

## *Original Paper*

# “Little Glass Slippers” on the American Silver Screen: An Inquiry into Hollywood Adaptations of Charles Perrault’s “Cinderella”

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### ***Abstract***

*Considered as a form of translation, adaptations involve intersemiotic transfers of stories, novels and poems into the symbolic system of the cinema. This process could be construed as an attempt on the part of the “translators” to “consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question” as also “pay tribute by copying” (Hutcheon, p. 7). Adaptations of folktales present a particularly challenging and at the same time, interesting task in that unlike novels or short stories, which are mostly in the written form and hence possess a fixed plot, folktales are mostly in the oral tradition and thus present regional and chronological variations. This accounts for the multiple adaptations of “Cinderella” or “The Little Glass Slipper”, one of the most popular tales by Charles Perrault, across and more importantly, within cultures, during different historical periods. In this paper, I attempt a diachronic comparative study of multiple adaptations of “Cinderella”, focusing on different ‘versions’ of the tale embodied in films produced in the USA, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary times. The study would take into account the issues of race, gender, class as also the varying themes, keeping in mind the historical conditions under which the films were produced.*

### ***Keywords***

*adaptations, semiotic system, multiple translations, film studies, gender roles, race, intertextuality*

## 1. Introduction

Cinematic adaptations, involving intersemiotic transfers into the symbolic system of cinema from that of the written or oral text, is an attempt on the part of the ‘translators’ to “consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question” as also “pay tribute by copying” (Hutcheon, p. 7). Linda Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Adaptation* asserts that “adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (p. 7), which perhaps accounts for multiple translations, or rather, adaptations of literary works. Adaptations of folktales present a particularly challenging and at the same time, interesting task in that unlike novels or short stories, which are mostly in the written form and hence possess a fixed plot, folktales are mostly in the oral tradition and thus present regional and chronological variations. This makes it imperative for the translator/film-maker to present the story in a way that appeals to diverse audiences and at the same time produce a work of art that can be seen as a text in its own right. This accounts for the multiple adaptations of “Cinderella” or “The Little Glass Slipper”, one of the most popular tales by Charles Perrault, across and more importantly, within cultures, during different historical periods. Multiple translations/ adaptations may mean either: 1) translations/adaptations of literary works into (films in) more than two languages, or 2) translations/adaptations of works into the same language more than twice, during different chronological eras.

## 2. Method

In this paper, I attempt a diachronic comparative study of multiple adaptations of “Cinderella”, engaging with the different “versions” of the tale embodied in films produced in the USA, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary times. *Cinderella* (1914) by James Kirkwood, *Cinderella* (1950) by Walt Disney Television, *The Glass Slipper* (1955) by Charles Walters, *Cinderfella* (1960) by Frank Tashlin, *Cindy* (1978) by William Graham, *Cinderella* (1997) by Robert Iscove, *Ever After* (1998) by Andy Tennant, *Another Cinderella Story* (2008) by Damon Santostefano and *Rags* (2012) by Billie Woodruff have been taken into consideration for the purpose of the study. The major reason for the exclusive focus on adaptations produced in America is the fact that the country accounts for the largest number of adaptations of the story from any single country over different time-periods. The relative higher mass appeal of Hollywood to international audiences and the effect this has on the plot of the film is another reason. The study would take into account the issues of race, gender, class as also the varying themes, keeping in mind the historical conditions under which the films were produced.

## 3. A Thematological Approach to Cinderella Movies

### 3.1 Moral Dimensions, Religion and Family Dynamics across Time in “Cinderella Movies”

One among the first American adaptations of the Cinderella story was the 1914 silent film *Cinderella*, directed by James Kirkwood. The most interesting aspect of this film was the attempt to impart moral values, especially through the use of intertitles which were necessary, since it was produced during the

