving her behind (Perrault). Cinderella is in a very vulnerable state at this moment; since we know she never let on the extent of her suffering to her father, it can be assumed that she tried to never cry in front of her family. By letting her godmother witness this moment of weakness, she is demonstrating how much trust she places in her godmother not to invalidate her emotions. Her godmother does not ridicule Cinderella for her desire to go to the ball, as her stepmother and stepsisters have done. Instead she takes her goddaughter's wish and turns it into a reality by enchanting ordinary objects and animals into a carriage and an entourage. Finally, the fairy godmother gives Cinderella "cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels" and "a pair of glass slippers" to wear to the ball (Perrault). The fairy godmother cares deeply about Cinderella and does everything within her power to make the girl happy for even a short while. When Cinderella wants to go to the ball again the next night, the godmother happily obliges to send her off in style once more.

Cinderella does not benefit from her godmother's magic simply because of the love and care that her godmother has for her; she receives aid because she is a good person at heart. Recipients of Perrault's tales were often young middle and upper class girls. Cinderella's behavior was meant to act as a model for them. If Cinderella were lazy and unkind, she would not be deserving of her godmother's help; after all, "the good deeds of the hero and heroine single them out... and mark them as the beneficiaries of helpers and donors" (Tatar 79). Cinderella's godmother

may care deeply for her, but without good character Cinderella could not expect any assistance from her fairy godmother. The godmother even says to Cinderella as she is preparing her for the ball, “be but a good girl, and I will contrive that thou shalt go” (Perrault). Here *goodness* can be exchanged for *obedience*. Similar to how the stepsisters demand Cinderella to perform tasks for them, the godmother also asks Cinderella to fetch a series of things before she can go to the ball. This constant willingness to do as asked without complaint is what makes Cinderella a “good girl.” Perrault uses Cinderella to push the importance of being virtuous onto his audience. Cinderella’s obedience and perseverance is rewarded with an extravagant dress and carriage for the ball, which grabs the prince’s attention and allows Cinderella to leave her old life behind for good. Cinderella would never have been able to achieve this without the help of her fairy godmother, but she earned the help by her own virtue.

Persia had its own variety of supernatural beings to incorporate into its literature. Settareh, the heroine of *The Persian Cinderella*, finds herself the beneficiary of a *pari’s* good graces. According to Persian mythology, a *pari* is a class of fairy or genie that was originally described as evil, but became good through penance. *Pari* fall somewhere between angels and evil spirits and are usually described as female. Settareh stumbles upon her *pari* in the marketplace. Instead of buying herself new clothes for the prince’s festival, Settareh donates most of her money to a poor beggar and then buys a small, cracked, blue jug that she finds herself drawn to. She accidentally discovers that a *pari* has made the jug its home when she wishes the jug to be filled with jasmine blossoms and the wish is fulfilled.

Settareh makes sure not to abuse her new friend's magic. She starts by only wishing for food, warmth, and companionship, all things a young girl needs to be happy and healthy. Settareh does not tell her family about her *pari*. She knows that her aunts and her stepsisters would take it and use it for their own selfish gains. The *pari* remains "her own secret" and the two form a bond (Climo 10). Fairies and genies and other supernatural wish granters are notorious for twisting a person's wish into something undesirable, but Settareh's *pari* never cheats her. The *pari* always gives Settareh the best version of what she asks for. When Settareh complains of being cold, the *pari* gives her "a warm shawl of the softest goat hair" (Climo 10). When Settareh simply asks for a new gown to go to the No Ruz festival, the *pari* gives her an exquisite outfit complete with diamond-studded anklets. The *pari* gives Settareh everything she asks for, and then some, so that Settareh can feel safe and loved. The pair protects each other. The *pari* protects Settareh by providing for her needs, while Settareh protects the *pari* from her family by keeping its existence a secret.

Unfortunately the *pari* and Settareh can only protect each other for so long. After Settareh is engaged to the prince, her stepsisters force her to tell them how she was able to win the prince. When the stepsisters learn about the *pari* in the jar, they plan on using it against Settareh. On the day of Settareh's wedding to the prince, the two stepsisters steal the little blue jug and tell the *pari* inside that they "want Settareh gone – forever" and demand "a way to be rid of her" (Climo 24). The *pari* must obey the command and erupts leaving six hairpins behind. Torn apart by its obligation to obey a command and its bond with Settareh, the *pari* bursts.

However, despite being forced to turn against Settareh, the *pari* does not cooperate

with the stepsisters the way it cooperated with Settareh. The stepsisters are obviously aiming to kill Settareh, but the *pari* does not give them a way to accomplish this. The hairpins do not kill Settareh; they simply turn her into a turtledove. The effect is not permanent either, like the stepsisters requested. The prince is easily able to reverse the effect by removing the hairpins from the turtledove. Even when the *pari* receives a request to destroy Settareh, it still finds a way to protect her.

The Chinese version of this tale, *Yeh-Shen*, does not employ a mythological creature as the heroine's savior and protector. In this version the bones of a fish provide Yeh-Shen with everything she wants and needs. Yeh-Shen's stepmother keeps her isolated from the rest of the world, so the poor girl's only companion is a fish in a pond outside the cave they live in. She brings the fish some of her food every day, despite not being given much food to begin with. Yeh-Shen is able to keep her pet a secret from her stepmother for a while, but one day she does find out and kills the fish. Yeh-Shen is devastated when she finds out her fish friend is gone, but it turns out that the fish's spirit has not left her. The bones of Yeh-Shen's fish "are filled with a powerful spirit" that can grant her any wish (Louie 6). She gathers the fish's remains from the dung heap and speaks to them daily. The fish's spirit does not forget the times that Yeh-Shen brought food for it and now provides food for Yeh-Shen whenever she is hungry. Just like Settareh, Yeh-Shen does not abuse her fish's magic and kindness. She typically only ever asks for food when she does not have enough. When it comes time for the spring festival, Yeh-Shen has not exhausted her fish's kindness and is able to ask for appropriate clothes in which to

attend the festival. The fish gives her a “cloak of kingfisher feathers” and slippers that had “a pattern like the scales of a fish” (Louie 10). When Yeh-Shen loses one of the slippers at the festival, the fish’s bones become silent. The spirit and its gifts are linked by the same magic, and Yeh-Shen loses her friend. However, in losing her friend she gains something greater. She gains a new life married to the king away from her stepmother and stepsister. The fish’s gift brings Yeh-Shen good fortune in the end.

