

# Four Critical Lenses or The Four Faces of Cinderella

Marxist



Feminist



Deconstructionist



Psychoanalytical

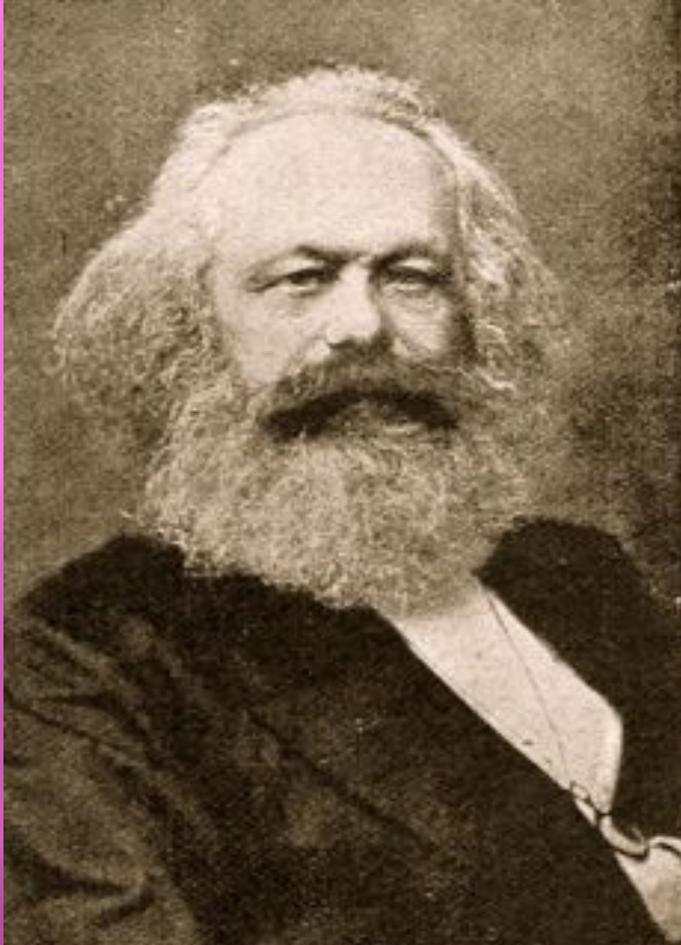


# The Four Faces of Cinderella



- The four most popular critical lenses used in literary criticism are: a Marxist lens, a Feminist lens, a Deconstructionist lens, and a Psychoanalytical lens .
- We will be using the fairy tale of Cinderella to demonstrate how these lenses can unpack a text.

# Karl Marx and Marxism



- ▣ **Origins:** Karl Marx: 1818 -1883
- ▣ Founder of Marxism and famous work called Das Kapital which critiqued the economic system of Capitalism.

# The Marxist Literary Lens



**Thesis:** A group of elite people control most of the wealth of the world, leaving everyone else poor and powerless.

## **Characteristics:**

- Sympathy for the working class and hatred of the middle and wealthy classes.
- Attention to how much material wealth one has.
- Class structure in a text.
- Characters in opposition to each other because of a power struggle.
- Inequalities in society.
- Characters who dream of a better life.
- Class warfare between the rich and the poor.

