

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The fight for the rights of women has been ongoing since back in the days until now. It is due to how women have always been trapped in the discrimination between gender. The reason for this inequality that women received lies deep in the historical record of women oppressions as women have always been regarded as the secondary gender. Women are expected to carry certain gender roles such as loving, nurturing, home-making and other submissive traits while men are expected to make decisions and act aggressive (Crespi 2004, 2).

According to a French philosopher, Foucault, power relations include the relationship which involves masculinity versus femininity represented by male dominance and female subordination (Balan 2010). This power relation always controls the action of a social group even though it may have no agent (Fricker 2007). It puts women into a more disadvantaged situation because it is directly and indirectly limiting their opportunities. For example, how men most likely have control of making the final decision of a problem rather than women. There are various studies talking about domination of men over women in power. Two political theorists studying about power, Nancy Hartsock and Nancy Eraser, stated that the resource of power needs to be distributed equally (Okin 1989) in which it relates to the dyadic relation of women and men where women are subordinate to men (MacKinnon 1987).

Women's traditional normative roles are maintained through various cultural products, and one of them is children's literature. Leading the popular culture, children's literature or fairy tales do not only act as entertainment but also as tools for children to explore "morals and societal ideals of good and evil" and often ideals of femininity (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). Traditional fairy tales are known because of their static formula. Mostly, fairy tales center around the idea of female representation telling the issue and association between being good and being beautiful. Nancy Canepa also emphasized this issue in her study and stated "it is characteristic of folk- and fairy tales, too, to present absolute aesthetic and ethical categories: the characters that populate their worlds are either beautiful or ugly, good or bad" (Canepa 2003, 233). The relation of women's appearance and morality is considered as problematic because it focuses solely on the relationship between male and female and not on female relationships or female self-development. As traditional fairy tales are known to have established this type of moral and beauty-centered message toward women, it was hard to see any positive narrative regarding women, vanity, and power (Persaud 2015, 1).

In 2003, one study examining the classic children's literatures or fairy tales written by Grimm Brothers' stated that those tales which carry the theme of women's feminine beauty ideal such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty* are more likely to have survived for the past 150 years since it was first published (Baker-Sperry and Grauerhoiz 2003). This proves how children's literature has the social control to maintain the gender system from years to years.

In post-feminist world right now, women's status in the society has improved a lot. Regardless of that fact, the contribution of 150 years old children's literature in emphasizing the idea of feminine beauty to children is still effective. Thus, many efforts have been made to break the traditional gender system education carried by those famous children's literature. One way of doing that is by modifying classic children's literature into modern entertainment media which is movies.

The movie industry has been hugely repackaging children's classic literature. One example is how The Walt Disney Company has become the most prowessful company of fairy tale storytellers in the form of a movie. Focusing on princess fairy tale narratives, Disney is said to have "appropriated the fairy tale" (Zipes 1999, 333) by repackaging them to match Disney's ideologies which was also defined by Wasko (Wasko 2001, 125) as "Disneyfying" classic fairy tales. Releasing their first animation princess fairy tale film in 1937, Disney adapted one of Grimm Brothers' fairy tales entitled *Snow White* which is featured in their story collection entitled *Grimm's Fairy Tale* or *Kinder- und Hausmarchen (1812)* as story number 53. On their very first set of classic princess fairy tale films consisting of 12 princess stories including *Snow White*, Disney received major criticisms on how they portrayed the female gender negatively. Princesses in those films are sexualized, portrayed to have passive and submissive characteristics (Wilde 2014, 135). However, entering the post-feminism decade of the 21st century, Disney began to change their way of telling the stories of princesses. They are repackaged to have the characteristics such as bravery, compassion, loyalty (Wilde 2014, 133).

