ISLAMIC ADAPTATION OF CLASSICAL WESTERN FAIRY TALES: A STUDY OF SELECTED WORKS OF GILANI-WILLIAMS

BY

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ABSTRACT

The genre of fairy tales is more popular among children and often powerful enough to shape one's attitudes and virtues. However, many classic fairy tales are charged with promoting inappropriate elements which can negatively affect children, as they have not developed a sufficient moral compass to differentiate the good from the bad. Therefore, children perhaps need to read a version of the tales that are free from gruesome and dark elements, and are filled with good values. Fawzia Gilani-Williams, who has authored many Islamic children stories, publishes a series of Islamic fairy tales. Her adaptations of the classic fairy tales are an alternative version appropriate for Muslim children, as she has modified the stories and made them compatible with Islamic teachings. No prior research has been done on her and her works, so this research finds out the reason as to why the Muslim writer adapts and modifies the classic fairy tales into Islamic ones. This study also examines her *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale* (2010), *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* (2012) and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale* (2018), and compares her adapted stories with Charles Perrault's "Cinderella/Cendrillon," "Sleeping Beauty" and the Grimms' "Snow White," using Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's Islamisation of Knowledge framework and the theory of adaptation to see the differences between the two versions of the tales. Lastly, this study thoroughly analyses the Islamised adaptations to identify the Islamic values that Gilani-Williams promotes in her version of the fairy tales.

مُلخَّص البحث

يُعدُّ أدب القصص الخيالية الأكثر شيوعًا بين الأطفال، وغالبًا ما يكون له تأثير قوي في تشكيل مواقف الطفل وفضائله، وعلى الرغم من ذلك؛ يُروِّج عدد من الحكايات الخيالية التقليدية لأفكار غير ملائمة يمكن أن تؤثر سلبيًا على الأطفال لأنهم لما يُطوروا بعدُ بوصلة أخلاقية كافية للتمييز بين الخير والشر، ولذلك يحتاج الأطفال إلى قراءة نُسخ معدلة من هذه الحكايات تكون خالية من العناصر المروِّعة والمظلمة، ومليئة بالقيم النبيلة، وقد ألفت الكاتبة فوزية جيلاني ويليامز عددًا من قصص الأطفال الإسلامية، ونشرت سلسلة من القصص الخيالية الإسلامية، وتُعدُّ تعديلاتها للقصص الخيالية التقليدية بديلاً مناسبًا للأطفال المسلمين؛ إذ جعلت تعديلاتها القصص متفقة مع التعاليم الإسلامية، ولم تتناول الدراسات السابقة هذه الكاتبة وأعمالها؛ لذا يستكشف هذا البحث أسباب تكييف الكاتبة وتعديلاتها للحكايات الخيالية التقليدية إلى حكايات إسلامية؛ ويتناول كُتبها: "سندريلا: حكاية إسلامية" (2010)، و"بياض الثلج: حكاية إسلامية" (2012)، "والجميلة النائمة: حكاية إسلامية" (2018)، ويُقارن البحث القصص المعدَّلة مع أصولها "سندريلا" و"الجميلة النائمة" لتشارلز بيرولت، و"بياض الثلج" لجريمز، وذلك باستخدام الإطار النظري لأسلمة المعرفة لإسماعيل راجي الفاروقي، ونظرية التكييف؛ لمعرفة الاختلافات بين النسختين؛ وأخيرًا؛ يُحلل هذا البحث في دقة التعديلات الإسلامية لتحديد القيم الإسلامية التي تُروج لها فوزية جيلاني ويليامز في حكاياتها.

APPROVAL PAGE

We certify that we have supervised and read this study and that in our opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English Literary Studies.

>………………………………..
>Md. Mahmudul Hasan
>Supervisor

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>Co-Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English Literary Studies.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nor Adilah Abdul Hamid

Signature…………………   Date   20 November 2020

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, Abdul Hamid Din and Zuraidah

Hassim, and other family members who constantly support and encourage me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Fairy tales as one of the genres in children's literature is popular and enjoyed by readers around the globe. It entertains children and teaches them life lessons, as most of the stories have allegorical significance that could shape readers' perception and attitudes. However, fairy tales especially classical Western fairy tales have received a lot of criticisms because not all elements that they promote are appropriate for young readers who have not developed a sufficient moral compass to differentiate the good from the bad. What is more, they are filled with unrealistic themes and messages that contradict Islamic teachings even though some of the stories promote universal moral values and have been sanitised according to the writers' standards. Hence, the stories could negatively affect Muslim children and weaken their conviction to the faith. As a way to protect the children, some people believe that Muslim children should abandon classic Western fairy tales and opt for stories that are suitable for them. However, disregarding the works of fairy tale writers like Perrault and the Grimms would be a loss for the children, as they would miss out their wonderful and entertaining fairy tales. Hence, writers should continue producing more sanitised versions of the stories where lurid and gruesome aspects are filtered so that Muslim children can read and enjoy them.