“silent era” (1894-1929) of motion pictures. The story is divided into several segments, each part preceded by an intertitle, often imparting a moral dimension to the story. The intertitles attempting to inculcate moral values in the audience read as follows: 1) “Love of one’s neighbor and friendliness” (preceding the segment where Cinderella gives food to the fairy godmother disguised as a beggar woman), 2) “Ignorance and Superstition” (when the step-sisters go to a fortune-teller), 3) “Faith and Prayer” (of Cinderella), 4) “Peace of mind for Cinderella” (because she prays), 5) “Guilty Conscience” (for the stepsisters since they went to heathens), 6) “The consequences of disobedience” (when Cinderella forgets about her godmother’s warning and stays in the palace till midnight), 7) “The blessings of prosperity and happiness are always to be bestowed on the Good and Noble. And they lived happily ever after”, when Prince Charming marries Cinderella (Kirkwood). We can see an explicit attempt at inculcating values in the audience, which is significant when we take into consideration, the fact that it was produced in the same year the First World War began and it was necessary for the State to ensure the unchallenging support and obedience of the people. The ‘faith’ and ‘obedience’ Kirkwood includes in the intertitles are essentially exhortations to the people to have faith in the government and ready themselves for service to the nation. Such explicit statements about the importance of values and morality cannot be seen in any of the later adaptations (although they do contain inspiring songs such as “If you keep on believing” in the 1950 Walt Disney adaptation and “Someday” in *Rags*). This can be attributed to the increasing adherence of the United States to the Laissez Faire theory in the light of globalization and the emergence of the nation as the global power-center in later years. The individual was considered self-sufficient and the concept of the free individual who could take care of himself/herself even in the absence of state control became rooted and this explains why the adaptations of “Cinderella” undertaken during and after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not state explicit morals for the audience.

The significance of religion in America and the transitions the sphere underwent over time also gets depicted in the movies under consideration. As mentioned before, the 1914 silent movie *Cinderella*, places great emphasis on religion, with Cinderella being a devout Christian. In the other movies set in America with White American characters, we do not see much importance accorded to religion. It seems to have receded to the background—to the “private sphere” of the individual. This is true especially in the case of the two movies produced in the twenty-first century, *Another Cinderella Story* and *Rags*, where it is the public lives of the characters—that is, their performance in music and dance contests—that is highlighted. As such, religion is never brought to the fore. In *Cindy*, on the other hand, it assumes significance. Cindy prays every day and goes to Mass regularly. In fact, she earns her step mama’s wrath when she prays according to the traditional African system (which was followed in the South, where she had previously been) in the church at Harlem. Religion becomes a definitive marker of identity for the African-American Cinderella. In *Ever After* also, the Church as an institution becomes prominent. Here, it should be noted that the movie is a kind of historical fiction, set in

Renaissance France, the reason for which, may be the fact that France has been of the oldest allies of America from the 1770s to the contemporary times. In the movie, the church becomes the site where Franco-Spain relations get played out in splendor. The Prince is forced by the King to marry the Spanish Princess due to political reasons and in the church the latter starts weeping in a hysteric and very ridiculous way since she is in love with a courtier and finally, the Prince laughs and says: “Madame, I know exactly how you feel” and lets her go to her lover, in much the same way that Pierre le Pieu, who bought Danielle (the Cinderella figure) as a slave, gives her her freedom. The French King and Queen laugh at the Spanish Royal couple bickering, blaming each other for what transpired, once again, in a ridiculous way in the church. The Church becomes a venue for the playing out of political dramas. It is also interesting to note how the Spaniards are represented as totally ridiculous, in the movie. This may be a reflection of America’s support of France and consequent contempt for the latter’s long-term enemy, Spain. The reflection of political turbulence in the cultural media once again becomes evident here.

