

Adaptation of Fairytales into Films with Special Reference to *Beauty and the Beast*



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Abstract

Movie adaptation is the way to transform a play, book or novel into a movie. The intention of this paper is to discuss the adaptation of admired fairy tale *Beauty & the Beast (2017)*. The main focus of this paper is to the effectiveness of adaptation by the movie directors and how they represented the story in the movie. Were there any deviations made in the movie or not, is there any fact that was hyped or understated in the story. In conclusion the concern of gender in translation is also discussed briefly considering the films.

Keywords: Fairytales, Disney Movies, Translation of Fairytales, Adaptation of Fairytales, Difference.

Introduction

Most of us have the understanding of hearing or reading about motivating Characters from story books, true stories, and fairy tales in our childhood which helped us build our ethical and moral behavior. The fairy stories deliver a message to its listeners or readers who are usually children. These tales are either orally transmitted or in written form. There are Story tellers in country side groups of people who are receptacle of such stories. Later, when television surfaced as the most influential form of entertainment channel some of these stories turn out to be the part of television productions. These adapted forms on television have been broadly accepted by mass audiences both grown-ups and children.

Aim of the Study

The paper intents to discuss the movie adaptation process in the Disney movie called *Beauty and the Beast (2017)* in the perspective of the issues and ideas that have been upraised so far. This paper tries to examine the difference between the source texts and its movie versions. Since precisea daptation/translation is never possible, this paper also intent to look at how fruitfully the adapted movies brings up the main themes of the fairy tales. In addition, the traits of the fairy tales that are lacking in the movie version will also be discussed in this paper.

The intention of transforming a story into a film has become a very common occurrence in recent times.This is called adaptation in which a work in one genre gets translated into another genre. Today, even true stories and much plays are adapted into films. This procedure of adaptation- which is a form of transformation is a difficult task, but this is possible if there are no drastic changes or any distortion. If we look at the fairy tales then we can see that all the admired fairy tales are now available as movies, and most importantly these are deeply admired among teenagers and children. There are numerous movies but some to be mentioned here are *the Beauty and the Beast (2016)* and *Cinderella (2015)*.Besides there are teenager's popular movie productions like *Spiderman (2002)*, *Harry Potter (2001)*which have fairy tale alike elements, which is either implicit or explicit. Though these were written in book form initially, but they are being translated into movies.

Adaptation is famous among television makers and film and audiences alike due of its power to bring universal features in one frame into another. Disney movies in USA are mainly on a worldwide scale pleasing to teenagers and children. These are famous due to the message a fairy tale holds can be delivered quite appealingly and strongly in a movie version, also the audio-visual version has a long-lasting impact in the memory.For example, evil always get beaten in a fairy tale by good, ego can damage the image, greed can bring danger etc. In addition, these

messages are still important to people's lives and they can compare themselves along with the fairy tale story line.

Adaptations have gradually become a tool of spreading diverse cultures across the globe. Due to the methods of the Internet and electronic devices, adaptation of non-literary and literary works into visual medium has become quite widespread. Language to language transformation was mostly limited to book forms; but adaptation of these fairytales has made achievable to represent the stories on big screens. Thus, when a literary work is adapted for filmed, in short time it can reach a wide range of audiences. There is a difference between written language and language of the film. The film language is based on action of characters, sound and movement of colorful images on screen. Audiences can recognize the meanings of these images easily even if the language is not same. However, written language is particularly based on word images and the power of imagination is presented strongly as the reader goes over the story. Film language is comparatively simpler to understand for people. This is the power of audio-visual image. In this regard, *Peter Verstraten* states-

...words and literature stimulate our thoughts, while images and film provoke our senses. And whereas a novel can dedicate ample space to describe characters or landscapes, a film can show them at a glance. (Verstraten, 174)

A fairytale describes a story based numerous interrelated witches, paraphernalia - magic, dragons, mermaids, goblins, princesses and princes. Fairytales are unavailable in documented versions as these are generally oral productions, and mostly part of folklore. Although fairytales began in oral traditions these stories can be translated into distinctive forms. Oral literature can be transformed to and adapted for TV serials, cartoons, films, stage shows etc. Movie adaptation of fairytales is an instance of the use of oral literature or folklore as a source of truth. This often comes in criticism for deviance from the distortion, source text and bias and lack of theoretical accuracy. This becomes challenging as there is no static, documented form of source text available to transmission. Transforming and adopting fairy tales for the visual media have become a bit challenging as fairytales mainly derive in oral traditions.