British Muslim writer Fawzia Gilani-Williams (1967-) takes up the challenge to offer Muslim children alternative stories or what can be termed as "Islamic fairy tales". She adapts some of the popular classical Western fairy tales, turning them into stories that reflect the life of Muslims and fill them with Islamic teachings. Such contributions

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in children's literature would benefit Muslim children greatly, so her hard work should be recognised and studied. Therefore, this research will examine some of Gilani-Williams' Islamic fairy tales such as *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale* (2010), *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* (2012) and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale* (2018), and compare them with their classical prototypes which are Charles Perrault's "Cinderella/Cendrillon" (1697), "Sleeping Beauty" (1697) and the Grimms' "Snow White" (1812). This dissertation is intended to explore the reasons behind the idea of Islamising classical Western fairy tales. It is also a comparative study that is mainly focused on seeing how Gilani-Williams writes her version of the above-mentioned classical tales by highlighting the differences in plot, characterisations of characters and morals between the classical and their respective Islamised versions. This study also examines and analyses the Islamic elements that Gilani-Williams includes in her versions of the classical Western fairy tales.

1.1.1. The Brief History of Fairy Tales

Fairy tales as a literary genre originated within an oral storytelling tradition among adults specifically peasants and the working class people only (Zipes, 2006, p. 3). The members of spinning circles frequently invented and shared folk stories among themselves when they were working in workrooms (Tatar, 2003, pp. 112-113). As time went by, their audience continued to grow once Louis XIV's court and prominent Parisian salons started listening to and enjoying folklores (Zipes, 2006, p. 3). Thus, it started to become popular among the aristocrats and the middle-class people.

Eventually, children began to listen to folktales, even though the themes and lessons conveyed in the stories were inappropriate for them. As a result, the stories affected children's morals and behaviours negatively. The reasons are the focuses of

folktales during that period were class struggle, competition for power and the brutality of everyday life of that era such as rape, exploitation, starvation and the abandonment of children (Zipes, 2006, pp. 7-8). For that reason, fairy tale writers and collectors saw the need to address children as a separate entity from adults. Thus, they transformed folktales into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners, so that their audience would become civilised according to the social code of that time (Tatar, 2003, p. xxvi; Zipes, 2006, p. 3). They carefully modified folktales that they adapted from Italian tales – tales by Straparola (1480-1557) and Basile (1566-1632) – and from the oral tales of governesses and servants, and turned them into literary fairy tales. Their appropriated version of the folktales became a source of entertainment for children and a guide on how to mould one's character and behaviour (Zipes, 2006, pp. 3-9, p. 35).

1.1.2 Charles Perrault, the Grimms and Their Fairy Tales

Charles Perrault (1628 – 1703) was one of the French writers who educated children through his adaptations of folklore. He became interested in folktales after being a frequent visitor of the literary salons of Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier (1664-1734), Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy (1651-1705) and other talented female writers. By 1696, he started to transform several popular folktales that he collected into moralistic tales to improve the minds of young people (Zipes, 2008, p. xiv). In 1697, he published his famous collection of tales, *The Tales of Mother Goose*, which contains stories such as "Sleeping Beauty", "Cinderella", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Tom Thumb" and others. Almost all of the stories in this book are taken from Straparola's *The Pleasant Nights* (1550-1553) and Basile's *Pentamerone* (1634), as Perrault was inspired to write his versions after he read a copy of those collections (Zipes, 2008, p. xv; Bottigheimer, 2016, p. 34).

As for the Grimms, Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) ventured into collecting folktales after they were driven by nationalism. They collected folktales from mostly *petit bourgeois* or educated middle-class people to retain German culture because they regarded folktales that were shared from generation to generation as a heritage (Neumann, 1996, pp. 25-26; Zipes, 2006, p. 61; Hernández, 2019, para 4). They also wanted to promote the cultural tradition of the common people to the rising middle classes (Zipes, 2006, p. 61). Thus, they published *Children's and Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*) or also known as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*.

