

Disneyfication as a Stereotype Creation Problem in Mainstream Classical Fairy Tale Illustration *

Ana Akım Klasik Masal İllüstrasyonunda Bir Stereotip Yaratım Sorunu Olarak Disneyleştirme

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Abstract

It is frequently encountered in the visual narratives of classical fairy tales, which have had an important place from past to present with their timeless utopian content and valuable moral messages, aestheticized approaches based on the Western ideal, also known as *Eurocentric* or *Euro-American*. It is understood that these approaches have been strengthened with Walt Disney's animated adaptations of classical fairy tales since the 20th century. The successes obtained from these adaptations and their increasingly widespread influence on mass popular culture consumption have reached a level that will affect the originality of the illustrations in fairy tale books prepared for children and young people. Disney, which has a very large place in the culture industry, has these and similar effects based on the concepts of Disneyization and Disneyfication in the literature. In this qualitative study, the aforementioned concepts and the phenomenon of stereotypes are explained with the opinions of academics, literary critics and fairy tale research experts. In the light of the information provided, a comparative analysis was made on old and more current visual data, and with the findings, it was tried to be revealed that Disneyfication is one of the stereotype creation problems that continue to have an effect in the field of classical mainstream world fairy tale illustration. The aim of the research was to gain professional awareness on the main points of stereotype creation problems in classical fairy tale illustration and to provide useful literature for further studies in the field.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fairy Tale Illustration, Stereotype, Disneyfication, Disneyization, Popular Culture

Özet

Zamansız ütöpic içerikleri ve değerli ahlaki iletileriyle geçmişten günümüze önemli bir yere sahip olan klasik masalların görsel anlatımlarında *Avrupa-merkezli (Eurocentric)* veya *Avro-Amerikan (Euro-American)* olarak da bilinen Batı idealine dayalı estetize yaklaşımlara sıkça rastlanmaktadır. Söz konusu yaklaşımların Walt Disney'in 20.yy.dan itibaren yükselen klasik masal animasyon uyarlamalarıyla birlikte güçlendiği anlaşılmaktadır. Bu uyarlamalardan elde edilen başarılar ve bunların kitlelerarası popüler kültür tüketiminde gittikçe yayılan etkisi, zaman içerisinde, çocuk ve gençler için hazırlanan masal kitaplarındaki illüstrasyonların özgünlüğünü etkileyecek boyuta ulaşmıştır. Kültür endüstrisinde oldukça geniş bir yere sahip olan Disney'in bu ve benzeri etkileri alan yazınında Disneyization ve Disneyfication kavramlarına dayanmaktadır. Nitel bir çalışma olan bu araştırma kapsamında bahsi geçen kavramlar ve stereotip olgusu akademisyenlerin, edebiyat eleştirmenlerinin ve masal araştırmaları uzmanlarının görüşleriyle birlikte açıklanmaktadır. Aktarılan bilgiler ışığında eski ve daha güncel görsel veriler üzerinden karşılaştırmalı analiz yapılmış, bulgularla birlikte Disneyfication'un klasik ana akım dünya masalı illüstrasyonu alanında etkisini sürdüren stereotip yaratım sorunlarından biri olduğu ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırmada klasik masal illüstrasyonunda stereotip yaratım sorunlarının ana dayanak noktaları konusunda mesleki farkındalık kazanılması ve alanda yapılabilecek ileri çalışmalar için faydalı bir literatür sağlanması amaçlanmıştır.

Keywords: Masal İllüstrasyonu, Stereotip, Disneyfication, Disneyization, Popüler Kültür

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Introduction

It is no coincidence that when we think of classical world fairy tales today, the first things that come to mind include a list of fairy tales such as Snow White, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, which are constantly circulating in the international market of the culture industry. It is understood that this mainstream list, of which almost everyone can tell at least a few in detail, is dominated by Western fairy tales and/or fairy tales known as Western fairy tales. As a natural consequence of this, it would be appropriate to state that the fairy tales in question already contain a uniform perspective in the cultural context.

The constant growth and diversification of fairy tales in our society today permeates a wide range of media: from film and television to commercial platforms, advertising and marketplaces for consumer products (including clothing, toys, household goods and more), from popular literature to graphic novels and new media. Fairy tales have now become a multimedia phenomenon, thanks to the electronic availability of their texts and all materials inspired by them through websites and online publications. “Technological tools such as computers, tablets, and smartphones allow us to watch, read, listen, play, and generally interact with fairy tale material from anywhere in the world” (Schwabe, 2016:2). Understanding the leading factors in the fairy tale genre reaching such an expansion opportunity by spreading to the masses through these media will make important contributions in the context of the subject.

According to Zipes (2011a:20), who states in his work “Enchanted Screen” that the dominance of the printed text, which pioneered the development of the fairy tale as a genre, underwent a very important change in the 1890s and the early 20th century, the great revolution in the institutionalization of the genre after written and printed adaptations occurred with the technological development of film; because images now impose themselves on the text and create their own texts both with the help of print culture and by “violating” the printing press. “The fairy tale has become one of the dominant cultural forms and genres internationally, largely through its many manifestations on the screen” (Zipes et al. 2016:i). In screen adaptations, it is understood that the mass prevalence, recognition and value of fairy tales in the contemporary world are largely associated with Walt Disney, as a result of his persistent loyalty to this genre, which he adapted with the highest level of technique of the time.