Eco highlighted the significance of storytelling power and emotion of a literary work in translation. As per him -

...translating is not only concerned with linguistic competence, but with intertextual, psychological, and narrative competence. ... Translation does not concern a shift from language A to a language B. (Eco, 13)

Thus, it is doable to translate fairytales or folklore into an audio-visual form. Adequately, fairy tales have worldwide themes which are still appropriate to human emotion. The themes and characters provide a base of a translation and adaptations.

Folklore developed, and continues even now, in the communities where few if any people can read or write. (Abrams and Harpham, 104).

Folklores used to travel and still travelling orally all-over human societies. Although fairytales are of oral tradition, the ancient oral tradition they signify have some important characteristics on which an Adaptor can aim. There might be technical issues, lack of structural elements and other forms, but the impact, themes and Characters of fairytales connects themselves easily into a translated or adapted works. The contrast between evil and good is perhaps the most usual point in any fairytale. A fairytale is described in a way that imparts us that good always victories over evil. The power of compelling story telling always takes our attention. This impact is even more powerful in children's mind. As a result, the moral values of fairy tales can easily be conveyed to them in any form - written form, translation. oral transmission or adaptation.

With the growth of media and its governance over society in the last few decades, literature started to adopt a specific mechanical form for broadcasting. Translation makes a space so that literature can achieve its aim in the electronic media. In discussing the nature of film as art in the perspective of the influence of technology and media, *James Monaco* says -

Application of digital technology to film and audio, which begun to gather momentum in the late 1980s, points to a new level of discourse: alone that is about to revolutionize our attitude toward the recording arts. (Monaco, 27)

Television is the most widespread example in this regard, as movie or a television represents moving images. This is an example of the recording art. Translation can be effective tool to make literature in visual form or recording art form. A written or an oral story must go through the procedures of transformation or adaptation to exist in the visual form. This conversion makes a work capable to exist in visual forms.

Movie adaptation which can also be defined as transmutation- transfers a source text into moving images as target text. These two are forms of language yet they differ in terms of instruments and mechanisms. Sound, Light and Camera words are of major concern in film language whereas a fairy tale needs the author's/ narrator's imagination, use of investment of memory and emotions. A decent intersemiotic translation can effectively transfer the source text onto the screen. As per *Kiene Brillenburg Wurth*-

Screens are frames, or rather, they frame, and framing is crucial to literature as it is a condition of possibility for fiction-- a demarcation of the imaginary. (Wurth, 2)

Translation theorists think that precise translation is nearly an impossible task. Even, self-translation shockingly has many challenging issues.

Thus, the question of gain and loss is a general discussion that translation theorists inspect in order to decide the success and appropriateness of the translated work. In the same way, the means of fairytales adaptation require answers to some questions: Whether the director maintained the chronology of events of the story; whether like source text the characters are the same in the film version, whether the moments portrayed in the source text are exists in the film version, and whether we are persuaded by the movie as a fairytale. These are significant issues to look at to determine whether the adaptation is successful or unsuccessful.