Another aspect of the film that deserves attention is the way the Cinderella figure is treated by the step-mother and step-sisters. While in the 1914 movie, they beat and impose physical violence on her, this tendency disappears in the later versions, thanks to the increasing concern of the state regarding corporeal punishment of children. Verbal abuse and emotional harassment become the major means through which the Cinderella figure is “brought under control”. It is interesting to note that none of the movies present an alternate version of the movie, subverting the power dynamics. The step-parents are depicted as cruel and ruthless, thereby reinforcing the prevalent stereotypes, which may be a reflection of the general resistance of both children and adults to second marriages. Despite radical changes in the family set-up and the institution of marriage over the years, all the adaptations of the Cinderella story show the step-parent as being a monster-figure, usurping the (orphaned) child’s right to the deceased parents’ property and ill-treating them without reason. The films thus do play a role in reinforcing stereotypes about step-parents. It is to be noted that in all the movies, except *Rags*, the oppressor is the step-mother—a reflection of the widespread belief in the unresolved Oedipal complex. And except for the two movies where the Cinderella figures are male—*Rags* (where Charlie has a step-father and step-brothers) and *Cinderfella* (where Fella has a step-mother and step-brothers)—in all the movies, the monster-figures are female. The step-mother becomes a rival when she snatches away the father’s attention from the Cinderella figure, while the sisters become a threat when the Prince figure comes into the picture. The rifts thus become explicit in the plane of an established or potential relationship with a male figure. But the situation changes in *Cinderfella*, produced in 1960 and *Rags*, produced in 2012—both films where the Cinderella figure is a male. In the former, Fella (the Cinderella figure) craves for the step-mother’s attention, which she finally provides him with, albeit in a very indifferent manner—another way in which the Oedipal complex (myth?) is propagated. The step-brothers are not real threats to him in his desire for the Princess, since they are interested more in Fella’s hidden

treasure than in marrying the Princess. In *Rags*, the rivalry between Charlie and Andrew (the elder brother) surfaces basically when the music competition is announced. The rivalry was initially in the sphere of talent and later it shifts to the potential relationship with the singer, Kadee. In a way, Charlie sees in Kadee a version of his deceased mother, in that both were interested in music, pointing to a latent mother-fixation. But such a fixation cannot be seen in the movies where the Cinderella figure is a female. The Prince is attractive to her, because he is handsome and dances with her and she does not make any explicit identification between him and her father. The depiction of the step-brothers/sisters in the later movies is slightly different in that one of the siblings is sympathetic to the Cinderella figure. In *Ever After*, the younger sister, Jacqueline stands up for Cinderella; in *Another Cinderella Story*, Bree does not grudge Mary as much as her twin sister; and in *Rags*, Lloyd supports and encourages Charlie. The increasing rate of second marriages in America may be a reason for this tendency. A weak attempt at subverting stereotypes takes place here.

### 3.2 Sound, Setting, Color and Technology in “Cinderella Movies”

Music and dance assume prominent roles in the movies, in different ways. The 1914 movie does not give much importance to dance as an art-form. The only time the characters dance is at the Prince’s ball. And since it was produced at a time when sound-technology was not yet developed, music does not play any significant role. But in the later movies, there is an increasing importance attached to music and dance, the primacy progressing with the years. The 1950 Walt Disney movie begins with Cinderella’s song and the ballroom song is also heard. Besides, there is background music to suit every occasion, as when the animals modify her dress, when the fairy godmother performs her magic etc. In *The Glass Slipper*, the intimacy between the Prince and Cinderella develops when the former teaches her to dance. Cinderella also dreams of ballet performances and finally, there is the ballroom dance with the Prince. The movie seems to be set in Victorian England, with the waltz as the predominant form performed at the ball. The dance and songs in *Cinderfella* (1960) are much in the same vein, but with slightly comical touches to them. In *Cindy* (1978), in keeping with the African-American backdrop, the music played has jazz and pop music elements. Dance and music assume central role in the two movies produced in the two decades of the twenty-first century- *Another Cinderella Story* (2008) and *Rags* (2012). Damon Santostefano’s *Another Cinderella Story* has music and dance as the central motifs. The film starts with Mary, the Cinderella figure, dancing to her own song. The Prince figure is Joey Parker and his celebrity comes from his status as an extremely popular singer and dancer. The ball is replaced by a school masque party, where, for the first time, Mary’s dancing skills get recognized and she dances with Joey. It is the Zune that she drops that serves the function of the glass slippers in the movie. Joey tries to find her by the “most played songs” in the zune. Again, after the break-up, Joey and Mary reunite at a music-dance contest organized by the former in order to ensure Mary’s admission into the Manhattan Academy of Performing Arts. Music and dance seem to drive the plot forward. As different from the older films, *Another Cinderella Story* features modern dances and

not just waltzes. The case is the same with *Rags* as well, where Kadee (the Prince figure) and Charlie (the Cinderella figure) sing and dance to popular tunes, mostly those composed by Kadee. The function of the glass slipper is served by the CD in which Charlie's song is recorded. The song becomes a hit not just because of the lyrics, but also because of the high beat and rhythm, appealing to audiences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially the younger generation. The rapid developments in the music industry, especially with the widespread use of computers and CDs in America get reflected in the two movies.