As Patel (2018:5) states, “The Brothers Grimm may have contributed to providing a foundation for fairy tales, but it was Disney who solidified it.” Disney not only reproduced and marketed fairy tales through mass media, but also played a significant role in the genre’s survival and its maintenance of their recognition as classics of major importance in children’s literature, starting in the 20th century. Mollet (2020:2) expresses a natural consequence of this with the following words: “The name Disney has always been indelibly associated with fairy tales.” So much so that today it is possible to witness that the main classical fairy tales that are considered to have high generational and international recognition are sometimes referred to as “Disney Fairy Tales”. In addition, in the episode titled “Fairy Tales” of the documentary series “Explained” (Cascione, 2021), American literature and cultural studies professor Maria Tatar, who accepts that Disney keeps fairy tales alive and that most fairy tales continue to exist thanks to Disney, also opens a parenthesis as follows: “Disney created the *only* version of fairy tales that we all know. In this respect, it is possible to say that it has a negative cultural impact” (Tatar, 2021).

According to Zipes (2011b:65), who elaborates on the effects of Disney's fictional and technical innovations, "Although there were many types of fairy tale films, Disney's work in the 1930s certainly set the model for many of the fairy tale animated films that would be made in the late twentieth century." However, the huge revenues generated by the company, which breathed new life into classical fairy tales, had an impact beyond animation. Disney adaptations and all cultural products related to them have

initiated the standardization process of almost every digital and printed creation with classical fairy tale content in children's cultural production. Indeed, the illustrations of books with classical fairy tale content, which have an important place in child development and mass culture, are among the main products that have received their share of the Disney standard.

The *Disney standard* in question can be considered as an aesthetic understanding that acts in the form of generalization rather than diversity in the field of classical fairy tale illustration, known as Disneyfication/Disneyization in cultural studies. Although it seems quite tempting at first glance to attribute this to a fast and guaranteed production, it would be appropriate to state that the generalizations that cause the reduction of artistic diversity also refer to an automatic mental functioning that people frequently resort to for practical life. Especially in today's global world where human technology and communication are extremely effective, the pressure of the *need to know* increases day by day and such a mental functioning may become inevitable. As Allport (1954:9) stated, "Given a handful of facts, we are in a hurry to generalize as much as a bathtub... Life is short and the demands on us for practical adjustments are so great that we cannot allow our ignorance to prevent us from our daily operations (as cited in Blair, 2002:242). In this context, the concept of stereotype, which we will consider as a uniform thought element based on a prototype, is a phenomenon that includes both Disneyfication and generalization act. This phenomenon also points to a creativity problem that negatively affects the artistic originality in the illustration content of classical world story books prepared for children and young people.

What is Stereotype?

Every piece of data that a person encounters in their life can be quickly logically perceived and controlled thanks to generalizations structured together with the cultural codes they acquire from the society or the world they live in. This also coincides with the concept of schema, which was put forward in the research of Jean Piaget, one of the important representatives of cognitive development. The concept of schema, put forward by Piaget, refers to the mental category headings that a child creates in order to define a stimulus they encounter at the first stage—for example, a dog—based on certain features of this stimulus, such as "wet nosed" or "four-legged". The child can collect a wide variety of animals with similar characteristics that they will encounter later under these main headings; they quickly transform the data in their schemas into knowledge by going through mental stages such as assimilation, organization and balancing (Wadsworth, 2015:14-20). However, it is possible to say that this mental functioning, which is a basic feature for early childhood cognition, is not of the same qualification in adulthood, when they can be thought of in a more abstract and complex way.

The schematized thinking approach in adults is closer to the concept of stereotype, driven by the need for social belonging rather than the acquisition of knowledge. In this context, stereotype is also described as a traditional form of perception rather than a factual reality. According to McGarty et al. (2002:1), since individuals and groups are considered to be the central realities of society, there can be no society without individuals, but unless individuals also perceive themselves as belonging to groups; that is, unless they share characteristics, conditions, values and beliefs with other people, they will lack social structure and order. These perceptions of groups are called *stereotypes*. Therefore, the concept includes the duality of reality and illusion as well.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines stereotype as "A particular idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an incorrect idea", and gives an example in the following line with the phrase "racial/sexist stereotypes" (Cambridge, 2024). Similarly, the concept is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "a fixed idea or image that many people have about a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality." In a lower line, the definition is reinforced with the example

of “cultural/gender/racial stereotypes” (Oxford, 2024). In the definition in the Britannica Dictionary, the pessimistic inner aspect of the concept is seen to deepen by adding the dogmatic aspect of the concept and its scope that runs counter to the principle of justice. The dictionary defines the concept of stereotype as “a belief, often unfair and untrue, that most people have about all people or things that have a certain characteristic” and gives the example of “racial/cultural stereotypes” in the next line (Britannica, 2024).

On the other hand, peculiar words such as “belief”, “idea” and “image” in definitions can be considered as elements that refer to the distinct effect of culture and art. In this context, although the classical tales that we encounter from childhood have a global importance as cognitive development and learning materials, they have the potential to turn into elements that trigger stereotype perceptions if the necessary updates and variations are not made. Therefore, considering that the target and reach audience of fairy tales mostly includes children and young people, the diversification of visual adaptations that stimulate creativity and complex thinking skills gains undeniable importance.