In examining movie adaptation from the point of view of literature *Peter Verstraten opines –*

...a director should grab the basic idea and then take a distance from the literary language in order to develop a specific film language. (Verstraten, 177)

Adapting fairy tales for movie creation also needs analysis. In translation decoding of the source text and transferring it to filmic language as a recoded meaning is a much-needed job. In this context *De Witt Bodeen*, in his work "*The Adapting Art*", (*Films in Review*) defines:

Adapting literary works to film is, without a doubt, a creative undertaking, but the task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability to recreate and sustain an established mood. (Bodeen,7)

It is likely to claim that space and time are most important factors in the translation process. They bring up the state and condition of a culture of the source text as well as the cultural aspects of the intended language.

...every interpretation is in the first place a translation (Eco,73)

A translator can be persuaded by definite ideological state. So, a translation work would be touched if the translator interpreters the source text from inside any ideology. Ideology, the issue of gender, power-relations or a particular political or racial bias can manipulate or alter the process. For instance, a capitalist translation would be quite different from a Marxist translation. Similarly, a feminist translation has few important characteristics that would be different from a male-centered translation work. A translation work done by a translator, who thinks women maintains a patriarchal supremacy or are inferior, would certainly minimize a strong female character and decrease its influence.

Likewise, a gender biased translation would typically keep the binary category of Self/Other or male/female. In such depictions female characters are submissive and male figures are mostly powerful and In *Sexual Politics (1969)* American feminist theorist *Kate Millett* highlights how sociological and ideological factors work to suppress women. Literature is a traditional domain, there; if a translator trusts in patriarchy and translates a source text from an

essential gender inclined culture then, manipulation on his part to decrease the feminist content is likely.

One of the movie *Beauty and the Beast (2017)* is produced by Walt Disney. This is an adapted type of a fairy tale. The fairy tale used by the film as the source text is French version from *Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve*. There are numerous movie versions of the story available in market, and has been told in various ways in many cultures but *Bill Condon's Beauty and the Beast (2017)* is the newest. Let us discuss the adapted film version in the perspective of the fairy tale. For this purpose, source text has been considered from the audiobook of *Brothers Grimm*.

The fairy tale in *Brother's Grimm* version describes the story of a rich merchant. He had six children, three daughters and three sons. The youngest daughter was so well-mannered and beautiful that everyone called her Beauty. She was a kind, soft-hearted girl and a good reader whereas her elder sisters were party-loving and harsh girls. However, the merchant business fortune was lost and was forced to go away from the town. As a reaction, the elder sisters were upset but Beauty lived with her father in spite the misfortune. Beauty could live her life in the county and there the merchant got a letter about a business deal. With this business task again, the merchant asked his daughters what to bring from town. The elder sisters asked for luxurious gifts, but Beauty only asked for a rose.

Very well, my dear father, said she, "since you desire me to make some request, I beg you will bring me a rose; I love that flower passionately, and since I have lived in this desert I have not had the pleasure of seeing one. [Villeneuve, 10]

In the business, the merchant again had his misfortune and returning back he met with bad weather. Therefore, he took shelter in a large palace in the forest. While going back to his village he took a branch of a rose plant from the palace garden. As he took the rose branch a Beast emerged to threaten him, and said that he can allow him to return for home on one condition only and that is his one of the daughters would suffer in his palace. On hearing all the details from her father Beauty decided to suffer to save her father's life. However, her two sisters turned back from their father as Beauty starts living in the palace she becomes familiar with the Beast. At some point, Beauty came to know through the magic mirror that her father was ill and cries to visit him. In response, the Beast allowed her one week to visit her father but when she arrives her elder sisters plot against Beauty to make her stay for a longer time. Beauty decided to return to the palace as she dreamt that the Beast is dying. There she finds the Beast in unconscious state lying in the garden. Beauty expressed her love for the Beast and unexpectedly the entire palace becomes brightened with light. And Beauty sees that Beast gets transformed into a handsome Prince. A fairy lady appears to reveal the mystery. At last, the greedy sisters are punished and Beauty lives a happy life with the Prince.