The collection was published in seven editions. The first edition was published in 1812, and later, it continued to grow bigger until the final one, the seventh edition was introduced to the public in 1857. Out of the seven editions, the first one was criticised because most of the stories shared similar plots and themes, and it was said to have "problematic content and awkward narrative style" (Neumann, 1996, p. 27). Moreover, Friedrich Rühs (1781-1820) regarded the first edition as not suitable for children, hence suggested parents to "exercise good judgment in selecting only appropriate stories" to share with children (Tatar, 2003, pp. 15-16). After being bombarded with those criticisms, the Grimms deleted texts that did not meet their aesthetic demands and stories that were too bizarre for children (Neumann, 1996, p. 28). Wilhelm continuously adopted new stories and replaced weak texts with better tales under new titles. The Grimms also deleted elements of social criticism to avoid offending the groups of readers they were addressing (p. 32). After the major revisions, the Grimms eventually managed to publish the most beautifully written stories in the final edition which is said to be "occasionally more prudish, certainly more pious than they were to begin with" (Pullman, 2013, p. xii).

1.2. THE AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Fawzia Gilani-Williams (1967-) is an experienced educator and educational consultant who graduated from the University of Wolverhampton in the UK with a Bachelor's Degree in Education in 1993. She graduated from the University of Birmingham in 2000 with a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Islamic Studies and Education and earned a PhD in Children's Literature and Character Development from the University of Worcester in 2015 (Gilani-Williams, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

Gilani-Williams has contributed to the world of education as a researcher, teacher, librarian, and school principal. She has been an educator since 1993 and has mostly worked in Islamic as well as mainstream schools located in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates (Gilani-Williams, personal communication, May 4, 2018). Besides, she is also a writer who has a deep passion for children's literature. She published her first children's book in 2002 and, since then, has continued writing for children. This talented woman has more than 50 books to her credit and has published with various international publishers such as Taha (UK), Nordeen (Malaysia), Kube (UK), Tulika (India), Marshall Cavendish (USA), Kar-Ben (USA), Eid Stories (USA) and Mitsumura (Japan). Her works include *Aminah and Aisha's Eid Gifts* (2004), *Nabeel's New Pants: An Eid Tale* (2008), *The Lost Ring: An Eid Tale* (2009), *Abu Firas the Fanoos Maker: A Ramadan Story* (2010), and *Umm Badoor's Ramadan Gaimat* (2017). Her book, *Yaffa and Fatima Shalom Salaam* (2017), which promotes peace and harmony among human beings, won a silver medal from the Sydney Taylor Book Award in 2018 (George, 2018, para 2). Gilani-Williams also wrote adaptations of classical Western fairy tales of notable writers such as Perrault and the Grimms. As of now, her adaptations are *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale* (2010), *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* (2012) and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale* (2018). Her

Islamised versions of "Rapunzel" and "Beauty and the Beast" are scheduled for publication in 2020 (Gilani-Williams, personal communication, May 28, 2020).

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Western fairy tales are popular and they are widely circulated around the world. However, most of the fairy tales are not suitable for children, especially for those from Muslim family backgrounds. This is because some of the morals and themes that fairy tale writers like Perrault and the Grimms preach in their stories are inappropriate for children in general. However, it may not be a wise decision to hinder children from reading fairy tales, as there are ideas in them that could benefit them greatly. Some of the stories, particularly the works of Perrault and the Grimms that are classified as part of didactic literature are riched with universal moral values. Moreover, Muslim children would miss out the fun and joy of reading them if they are stopped from reading classic Western fairy tales.

As a way to tackle these issues, Islamised adaptations of popular classic Western fairy tales by Gilani-Williams might be one of the best solutions for Muslim children, as her versions of the fairy tales would allow Muslim children to enjoy the genre. Despite her continuous efforts in adapting and Islamising fairy tales, most existing research works related to the genre overlook her works. There are only a few articles that highlight Gilani-Williams' works, as Islamised fairy tales as a topic is not yet widely discussed although such adaptations deserve recognition. This study, henceforth, is an attempt to add in more information related to the topic and also introduces those adaptations by Gilani-Williams into the folkloric academic discussion, hoping that they become popular and gain more audience. Through this research, I will discuss Gilani-Williams' Islamised adaptations to uncover the reasons behind her idea of adapting

classic Western fairy tales through an Islamic lens. Furthermore, this study will compare her Islamised adaptations and their Western versions by Perrault and the Grimms to see the ways the writers present their plots, characters and morals. This research will also see the writing styles of the writers and examine the way Gilani-Williams adapts Islamic elements and culture into her version of the tale.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will enlighten parents and teachers about the availability of the Islamised adaptations of classical Western fairy tales by Gilani-Williams. Besides, the findings of this research will convince them that the Islamised adaptations contain elements, themes and messages that are in line with Islamic teachings. Hence, they can use the adaptations as alternatives for Muslim children to read the classical Western fairy tales.