The advent and advancement of modernity and technology in America also gets reflected in the movies under consideration. While in the 1914 movie, Cinderella has to go to the forest to fetch wood for lighting fire in the kitchen to cook, and Ella, in *The Glass Slipper* is perpetually covered in charcoal powder, the later day Cinderella figures like Fella, Mary and Charlie, have stoves to cook upon and also toasters, dishwashers etc. Cinder becomes an archaic object for them. Only the empty signifier of the name "Cinderella" persists. Mops and rags used to clean the floor in the silent movie *Cinderella*, the animated version, *The Glass Slipper*, etc., are replaced by vacuum cleaners and indeed, cleaning agencies in *Another Cinderella Story*. The function of the shoes is served by technology in the form of CDs and Zunes. There are also intercoms and computers and mobiles in the modern day Cinderella stories.

Color becomes a motif in all the nine movies. The color of Cinderella's dress is often what makes her stand out in the ballroom. In *The Glass Slipper*, while everyone else in the room wears dark colored gowns, Ella wears a white one. In *Another Cinderella Story*, everyone in the room is dressed in black and/or white, while Mary wears red. The case is the same with Fella in *Cinderfella*. The shoes/slipper is another motif. The role shoes played in identifying the social status of a person becomes evident in all the movies, and especially so in *Ever After*, where Da Vinci notices that Danielle, who pretends to be a countess to save a servant, is wearing shoes of cheap material which immediately identifies her as a maidservant. But later, her ballroom shoes become the point from where the Grand Dame of France begins telling her story to the Brothers Grimm. What becomes important here is the fact that despite the eulogization of Danielle as a defender of the rights of the downtrodden and a noble woman, it is only her grandeur that is highlighted. The shoes made of cheap material is not worthy of attention. The story can begin only with the expensive glass slippers! In *The Glass Slipper*, *Cinderella* (1997), *Ever After* and the Walt Disney animated version of *Cinderella*, the shoes are made of glass, and in the 1914 version, they are made of leather, while in *Cinderella* it is a plain canvas shoe. This, in a way, points to the unequal distribution of wealth between the Whites and the Blacks of America. It can also be indicative of the prejudice that African-Americans are less polished and much less stylish than the White Americans, who wear colored, high-heeled expensive shoes like Mary in *Another Cinderella Story*. In the two movies where the Cinderella figure is played by men—*Cinderfella* and *Rags*—the shoes are significant only in terms of their function. The aesthetic appeal is not very important. In *Cinderfella*, the Princess already knows who Fella is and persuades him to try on the shoes just to make him

understand that she knows that it was he who danced with her. In *Rags*, the step-brother identifies Charlie by his shoes. In both cases, the shoes are no different from those worn by the others in the room.