While making *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) Bill Condon held the main theme of the fairy tale in a professional manner. The sacrifice and devotion of a young daughter are the center of the fairy tale. This role is beautifully played by *Emma Watson* (Belle) and the character of beauty has been successfully transferred onto the screen. The role of beast is played by *Dan Steven*. She played an unkind prince who is transformed into a beast, other major roles of father and Gaston (antagonist) is played by *Kevin Kline* and *Luke Evans* respectively. To meet the formal demands of a film, the director has made some changes in the film. Translating a fairy tale to a film requires an interpretation of the source text and any interpretation reflects the need for perspectives and causes identification of certain issues. As a result, there are always some loss and gain in translation process. However, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) depicts the devotion and sacrifice of a loving girl, who is called Belle in a significant way. More precisely, the director is effective in creating a live image of Beauty's character.

Bill Condon's film *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) begins with the projection of a dark castle and a hand with a red rose which is set in a village in France. An Enchantress undertakes the form of an old woman and obtains shelter in the palace of a king but the superior Prince rejects her. The old woman discloses her real form and the Prince was turned into a Beast. The beast can recover his human form only on one condition, if a beautiful virgin girl loves him. Maurice, Belle's father, asks Belle what to get from his business trip. While returning from the fruitless business trip he encounters with a bad weather and gets shelter in the castle. The Beast saw Maurice taking a white rose from his garden and detains him. Philippe, the horse, hurries back home and brings Belle to the castle. Belle performs a trick to discharge Maurice by jailing herself. She remains captured in the castle and befriends the servants. Maurice returns to the village and asks for help to rescue Belle but only Gaston agreed to help him so that he can marry Belle. Meanwhile, Belle grows a friendly relationship with the Beast. On the contrary, Gaston convinces the villagers to kill the Beast. So, they attacked the palace. At some point, Gaston shoots the Beast. Finally, Belle expresses her love and kisses the Beast. The enchantress, Agatha, appears and releases the Prince from his beastly body. Belle and the Prince are united and live happily ever after.

The beginning scene of *Beauty and the Beast* presents a delightful glimpse of the whole story. The film starts with a tried story telling technique. It says *Once upon a time in the hidden heart of France; a handsome young Prince lived in a beautiful castle. Although he had everything his heart desired; the Prince was selfish and unkind* (*Beauty and the Beast* 2017). As the Prince was unkind he discards the old woman's shelter on the windy night, so the woman, who is actually an enchantress converts the Prince into a beast. The incident of Prince converting to a beast is also present in the fairy tale version. However, in the fairy tale the Prince is not cruel or selfish and becomes a beast as he disagreed to marry

one of his governesses. The key action is the Prince's transformation from a beast to a human form; and that is clearly depicted in the film version. In the film the main female character is named as Belle but in the fairy tale she is called just Beauty. Though the name is marginally changed the characteristics of Beauty are properly transmitted into Belle's character. Belle is an adoring daughter; she is habitual of reading books and tries to educate others as much as she is able to. She uses to help her father in his work, and most significantly she is always ready to die for her father. Belle is an intellectual and ambitious character. She is an intense reader of books, unlike other women in the village. As she says *I want much more than this provincial life. I want adventure in the great wide somewhere.* (*Beauty and the Beast* 2017) Her aspiration to teach a young girl to read is criticized by villagers. *What on earth are you doing? Teaching another girl to read? Isn't one enough? We have to do something.* In the fairy tale we find no thorough accounts of Beauty's reading habit and teaching of other girls. But in the film this characteristic has been elaborated properly within the socio-political circumstances of the Villeneuve village. A film adaptation demands interpretation of certain issues in the language of film, and in Condon's film this expansion of the character of Beauty is a very good instance of interpretation of an ideal character.