# A Marxist reading of Cinderella



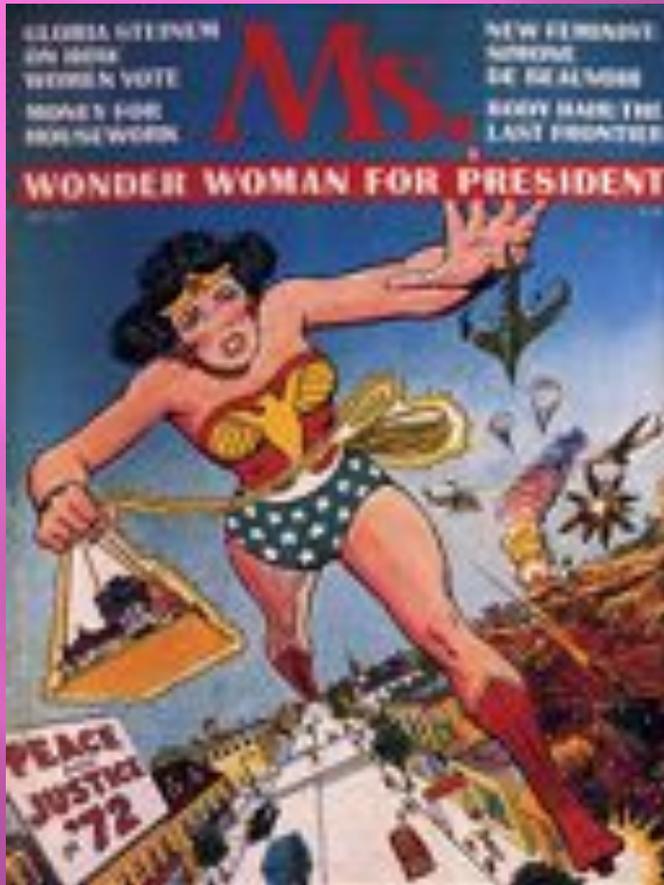
- ❑ Cinderella is exploited by her rich relatives.
- ❑ She exploits the mice, birds, and fairy godmother who help her for no pay.
- ❑ Cinderella has no wealth and her only hope is to marry the prince.
- ❑ Class structure with Cinderella (poor) who does all the work, Step Sisters (middle class) who yearn to marry the rich prince, prince (wealthy) who controls the power in the kingdom decides who he will marry.
- ❑ In the original fable, the animals gouge out the eyes of the step sisters and drive them out of town symbolizing the violent clashes between the rich and the poor.

# Feminism



- ▣ **Origins:** originated in the Women's Suffrage Movement of the late nineteenth century that fought for the rights for women to vote.
- ▣ In the 1970's, the movement shifted to having legal rights for women such as and laws, such as ensuring women had the same rights in the work force as men.

# The Feminist Literary Lens



**Thesis:** Women are dominated by men and thus are stereotyped and controlled. Typically male authors include a gender bias in their writing that demeans women.

## Characteristics:

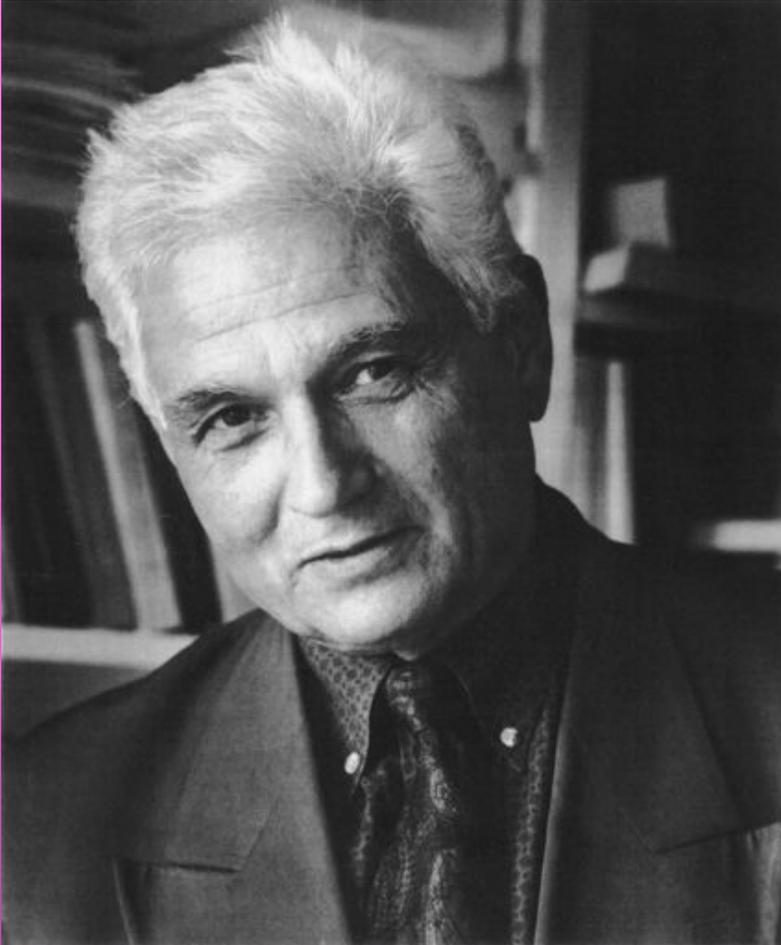
- ❑ Male characters are strong/ dominant and female characters are weak/ passive.
- ❑ Negative stereotypes regarding women and sexuality.
- ❑ Women striving to survive in a male-dominated society.
- ❑ Power struggle between men and women.