The fact that Yeh-Shen’s benefactor is a fish is a very important detail. Yeh-Shen’s fish leads her directly into a marriage with a wealthy king by giving her the gown and slippers to go to the festival in. In Chinese culture, a fish is a symbol of wealth and prosperity. However, this association could be the result of “confusion between two characters which have the same sound, *yü*, which means both ‘wealth’ and ‘fish’” (Dundes 91). The idea that fish are the providers of wealth could be built on a pun. However, this is not the only association in the Chinese language that is built on similar sounding words. There is a strong superstition surrounding the number four because the Chinese word for four sounds a lot like the Chinese word for death. People will avoid saying or writing the number four in case they invite death upon them. The habit to associate homophones with one another is a strong one. It makes perfect sense why the being that lead Yeh-Shen into prosperity and wealth was a fish.

The West African heroine of *Chinye* has animal helpers as well. When her stepmother forces her to travel through the jungle at night to fetch water, Chinye meets two kind and helpful animals before seeing the mysterious old lady of the

jungle. It is suggested that animal helpers in a tale “may be an individual totem or guardian spirit” for the hero or heroine, guiding them to safety or success (Dundes 89). The antelope and hyena that Chinye encounters certainly try to keep Chinye safe during her nighttime trip through the jungle. Chinye encounters the antelope first. The antelope tries to convince Chinye to return home because the jungle is not safe at night, but when Chinye rejects this attempt to guide her to safety, the antelope allows her to continue on her mission. Shortly after leaving the antelope Chinye meets the hyena, whose “voice was full of love and kindness” (Onyefulu 7). The hyena also assumes the role of guardian over Chinye, this time by helping her avoid a lion so she can successfully and safely fill her waterpot. Throughout Chinye’s journey into the jungle, the animals take on a protective and nurturing role. They show more concern for Chinye’s wellbeing than her stepmother ever did. And by safely guiding Chinye through the jungle they also indirectly guide her to the old lady of the jungle.

The kind guardian animals do not directly give Chinye a way to escape her miserable life with her stepmother and stepsister; the old woman Chinye meets in the jungle provides this. The old woman is likely another supernatural being due to her ability to appear and disappear at will. Upon meeting Chinye, the old woman blesses her and tells her to go to the hut filled with gourds. She carefully instructs Chinye to take the smallest and quietest gourd before disappearing. Similar to *Cinderella*, this task is meant to test obedience. Elders possess much knowledge, and villages in West Africa are of the opinion that their advice should be heeded. The old woman chooses to share her wisdom with Chinye, and if Chinye trusts and

obeys the old woman's instructions she can expect to be well rewarded. Chinye leaves the hut with her gourd in hand, and her choice is immediately approved by the old lady's words, "you have chosen wisely," (Onyefulu 13). Because of the old woman's kindness and instruction and because of Chinye's obedience, Chinye is rewarded with enough gold, ivory, and cloth to bring prosperity to the rest of her village. There is no doubt that Chinye has earned her opportunity at a better life.

In the Mexican version of the Cinderella tale, Domitila's mother takes a hands-on approach to raising her daughter and teaching her how to provide for herself. Growing up, Domitila never doubts that she is loved and cared for. She has confidence and a wide array of skills, which means she has no need to be rescued by a godmother figure. In due time Domitila grows up and leaves home to do her part to supply an income for the family. While working as a cook in the governor's house, she receives word that her mother has fallen seriously ill. Unfortunately, Domitila returns home too late. Her mother has passed away. Her mother's spirit lingers a little longer, though. She visits Domitila in the night to remind her one last time, "I will always be with you, my child" and to perform every task with care and love (Coburn 9). Domitila's parents raise her to not be ashamed of hard work, and they also ensure she already has all of the tools she needs to succeed in life. This last reminder from her mother is all she really needs to go out and make a good life for herself.

Domitila doesn't necessarily have a fairy godmother because she grew up with her real mother. There was no need for a mystical, magical being to take up a positive maternal role over Domitila since that role was never vacated. The

“godmother” figures of other tales act as a surrogate mother to the heroine. They provide the heroine with a fancy outfit or a magic object to help make up for the setbacks she has faced from not having a real mother to care and provide for her. However, Domitila succeeds in winning the governor’s son because of the skills and dedication taught to her by her own mother. More importantly, she uses the lessons her mother taught her to create her own path in life. Domitila certainly had an advantage growing up with her biological mother. She may not have had a magical being to grant her wishes, but she had a loving family and a good work ethic. Mexican tradition places a lot of emphasis on family connections and spending time together. This version illustrates that idea by keeping the mother alive throughout most of Domitila’s life. Family has made her stronger.

Similar to Domitila, the Rough-Face Girl creates her own destiny mostly by herself. Abused by her sisters and ridiculed by the rest of the village, the Rough-Face Girl has confidence in her ability to see the beauty of the earth and recognize the Invisible Being within nature. The Rough-Face Girl has no help when she sets out to prove she can see the Invisible Being. She makes her dress herself from the bark of dead birch trees. She wears her father’s worn out moccasins from the previous year. Villagers taunt her from their wigwams, telling her to go home because she is too ugly to marry the Invisible Being. The Rough-Face Girl does not meet a supportive person until she reaches the sister of the Invisible Being. Since the sister can see the Invisible Being, she conducts the tests on the eligible maidens to make sure their claims of being able to see the Invisible Being are truthful. The sister of the Invisible Being also has her own special power. She can look at a

person and “see all the way down to [their] heart” (Martin 21). The sister looks into the Rough-Face Girl’s heart and sees that she is good and kind. Knowing this, the sister remains compassionate towards the Rough-Face Girl. When the Rough-Face Girl passes the sister’s test, the sister shifts roles from gatekeeper to guide. She is no longer trying to keep the Rough-Face Girl away from the Invisible Being, but trying to help make the transition into being his bride as smooth as possible. The sister proceeds to give the Rough-Face Girl “the finest of buckskin robes and a necklace of perfect shells” and instructs her to bathe in the lake (Martin 28). As the Rough-Face Girl does this, her scarred skin becomes smooth and her burned hair grows long. She becomes as beautiful outside as she is inside, just as “the Invisible Being and his sister had seen... from the start” (Martin 28). This version alters the basic Cinderella story just a bit to have the heroine receive supernatural help and gifts after already having proven herself to the “prince.” By passing the test without any help, the Rough-Face Girl further proves that she deserves the help of the sister. Other heroines earn their benefactor’s help on kindness alone, but the Rough-Face Girl earns it with her confidence and trust in nature as well. The sister may have made the Rough-Face Girl outwardly beautiful, but she and her brother had already seen the girl’s inner worth based on her actions.