1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1- To explore the reasons for adapting Western fairy tales through an Islamic lens.

2- To see the differences in the plots, characterisations and moral messages of the classical adaptations and their adapted versions by Gilani-Williams.

3- To analyse the ways through which Gilani-Williams promotes Islamic values through her adaptations of popular Western fairy tales.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1- Why does Gilani-Williams write adaptations of popular Western fairy tales?

2- What are the stylistic differences in classical adaptations and their adapted versions written by Gilani-Williams?

3- How does Gilani-Williams promote Islamic values through her adaptations of the popular Western fairy tales?

1.7. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The methodology proposed for this research is literature-based. As this research requires analysing and comparing different versions of adaptations, the main sources of this study are Gilani-Williams' *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale*, *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale* and their classic Western versions, Perrault's "Cinderella", "Sleeping Beauty" and the Grimms' "Snow White". Apart from the primary sources, this study also uses secondary sources such as various academic writings – both printed and non-printed materials – to support its findings.

1.7.1 Limitations of the Study

This research only focuses on a limited number of adaptations, which are the above-mentioned stories, and seeks to study only one Muslim writer, Fawzia Gilani-Williams. Thus, other Islamised adaptations and adaptations by other Muslim writers may not be covered. Moreover, the lack of prior research studies on Gilani-Williams and her works somewhat limits the analysis of this research. Thus, this study could only rely on a few available studies, online articles and personal communications with the writer to support its findings.

1.8. CHAPTER OUTLINE

This dissertation consists of six chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter provides the introduction, the background of the study and the statement of the problem. It also discusses the significance of the study as well as research objectives to guide the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This chapter consists of an in-depth literature review. It also includes a theoretical framework that sheds light on the concept of Islamisation of Knowledge.

Chapter Three: From the Blonde Cinderella to the Headscarf-wearing Zahra: An Alternative Tale for Muslim Children. This chapter starts with a discussion on Gilani-Williams' objectives in writing Islamised adaptations of popular fairy tales. It also discusses the two adaptations of the Cinderella tale where I analyse the differences between Perrault's "Cinderella" and Gilani-Williams' *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale* and highlight how the latter incorporates Islamic values.

Chapter Four: From a Poison Apple to a Poisonous Date: Modifying Western Tales Islamically. A study is conducted in this chapter to see the differences in terms of plots, characters and morals of the Grimms' "Snow White" and Gilani-Williams' *Snow White: An Islamic Tale*. The study also points out their writing styles and examines the way Gilani-Williams adapts Islamic elements and culture into her version of the tale.

Chapter Five: Faith and Prayers vs. a Fairy's Power: An Islamic Adaptation of "Sleeping Beauty". This chapter highlights the differences in Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty" and Gilani-Williams' *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale*. Here I discuss the way the latter integrates Islamic values in her adaptation of the tale.

Chapter Six: Conclusion. The concluding chapter of this study rounds off the arguments of the thesis and suggests future research trajectories in the area of Islamising fairy tales. It also vindicates the need for such research projects.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fairy tales originally travelled through the word of mouth, as storytellers shared and transmitted stories to other people. Later, fairy tale writers collected, recorded and distorted the original forms of the tales according to their likings and public demands. Hence, stories like "Cinderella", "Snow White" and "Sleeping Beauty" have various adaptations written by different authors. Out of all those versions available, the adaptations by Perrault and the Grimms remains popular among readers and also among folklorists and researchers.

Many scholars have examined these writers' works from various critical approaches such as psychoanalytic, cultural, social-historical, feminist, Marxist and anthropological. For example, there are many studies conducted based on psychoanalytical theory and psychological perspective, but the most cited one is by Bettelheim (1903-1990). The Austrian-born psychologist writes a book, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) where he thoroughly discusses and examines the psychoanalytic interpretation of various fairy tales like "Cinderella", "Snow White", and "Sleeping Beauty". Besides, information related to the history of fairy tales is also available because academicians like Zipes, Tatar and Warner focus their studies on the historical perspective of the genre. Their books and papers mainly discuss the origin of fairy tales, its evolution, adaptations and interpretations. Moreover, out of all fairy tales, adaptations of Cinderella are heavily discussed among researchers who try to investigate the history and origin of the Cinderella tale. For instances, Dundes collected

and compiled various versions of the tale written by different authors and in different languages in his *Cinderella: A Casebook* (1982). Cox (1893) and Kelley (1994) investigate the origin of the tale and discover the total number of Cinderella variants, while researchers like Waley (1947), Bettelheim (1976), Greene (1986), Warner (1995) and Tatar (1987) study the earliest form of "Cinderella".