The Western Canon and Disney’s Influence on Mainstream Classical World Fairy Tales

Although it is understood from the researches on children's literature, folklore and fairy tales that the beginning of the genre goes back too far in history to be traced, the beginning of the period in which it evolved from local to mass indicates the pioneering of the printed media. New appropriation and consumption opportunities that developed as a result of the transfer of oral folk tales to printed media in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with the intense work of collectors/writers such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, brought the fairy tale genre into an irreversible evolution process. According to Jack Zipes (2011a:19), an expert in folk art and literature, who states that fairy tales were rapidly expanding into various visual and auditory art forms during this period, the fairy tale expanded in classical and experimental forms for both children and adults in the late 19th century in high art such as opera, ballet, drama and low art such as folk play, vaudeville, and parody. The author states that as a result of the wide-ranging discussions initiated on the definition and functions of oral folk tales and literary tales, anthropology and folklore began to rise and that the genre made an important progress by entering the scope of the academic field during this process. According to the author, who stated that the classical Western fairy tales had evolved into a canon in the early twentieth century, these fairy tales were spread through mass media such as magazines, books, newspapers, films, postcards and radio, and “Rapunzel”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Cinderella”, “Bluebeard”, “The Little Mermaid”, “Snow White”, “The Frog Prince”, “Beauty and the Beast”, “Hansel and Gretel”, “The Ugly Duckling”, “Jack and the Beanstalk”, “Rumpelstiltskin”, “Donkeyskin”, “Aladdin”, “Tom Thumb”, “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” and some other variations of these fairy tales are considered the main works of the genre. In addition, it is understood that this list has maintained its same qualification in mass acceptance since then, sometimes in a more comprehensive and sometimes in a narrower form.

"Fairy tales have found a place in Western and even world culture thanks to their inclusion in collections that have nothing to do with folk literature, which is expected to be anonymous or collective, but are closely tied to certain authors" (Bacchilega, 2013:21, as cited in Ziolkowski, 2006:236). The published fairy tales that make up the main ones of these collections, associated with Charles Perrault, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, have generally been associated with a certain group identity (ethnic, national, gender-based), in contrast to the "old-fashioned" and simple "folk tales" and the way they are understood to be "universal" appeal (Bacchilega, 2013:21). Indeed, considering the pioneering work of Western writers and the fact that those who effectively use mass media in the dissemination of fairy tales are again Western cultural producers, it is only natural that the classical world fairy tale lists predominantly include *Western* fairy tales or fairy tales known as Western fairy tales. However, it is possible to say that the main factor that brought these tales into today’s mainstream

dates back to the same period as the emergence of animation and the rise of Disney. Because Disney shaped the classical world fairy tale consciousness by reaching record viewing and revenue rates with the most advanced production and marketing techniques of his time.

Walt Disney's enormous income and achievements, which from his humble beginnings in the 1920s greatly influenced children's cultural production over time, have gone beyond the West and reached an international dimension through all the tools and products that popular culture is active in. The feature-length animated films that Disney undertook to produce only throughout his lifetime, such as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Pinocchio (1940), Cinderella (1950), Alice in Wonderland (1951), Peter Pan (1953), Sleeping Beauty (1959)" and the television programs that mostly included the characters of these productions, such as "Disneyland (1954-1959), Mickey Mouse Club (1955-1959), Zorro (1957-1959)", are considered to be the most famous children's cultural products. In addition, it is understood that he has a huge worldwide mass consumption network consisting of theme parks, licensed commercial products, music albums, educational materials, comics, story books and magazines. Richard Schickel gives the data of the consumption volume and income the company achieved until 1966 as follows:

In 1966, Walt Disney Productions estimated that approximately 240,000,000 people worldwide had seen a Disney film, 100,000,000 watched a Disney television program per week, 800,000,000 read a Disney book or magazine, 50,000,000 listened to Disney music or danced to Disney records, 80,000,000 purchased Disney-licensed merchandise, 150,000,000 read a Disney comic book, 80,000,000 watched Disney educational films at school, church, or work, and 6.7 million took a trip to that strange Mecca, "Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom," as the company's press releases insisted, more commonly referred to as Disneyland. From a near-zero profitability in 1954, the company grew over the years to \$12,392,000 in gross revenues with a net income of \$116,543,000, meaning the Magic Kingdom was about to join that magic circle – the top 500 companies in the country – which it would soon advance to. (Schickel, 2019:18)

Disney, which continues to be among the most successful production companies in the world with its popular products to the culture industry, has two main strategies that are interconnected when we look at the unlimited cultural production methods and diversity in effective market areas. The strategies in question, which enable the transformation of classical Western fairy tales into fast-moving consumer goods with continuity and the spread of these transformed products in a wide variety of market areas, are defined in the literature as *Disneyization* and *Disneyfication*.

