



**DORA ISABEL
TOSCANO FERREIRA
SALGADO**

**FAIRY TALES, OR UNFAIR TALES?!... Breaking the
Glass Slipper, and the Need for Modern Retellings**

**Contos De Encantar, Ou De Desencantar?!...A
Quebra Com o Passado e a Necessidade de Novas
Versões**



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica da Dra. Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira, Professora do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

Dedico este trabalho a todos aqueles que estiveram directamente integrados na realização deste projecto, ou que indirectamente proporcionaram a necessidade de que o mesmo fosse imprescindível.

o júri

Presidente

Doutor **Kenneth David Callahan**, Professor Associado da Universidade de Aveiro

Vogais

Doutora **Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira**, Professora Associada da Universidade de Aveiro
(Orientadora)

Doutora **Graça Maria Constantino de Oliveira Capinha**, Professora Auxiliar da Faculdade de
Letras da Universidade de Coimbra

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Contos de Fadas, Literatura Infantil, Crianças, Adultos, Professores, Irmãos Grimm, Mother Goose, Estéereotipos, Realidade, Mitos, Imaginação, Socialização, Violência, Cultura, Cinderella, Escola, O Género, Ética

resumo

Cinderella was told a whole pea pot full of lies in those days... about Prince Charming and living happily ever after.

~ Thelly Reahm

Cinderella é um dos contos de fadas mais célebres de todos os tempos. Mas, até que ponto é que esta personagem é tratada com justiça na terra do *muito muito longe*?... E quão longe da verdade estão os valores exercidos por estes habitantes sonhadores? O objectivo deste estudo é examinar os retratos injustos realçados no reino do mundo encantado, nomeadamente no tão conhecido conto do sapato perdido – *Cinderella*. Ao incorporar componentes literárias e práticas, este estudo não só alerta pais e educadores para mensagens prejudiciais presentes neste tipo de contos, como também reforça a necessidade de existência de versões contemporâneas que permitam que esta forma de arte popular permaneça e continue a encantar as crianças, eliminando, ao mesmo tempo, as mensagens injustas que no fundo propaga.

keywords

Fairy Tales, Children's Literature, Children, Adults, Teachers, Grimm Brothers, Mother Goose, Stereotypes, Gender Roles, Reality, Myths, Imagination, Socialization, Violence, Culture, Cinderella, School, Morals

abstract

Cinderella was told a whole pea pot full of lies in those days... about Prince Charming and living happily ever after.

~ Thelly Reahm

Cinderella is one of the most renowned fairy tales of all time, but exactly how *fair* is this maiden portrayed in the land of *far away*?!...and how far away from the truth are the morals really conveyed by these dreamlike inhabitants? The purpose of this study is to examine the unfair portrayals depicted in the fairy tale realm, especially in the tale of the glass slipper. By incorporating literary and practical components not only does it forewarn parents and educators of the harmful messages it delivers to children, but also highlights the need for contemporary rewritings that allow for this popular art form to thrive and enchant children, while eliminating the unfair messages it ultimately propagates.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There is no happily ever after... no Prince charming... no glass slippers... no talking animals... no magic wands. Who exactly is this fairy godmother anyway? And is it even theoretically possible to pinpoint the exact whereabouts of "once upon a time in a far away land..."? Although the answers appear to be conspicuously obvious, for generations, old and young alike have continued to grasp at these dubious convictions, allowing make-believe to preside so powerfully over reality, that at times it becomes intricately impossible to separate the real from the unreal. But where precisely do these beliefs come from? From our society?... from our parents?... our families?... our ancestors?... our teachers?... our friends? Who is to blame exactly? Is it really anyone's fault? In fact, perhaps they are all guilty... For all were directly, or indirectly responsible for the exposure to those stories, those tales of make believe, better known as fairy tales, that let our childhood minds run to those faraway lands, chase those fragmented dreams and aspirations, find the prince and enter the castle to happily ever after, on a white horse nonetheless.