### 3.3 Cinematic Representations of Shifting Gender Roles in America

Gender roles and the perception of the categories of “woman” and “man” by the society also show significant transformation across the years in film adaptations of “Cinderella”. In the 1914 movie, Cinderella is depicted as a shy girl with little exposure with the outside world. But *The Glass Slipper* has Ella going out into the streets and arguing with people. She is shunned by the society for her “anti-social behavior”, which must have meant, her “unfemininity”—both in terms of appearance (in that she has short hair) and in terms of her behavior (in that she dares to come out of the confines of her home, out into the street). *Ever After* portrays Danielle as a well-educated girl, unlike most girls of her time. She dares to speak her mind because of her education and is not reluctant to confront the Prince to secure the release of a servant. She quotes from More’s *Utopia* and tells the Prince: “A servant is not a thief, your Highness, and those who are, cannot help themselves. ...If you suffer your people to be ill-educated and then make them corrupt from infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded, sir, but that you first make thieves and then punish them?” And this is what makes the Prince fall in love with her. She is not a meek woman, ready to suffer, but rather, one in charge of herself. This is proved when she threatens Pierre le Pieu when he makes advances towards her and gains her freedom from slavery. But it is to be noted that despite the fact that the Prince insults her at the ball when the fact that she is a servant is revealed, she does not hesitate to accept him back as soon as he comes to “rescue” her. Although educated and in charge of herself, and capable of gaining her freedom, she finally succumbs to the male figure, which must have appeased the predominantly male audiences. And *Cinderfella* shows the Princess pleading with Fella to marry her. He condescends only when she throws away all the markers of royalty and cries in front of him. It seems to convey the message that for a woman, power and prestige is of no use and whatever she achieves, she can achieve only through meekness and pleading with the man, even if he is much inferior to her. In *Another Cinderella Story*, Mary does conform to the standards set for women by the patriarchal social order. She does not rebel, and often is the angel in the house. The only instance of rebellion is when she leaves for the Manhattan Academy against her stepmother’s wishes. And she is capable of doing it, because she has Joey’s support. We see stereotypes of the woman as a subject without agency enforced once again. The agency of the woman is asserted in unequivocal terms only in *Cindy*. Despite being ‘chosen’ by Prince, she decides to marry Michael, thereby making her independence felt.

In the movies of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a female in the Cinderella role, we see attempts on the part of the women, (sometimes the Cinderella figure as well) to impress the Prince figure with their beauty. This is especially so in the case of *Cindy*, *Cinderella* and the Walt Disney version of the

story. In *The Glass Slipper*, it is the woman's physical attribute that makes the Prince fall in love with her—her “sad eyes” (Walters). The popular notion that beauty and the body are the only assets that a woman possesses becomes evident here. The not-so-dangerous feminine quality of being beautiful does not pose any threat to male superiority and hence can be glorified in movies. But this changes by the latter half of the century. In *Ever After*, for example, the Prince is impressed by Danielle's education and behavior rather than her beauty (although the other women still pose and preen to get his attention). In *Another Cinderella Story*, Mary's skill in dancing is highlighted and not her beauty. The gradual acceptance by society of women as subjects in no way lesser than men becomes evident through this change in (the reasons for) Cinderella's appeal in the movies produced over a century.

Now let us consider the movies where male figures play the role of Cinderella. Both Fella and Charlie attract the Princesses' attention through their talents and/or behavior and not their beauty. A man, unlike a woman, does not need beauty or style to gain the Princess figure's attention—this seems to be the message that these movies convey. In fact, in *Rags*, Charlie becomes close to Kadee because it is through him that Kadee can be “herself”. He becomes a savior figure for her. The popular notion of man as the “knight in armor” gets reflected in these movies as well.

The constraints imposed on men due to these stereotypes also find space in the movies. In *Ever After*, Danielle rescues the Prince from the gypsies and carries him away on her back, thereby subverting the established gender roles. This leads to laughter and the Prince has to bear the brunt of the insult. It need not be mentioned that if it had happened the other way round, i.e., if the Prince had rescued Danielle—there would not have been any kind of ridicule. A strong case is made for masculism, a movement which emerged at around the same time the movie was produced (in the 1960s), by Fella's godfather in *Cinderfella* when he says:

Fella, you have been chosen to correct the wrongs brought about by the original Cinderella story. Through the centuries, the women of the world, influenced by Cinderella, have waited. Waited for their Prince Charming galloping out of the wide blue yonder on their white horses, to claim their hands in marriage. But there was only one Prince Charming. And when he didn't appear, these women married the closest available man. And their lives were ever after miserable. Because, they all regretted and they felt that, well, that they had taken the second best. But what is worse, they made their poor husbands miserable because the poor fellow wasn't a prince. ...Oh, the Cinderella legend has brought nothing but dissatisfaction to the hearts of women. And their husbands have taken the brunt of it. ...the unhappy husbands of the world are crying for help. They are crying for a chance to get even. It's time



for a change. And you have been chosen to bring about that change  
(Tashlin).