Disneyization and Disneyfication

In academic literature, the concepts of Disneyization and Disneyfication are sometimes used interchangeably. However, the concepts actually include different—and complementary—constructs that demonstrate Disney's broad impact on consumer culture. According to sociologist Alan Bryman (2004), who states in his book "The Disneyization of Society," in which he details Disney's broad impact on various sectors of society and the economy, the concept of Disneyization refers to the spread of Disney-like principles and practices to various sectors of society and the economy, this concept includes four main processes: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labor. The definitions of the processes can be summarized as follows, according to the narratives in Bryman's book:

1. **Theming:** This process involves creating a unified theme for various aspects of a product or experience. Theme parks, restaurants, hotels, and retail environments are often designed to draw visitors into a specific narrative or setting. Disney theme parks, for example, are meticulously designed environments that transport visitors into the world of their favorite movies.

2. Hybrid Consumption: Disneyfication encourages the convergence of different consumption opportunities in one place. This means combining entertainment, dining, shopping, and accommodation to create a seamless and all-encompassing consumer experience. Disney resorts that offer hotels, theme parks, dining, and retail options are an example of this trend.

3. Merchandising: The practice of creating and selling products based on popular narratives or themes is the cornerstone of Disneyization. “The basic principle behind it is to generate more revenue from an image that has already captured people’s attention” (p:80). Bryman emphasizes the importance of animated characters in merchandising: “Nowhere has there been such a clear sell because animated characters are so adaptable and merchandise-ready” (p:89). For product suppliers, merchandising is a way to develop and expand an image and to own material that becomes a reflection of people’s enjoyment of it. Products extend the reach of the brand and allow consumers to take a piece of the themed experience home with them. Disney’s wide range of products, from toys to clothing to home decor to electronics, illustrates this principle. “Increasingly, a film becomes not just a movie, but a platform from which a variety of different extensions of the movie can be launched” (p:79).

4. Performative Labor: Employees in Disneyfied environments often engage in performative labor, in which they adopt roles and behaviors consistent with the themed environment. This practice enhances the immersive experience for visitors. For example, staff at Disney theme parks are trained to act as *cast members* who maintain the illusion of a fantasy world. However, the author divides this form of labor into emotional and aesthetic. The former involves maintaining a consistently positive stance or role specific to the theme, while the latter refers to *reasonable physical appearance*. The author describes the aesthetic labor through the characteristics sought in Disneyland’s ride operators as follows: “Single, *white males and females* in their early twenties, *without facial blemishes, above average height and below average weight, straight teeth, conservative grooming standards, upright posture, and good health posture* that gives the impression of having exercised recently...” (p:124). All of these components are also implemented in collaboration with other major brands in the relevant fields—such as various food and beverage and clothing/textile brands within Disneyland (Bryman, 2004:15-127).

In short, these components collectively contribute to a form of commercial homogenization in which diverse cultural products and experiences are standardized in order to increase their marketability and appeal. On the other hand, cultural critic and historian Richard Schickel, who first used the term Disneyfication extensively in his 1968 book “The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney”, introduced the term in his critical discussions of Disney’s influence on culture, particularly in the context of the simplification and “purification” of narratives. In this analysis, Schickel emphasizes the essence of *Disneyfication* as a process in which the unique and artistic are reduced to broadly appealing and commercially viable forms.

This term is widely used in cultural studies to describe the transformation of cultural products into mass-produced entertainment through standardization (Patel, 2018; Schickel, 2019; Zipes, 2011b; Mollet, 2020). Disneyfication, which refers to the interpretation and re-presentation of cultural products through the Disney filter, is an extremely effective concept in terms of radically transforming classical world fairy tales that have their origins in the mythologies of many different nations and have already undergone some transformation as they passed from oral tradition to print. Zipes (2011b), who details the Disneyfication strategies in cultural production that the company has remained loyal to since the production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which is considered one of its greatest successes in its early days, conveys the basic elements of the company's approach to adaptations of classical fairy tales as follows:

A. Given the rationalization of the production process he established at his studios, the story line was developed through collaboration between the animators, with Disney having the final

say. Since the animators were all male, the ideas, jokes, and themes came from a kind of boy-in-the-locker room conversation. Early Disney films often had a childlike humor, reminiscent of the pranks boys tended to play.

B. The classical fairy tale was reshaped to fit the basic format of the musical and adventure tale. The structure included the introduction of the protagonist, who soon got into trouble and had to be rescued or saved themselves, depending on their gender. Females did not save themselves in Disney films, but they did sing. The simple story was punctuated by comic relief (usually animals, odd little people, or snobby characters) and songs.

C. Because the storyline was so simple and familiar, technical mastery and invention were emphasized to capture the audience's attention.

D. There were few significant changes to the plot in Disney's adaptations of traditional fairy tales for the the screen, as Disney and his colleagues generally embraced the ideological content of the action. In this context, Disney delineated clear gender roles that associated women with domesticity and men with action and power. *Villains* were inevitably *dark* or *black*, while *heroes* were *white*.

E. The fairy tale film was the centrepiece of a package with various items attached to it: a show, a picture book, a doll, a poster, a ceramic model, an article of clothing. Today the package is even larger.