Two examples of how Disney have repackaged their princesses can be seen in the two 21st century's Disney films, *Maleficent* (2014) and *Tangled* (2010). Movies like *Maleficent* (2014) for instance challenged the traditional ideology of the original fairy tale, *Sleeping Beauty* by Charles Perrault, which was very deeply influenced by patriarchal ideologies where women become witches or evil stepmothers (Ziper 2007). It does that by retelling the story from the evil witch's point of view and "offering an explanation for the behavior of the eponymous 'witched fairy'" (Newstead 2014). *Tangled* (2010) also tried to challenge the traditional ideology of the original fairy tale, *Rapunzel* by Grimm Brothers, by giving a positive characteristic of the dominant princess to the heroine. Rather than waiting for the prince to save her life as told in the original Grimm Brothers' *Rapunzel*, the heroine in *Tangled* wants to see and experience the world outside her window. One of the issues told in this movie is about women and humor where the heroine in *Tangled* is depicted to be very outspoken when she responds to Flynn's narration "first I said no can do" by throwing him out of the tower using her hair (Wilde 2014, 139). Whereas, women were used to being subjected to sexist humor under the patriarchal gaze (Shifman and Lemish 2010). It is said that her humor depicts how "traditional masculine and feminine traits are changing within social conventions and women can take on this trait and surpass the notion that 'men act and women appear'" (Wilde 2014, 139).

Another example that is important to this study is the repackaging of one of Grimm Brothers' work, *Hansel and Gretel* (1812), in Tommy Wirloka's movie entitled *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunter* (2013). This movie takes Grimm's

original work and expands it where the ending of the original tale acts as the beginning of the movie. Hansel and Gretel in this movie are shown as adults who are doing their career as bounty hunters who kill all witches and protect innocent children. This movie is said to have transformed Gretel's female gaze from passive to active. Gretel in this movie "represents a new kind of female protagonist in the genre that cannot be as strictly labelled as her predecessor" (Persaud 2015, 92). However, this movie still places Gretel under the eye where physical beauty is still important to determine women's morality (Persaud 2015, 93).

This study, specifically, focuses on a more recent children literature adaptation movie of Grimm Brothers' work, *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*, directed by Oz Perkins entitled *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*. Different from Tommy Wirloka's *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunter (2013)* where it talks about the continuation story of Hansel and Gretel as grownups, Oz Perkins's *Gretel & Hansel (2020)* attempts to retell Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* with the same plot line but under some modification to match the gaze of female in post-feminism era.

Works written by Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm or Grimm Brothers are known to often emphasize the patriarchal ideology of females where women have to be feminine (Erum 2009, 2). Women will also take the role of being led and controlled by males. For example, in their traditional fairy tale works such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, each of the female protagonists reflects feminine attributes. Those who reflect feminine attributes will be rewarded with 'living happily ever after' prize with a masculine male figure (Erum 2009, 3). Meanwhile, if a female does not perform proper feminine traits,

they will get penalized just like in *Little Red Cap*. The adaptation movie of Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*, *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*, aimed to break the patriarchal ideologies in the source story focusing on the issue of the female main character, Gretel, being placed as the secondary gender compared to her male brother, Hansel.

This study takes a closer look into *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* and the adaptation movie, *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*, which is directed by Oz Perkins. In this research, the researcher analyzes the relation of the two works as an adaptation and source text. The study focuses on the issue of feminism portrayed in Gretel's character in both works.

Hansel and Gretel (1812) itself is an original German fairy tale which is famous worldwide until nowadays. It is written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm known as Brothers Grimm under the collection of stories entitled *Kinder- und Hausmarchen*. This story was released in the first volume of the collection book as story number 15. The story is derived from local folk tales and tells the story of the journey of a pair of brother and sister named Hansel and Gretel. They are being left together in the woods to die by their parents which are mainly influenced by the evil will of the step-mother. Together, they wander through the woods until they find an edible house owned by an evil witch who plans to eat them.

Gretel & Hansel (2020) tells about a brother and sister from a poor family who wander through the woods because they are being kicked out by their mother. On their journey, they find a house full of food owned by an old woman with witch-

like costumes. The broad outline of the story as stated above exactly mimics the source text, *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*. However, there are some distinct contrasting spins. The reversing order of names in the title itself already gives a clue about how the movie wants to place Gretel who represents the female gender before Hansel, the male one.