Fella has been chosen by the Board of Directors of All Fairy Godfathers, Committee for the Preservation of Sanity to Married Men etc., in order to put an end to “centuries of female abuse” (Tashlin). There is a strong criticism of the stereotypical images of men propagated over the centuries and the pressure it has on the man as an individual.

Despite multiple adaptations of “Cinderella” in the United States over the years, featuring female and male Cinderellas, African-American Cinderellas, modern-day and olden-day Cinderellas, no attempt has been made till date to accommodate homosexuality in the Cinderella story. This may be due to the fact that many states in the US have still not passed the same-sex marriage bill, although homosexuality was legalized in America in 2003.

### 3.4 The Dynamics of Race in Multiple Film Adaptations of “Cinderella”

Racial factors also surface in a significant way in the movies. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and the African-American Civil Rights’ Movement (1955-1968) had had a significant impact on the cultural and social life of America. The movement of African-Americans from the South to Harlem, in the aftermath of the World War II, the living conditions of the Blacks in America, their institutions, the impact of the war with the Japanese and the ensuing political turbulence on their lives...all get represented in several of the Cinderella movies under consideration. Set in Harlem, *Cindy* (1978) has as the central character, an African-American girl who moved to Harlem from South Carolina, after the World War. The drafting of soldiers for the American army, in order to fight the Japanese, becomes a theme in *Cindy*, with the second Prince figure, Michael, being a draft-dodger in the beginning and later getting enlisted. In the 1997 film *Cinderella*, by Walt Disney Television, the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, as an indirect result of which many interracial marriages took place, especially between Chinese American men and African American women, becomes evident. The King is a Chinese American man and the Queen an African-American. Their son, with explicit mongoloid features, marries the Cinderella figure, who is an African American woman. The rise to prominence of many African-Americans is represented by the popularity of Kadee, the Prince figure, in *Rags*. It is interesting that this movie was shot during the reign of Barak Obama, who has become iconic of African-Americans’ becoming success stories in the USA, where they had previously been considered as secondary citizens. Thus, an alternate history of the United States of America, through the representation of non-White races also gets reflected in film adaptations of “Cinderella”.

But racial prejudices abound in these the movies, especially *Cindy*. Although all the actors are African-Americans, the underlying racial prejudices of the writers, directors and producers—all of whom are whites—do get reflected in the film. Although Harlem was mostly populated by African-Americans who were well-educated and more or less affluent, the movie depicts Cindy’s street (Harlem, 135<sup>th</sup> Street) as poverty-stricken and consisting of the families of unskilled laborers. In fact,

the film begins with Cindy's travel from South Carolina, a rustic countryside, to New York, which is depicted as a posh urban area with skyscrapers and educated people and then to Harlem, which is also in New York, but entirely different from the rest of it in that the inhabitants are mostly from the lower sections of the society and the streets are represented as ugly and crowded. Not a single inhabitant of Harlem is depicted as educated. Cindy's father is a service-boy in a restaurant owned by the Whites and we see him doing menial work for them in order to buy Cindy a dress for the party. Again, Cindy becomes a laughing stock when she prays in the traditional way of the Blacks of the South, singing and clapping and saying Halleluiah out loud at the church in Harlem. It is to be noted that the Blacks residing in Harlem were expected to conform to European standards of propriety, with very controlled body movements in the church. When Cindy asserts her racial identity, it becomes an issue to be laughed at and an indication of "being uncultured".

Also, as different from the father figures in other Cinderella films (which feature white characters), Cindy's father married her step-mother through deceit. He hid from her the fact that he had been married once before and also had a daughter in that marriage. The White father-figures in *Ever After*, *Cinderella*, *The Glass Slipper* etc., on the other hand, are depicted as straight-forward men, honest and faithful. Again, there are two Prince figures in the movie. One is Captain Joe Prince, a Mulatto and the other, whom Cindy ultimately marries, is a Black man called Michael. The former is depicted as the character women swoon over, while the latter is an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. Although the reason for Prince's primacy is his status as an army officer of great merit, the question remains as to why a Mulatto, with White blood in him has been chosen to take that role and not a Black man. When Cindy chooses Michael to Prince, despite her father's disapproval, it is a kind of condescension that can be seen- the condescension of the Black woman "chosen" by the half-White man towards the "unfortunate", "ordinary" Black man. The movie becomes a message of the American condescension towards the African-American, and also a way of asserting American supremacy, as proved when the American flag flutters high with a White officer dictating the oath (pledging support to the American army) to Michael. In *Another Cinderella Story* as well, there are subtle elements of racism. Dustin, a Black American, is Joey Parker's side-kick and "manager". He often has to do the unpleasant tasks for Joey. The racial prejudices underlying the movies cannot go ignored.