F. As a commodity, the fairy tale film sacrificed art to technical invention; innovation to tradition; the stimulation of imagination to consumption as a distraction. (Zipes, 2011b:65-66)

According to Mollet (2020:7-8), the success of the Walt Disney Company throughout the twentieth century paralleled the rise of America as a global power, making the two almost synonymous in discussions of globalization and Hollywood; Hollywood's ability to reach global audiences reflects Disney's success, especially through its fairy tale series. Disney films have promoted values such as love, heroism, family, and freedom as uniquely "American," reinforcing the myth that the United States is a place where these ideals can be realized. However, the way Disney packages these values has also drawn criticism, with many scholars arguing that Disney's feature-length fairy tale adaptations often promote conservative, patriarchal, and heterosexual ideologies associated with white middle-class values and American cultural imperialism. For example, according to Schickel's (2019:166) narrative, Disney took a different approach to realism than the caricatured approach applied to all other characters in order to create Snow White and the prince charming in line with *traditional beauty standards*, and even preferred to have most of the movements of these two main characters rotoscoped from the real thing.



Figure 1. A scene from Disney's 1937 film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*: Snow White character
Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029583/mediaviewer/rm2718217984/> (IMDB, 2024)

According to Schickel, who noted that Disney was interested in realism and had a sense of beauty very close to the style preferred by nineteenth-century children's book illustrators, "These were part of a larger cultural conservatism typically found in small-town middle-class Americans," and this was accompanied by ideals such as the aristocratic tradition of his literature, the romanticism of the music he preferred to listen to in his concerts and musicals, and his preference for sentimentalized portraits and nature paintings in his art, all of which meant "culture" to America's struggling middle class (Schickel, 2019:161-162). Indeed, the Snow White character in Figure 1 reflects the body image desired by the average white American male with her white skin, thin waist, big eyes and red lips in her noble outfit. In other words, Disney's Snow White provides a clear example of a Western-based beauty standard, defined in the literature as *Eurocentric* or *Euro-American*, which can affect the body perception of people of almost every gender, race, and age group, while putting more intense pressure on young girls and adult women (M.C. Serrano Barquín et al. 2016; Tomlinson, 2023).

The Western-based ideal body concept has a deep history woven with major mass periods such as the Age of Enlightenment, Modernity, and Capitalism, which have radically affected the fields of science, art, politics, and culture. Although it is not possible to briefly convey this history, such periods have been developments in the Western world and have reached a level that has affected social structures internationally, especially with the transformation of capitalism into a global economic model. At this point, it is possible to read popular culture as the producer of performative impulses that can instrumentalize the body in favor of capital and lock it on to a peculiar target. As Mutlu (2021: 155-156) states: "A great hegemony has emerged as economic power has become more dominant over the structure of society than other foundation stones. Now, products sold globally are distributed only with economic concerns, and the cultural structures of societies are ignored. However, in order for societies not to resist this situation, there is also a tremendous cultural creation aimed at these products. This created culture is popular culture."

In the context of the Western-centered understanding of aesthetics, body image has also received its share of this effect, especially through the images of mainstream culture, which is a global phenomenon. "Culture is a medium through which we perceive reality. It determines the psychic structure of the individual as well as other aspects. The various manifestations of culture facilitate the interpretation of reality as observed and noted" (M.C. Serrano Barquín et. al. 2016: 66). In addition, as Pierre Ancet (2010: 51-54) stated, "Perception is not an autonomous act, independent of the culture that equips it with an interpretation (...) Culture constitutes the act of perception from beginning to end." When it comes to talking about widespread stereotypes in the perception of beauty, examining industrialized culture forms, which have a Western-guided understanding of culture, will provide an explanatory perspective. A certain phenomenon of beauty framed by the mainstream culture spreading from the West can become the inevitable target of its audience. Featherstone (2010: 195) explains the reason for this as follows: "The natural consequence of consumer culture is that body modification and cosmetic enhancement through various regimes and technologies can be used to create a beautiful appearance and therefore a beautiful self."

It is understood that mainstream culture creates famous icons as heroes in which idealized values or moral teachings are placed, as in Disney's Snow White example, and frequently uses iconic famous figures in the sustainability of the Western concept of beauty. In his work *The Celebrity-Icon* (2010), Alexander emphasizes the aesthetic obligations of famous icons in representing the concept of "beauty" in question. According to him, these icons, just like the transcendent representations of saint icons in Christianity, should not take their bodies outside the set of "beauty" and "ideal values" in order to be adored. Otherwise, they lose their right to represent the mainstream's image of "beauty". "What cannot be forgiven is the distortion of the surface form. If actresses want to be beautiful, they cannot age. If actors want to remain heroes, they cannot be fat or gay" (Alexander, 2010: 331).

In short, certain “imaginary body” (M.C. Serrano Barquin et al. 2016) characteristics implicit in Western beauty standards, such as youth, fitness, thinness and whiteness, can be clearly observed in the protagonists of many of Disney’s fairy tale adaptations. Therefore, Walt Disney’s Snow White figure, inspired by the Western mainstream children’s book illustration style of his time and the concept of beauty in question, constitutes a parallel example to the aesthetic issue. This image, many similar to which were produced in mainstream classical fairy tale illustrations after Disney, carries Disney’s aesthetic understanding in the visual field to an international dimension and represents the basic stereotypes that trigger similar creations in the understanding of children’s cultural production.