Each heroine finds a better life for herself based on gifts or lessons from a fairy godmother or other donor figure in their life. They all had to earn the help that was given to them, though. Cinderella’s fairy godmother was able to send her to the ball in style because of the girl’s obedience. Once there, Cinderella used her godmother’s gifts to enchant the prince, eventually marrying him and leaving her

life of servitude behind for good. Settareh forms a bond with her magical *pari*, and the two protect each other from Settareh's family. Once again, Settareh's kindness and good character rewards her with a beautiful outfit to charm the prince at the festival, allowing her to leave the confines of her abusive family home. Yeh-Shen's fish repays all the times she brought it dinner by feeding her in her times of need and allowing her to escape her stepmother by giving her exquisite shoes that catch the attention of the king. Chinye's obedience and attention to elders leads her to riches when she listens to the jungle animals and the mysterious old woman in the jungle. Domitila's mother teaches her how to work hard and be kind, and Domitila uses her mother's lessons every day, catching the attention of the governor's son along the way. The Rough-Face-Girl earns outer beauty for herself through having a good heart and being in tune with nature. Each girl used the gifts they received in constructive ways, earning a better way of life for herself along the way. They have to prove themselves worthy of such a gift before the donor figure will grant it to them, but without the gift they could not have succeeded in their goals.

CHAPTER 3.

IF THE SHOE FITS: TESTS OF PERSONAL WORTH

"Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world."

-Bette Midler

*"A fairy tale also reveals some sort of truth,
the perils of choices we face in our youth."*

-Ella Enchanted

One of the most recognized features of the Cinderella story is the shoe she leaves behind at the ball. The symbol of the shoe performs multiple tasks. First of all, it acts as a clue to help the prince find his "Cinderella" again after the ball. As the only thing the heroine leaves behind, the shoe is the one way that the prince can locate her again. In addition to this, the shoe also functions as a test of sorts. Only the maiden who can fit into the shoe passes the test, and only the maiden who passes the test can marry the prince. The test of the shoe serves to weed out the false maidens from the one true maiden. However, despite being a key part of the story archetype, not every Cinderella story uses the shoe symbol. Most stories have the heroine leave some belonging behind for the prince to find, but some do not even do this. These stories test their characters in a different way.

Of the stories being explored for this thesis, only four of the six texts use a shoe or other belonging as a test. Charles Perrault's *Cinderella*, of course, uses a glass slipper. In the Middle Eastern version, *The Persian Cinderella*, the main character leaves behind an anklet. *Yeh-Shen*, of the Chinese Tang dynasty, shows its main character losing a shoe of gold. While the title character of the Mexican variation, *Domitila*, leaves behind both her sandal strap and a taste for her

homemade *nopales*. In the case of the final two texts, the characters must prove themselves in a different way. The heroine of *The Rough-Faced Girl* must show herself worthy of marrying the Invisible Being by proving that she alone can see his true form, while the West African tale of *Chinye* shows the girl making her fortune by listening to the advice of an elder.

Interestingly, in the versions that do leave an object behind for the prince to find, the lost object has to do with the main character's feet. Rather than being some giant coincidence, later texts have, almost certainly, drawn inspiration from the stories that came before. The earliest written Cinderella story included in this research, *Yeh-Shen*, offers the best explanation for this preoccupation with feet.

Yeh-Shen was written in the Chinese Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). In both the Tang dynasty and the Song dynasty, it was fashionable for women to have bound feet. Foot binding was a process in which girls would have their feet pulled and stretched in such a way that would cause their feet to stop growing and appear smaller. It was an extremely painful process that reshaped the bones of the foot and left girls unable to walk without help. Yet countless generations for thousands of years continued the tradition of binding their daughters' feet. Tiny, bound feet became synonymous with desirability as "one of a good family does not wish to marry a woman with long feet" (Dundes 104). Bound feet would ensure a daughter would have an honorable and beneficial marriage, contributing to her overall cultural worth. Parents would start the binding process when their daughter was around five years old, and by adulthood the girl could fit into shoes that were only four or five inches long. The culture surrounding womanhood revolved around foot

size during the Song and Tang dynasties, contributing to the emphasis on shoes and feet within *Yeh-Shen*.

While it does not specifically say that Yeh-Shen had bound feet, considering the time period during which it was created, one can assume that her feet were bound. When Yeh-Shen is dressed for the festival, special attention is paid to her feet. Her magic fish bones give her beautiful golden shoes to wear “on her tiny feet” (Louie 10). The splendor of the shoes, which “were woven of golden threads, in a pattern like the scales of a fish,” is meant to draw the attention of those attending the festival (Louie 10). The festival is a place for the village youth “to meet and to choose whom they would marry,” and an attribute such as small feet is meant to be showcased at such an event (Louie 8). In a culture that values small, dainty feet as a measure of beauty, small feet would be shown off whenever possible. The gold thread and solid gold that makes up Yeh-Shen’s shoes were specifically chosen for its flashiness. The shoes were designed to be noticed, and by noticing the material and brilliance of the shoes, people would also notice the size of the shoe, emphasizing the wearer’s beauty.

When the king comes into possession of the lost golden slipper, he becomes determined to find the owner of such a small shoe. However, every woman who tried on the shoe “found it impossibly small” (Louie 20). In the midst of the Tang dynasty when this story was written, it can be assumed that most women would have small, bound feet, so even these women with their incredibly tiny feet could not fit into this small shoe, showing Yeh-Shen’s foot to be even smaller by comparison. Additionally, girls in China would often send their betrothed a pair of

shoes prior to the wedding “in signification of her subordination to him” (Dundes 88). By owning Yeh-Shen’s shoe, the king is traditionally betrothed to her and has her under his control. However, the king does not know the identity of his betrothed and is even more desperate to find her. Since the only thing the king knows about his mystery girl is that she has feet small enough to fit into this shoe, this is the starting point for finding Yeh-Shen’s true identity. When the king first sees Yeh-Shen, he prepares to throw her in prison as a thief until he sees “that she walked upon the tiniest feet he had ever seen” (Louie 22). When he sees this, he hopes that she is the maiden he has been looking for and makes her try on the shoes to confirm they fit. The size of the shoe and the size of her feet allow the king to correctly infer Yeh-Shen’s identity. Yeh-Shen’s tiny shoe also serves as a test to prevent unworthy women from taking Yeh-Shen’s rightful place as the king’s wife. All of the women who tried the shoe had significantly larger feet, pointing out their flaws. Only the one with perfect, tiny feet would be able to pass the test set forth by the shoe.