# A Feminist Reading of Cinderella



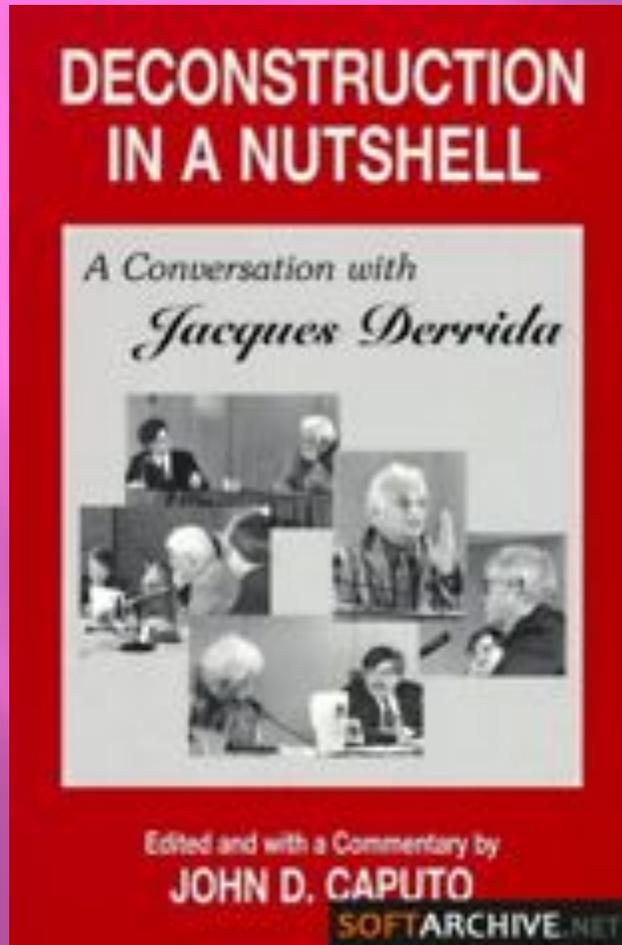
- ❑ Cinderella's happiness depends on men.
- ❑ After Cinderella's father dies, she is forced to live with the evil step-sisters.
- ❑ She becomes happy after she marries the prince.
- ❑ In order to attract the prince, she must impress him with her looks.
- ❑ The prince only knows her by her beauty and the missing glass slipper.
- ❑ Without men, Cinderella has no control over her life.

# Jacques Derrida and Deconstructionism



- ▣ **Origins:** Jacques Derrida : 1930 – 1944.
- ▣ Jacques Derrida was a French philosopher and literary critic who wrote extensively that texts need to be deconstructed, or torn apart, like a dissection to determine their underlying flaws in logic and structure.

# The Deconstructionist Literary Lens



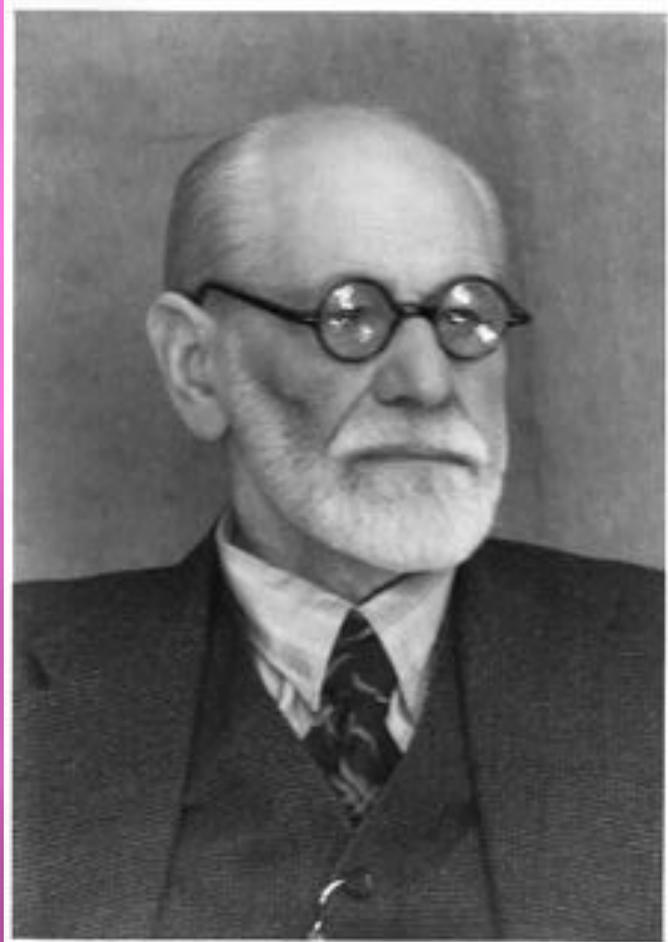
- ❑ **Thesis:** We can challenge traditional assumptions by unraveling the ideas that ground those traditions. Furthermore, life is multifaceted and includes many viewpoints to exist.
- ❑ **Characteristics:**
- ❑ **The world follows a binary, or oppositional structure:** good/evil, rich/poor, male/female, smart/stupid, etc.
- ❑ **Reversal of values approved by society:** Batman is evil because he works outside the law, while the Joker is good because he is creative, intelligent, and funny.
- ❑ **Unravel Traditional Beliefs:** “The Declaration of Independence” espouses freedoms like freedom of speech and to assemble, however, these were used in opposition to England so the colonist could rebel.
- ❑ **Multifaceted Viewpoints:** Howard Zinn writes from the Arawaks’ perspective in The People’s History of the United States to give a voice to a society that had no voice in American history.