#### **4. Degrees of Intertextuality in Adaptations**

The degree of intertextuality and the degree to which the movies acknowledge their indebtedness to the original Cinderella story also vary. Although all the movies are intertextual in that they draw from Perrault's "Cinderella", the plot structures vary greatly, with some movies involving magic and others avoiding that aspect, roles getting reversed, new episodes added and old ones deleted as per the expectations of the audience. Six of the nine movies under consideration have either the name "Cinderella" or "The Little Glass Slipper" (or their variations) as the title. Again the 1914 silent movie

begins with the intertitles—“Cinderella—A Play in Four Acts” (Kirkwood); Walt Disney’s animated version opens with the picture of a book titled *Cinderella* and as the narration begins with “Once upon a time” (Geronimi), the camera focuses on the pictures in the book and it concludes with the last page of the book where it is written: “and they lived happily ever after” (Geronimi); again, *Cinderfella* ends with “and they lived happily ever after” (Tashlin), the typical ending of the Cinderella story; *Cindy* begins with the intertitle: “Once upon a time, in a faraway country, there lived a girl whose name was Cinderella. This is a rip off that story” (Graham), and concludes with an African-American man saying: “And everybody, I mean, EVERYBODY, lived happily ever after” (Graham); as for *Ever After*, the story begins with the Grand Dame summoning the Grimm’s Brothers and showing them Danielle’s glass slippers. Thus, almost all the texts, irrespective of their historical spatial location, explicitly acknowledge the fact that they are derived from the fairy tale, thereby avoiding copyright issues.

## 5. Conclusion

The multiple Hollywood adaptations of “Cinderella” help trace an alternate history of the country and its people through the lens of gender, race, class, modernity, social institutions etc. The original Cinderella tale has been modified at multiple levels during the process of translation/ adaptation, in order to fit it into the target culture or rather, the target age. The adaptations vary according to the zeitgeist, historiological conditions and the subjectivity(ies) of the translator/film-maker. Despite major differences between the various versions highlighted by this diachronic comparative study of the multiple adaptations, the basic human essences remain constant in the films—dispossession, cruelty, love, grief, good and evil, punishment and reward, the desire for happiness... The emotions and essences common to human beings, irrespective of class, race, gender or nationality, are not variables in the adaptations. A diachronic comparison of the multiple adaptations of Cinderella thus proves the American comparatists right in their argument that Comparative Literature is essentially a study of humanistic essences which are the same throughout the world, throughout the ages, irrespective of class, race and gender.

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### Declaration

I hereby certify that the paper titled “‘Little Glass Slippers’ on the American Silver Screen: An Inquiry into Hollywood Adaptations of Charles Perrault’s ‘Cinderella’” is an original work and that it has not been published previously.

### Bio Note

Dr. Minu Susan Koshy is currently working as Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Marthoma College for Women, Kerala, India. She was awarded Ph.D in English (Comparative Literature) by The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad in 2017. She has published extensively in national and international journals and presented papers at international conferences. She has served as the resource person at several conferences and has conducted workshops on cultural and critical theory. Her areas of interest include cultural studies, postcolonial studies and comparative and world literatures. She has also been a member of the editorial board of the 17<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK). Her book titled *Narrating Childhood Trauma: The Quest for Catharsis* and a translation of the Malayalam anthology *Tattoo* by Jacob Abraham, the winner of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Geetha Hiranyan Award, were published in 2015. An edited volume titled *When Objects Write Back: Reconceptualizing Material Culture in the Tricontinent* is scheduled to be published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2020.