Charles Perrault’s *Cinderella* draws heavily from the shoe test used in *Yeh-Shen*. Though Cinderella’s shoe is not necessarily used to showcase her culturally superior tiny feet, they are made of an uncommon material. Yeh-Shen’s shoes were made of solid gold and gold thread, while Cinderella’s were made of glass, both of which are not typically used in shoemaking. The uniqueness of the shoe serves as a clue as to Cinderella’s identity since not many maidens go around in glass slippers. Also similar to *Yeh-Shen*, Cinderella’s shoe does not fit any other maiden in the land besides Cinderella. The shoe once again serves as a test, preventing the unworthy

(those who cannot fit into it) from the worthy (the one who can fit into it). Additionally, Yeh-Shen and Cinderella are both defined by their shoes. Yeh-Shen is mistaken for a thief until the king sees her small feet and hopes the golden slipper can fit her. After she has lost her shoe and been transformed back into rags, Cinderella is viewed by the palace guards as having “more the air of a country wench than a gentlewoman,” when she had been seen as a princess just moments before in her fancy clothes and shoes (Perrault). The close linkage of the shoes to status is closely tied to the worthiness of the wearer. The shoes are seen as belonging to someone special, someone important, so the fact that they fit these girls who appear not to be special at first glance shows their true worth. Both girls show up to retrieve their shoe dressed in rags and common clothing in a time when clothing was linked closely to wealth and status, especially for women. The fact that they can claim ownership of their beautiful shoes subverts the idea that clothing equals wealth and wealth equals worthiness. This shows true worthiness comes from inside one’s character.

The idea of testing a woman’s worthiness based on the size of her foot is still present in the Persian tale. In *The Persian Cinderella*, it is not her shoe that Settareh loses but her anklet, which is still an object closely associated with her “slender ankles and tiny feet” (Climo 2). However, the prince’s mother is now the one to administer the test. She takes it upon herself to find the owner of the anklet, telling Prince Mehrdad, “What do you know of women and their ways?” (Climo, 18). In Persian culture, men and women had vastly different social spheres. They occupied separate men’s quarters and women’s quarters at home, only occasionally visiting

the opposite side of the house. When going out, “every woman, no matter her age, covered her head with a cloak so that no stranger might look on her face,” effectively segregating the men from the women even more (Climo, 4). With these strict social customs regarding gender, it was not only proper for the prince’s mother to look for the maiden in question, but logical as well. Having spent very little time with women, especially women outside of his family, Prince Mehrdad would be unfamiliar with how to interact with the opposite gender. By sending his mother out in his place, the royal family ensures that the queen, being a woman herself, can track down the true identity of this girl using the anklet.

In *Domitila*, the governor’s son, Timoteo, does not find a whole shoe left behind. Domitila only leaves a broken sandal strap at the governor’s house when she returns home to care for her mother. The strap is one she made herself, having learned leatherwork from her mother growing up. The leather strap showcases the talent and workmanship Domitila possesses, which impresses Timoteo, who wonders how someone could turn “scraps of leather into works of art” (Coburn 13). However, it is not just the impressiveness of the shoe strap that continues to hold Timoteo’s attention. Domitila’s talent in cooking is equally as impressive as her skill in leatherworking. He is most impressed by her meal of *nopales*, a dish made from cactus. Timoteo originally thinks of the dish as disgusting and meant for common people, but upon tasting it he changes his mind and refers to it as “a delicacy” (Coburn 8). The care and dedication Domitila puts into anything that she does is what catches Tometeo’s eye.

While the leather sandal strap does give Timoteo a hint as to Domitila's identity, the *nopales* play a more significant role in his endeavor to find her. His desire to learn the secret of her cooking is what sets off his entire search. No other food is palatable to him after tasting Domitila's cooking. In this story, the cooking is the main test that the governor's son uses to weed out the one worthy girl from the many subpar ones he comes across. Domitila's cooking is so wonderful that, in the eyes of Timoteo, no other person could compare. Each person that cooks for Timoteo does not match up to the taste of the food he remembers, meaning that the cook in question fails the test set forth by Timoteo to find the hardworking and talented Domitila. With focus placed on a tangible creative product, it can be seen that this culture values hard work and skill. Someone who puts everything into their work and enjoys what they do, as opposed to someone with small feet, is someone who is prized in this society.

In the Algonquin Native American legend, *The Rough-Face Girl*, no shoe or other object is used as a symbol in the same way as in the other texts reviewed. In fact, the Invisible Being, the great warrior of the tribe, and the Rough-Face Girl are never separated after meeting, so any clue to allow the warrior to discover the girl's real identity is unnecessary. However, the Rough-Face Girl must still prove herself to be worthy of marrying the Invisible Being. Any maiden who wishes to marry the Invisible Being is put to the test and must prove that she is capable of seeing his true form. Girls who try to fake their way into marrying the Invisible Being are immediately exposed by his sister, who is able to see her brother. Neither the Invisible Being nor his sister tolerate lying, so the girls who try to lie about seeing

him are sent home, ashamed. When the Rough-Face Girl comes to marry the Invisible Being, his sister gives the girl a fair chance, despite her burnt face and strange clothes. The sister has the ability to “see all the way down to your heart” and could tell the Rough-Face Girl “had a beautiful, kind heart” (Martin 21). This glimpse of the girl’s good character gives the sister hope that the Rough-Face Girl will succeed. When she accurately and honestly describes the Invisible Being, she passes the test. The Algonquin tribe valued honesty. This legend taught their people that lying for personal gain or in order to improve one’s situation would not work out. Those who lie are caught and those who tell the truth are rewarded.

In addition to her good heart, the Rough-Face Girl is also able to pass the test because of her closeness to nature. According to the story, “As she walked on she saw the great beauty of the earth and skies around her. And truly she alone, of all in that village, saw in these things the sweet yet awesome face of the Invisible Being” (Martin 18-19). The Invisible Being is intertwined with the wonders of nature, and almost no one in the tribe realizes this. The Algonquin tribe was a tribe of hunters and gatherers, so being in tune with the workings of nature around them was very important. The Rough-Face Girl was so in tune with the nature that the Invisible Being represents that the carvings on her dress “of the sun, moon, stars, plants, trees, and animals” (Martin 16) mimic the “pictures of the sun, moon, stars, trees, and animals” painted on the side of his wigwam (Martin 2). The connection that the Rough-Face Girl and the Invisible Being have through nature serves as a reminder to members of the Algonquin tribe to stay connected to nature as well.