Although some believe fairy tales are just pure, innocent bedtime stories, their effects can be staggering, and persist all throughout the child's lifetime, influencing important choices, instilling personal and intrapersonal relationships, morals and value systems, and defining the child's conduct all throughout life. As Carolyn Heilbrun affirms,

We live our lives through texts. These may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us of what conventions demand. Whatever their form our medium, these stories are what have formed us all, they are what we must use to make our new fictions... out of old tales, we must make new lives.¹

Clearly, we all must make new lives, but these lives should be our own and not a mirrored reflection of what we see in books, on television or at the movies. However, the impact of these texts, these images can sometimes speak so profoundly, that it can be difficult to separate the real from the imaginary, the ordinary from the extraordinary, perhaps, even inconvenient. After all, isn't it easier to at times believe that our lives will have the same outcome as those of the characters out of a children's storybook, or out of a Hollywood film? Isn't it easier to wait for the happy ending than to believe things won't get any better than this, and continue living as we are? Sharon

¹ Quoted in Maria Tatar's *The Classic Fairytales*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999, p. xii.

Nelson claims that, "unless we critically examine the myths we learned as children, they tend to shape us unconsciously as adults."²

We should not ignore our everyday exposure to fairy tale stories, their tainted messages are all around us, in the movies we watch, in the television programs we swoon over, in the advertising messages we subconsciously consume, in our schools, our homes and our workplaces there is at least one subliminal message derived from a fairy tale story, and its profoundly negative influences still continue to thrive. According to Angela Carter the fairy tale continues to survive in our society because it has become user-friendly. "It has transformed itself into a medium for gossip, anecdote, rumour; it remains hand-crafted, even in a period when TV disseminates the mythologies of advanced industrialized countries throughout the world, wherever there are TV sets and juice to make them flicker."³ In the same way that parents should monitor their children's exposure to television and other media, they should not disregard this threatening source, for dismissing it is sure to undervalue the omnipresent supremacy of these stories. In our contemporary society fairy tales still instil binary positions for men and women, and female obsession over socially defined beauty. Fairy tales tell us how we should act. By constructing what is believed to be appropriate gendered behaviour, fairy tales teach young girls that their real value is found in their beauty, and in being the object of men's desires. Fairy tales make women believe that being beautiful is enough to win the prince, and that being passive and docile will bring its rewards. These stories also transmit that idea that before women can be rescued and reap their rewards, they must suffer and endure hardship and humiliation. Winning the prince, getting married and living in the castle of happily ever after is not then a product of female struggle and determination, but rather the coveted prize in a beauty contest. What kind of examples are we setting for children by allowing them to be exposed to fictitious worlds where a beautiful woman is always docile and good, and will be rewarded for that; and ugliness always belongs to the antagonist of the story, the evil witch or wicked stepmother. Furthermore, the relationships between women in these stories are almost always conveyed in negative ways, they do not promote female friendships but rather shun them. It is almost always women who inflict suffering upon other women, and it seems that their only hope of rescue and happiness lies in the hands of a man. In fairy tales there is

² Sharon Nelson in: Tim Newfields. "Deconstructing Cinderella – Helping Students Explore Their Personal Myths". 2nd *Peace as a Global Language Conference Proceedings and Supplement*. 9 July 2006
<<http://www.jalt.org/pansiq/PGL2/HTML/Newfields.htm>>

³ Angela Carter. *Angela Carter's Book of Fairytales*. London: Virago Press, 2005, p. xxiii.

separation between women and men, but also other women. Perhaps it is even safe to assume that some of the ongoing competition and envy between women today is derived precisely from these tales.

