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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

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The Cinderella Factor

My treatise is about a fairytale, the story behind the story. I will ask and answer the question “What makes Cinderella so interesting to authors, scholars, TV producers, feminists and to me”? I will explore the story and how it speaks to us about identity, sexuality, and gender-specific social roles. By examining the past and present stories of Cinderella, we will see how far women’s images have advanced and how they have primarily stayed the same. Cinderella brings to light complex and fundamental concerns.

The Cinderella myth has functioned as a double-edged ideological weapon. On one hand, the code of propriety is carefully woven into a myth that romanticizes women’s subordinate and domestic roles inside the patriarchy; on the other hand women feel that it gives a woman hope, hope of being saved, being removed from hard work and oblivion.

As it’s foundation, the Cinderella story contains a strong negative narrative, which serves the patriarchal purpose of keeping women in a passive and subordinate position. My treatise will analyze several “moments” of Cinderella, and her continuing influence on our culture. I will discuss the evolution of this fairytale concentrating on the Perrault story and its closest descendant, the Disney animated version released in 1950. I will analyze how the attitudes of that time were reflected in the Disney film. Using theories of archetypes and literary structure, I will examine the character types used in Perrault and Disney, and demonstrate the ways in which they confine women to specific roles.