In the last text, the West African tale of *Chinye*, there is not a prince, much less a shoe symbol for the prince to find. Chinye is a very young girl, so marriage is not a concern of hers yet. However, she is able to make her own fortune and leave the home of her stepmother, Nkechi, and stepsister, Adanma. She is able to do this through her ability to listen and obey the advice of her elders. While out fetching water one night, Chinye comes across an old woman. The old woman warns her that she will come across a hut full of talking gourds. Of these gourds, Chinye should take the “smallest, quietest gourd” home with her (Onyefulu 10). Chinye obeys, and is rewarded with all sorts of treasure. Because she heeded the warnings of the mysterious, old lady, Chinye passes the test and proves herself worthy of reward. Instead of earning a prince, though, she earns financial stability and independence from her stepmother.

After Chinye’s success in the gourd hut, her stepmother makes her stepsister, Adanma, try to earn riches as well. When she comes across the test, the old lady gives her the same advice, to take the smallest and quietest gourd and ignore the loudest one. Adanma is expressly told how to pass the test, yet when she reaches the hut with the gourds in it she chooses to take the largest one she can carry, thinking it holds even more treasure than the small ones. However, once Adanma returns home the gourd is opened to produce a whirlwind that ruins the family’s belongings. Adanma’s and Nkechi’s ruin is brought about directly due to Adanma’s greed and her refusal to listen to her elders. The elderly are seen as wise and knowledgeable, so blatantly ignoring their advice has consequences. Adanma presumed to know more than the old woman did, and her presumptions cost her

and her mother. The old woman told them the large gourds were no good, and Adanma's choice to ignore the woman and instead serve her selfish desires shows her to be unworthy of reward.

In each story the main character is tested, and in each story she proves herself by passing the test. The test used in Cinderella tales is nearly always a shoe or other foot related object, but other objects or concepts can be used as well. The type of test used tells a lot about the culture employing the test. Those in China, Europe, and the Middle East all prize foot size and overall beauty in their women. Residents of Mexico value hard work and skill. Members of the Algonquin tribe find honesty and closeness to nature to be significant. And those in West Africa think listening to elders and not being greedy is important. Each culture inputs their values into the story through these story tests in order to instill these values into future generations listening to the stories.

CHAPTER 4.

GOODNESS GRACIOUS: HOW GIRLS ARE EXPECTED TO ACT, THINK, AND LOOK

"PRINCE DEREK: What? You're all I ever wanted. You're beautiful!

ODETTE: Thank you. But what else?

PRINCE DEREK: What else?

ODETTE: Is beauty all that matters to you?

PRINCE DEREK: What else is there?"

-The Swan Princess

"She told me it was a girl, and I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.'"

-Daisy in The Great Gatsby

The story of Cinderella hinges on the idea that the heroine is good in every way. She needs to be portrayed in such a way that audiences pity her and root for her to leave her home to find a better life. If the heroine was to be spoiled and awful, however, audiences would agree that she deserves the servile position her stepmother puts her in and should not be rewarded. The goodness of character required of the heroine could be portrayed as any combination of domestic competence, modesty, kindness, obedience, or physical beauty, just to name a few common traits. The story type Cinderella falls under is "driven as much by the opposition between hard-working/lazy and dutiful/disobedient as by the contrast kind/unkind," meaning that the good traits of the heroine are meant to contrast the poor traits of the stepmother and stepsisters (Tatar 54). This contrast in behavior, along with whether characters are rewarded or punished for their behavior, contributes to the didactic storytelling that reinforces community values in young children. The heroine of each story embodies the positive characteristics sought after and expected in women within the culture producing the story.

Just as media today can influence people's perceptions of beauty standards or stereotypes, literature of past eras influenced its audiences' self and world views. The traits portrayed as good in each heroine are established by readers as normal and come to be expected from women in the culture. Little girls especially pick up on the positive light in which the heroine is portrayed and try to emulate her. They see that she is rewarded after everything she has gone through, and they try to be like her in the hopes of gaining a similar reward. In this way, young readers learn the power of hard work from the heroine's effort, but they also learn that a woman's place is in the home and that her concentration should be on looking pretty based on the story's emphasis on domestic work and beauty. The young generation of readers and listeners grow up trying to imitate these emphasized traits, contributing to the importance of these traits as perceived by the culture. The culture continues to see the value of these traits in society and continues to emphasize the values into their literature to indoctrinate the next generation with these traits.

The only story explored in this thesis that does not place an emphasis on the main character's looks is *Chinye*. The West African tale is also the only version to exclude a prince from the narrative. This story's shift away from marriage and external beauty likely has to do with the heroine's age. Chinye is younger than the heroines of other versions and has not yet reached her culture's marrying age. Since she is not trying to court someone or gain a suitor's attentions, it would hardly be appropriate to bring excessive attention to the child's appearance. Instead, the text focuses on how Chinye is "a quiet, obedient girl" (Onyefulu 1). Overworked by her

stepmother, Chinye never complains. She does whatever task is demanded of her quickly and efficiently in order to try to please her stepmother. Chinye is a hard worker, but being obedient is what makes her an example of a good child. Children in this tribe are expected to help out around the village, but most importantly they are expected to respect and listen to their elders. Chinye continues to listen to and obey her stepmother, Nkechi, even though doing so makes Chinye's life difficult. Because Nkechi is the closest thing to family that Chinye has, she must respect her as an elder and as the family authority. She continues to work hard and obey Nkechi's demands, even though they may threaten her safety, in order to show Nkechi the respect an adult in the tribe should be given.

One night Nkechi demands that Chinye fetch water from the stream in the jungle despite the fact that "wild animals prowled there, and even on moonlit nights the bravest villagers stayed at home" (Onyefulu 4). Chinye's obedience, however reluctant, leads her into the jungle where she is finally rewarded for her hard work and patience. During the return trip from the stream, Chinye comes across an old lady who tests her obedience one last time. The old lady instructs Chinye to take the smallest and quietest gourd from the hut that she will pass on her way home. If Chinye does not do as she is told, she risks taking home a gourd that is "full of evil things" (Onyefulu 10). Chinye proves once again to be obedient and worthy of reward by listening to the old woman's instructions and "[searching] until she found the smallest, quietest gourd" (Onyefulu 12). Chinye puts in the extra effort to obey the old woman's exact instructions even though it would have been much easier to listen to the large gourds yelling at her to take them instead.