Likewise, in the fairy tale, the good old man or Beauty's father faces bad weather due to which he was forced to take shelter in the Prince's palace. In the fairy tale *It rained and snowed terribly, besides, the wind was so high, that it threw him twice off his horse; and night coming on, he began to apprehend being either starved to death with cold and hunger, or else devoured by wolves whom he heard howling all around him.* And the same action is captured in the movie in a more decorative and suspense filled manner. To save his life from aggressive wolves Beauty's (Belle's) father Maurice was riding very fast on his horse Philippe. The pressure doesn't release till he arrives at the palace where he locates fire and food. While returning Maurice picks up a red rose from the Beast's garden. Then he became jailed in the castle. This is a significant moment in the fairy tale and the main action started with the good old man picking a rose for his daughter. The film contains indifferent flow of action.

In the fairy tale Beauty is well-versed by her father that a Beast is going to imprison, enslave him whereas the film portrays that it was his horse Philippe who brought Belle to the palace. Belle wanted to have a private talk with her father inside the prison which was her plan to set her father Maurice free. But she herself got jailed but let her father released. The sacrifice Beauty made in the fairy tale is also depicted in the film. The approach of devoting life for her father is different but the sacrificing attitude is appropriately presented in the movie as well.

In parallel to the fairy tale, there is a strong father daughter-relationship shown in the movie version. Maurice asks what to get from the business trip and loving Belle asked only for a rose. Apart from this we see Belle cheerfully helping her father in work.

The utmost emotional scene is the dialogue between Maurice and Belle is in the prison that assures their strong bond. Belle says her father is her life and she is ready to protect him by sacrificing her life. But Maurice believes he is old and would not live long so he asks Belle to leave the prison. He states –

*I am almost frightened to death,
believe me, you had better goback,
and let me stay here.*

[<https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/beauty.html>]

The minor characters have played a significant role to back the main storyline in the film. The most fascinating issue about the film is that the minor characters in the castle were converted to furniture and household items. The Beast lost all hope to convert human again; but Lumiere, the head of the household, feels that Belle is the only girl who can break the solid spell cast on his master. Lumiere even unchains Belle from the prison and provides her a relaxing bedroom. In addition, Lumiere organizes a grand dinner to entertain Belle. The minor characters try to acquaint the Beast to Belle in an adoring way. One of the minor characters says, *The Master is not as terrible as he appears. Somewhere, deep in his soul there's a Prince of a fellow just waiting to be set free (Beauty and the Beast 2017).*

Even as the Prince is unkind and rude the Beast feels of Belle as an lawful or perhaps unaware of his love for the beautiful Belle. He furiously says, *She's the daughter of a common thief. That's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard! Charm the Prisoner? (Beauty and the Beast 2017).* It is Lumiere who revives everyone's hope to become human again. He says, ... *this girl is the one who can break the spell.* Though in the fairy tale there is no minor characters in the palace, Beauty reads a book where it is written in gold *Welcome, Beauty, banish fear, you are queen and mistress here; speak your wishes, speak your will, swift obedience meets them still (Beauty and the Beast 2017)* On the contrary, in the movie, same message has been delivered to Belle from Lumiere. He says *Castle is yours so feel free to go anywhere you like.* The minor characters in the castle urges the Beast to express his love for Belle. This was very significant to recover their human body else if the last palate of the rose fall then they would never become human.

Library space has a significant influence on the story. As Belle is a keen reader of books so in the film there is a huge library where she gets books to read. The Beast joyfully shows his library to Belle. The library space brings them a collective ground to begin their conversation. Belle says *Romeo and Juliet* is her favorite play and asks the Beast if he had ever read William Shakespeare. The fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast* does not name any specific playwright but the presence of *William Shakespeare* makes the scene successful. Readers can associate their familiarity of reading *William Shakespeare's* play *Romeo and Juliet* in the romantic relation between the Beast and Beauty. In the library space Belle first sees the magic mirror and a magic book. In fairy tale version, Beauty sees through a looking glass that her father is sick.

But in the movie Belle finds that her father Maurice has fallen under a plot and Gaston is influencing the case. This is very important to any fairy tale, magical elements always capture readers attention. The film also tells this magical intrusion.