However, women are not the only victims of the pervasiveness of the fairy tale. Men too must endure the pressure of being the woman's saviour, the dragon slayer and the provider of the household. Fairy tales portray men as the ugly oppressor, who at times even degrades women, yet still marries the beautiful princess and triumphantly rides off as the hero. These destructive images will also surely effect the treatment and attitudes that men will have towards women. Isn't the age of three or five just a little too young for men to start behaving this way towards women? And if we acquire most of our beliefs and values when we are children, how will these same men act twenty or thirty years later? Unless something changes, the outlook does not seem promising.

On the one hand, fairy tales do give us the opportunity to dream, to believe that our suffering is temporary and that we too will be rewarded, just like the docile maiden who spends her life among the ashes, endures the harsh and evil treatment of her family, but is then carried away on a white horse by her prince. According to Marina Warner,

storytelling makes women thrive... Fairy tales offer the possibility of change, far beyond the boundaries of their impossible plots or fantastically illustrated pages... Like romance, to which fairy tales bear a strong affinity, they could remake the world in the image of desire.⁴

Unarguably, life in a world of desire appears to be far more alluring than dealing with the monotony of the everyday. On the other hand, however, it can also be ridiculously intangible and dangerous. Avoiding confrontation with our own lives prevents us from working out our problems, from going after our goals and reaching our greatest potential. Trying to attain the images of desire we once lived as children through these bedtime stories, leaves us stuck in the past, dormant and naive. The images and beliefs we acquire as children are the ones we carry throughout the rest of our lives. As Angela Carter affirms, "the stories have seeded themselves all round the world, not because we all share the same imagination and experience but because stories are portable, part of the invisible luggage people take with them when they leave home."⁵

⁴ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. xii.

⁵ Angela Carter. *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*. London: Virago Press, 2005, p. xx.

If children grow up believing that the prince and his castle are their ultimate goal, they will initiate a mission that will most likely never end. They will never enjoy the here and now due to their incessant conquest for the unattainable future. We often spend so much of our time planning the fairy tale like ending that we end up missing the story being read to us now. How can we arrive at the future if we are unable to live the present? Too many times we find ourselves discontent with our present lives, not because we have nothing but because what we do have is not what we dreamed we would have. We constantly complain about our jobs, our relationships, our possessions and believe what we have brings us no real comfort and satisfaction because instead we put too much weight on the dream job, on the handsome prince, and five storey castle we don't have.

Angela Carter believes that the aim of fairy tales was not conservative but rather utopian, a form of "heroic optimism", as if to say, "one day we might be happy, even if it won't last."⁶ But how exactly do the women protagonists of these tales attain this state of happiness? Definitely not by struggling with their problems to overcome them, certainly not by confronting their enemies or those who mistreat them, and surely not by being active or confident females. Rather, they sit at home, passively enduring the hardship, waiting for none other than prince charming to come and fight the dragon, stand up to evildoers, and take them to the castle where they will enter this infinite state of happily ever after. These are the messages that traditional fairy tales send to children, these are the beliefs they will grow up with for the rest of their lives, this is their "exemplary model" camouflaged beneath the wonder and awe, the images of desire and the castles of dreams... Are these the images we should continue to expose young children to, those same individuals who can't quite yet distinguish real from make-believe, good from evil? In Plato's Republic, Plato questions if we "shall just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tale, which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive it into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they're grown up?"⁷

Or, wouldn't it be far more beneficial and just to give children a more realistic perspective? Not by eliminating princes and princess, magic spells and fairy godmothers. These are undoubtedly what captivate children to a story; they're what allow children to dream and play pretend. Positioning themselves in the role of hero or heroine clearly makes growing up more fun, and every child should be able to enjoy

⁶ Angela Carter. (Ed.) *The Second Virago Book of Fairytales*. London: Virago Press, 1992, p. xi.