Chinye does nothing out of the ordinary in order to gain her reward. She is simply her usual obedient, hardworking, and respectful self. The riches she receives do not change her character either. She lives “happily ever after,” but in doing so she also uses “her wealth to help the people of her village” (Onyefulu 24). Chinye selflessly wants to help her community and share her wealth. Many folk and fairy tales “repeatedly emphasize and enshrine the importance of indifference to wealth and worldly goods” (Tatar 59). It’s not at all uncommon for a hero or heroine to be unchanged by his or her new riches. Chinye, like many other fairy tale heroes, remains true to herself and does not allow greed to consume her. However, she takes her indifference to worldly goods a step further than most by sharing her riches with her village. Tribes and villages in West Africa are close-knit communities with strong ties to one another. Chinye, kind and hardworking as she is, does not think anything of contributing to the village’s overall wellbeing. In helping others she finds happiness for herself.

Moving to the Chinese version, *Yeh-Shen*, it is obvious that the heroine is still created to be hardworking and kind, but now emphasis is placed on her beautiful appearance as well. Concentration on the main character’s looks is the norm for the rest of the stories explored in this thesis. Even from a very young age Yeh-Shen is noted to have “skin as smooth as ivory and dark pools for eyes” that her stepmother is jealous of (Louie 1). Yeh-Shen’s beauty seems to be the source of her troubles. Angry that Yeh-Shen is more beautiful than her own daughter, the stepmother makes Yeh-Shen do all of the most difficult chores and isolates her from the rest of the world. Yeh-Shen works hard and does her chores to the best of her ability, but

her stepmother never lessens her jealous rage. The stepmother goes so far as to prevent Yeh-Shen from going to the spring festival where young men and women meet and choose their future spouses. Yeh-Shen threatens her own daughter's chance at finding a suitable match, so Yeh-Shen is forced to stay home and guard the fruit trees.

Even though her looks contribute to a poor home life, Yeh-Shen's attractiveness is ultimately beneficial to her when she sets out to reclaim her golden slipper. In hopes of finding the true owner, the king places the slipper in a pavilion and announces that the shoe will be returned to its original owner if they come to claim it. Yeh-Shen does not come during the day with the flocks of women who attempt to fit their foot into it. Instead she comes in the dead of night. After inspecting the shoe and confirming it is hers, Yeh-Shen simply takes the shoe without trying it on. The king wants to throw her in jail as a thief until he sees her face and is "struck by the sweet harmony of her features" (Louie 22). Because Yeh-Shen is beautiful, she escapes the king's initial rage and is instead the subject of his affections. His affection for her only grows when she changes out of her rags and into her fancy festival clothes. He decides "that he had found his true love," and the two are soon married (Louie 25). The king is impressed with Yeh-Shen simply because of her physical beauty, fine clothes, and timid nature, all qualities encouraged in women living in China during the Tang dynasty. Women, especially women of higher social status, were expected to be pretty dolls. Their feet were bound so that they could not work around the house or do things for themselves. Their sole purpose was to look beautiful for their husbands. Yeh-Shen's stepmother

tried to turn Yeh-Shen into little more than a laborer in order to ruin her chance of getting a husband before her own daughter did, but Yeh-Shen's natural beauty was still able to catch the eye of the king. Growing up listening to this story, little girls would try to look as beautiful as Yeh-Shen. They would hope for her light, smooth skin and her dark hair. Parents of little girls would even take part in styling their daughters and teaching them to be as passive as Yeh-Shen. The cultural obsession on female beauty and passivity was carried throughout dynasties by art and literature for hundreds of years, allowing this story to remain popular.

Similar to the Chinese version, *The Persian Cinderella* also places heavy emphasis on the heroine's beauty. Settareh "grew lovelier with the years" despite having nothing to eat or wear besides her stepsisters' old, cast off leftovers and clothes (Climo 1). The stepsisters grow jealous of Settareh's "long black hair [that] gleamed like polished ebony" and her perfect eyebrows above her dark eyes (Climo 2). Out of jealousy, Settareh's stepsisters tell her she is ugly and dirty, and that her star shaped birthmark is nothing but a mud spot. This constant torment keeps Settareh modest and humble. Since she doesn't know the extent of her beauty, she never tries to show off her looks. She is content to veil herself and cover up around strangers like a good Persian woman. Settareh also remains kind despite her stepsisters' treatment. She knows how it feels to be ridiculed and ignored, so she treats everyone she meets with kindness and respect. While Settareh is shopping with her family for new clothes to attend the prince's festival, she comes across an old lady begging for spare coins. Because Settareh knows how it feels to lack food or

clothes she gives most of her money to the old lady. Her stepsisters ridicule this choice, but Settareh is content knowing she has done the right thing.

Settareh chooses to spend her money on something other than a new outfit a second time when she buys a small and cracked blue jug. The *pari*, or fairy-like creature, living inside Settareh's blue jug gives her a new outfit to wear to the festival since she was not able to buy one. At the festival, Settareh's beauty and modesty dazzle everyone, even her own stepsisters who "believed her to be a princess from some distant land" (Climo 16). After Settareh's identity is discovered and she is brought before the prince, her humbleness and modesty continues. She is given a mirror "so that she might gaze at the prince's reflection without the embarrassment of facing him" since it would be wrong for two unmarried and unrelated members of the opposite gender to look at each other face to face (Climo 21). The prince sees how beautiful Settareh is, but is most pleased with the star shaped birthmark on her cheek. Still embarrassed of her mark because of her stepsisters' teasing, Settareh tries to cover it up. This modesty only endears her to the prince more as he explains that the mark "is heaven-sent" as a sign that they will marry (Climo 21). Settareh's beauty and modesty lead her to a wonderful marriage with the prince that is "just the beginning of happiness for Settareh" (Climo 30). Little girls hearing this story will strive to be kind like Settareh, but they will also strive to be humble like her. This story is a tool to keep girls and women covering themselves out of modesty and putting themselves in a subservient position to men. Because the heroine's story ends with eternal happiness and a powerful marriage,

women and girls see the value in copying her in hopes of finding their own happy ending.