Methodology

The research is a qualitative study and includes the inductive method of narrating the data obtained through literature review in the context of the subject. “In scientific research, induction is a form of reasoning used in pursuit of understanding and knowledge, establishing a relationship between observations and theory” (Fox, 2008: 429). The literature presented with the opinions of cultural, art and literary critics and expert folklore researchers in the field has been created in an interdisciplinary context. A brief history of the evolution of classical fairy tales has been mentioned and the factors that have transformed certain examples of the genre into mainstream popular culture products that are still valid today have been revealed. In addition, information from the literature has been conveyed on the concepts of Disneyization and Disneyfication, which affect today’s classical fairy tale understanding and fairy tale book illustration.

Considering various expert opinions, it has been discussed that the wide effects of these concepts in the culture industry may cause a uniform —stereotypical— attitude in the context of the aesthetic understanding in visual culture productions. In the context of various arguments put forward in the literature, three fairy tale examples from Disney’s classical fairy tale adaptations will be examined with the visual analysis method. “Visual research focuses on nonlinguistic images. Pictures may be used as a source of data, as a method of data analysis, and as a means of data representation” (Siegesmund, 2008: 940).

Data Collection Process

The examples are limited to the book cover images on the first page that are encountered after the name of the relevant fairy tales is entered into the Google shopping search engine and are on sale. Cover images will be given in 3 pieces in the same figure, arranged from left to right, including the Disney version, another sample from abroad and a sample from Turkiye.

Analysis of Data

Visuals given will be examined with document analysis method in the context of comparative approach. Document analysis is a scientific research method that can be defined as the collection, review, questioning and analysis of various documents as the primary source of research data. This method is mostly used as a complement to other research methods in the literature, while it is also used as a stand-alone method (Sak et al. 2021:227). Comparative approach, on the other hand, “is a broad term that refers to the evaluation of the similarities, differences, and associations between entities” (Mills, 2008:100).

Findings

Since the examined visuals are has been adapted from the first original written works of classical fairy tale writers/collectors who do not have copyright, full access to the names of the author (adapter

of the text) and/or illustrator cannot be provided in some sources. For this reason, apart from the names stated in the web content or on the book cover, only the publishing house, year of publication and country of affiliation information will be given. A total of 12 given visuals are examined and the findings written under the next title.

The Observable Impact of Disneyfication on Classical Mainstream Fairy Tale Illustrations

It is possible to observe the time and geography resistant visual effect of Disneyfication on classical fairy tale books, one of the main products of children's cultural production, by comparing them with older and more current examples. This section includes studies and findings on the subject.

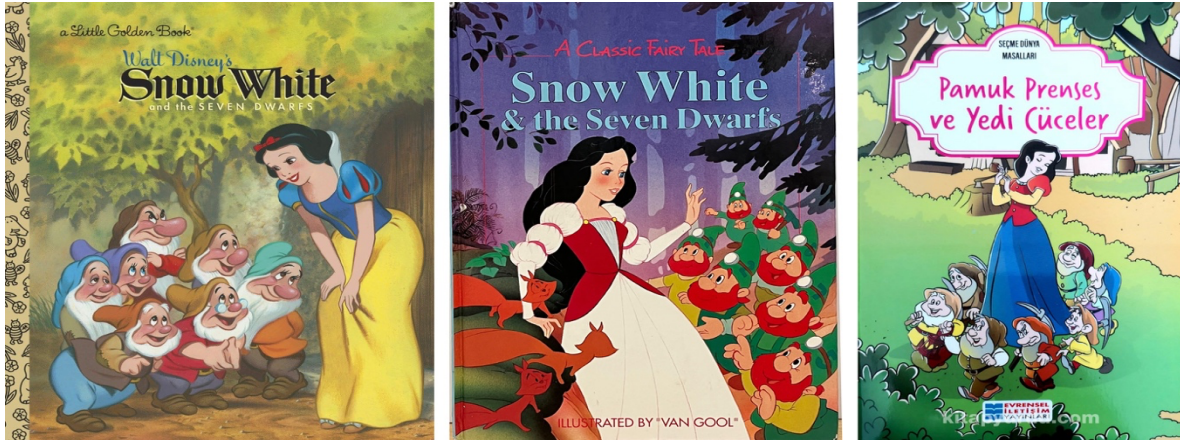


Figure 2. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* Fairy Tale Books. Left: Disney, RH. (2003). An Example Produced from Disney's 1937 Adaptation (RH. Disney, Illus.). Random House. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/TpaDd> Center: Paulding Thrasher, B. (1992). An Example from England (V. Gool-Lefèvre-Loiseaux, Illus.). Twin Books. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/r6DLJ> Right: Author Not Specified, (2018) An Example from Türkiye (Unspecified, Illus.). Evrensel İletişim Yayınları. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/fGDmJ>

Disney's 1937 Snow White character on the right in Figure 2 stands out with her rosy cheeks, big eyes, white skin and thin waist, as mentioned before, as well as her red, blue and yellow colored dress with puffy sleeve details—referencing the noble costumes of pre-modern times. In the middle—illustration made 55 years after the first adaptation—the same character in the international example is understood to have almost the same body type as the Disney adaptation, with some minor differences in hair length and color or shape in the clothing. The example from Türkiye on the left was made 81 years after the first adaptation and offers the reader a Disneyfied image, again with minor details in terms of color application in the clothing and hair length.

