

From Glass Slippers to Slit Bellies: Feminist Re-Visions of Fairy Tales in the Age of Gender Critique

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of fairy tales from their traditional canonical forms, exemplified by Charles Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* and the Brothers Grimm's *Cinderella* and *Little Red Cap*, to contemporary feminist retellings such as Sowmya Rajendran's *Girls to the Rescue*. While the classical versions functioned as didactic instruments of the "civilising process" (Zipes), encoding obedience, passivity, and bodily discipline as normative ideals of femininity, the new-age reinterpretations disrupt these gendered scripts. By foregrounding corporeal difference, female solidarity, and domestic abuse, Rajendran's retellings dismantle patriarchal tropes and reclaim narrative space for consent, agency, and empowerment. Drawing on feminist theory, particularly Simone de Beauvoir's notion of woman as cultural construction and Judith Butler's theorisation of gender performativity, this study demonstrates how fairy tales can shift from disciplining subjects to liberating them. In tracing this transformation, the paper argues that fairy tales, once vehicles of normative control, now serve as sites of feminist critique and cultural resistance, affirming Warner's claim that they are "in a state of metamorphosis."

Keywords

Fairy tales, Feminist retellings, Gender performativity, Cultural metamorphosis, Patriarchal critique.