While the Mexican version certainly does not ignore Domitila's looks, importance is once again placed on hard work and domestic capabilities in order to "emphasize the redemptive power of hard work" (Tatar 18). Domitila is not limited to just being "sweeter than a cactus bloom in early spring;" she is also a major contributor to her family's labor (Coburn 2). With her mother's lesson to always do tasks with love and care in mind, Domitila quickly becomes skilled in many things including cooking, weaving, and leather-making. Since girls typically inhabited the domestic sphere and were rarely allowed to go on their own adventures, female fairy tale protagonists hailing from these time periods are "faced time and time again with the task of demonstrating their domestic competence" (Tatar 69). Where heroes would win the princess with a show of force or bravery, heroines win the prince by showcasing their skills in homemaking or, in Domitila's case, cooking. Domitila impresses the Governor's son with her *nopales*, a dish made from cactus eaten by the common people of Hidalgo. At first Timoteo is disgusted at the concept of eating food for common people, but Domitila's skillful cooking wins him over. When Domitila is called home, Timoteo sets out to find her again to learn the secret of her cooking.

Though his love for her cooking starts him on his journey, Timoteo ends his journey by falling in love with Domitila. As he searches for her, he hears countless stories of Domitila's many talents. It seems as though everyone in Hidalgo adores her. By the time Timoteo finally reaches Domitila, he has already heard much praise

towards her, and he can't help but notice her beauty as well. We tend to view people that we think highly of as more attractive than those we dislike or have no opinion of. Timoteo already thinks very highly of Domitila, so he is predisposed to think she is physically attractive. Since the heroine's beauty isn't commented on other than Timoteo noticing it for the first time, it can be assumed that physical beauty is not a significant or important trait in the Mexican culture. Domitila's constant kindness and skillfulness is boasted of again and again throughout the story, meaning storytellers would rather instill ideas of helpfulness and hard work into the children being told these stories. Kindness brings happiness to all, according to the story. Through her kindness, Domitila helps Timoteo bring "prosperity and good will to all the citizens of the land" meaning it is much better to strive to be kind and hardworking than to be beautiful (Coburn 29).

The story of *The Rough-Face Girl* once again focuses on beauty, but it makes a point to compare inner beauty and outer beauty throughout the story. The Rough-Face Girl, the youngest of three sisters, is kind, respectful, and in tune with nature. Her two older sisters, on the other hand, are vain, spoiled, cruel, and care about nothing but themselves. The beautiful older sisters force their younger sister to sit by the fire until she is burnt and scarred. Her hair and skin become ruined, earning her the name Rough-Face Girl. Family and tribe members alike taunt the Rough-Face Girl for her rough skin and ugliness since they only see her outer appearance. The Rough-Face Girl, however, does not trouble herself with whether she or any other person is beautiful. She instead keeps her heart pure and focuses on "the great beauty of the earth and skies" which is how she is able to see the Invisible

Being (Martin 18). The Invisible Being and his sister are able to see past the Rough-Face Girl's appearance to her kind heart. When the Rough-Face Girl proves that she can see the Invisible Being, she is brought back to his wigwam to claim her right to be his wife. Upon seeing her, the Invisible Being remarks, "'and oh, my sister, but she is beautiful.' And his sister said, 'Yes'" (Martin 26). They are not referring to her physical appearance. The Invisible Being and his sister are speaking of her beautiful soul. Being beautiful on the inside is much more impressive than being beautiful on the outside. However, the Invisible Being and his sister recognize that outer beauty is held as highly important to some people, and they tell the Rough-Face Girl to bathe in the lake. As she bathes, her scars disappear and her hair grows back healthy. She finally is viewed as beautiful, "but the Invisible Being and his sister had seen that from the start" (Martin 28). This ties in to the popular idea that love is blind. The right people, those who truly care, are not concerned with how we appear to others. They consider our inner worth, and that is what makes us beautiful in their eyes, challenging the notion that beauty is only skin-deep. When someone is beautiful on the inside, that beauty shines through to the outside.

The Rough-Face Girl's connection to fire is another key part of her characterization. Fire is not only connected with the hearth, which is a symbol of a woman's place at home, but also with the idea of rebirth. Sometimes referred to as the thunderbird in Native American mythology, the phoenix is a magnificent bird that is reborn time and time again from its own ashes. Fire will destroy a phoenix, just as fire destroys the Rough-Face Girl's skin and hair. The phoenix, however, will rise from ash to become the beautiful, brilliant bird it once was, just as the Rough-

Face Girl “emerges... permanently brilliant” from her place by the fire (Dundes 37). Fire is the catalyst for change in both the Rough-Face Girl and the phoenix. It gives both the opportunity to start anew and realize their full potential.

Charles Perrault’s *Cinderella* is also closely tied with fire, but in this case the implication is of the hearth and domesticity. One goal of fairy tales, especially in western cultures, is “to promote a safe docility [in girls] while also participating in the cultural project of stabilizing gender roles” (Tatar 96). Children’s stories reinforce lessons and social norms seen everyday. The idea that the man goes out to provide for his family while the woman stays home to do the housework is not challenged in stories for children, especially not during Perrault’s time. Cinderella’s association with the hearth, a symbol of the home, runs deep enough to affect her name. When Cinderella finishes her chores, she sits in the “chimney-corner” among the cinders and ashes, earning her the nicknames “Cinderwench” and “Cinderella” from her stepsisters (Perrault). Cinderella upholds gender norms with her domestic capabilities and is expected to oversee all of the chores as well as help her stepsisters choose outfits and do their hair. She is already qualified to be the perfect housewife for someone, and upper middle class women in Europe were not expected to be more than a housewife.

Cinderella is more than a domestic servant, though. She is also kind and beautiful. Perrault treats both qualities as equally important, never referencing one more often than the other. In both of these aspects though, Cinderella has no rival. She is both “of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper” and “a hundred times handsomer than her sisters” (Perrault). Cinderella is great in every way and

has no perceivable faults. Her kindness and beauty even cause everybody attending the prince's ball to assume she was some "great princess" (Perrault). Her fancy clothes, however, have much to do with this assumption. One the second night of the ball, Cinderella accidentally stays past midnight. She escapes the prince in time, but her gown has changed back to rags by the time she passes the guards. The guards see her run by in her rags and think she has "more the air of a poor country wench than a gentlewoman" (Perrault). Cinderella's natural beauty is not enough to create the illusion she is a princess. The noble class has certain expectations in how they look, behave, and present themselves. Without her fancy ball gown, Cinderella does not meet these expectations. Her natural beauty and mannerisms are not enough to break through social classes. She can only temporarily experience the upper class until the prince claims her as his bride and allows her to permanently move up to the nobility. Cinderella has already proven she belongs, and she is finally accepted.