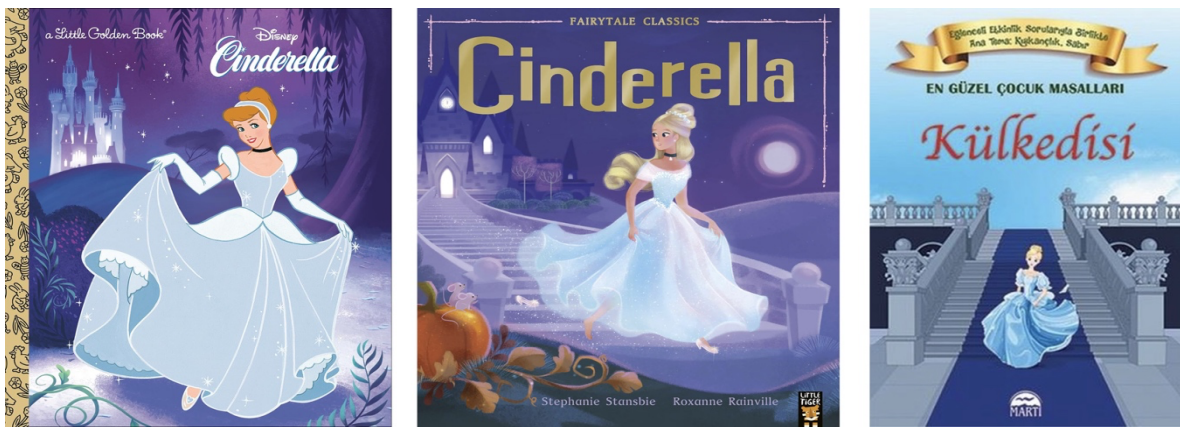


Figure 3. *Cinderella* Fairy Tale Books. Left: Disney, RH. (2005). An Example Produced from Disney's 1950 Adaptation (RH. Disney, Illus.). Random House. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/uuzn9> Center: Stansbie, S. (2019). An Example from England (R. Rainville, Illus.). Little Tiger Press. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/2Kcfo> Right: E. H. Çök (Ed.). (2017). An Example from Türkiye (N. Öztaykutu, Cover Design). Martı Publishing. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/ctIP4>

In Figure 3, on the left, the Cinderella character from Disney's 1950 adaptation draws attention with her blonde hair, big eyes, thin waist and flashy light blue ball gown. In an example produced abroad 55 years after the character was first created, the same character is seen to be in the center of a space with almost the same physical features as the first one, the same light blue outfit and even the same color/composition. When we look at the example of a book cover from Türkiye produced 67 years after Disney's first adaptation on the right, it is clear that the character was created by repeating the same body and clothing features.



Figure 4. Peter Pan Fairy Tale Books. Left: Disney, RH. (2007). An Example Reproduced from Disney's 1953 Adaptation (RH. Disney, Illus.). Random House. **Source:** <https://tinyurl.com/e234zykk> Center: Author Not Specified, (2022). An Example from Italy, (Sref and Fin Cramb, Illus.). Edizioni NPE. **Source:** <https://tinyurl.com/53u57k29> Right: Author Not Specified, (2022). An Example from Türkiye, (Unspecified, Illus.). Ren Kitap. **Source:** <https://tinyurl.com/4r68nmw4>

To give an example in a different gender, the Peter Pan character from Disney's 1953 adaptation on the left in Figure 4 was created with light brown hair, big eyes, a slim/fit body type and a tunic-type top, tight pants, a triangular hat all in shades of green and sandal-type brown shoes. In the example from abroad, produced 69 years after the character was first created, it is seen that the same character is depicted with almost the same physical features and the same clothing combination as the first one, except for the adaptation of red tones. When we look at the example of a book cover from Türkiye on the right—again produced 69 years after Disney's first adaptation—it is understood that the character's physical features, face type, clothing type and color combination are repeated and created almost in the same way as the original version.

Finally, it would be useful to deepen the comparative analysis by examining a classical fairy tale character and its derivatives produced by the Disney company after Walt Disney's death.



Figure 5. The Little Mermaid Fairy Tale Books. Left: Disney, RH. (2003). An Example Produced from Disney's 1989 Adaptation (RH. Disney, Illus.). Random House. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/isYio> Center: Author Not Specified, (2013). An Example from India, Uncle Moon's Fairy Tales (Unspecified, Illus.). Dreamland Publications. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/Glh2e> Right: Author Not Specified, (2018). An Example from Türkiye, Selected World Tales (Unspecified, Illus.). Parıltı Publications. **Source:** <https://tls.tc/eZcAk>

The example on the left of Figure 5 shows the cover of a fairy tale book adapted from the animation *The Little Mermaid*, produced 23 years after Walt Disney's death. First of all, it is understood that the character in this production has almost the same physical characteristics as the other female characters created by Walt Disney during his lifetime. Here, the fact that the aesthetic standard determined by the company's founder for female characters—big eyes, rosy cheeks, red lips, white skin, thin waist and a thin body in general—was inherited and maintained by the artists is noteworthy in terms of being an indicator of Disneyfication's insistence on the visual tradition. It is as if the artist has carefully studied and internalized a handbook prepared on Walt Disney's aesthetic understanding. In the middle example, which was produced 24 years after the *Little Mermaid* character was first created, the same character was produced with almost the same physical features and colors as the first one. The fact that the example here was produced by a publishing house in India, a distant South Asian country, can be considered as data showing how wide the visual impact of Disneyfication is. In the example from a publishing house in Türkiye on the right, it is seen that almost the same physical features such as large eyes, thin waist/body, and white skin are repeated. Even a supernatural being like the *Little Mermaid*, which is potentially subject to creative interpretation, is visually faithful to the Disney version, with the fish-like lower part of the body starting from the same area as in the first adaptation; even the bra detail (seashell) on the naked human upper body.