Beauty's elder sisters performed the role of negative character in the fairy tale. However, Belle had no sister in the movie but the negative role has been executed by Gaston. Gaston is a superior former soldier who wants to marry Belle. Gaston is the plotter; he does all the possible things so that he can marry Belle. When Maurice was looking for help to rescue Belle, then only Gaston settled to help him. But later we see his real intension. He persuades Maurice almost forces to marry Belle to him. As he became rejected, he ties Maurice to a tree so that wolves eat him up in the deep forest. Even, he proceeds to prove Maurice as psychologically imbalanced man. Some of the villagers think that Maurice is making unbelievable claims on haunted castle and about the Beast. In addition, he even encourages and prompts the villagers to kill the beast and demolish the haunted castle. He asks for proof that the Beast exists, as Belle shows it through the magic mirror the villagers were astonished. And Belle assures them *No, no, don't be afraid! He's gentle and kind. He's not a monster, Gaston! You are! The Beast wouldn't hurt anyone.(Beauty and the Beast 2017).* To counter Belle's argument Gaston states *The monster has her under a spell! I've heard the effect of dark magic, but I've never before see it with my own eyes! This is threat to our very existence(Beauty and the Beast 2017).* However, in the fairy tale the elder sisters-built conspiracy so that they can stop Beauty to be rich. But, here in this movie it is Gaston who builds difficulties to resist Belle to go beyond his control. Even, Gaston says that Belle has sent him to kill the Beast. This message makes the disheartened Beast weaker, so that the Beast loses all hope for her and then kills him.

The last scene is also same to the fairy tale version. Belle conveys her love for the Beast, she mourns over the Beast's death. She says *Come back! Please don't leave me. I love you.* And she kisses him. The enchantress, Agatha, witnesses the action carefully and eradicates the magic spell so that the injured Beast can recover his human body. All added household servants also become human. Then, Belle and the Prince united forever to live a happy life.

In conclusion, it is quite clear that despite some variations in the film the fairytale is translated effectively into a film. To meet the formal and technical requirements of a film the changes have been created, but the foremost theme of the story is present in the film. Director Bill Condon remains truthful to the key theme of the fairy tale.

Conclusion

Every fairy tale has some important features and crucial moments that always charm and touch us. The enchanted power of storytelling is the utmost enthralling aspect of fairy tale. In our childhood we were persuaded by some of the fairy tales. Strong father-daughter relationship, the intervene of fairy god mother, the insincerity of elder sisters, the harsh

nature of stepmother, the dichotomy of good and evil are the most obvious issues that establish the final impact of a fairy tale. If a film can depict these issues accurately then it would be possible to argue that the translation process is completed fruitfully.

Beauty is a significant character to assess the success of these Disney films. In the source text she is gorgeous, caring and undemanding, and has showed this through her actions as they are same in the film. Another important aspect is present in film that the girl suffered until she is united with her Prince. Thus, keeping this issue in mind it could be said that the film has maintained its masculine outlook. It is discussed in the introductory part of this paper that translation can serve agenda of politics and power. It could be claimed that the question of power politics in the context of gender has remain present in the making of the film.

However, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) is a Disney movie that represent the fairy tale in a way that takes our attention. Especially, for young audiences and teenagers, the film is effective to convey the spirit of the fairy tale. Directors change some parts of the story to make the story more pleasing and humbler to audiences without disrupting the main essence of the fairy tale. The film provoke our sentiments and we feel for the characters. In this paper the adaptation process of the traditional fairy tales has been observed from theoretical standpoint. Indeed, no translation is error free so the translation of this Disney movies. But the film rightly vibrates the gist of source text.

Finally, this paper has tried to discuss the theoretic concepts of translation and assess the

success of film adaption. The goal of a translated work is to transmit the source text to target text. Audience, power relation and translation medium are some of the factors related with a translation process. It is clear from the above discussion that the Disney film is effective in picturizing the character of Beauty. This makes the films more pleasing and enthusing for audiences.

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