Apart from the above two approaches, scholars like Dworkin (1974), Greene (1986), Botelho (2003), Trousdale & McMillan (2003), Haase (2004), Zipes (2008), Allan (2009) and Neikirk (2009) also discuss fairy tales, particularly the works of Perrault and the Grimms from a feminist perspective. Their studies reveal that most fairy tales reinforce the patriarchal view on gender roles and social codes, and justify the reasons behind the characterisation of female characters as weak and desperate. Besides, some studies analyse and compare different variants of fairy tale adaptations. For examples, Zipes (2008) and Bacchilega (2013) analyse Carter's adaptations of fairy tales; Tatar (1987) examines various adaptations of "Snow White"; Horn (1983) studies Barthelme's *Snow White*; and Greene (1986) discusses Cinderella adaptations such as Eleanor Farjeon's *The Glass Slipper* (1946) and Padraic Colum's *The Girl Who Sat by the Ashes* (1919). There are also comparative studies that compare Western adaptations with their adaptations from other countries. For instances, Waley (1947) and Beauchamp (2010) compare Western Cinderella with the Asian versions of the tale, and Donaldson (2014) conducts a study where she compares three European fairy tales – "One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes", "The Fairies" and "Mother Holle" – with five versions of an Indonesian folktale entitled "Shallot and Garlic".

Despite many research works on various adaptations of fairy tales have been conducted from multiple angles, studies on Islamised adaptations of classical Western fairy tales are still inadequate. This is because after reviewing existing literature, I only

found one research that discusses Islamised fairy tales. It is Alidou's "A 'Cinderella' Tale in the Hausa Muslim Women's Imagination" (2002). In the paper, the researcher compares the classical adaptation of Cinderella tale with its Islamised adaptation entitled "The Story of the Orphan Who Married the Prince of Masar". The lack of research on Islamised adaptations of classical Western fairy tales indicates that this topic is still not popular in academic research. What is more, no studies have ever been conducted on Gilani-Williams and her *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale*, *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale.* Thus, a research project that examines and compares the three stories and their classic Western versions needs to be conducted, as the findings of this study will bring new knowledge and, at the same time, contribute to the studies on Islamised adaptations of fairy tales. Moreover, a critical comparison between these adaptations will shed light on differences between classic Western adaptations and their Islamised versions.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research examines Gilani-Williams' *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale*, *Snow White: An Islamic Tale* and *Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale,* Charles Perrault's "Cinderella/Cendrillon", "Sleeping Beauty" and the Grimms' "Snow White," using the Islamisation of Knowledge framework by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986) and Hutcheon's theory of adaptation.

2.2.1 Al-Faruqi's Islamisation of Knowledge Framework

Muslim scholars started to deeply engage in the concept of Islamisation of knowledge after they noticed the negative impacts of secularism in the minds of Muslims (Hashim

& Rossidy, 2000, p. 19). The miserable state of the post-colonial Muslims and the determination to be intellectually and mentally free from secularism drove them to resurrect and rebuild a Muslim community that is "liberated and confidently Muslim and Islamic" (Abdul Manaf, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, al-Faruqi and other Muslim scholars decided to Islamised modern knowledge that was based on Western secular worldview and knowledge that they gained from the Western civilization (Hashim & Rossidy, 2000, p. 22).

Al-Faruqi believes that the process of Islamising modern knowledge involves the integration of Islamic teachings into secular education and incorporating Western modern disciplines in Islamic studies. He proposes the famous 12-point work plan to achieve the objectives of Islamisation of modern knowledge. This proposed research uses only four out of the 12 steps. Below are the four steps taken from al-Faruqi's work plan (Al-Faruqi, 1988, pp. 54-61):

Step 1:   Mastery of the Modern Discipline.

Step 5:   Establishment of the Specific Relevance of Islam to the Disciplines.

Step 6:   Critical Assessment of the Modern Discipline: The State-of-the-Art.

Step 11:   Recasting the Disciplines under the Framework of Islam: The University Textbook.

Step one of the workplan requires Muslims to understand and comprehend knowledge from the West to compare it with Islamic knowledge. As for the fifth step, scholars need to clarify and establish the specific relevance of Islam to Western knowledge. In other