Conclusion and Discussion

Although Disney began to turn to relative diversity in terms of cultural and ideal representations in mass production towards the 21st century, it is understood that the negative criticisms on the dominance of the visuals it created are not unfounded. It is observed that the stereotypes consisting of certain physical characteristics and derivatives representing Walt Disney's own aesthetic ideals, which we have especially mentioned in the context of the subject, have been adopted by various cultural producers after Disney's adaptations of classical fairy tales and continue to be presented to the masses. Considering the fact that the target audience of such companies, which dominate the cultural production environment on an international scale, is mostly young people and children, it is thought that a richer literature should be provided on popular culture products—especially fairy tale adaptations—of Disney and its derivatives, which cause standardization through constant repetition. It has been stated that this subject is not given enough space in the academic field, and the importance of questioning the concepts of popular culture and children together is emphasized (Zipes, 2011b: 12-13).

It is understood that classical fairy tales, which have survived for hundreds of years as timeless and unique works, have become part of the culture industry under the influence of Perrault-Grimms and Disney. As a natural result of this, it is clear that the Western and/or those known as Western fairy tales have priority in the mainstream fairy tales that circulate on an international scale. There is already centralization and mass acceptance here. The reason for this acceptance is explained by the fact that in the construction of modern fairy tales, these oral folk tales, which had existed all over the world long before they were being transcribed, were collected and appropriated under the leadership of European writers and constantly re-presented to non-European audiences in a modernized (sanitized) form. "This popular construction of the fairy tale as a modern genre, then, reproduces what Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies as the stagist historicism of European modernity that "came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody's way of saying 'not yet' to somebody else" (Chakrabarty, 2007: 8 cited in Bacchilega, 2013: 21). However, the audiences reached by these stereotypes, which are repeated from the dominant ideals of the Western canon and cultural Disneyfication, are very diverse. Therefore, these works, which have an indispensable place in children's education with their rich supernatural motifs and moral messages, should be reviewed, especially those with high exchange value. In this context, it is

seen as a useful approach to include diversity in content with adaptations that will be made without distorting the original of the main teachings of the works.

Although the textual content of classical tales is important, it is understood that in today's world surrounded by images, visual narratives have a priority as the main elements that can affect the thinking abilities of children and young people. However, it should be considered as an undeniable reality that every child growing up in today's global communication environment needs to be open to diversity and think creatively. It is stated that “a child raised with existing Disney products may have difficulty adapting to more sophisticated types of art” (Hames, 2001: 28) and may become cognitively passive (cited in Zipes, 2011a, p.24-25). At this point, the valuable contributions that illustrators can offer with a broader and more imaginative aesthetic perspective are considered as a professional responsibility.

Moreover, the persistent presence of Disneyfication and similar stereotypes in the global children's cultural products market, which is a majoritarian rather than a pluralistic production problem, can lead to cultural homogenization. For example, a study conducted at the Autonomous University of Mexico found that the Eurocentric concept of beauty and egotism in mainstream media caused young students to distance themselves from their own cultural heritage (Serrano Barquin et al., 2016:73). Stereotyping in the aesthetic consciousness of various child viewers exposed to uniformistic images can bring about a series of problems that can range from children's alienation from their original cultural values to a lack of self-compassion. In a study on this subject, it is emphasized that there is a serious gap in the literature regarding the effects of media and cultural products aimed at children on body perception, and that studies conducted with child participants to identify body stereotypes formed in young children due to cultural products such as printed and digital adaptations of popular fairy tales can provide a more advanced understanding of the subject (Herbozo et al. 2004, p.31). It is recommended that relevant academics, together with the opinions of psychologists and pedagogues, conduct further studies on this subject in the context of the effects of mainstream classical fairy tale adaptations on children and the development of these adaptations.

This study attempts to reveal the aesthetic effects of Disneyfication, which is an economic, sociological and cultural phenomenon, on visual narrative through comparative examination of classical fairy tale illustrations. It has been observed that Disneyfied characters have been created in different countries, and it is also noteworthy that this similarity is more dominant in the examples given from Türkiye. A larger-scale study can be conducted on this subject, specifically on classical fairy tale publications in Türkiye. It is suggested that fairy tale book illustrators, with awareness of the problem of Disneyfication as a form of stereotype production, should avoid this standard in their art; think more thoroughly about the possible and flexible aspects of the fairy tale world and the illustration discipline; and constantly produce more diverse, inclusive and creative solutions for mainstream fairy tales. In conclusion, including various ethnic cultures and body types with more independent stylized approaches without disrupting the basic values of mainstream classical fairy tales will allow both the transmission of classical fairy tales to future generations by purifying them from stereotypes gradually and the creation of a more equitable representation environment. Whether mainstream or not, classical fairy tales are humanity's common heritage. We can improve a deeper understanding of them and thus prevent them from getting stuck in the network of centralized ownership.

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