# A Deconstructionists Reading of Cinderella



- ❑ Cinderella is not an innocent heroine, but a daydreamer who disobeyed those who had authority over her.
- ❑ Cinderella is obsessed with appearance, over substance.
- ❑ The step-sisters had more rights than Cinderella, and with the fairy godmother as an accomplice, disrupted the order in society.
- ❑ The glass slipper represents Cinderella vanity and how her looks superseded everything and everyone else.
- ❑ Cinderella is portrayed as a positive person, but in reality, is vain, selfish, immature, and power hungry.

# Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalysis



**Origins:** Sigmund Freud: 1856 – 1939.

Sigmund Freud is known as the founder of psychology which is the study of human behavior. In his famous work The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud argues that humans have a sub-consciousness that controls our desires. Our sub-conscious is divided into the “Id” or uncontrolled desires, the “Ego” the realistic desires or the part of our personality we share with the world, and the “Super Ego” or our critical and moralistic selves.

The common metaphor used to represent this is a person going through a conflict with an angel and devil sitting on each shoulder.

# The Psychoanalytical Literary Lens

**Thesis:** Our sub-conscious desires controls our actions.

**Characteristics:**

**ID:** involves basic desires such as food, aggression, and physical pleasures. It's prime motive is survival. Someone influenced by his/her Id is considered less developed.

**SUPEREGO:** involves morality and is opposed to the Id. It is formed from standards acquired from your upbringing and society. Someone who is acting primarily under the influence of the Superego denies him/herself of pleasure and develops obsessive/compulsive disorders.

**EGO:** is a healthy balance of the Id and Superego. Someone who is acting primarily on his ego will have his/her desires fulfilled in a manner acceptable to society.

When a psychoanalytical lens is applied to literature, it follows a character's psychological or moral development throughout a story.