Nearly all Cinderella stories involve a beautiful protagonist. The male gaze, the idea that literature and other forms of visual art portray females from a male point of view, is common in societies where the patriarchy is dominant. This representation portrays women as objects for men's consumption, implying that all women's actions and qualities should be for the sake of men's pleasure, which is why all of the heroines who obtain a husband are portrayed as attractive. However, every heroine is more than simply beautiful; she is also kind, thoughtful, and hardworking. Children want to mimic the heroes in their stories, and tales about "the girl who is rewarded because of her looks rather than her good conduct simply

could not be harnessed into service for indoctrinating children with the right values” (Tatar 57). We want our children growing up into proper citizens, not shallow, self-absorbed people. Protagonists of children’s literature are created to instill good values in the younger generation. The people of West Africa want their children to be obedient and respectful of adults like Chinye. The ancient Chinese prefer their daughters be able to procure suitable husbands for themselves as Yeh-Shen did. Children in Persia who grow up to be like Settareh will please their parents by being modest and kind. Mexican families want their children to learn skills, help around the house, and put care into all of their work like Domitila. People of the Algonquin Tribe are content if the younger generation respect nature and have a good heart. The French want little girls to grow up to be able to take care of domestic tasks and to be kind. Each culture has different specific values it wishes to teach their children, but the base desire is the same: to teach their children to be decent human beings.

CONCLUSION

"We just try to make a good picture. And then the professors come along and tell us what we do."

-Walt Disney

Since fairy tales are deeply rooted in a given culture's values, one established version of *Cinderella* cannot be substituted for another. One culture's values are not necessarily another culture's values. For example, *Chinye* could not survive as the reigning version in France. For one, there are no jungles in France for the heroine's journey to make sense. Additionally, the wealth that the heroine accrues over the course of her story would be seen as inappropriate. Men were the breadwinners and providers of the home in Europe, and a financially independent woman would threaten the status quo of societal gender norms. People retell stories because they are familiar and comforting. They tell the stories that they heard growing up, stories that reinforce norms they see in real life every day. A story that promotes another culture's ideals and norms, while perhaps interesting to a reader, is not familiar enough to be retold again and again, and in order to survive a story must continue to be told or written down. Stories established in other cultures are less likely to be told enough times in their original form to take root and become popular in the new culture.

However, a story from another culture can be integrated into a new culture through steady change. One civilization can pick up a story from a neighboring society and alter it in subsequent retellings so that it reflects their own ideals. This is how the tale of *Cinderella* came to be in so many places around the world in the first place. Fairy tales, in any culture, remain relevant to society "because they

allude to deep hopes for material improvement, because they present illusions of happiness to come, and because they provide social paradigms that overlap nearly perfectly with daydreams of a better life,” and many variations on *Cinderella* touch on these universal wants and desires (Bottigheimer 13). The same basic plot structure survives across cultures: young, kind, overworked girl seeks refuge from a harsh family and receives help in finding a better, wealthier life for herself. The means by which the heroine accomplishes this is different based on each culture, as we have already seen in the six versions explored in this thesis, but the main desire for a better life and material wealth remains across cultures.

A popular story can still undergo massive changes today. When a fairy tale is seen as no longer relevant in how a society functions, there are two main paths it could follow. The first path is a short one: people could simply quit telling the story altogether; the story is lost to the ages, a mere memory in old storybooks. Or the fairy tale can be brought down the second path where storytellers heavily change details to make comments on society or otherwise influence the culture. It must be noted that fairy tales “do not merely encode social arrangements from the past, but also participate in their creation for the present and future” (Tatar 229). Literature is a powerful tool for swaying a culture’s thoughts and beliefs, and a popular and already well-known fairy tale is great for getting the public’s attention.

One such way fairy tales have been altered and used to make a statement today is through feminist retellings of these stories. It’s difficult to discuss fairy tales these days without hearing (usually valid) complaints that fairy tales uphold the patriarchy and that Disney does not create strong female role models for little

girls. Society today is not content with passive heroines who need a prince to save them and sweep them off their feet. However, Cinderella's story is too far engrained in our culture that simply refusing to tell it and letting it die is not an option. Pop culture finds new ways to reference this story all the time with new versions of *Cinderella*. The United States in particular is past the days when a woman was expected to stay home cooking and cleaning while she waited for her prince to rescue her. Girls are just as capable of going on adventures and creating their own destinies as boys are, and, for the most part, writers today recognize that. Modern movies like *Ella Enchanted* or *Another Cinderella Story* introduce these newer feminist ideas that reflect our culture's values into the *Cinderella* narrative to keep the story relevant. These works, and others like them, help foster discussions about what our culture values today, what messages we should include in fairy tales that will send the right ideas to the next generation. After all, fairy tales have always been intended to instill specific values and lessons in children, and even after all this time the "didactic coloring... has been virtually impossible to remove" (Tatar 11). Today we want our kids to grow up hearing that girls like Cinderella can save themselves through their own hard work and talent without waiting for a prince or relying on their looks. It is impossible to tell what values our culture will want to teach children in another century or two, but most likely *Cinderella* and other fairy tales will continue to change with the times to reflect these new ideas.

WORKS CITED

- Bottigheimer, Ruth B. *Fairy Tales: A New History*. Albany: State University of New York, 2009. Print.
- Climo, Shirley. *The Persian Cinderella*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999. Print.
- Coburn, Jewell Reinhart. *Domitila: A Cinderella Tale from the Mexican Tradition*. New York: Lee &Low, 2000. Print.
- Disney, Walt. "Mouse & Man." Interview. Time 27 Dec. 1937: n. pag. Print.
- Dundes, Alan, ed. *Cinderella: A Casebook*. Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1988. Print.
- Ella Enchanted*. Dir. Tommy O'Haver. Prod. Jane Startz. By Michele J. Wolff. Perf. Anne Hathaway, Hugh Dancy, and Cary Elwes. Miramax Films, 2004.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.
- Louie, Ai-Ling. *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China*. New York: Puffin, 1999. Print.
- Martin, Rafe. *The Rough-Face Girl*. New York: Putnam & Grosset Group, 1992. Print.
- Mommie Dearest*. Dir. Frank Perry. Paramount Pictures, 1981.
- Onyefulu, Obi. *Chinye: A West African Folk Tale*. New York: Viking, 1994. Print.
- "Tales Similar to Cinderella." *SurLaLune Fairy Tales*. Ed. Heidi Anne Heiner. Jan. 1999. Web. 28 Feb. 2016.
<<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/cinderella/other.html#CAT>>.
- Tatar, Maria. *Off With Their Heads!: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- The Swan Princess*. Dir. Richard Rich. Rich Animation Studios, 1994.

Zipes, Jack. *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*. New York:
Routledge, 2006. Print.