There are a number of related studies that are taken into account in doing the analysis. Regarding how children's literatures have been repackaged into post-feminist stories in the form of movie, the researcher uses these two studies entitled "*Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern-Day Fairy Tale (2014)*" by Sarah Wilde and "*Who's the fairest of Them all? Defining and Subverting the Female Beauty Ideal in Fairy Tale Narratives and Films through Grotesque Aesthetics (2015)*" by Leah Persaud. Regarding the issue of Existentialist Feminism of a female character in literature and movie, the researcher is using two studies entitled *Existentialist Feminism of Woman's Struggle in Cigarette Girl Novel (2020)* by Faidah Yusuf and *FEMINIST IDENTITY OF MERIDA PORTRAYED IN BRAVE MOVIE (2014)* by Yessi Dita Ariyasni. Another study that is taken into account is a study regarding the female characteristics portrayed by Gretel in the 1812's source work entitled "*A Comparative Analysis of Character Depiction in the Grimms' Kinder-un Hausmärchen and Modern Fairytale Adaptations*" by Meghan Hill. Aside from those, most of the previous studies regarding feminism and female characters in *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* focuses on analyzing the evil step-mother or the wicked witch while Gretel as one of the main characters in the story does not get much attention. Thus, the aim of

this study is to highlight the presence of Gretel and critically analyze her replacement from originally placed as the secondary gender in the source work to being placed as the superior gender in the adaptation movie work. This study contributes to the issue about how post-feminist modern media wants to break traditional gender ideologies brought by children's literatures which have survived until now.

To conduct the research and compare the two objects, the researcher is using Theory of Adaptation by Linda Hutcheon. It is used as the researcher wants to study *Gretel & Hansel (2020)* as an adaptation of the world-widely known children's literature, *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*. Hutcheon stated that in order for an adaptation to be considered successful, it has to have such novelty that differs it from the source text. This theory also introduces a critical analysis on adaptation works from various media including movie or film work by considering the contexts surrounding the texts. "The contexts of creation and reception are material, public, and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic" (Hutcheon 2006, 28). This research is using this theory to analyze the objects both from the narrative and non-narrative aspects and relating it to the context as an adaptation and source works.

The feminist issue in the two versions of the story is analyzed further using Existential Feminism Theory by Simone de Beauvoir. This theory analyzes the existence of women in the world where they become the secondary gender compared to men. This theory stated that in this world women are considered as the Other (Objects) and men as the Self (Subject). By that, she implies that in order for

men to remain free, they have to make women subordinate to them (De Beauvoir 1989, 31). She explains that existentialism for women is when they are no longer an object and has become a subject for herself (De Beauvoir 1989). This theory helps to analyze the issue of women representation in this research as there is a change of Gretel's representation from being depicted as the Other in Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* to being depicted as the Self in Oz Perkin's *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*. Thus, this theory takes a systematic closer look in analyzing that issue.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Considering the background of the study above, the problems are designed as follow:

1. How does the adaptation work, *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*, differ from the source text *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*?
2. How and to what extent does the portrayal of Gretel as a dominating female figure rejecting the concept of women being 'The Other' in *Gretel & Hansel (2020)* develop from *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the formula of analyzing the questions stated in the Statement of the Problems, the researcher would like to:

1. Reveal how the adaptation work, *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*, differs from the source text, *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*.
2. Reveal how and to what extent the portrayal of Gretel as a dominating female figure rejecting the concept of women being 'The Other' in *Gretel & Hansel (2020)* is developed from *Hansel and Gretel (1812)*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study aims to disclose adaptation transformation done to the character Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* into Gretel in *Gretel & Hansel (2020)*. This analysis will also broaden readers' perspective that there are classic work's influences to modern work. The classic story also tends to be reproduced with some modification along with the changing social and cultural condition. This research especially highlights the modification in the presentation of female character related to the feminist view. The readers are given knowledge about the historically changing feminist ideology in the story through the original work which was released in 1812 and the recent work which was released more than two decades later in 2020. For general reader, this research is intended to present a recent reconstructed work based on the worldly known classic children's literature *Hansel and Gretel (1812)* which is *Gretel & Hansel (2020)* along with the deeper meaning and feminist ideological change.

Furthermore, this research is going to contribute as a sample work regarding adaptation and feminism study especially for students from English Department of the Faculty of Humanities of Universitas Airlangga.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Adaptation	: A work in one medium that derives its impulse as well as a varying number of its elements from a work in a different medium
Source	: The work which the adaptation work derived from
The Self	: Based on Beauvoir's observation regarding existentialism, it is how men refer to themselves. Men considered themselves as essential.
The Other	: Based on Beauvoir's observation regarding existentialism, it is how men refer to women. Men considered women as inessential.
Domination	: An act of giving pressure to and having control of something or someone. Beauvoir states that this act happens between men and women where women are objects and men are the subject.