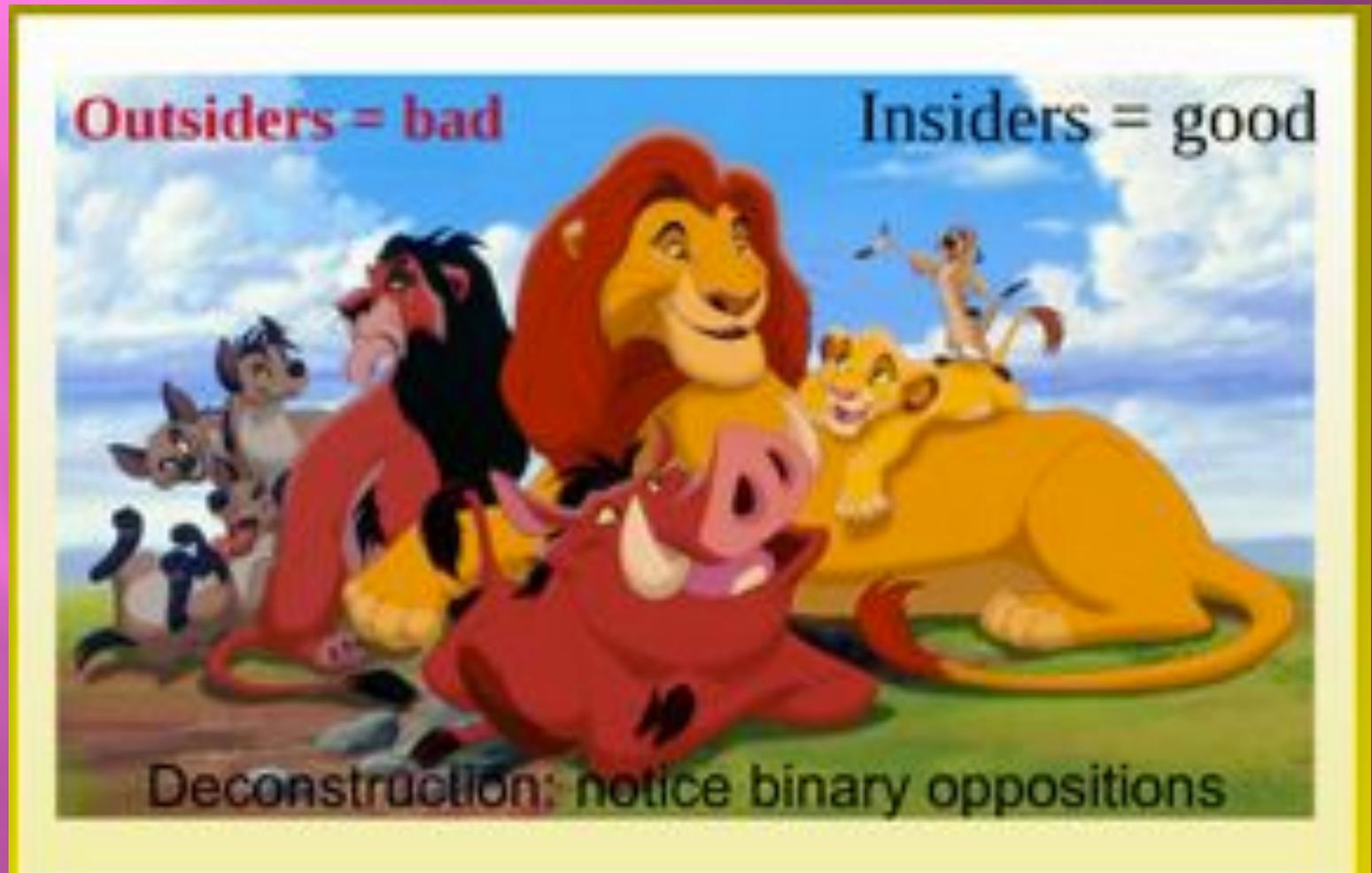


# A Psychoanalytical Reading of Cinderella



- ❑ Cinderella initially is driven by her Superego because she denies her desires in order to please her stepmother and stepsisters.
- ❑ However, her dreams reflect the Id waiting to come out.
- ❑ When her fairy godmother grants her wishes, she breaks out of the Superego dominance.
- ❑ Cinderella gives in to her Id by leaving her job and going to the party, something she was forbidden to do.
- ❑ Because she fell in love with the prince and got married, this exemplifies the emergence of her Ego because marriage is a socially acceptable relationship.

# Other Examples- Lion King



# Other Examples- Lion King

- ❑ Feminist/Gender: Can be viewed as the helpless role females have in society. The female lions are used to provide food and care for the young yet it is the males that have all the power. When Mufasa dies his power transfers to either his son or his brother. His wife is never even considered. Nala is also clearly “stronger” than Simba yet she is considered inferior.
- ❑ Marxist: Can be viewed as the upper class (lions) trying to maintain power over an unhappy lower class (hyenas). The lower class resents the privileges of better food and hunting grounds that the upper class maintains. This conflict causes a rebellion, which disrupts the normal social order causing chaos and destruction.
- ❑ Psychoanalytic: Can be viewed as a classic case of sibling rivalry – Scar is savagely jealous of his much stronger and might I say better looking older brother. Can also be viewed as the classic struggle to overcome feelings of guilt or inadequacy – both of which Simba has after the death of his father.

As a woman, your political worth is reduced to your marriageability.

If you're beautiful enough, you may be able to escape your terrible living conditions by getting a wealthy man to fall for you.

Pretty girls don't even need to be alive to get some hot princely action.

Appearances don't matter, what counts is what's in your heart. Unless you're the girl.

At first it may seem terrible, being so beautiful that other women get jealous enough to try and kill you. But don't worry, once your beauty attracts a man, he'll protect you.

It's okay to abandon your family, drastically change your body, and give up your strongest talent in order to get your man. Once he sees your pretty face, only a witch's spell could draw his eyes away from you.