⁷ William J. Bennet. *The Book of Virtues*. New York: Rockfeller Center, 1993, p. 17.

this temporary phase as much as possible before entering adolescence or adulthood. However, what if children were told stories where they could do all these things, where they could be the prince, the princess or even the evil dragon but without all the patriarchal notions embedded within? Wouldn't fairy tales provide more for children than the possibility to dream? By incorporating real life lessons and showing the contemporary roles that men and women play in society, both sexes could grow up with a more realistic life perspective. According to Plato "anything received into the mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unaltered; and therefore it's most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts."⁸

If stories can mix wonder with virtue, real with make-believe and eliminate all the damaging stereotypes, won't they prove to be all the more worthwhile for children who are exposed to these stories day after day? In today's society, there is a whole new tendency to adhere to the concept of edutainment, to teach children while entertaining. Therefore, shouldn't fairy tales, one of the most popular forms of entertainment for children, be adapted to educate, instilling real life values and beliefs for children, rather than serve purely as a source of entertainment? That is where contemporary re-writers of fairy tales come in.

In the past 30 years, children's authors have been striving to eliminate all the wrong-doings, negative stereotypes and damaging images incorporated in all the traditional fairy tales, to provide children with more than just an entertaining bedtime story. Plato divided the soul into three parts or operations: reason, passion, and appetite, and claimed that right behaviour results from harmony or control of these elements. If contemporary fairy tale writers are able to eliminate the traditional patriarchal patterns and instil reasonable and contemporary roles for women, keep the magical elements to induce children's appetites, and add passion to the lives or behaviours of the protagonists, then they are able to offer children more enlightenment and education than they could ever receive from their parents or teachers. By examining three contemporary re-writings of the Cinderella story, notably Robert Munsch's *The Paper Bag Princess*, Anne Sexton's "Cinderella" and Angela Carter's "Ashputtle or The Mother's Ghost", I plan to illustrate the advantageous perspectives and positive influence these have on children, while abolishing the negative stereotypes, yet still leaving room for the possibility of children to dream.

⁸ William J. Bennet. *The Book of Virtues*. New York: Rockfeller Center, 1993, p. 17.

Furthermore, Bruno Bettelheim's study of how fairy tales promote growth among children does not appear to be very farfetched, but the real question lies in how this growth is being accomplished. Can children grow up in a fair world, when they are constantly being bombarded with negative images and stereotypes, and being told which is the *appropriate* conduct for his or her gender? Unlikely.

Of course fairy tales are not the only contributors to a child's personality and value system. Modern psychology tells us that the process of socialization is influenced by family, education, culture, social class, religion and other aspects which all work in union to form a child's personality.

Socialization is the process where humans learn to adopt the communal behavioral patterns of the society in which they live. This process normally takes place in the early phases of life, where individuals learn and develop necessary skills and knowledge to live in their own culture and environment. The primary groups and/or people that influence an individual's self concepts, emotions, attitudes and behavior, known as the agents of socialization, are the family, the school, peer groups, the mass media, and other social institutions such as the church, work place, country, or the internet.⁹ Not only are these agents relevant to the development of a child, they can also influence the way children interpret these tales.

My research also focuses on gender role sexism included in fairy tales, the contemporary revisions of the fairy tale, as well as modern Hollywood and Disney adaptations. The stories children read play a vital role in the way children perceive the world and those around them. In a society that is increasingly driven by technology and the mass media, the texts transmitted to children are heavily responsible for defining adequate behavioural patterns and societal expectations. Children's premature exposure to fairy tale echoes and the powerful messages incorporated in these texts are no exception in the transmission of values and principles. It is imperative that the messages in children's stories do not go unnoticed. Nowadays, movies, plays, books, commercials, and even television shows are all reminiscent of these tales, hollering their protruding messages loud and clear. The very moment a child is born, he and she are bombarded with "socially acceptable" gender roles, some of which derive from severely impaired stereotypes, blurring the perception of the real and the "ideal".

The fact that children's attitudes, manners, education, clothes, toys and books are all products or effects of these social agents, is where the need for this study

⁹ "Socialization." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 24 Dec 2006, [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Socialization&oldid=96308757) 7 Jan 2007 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Socialization&oldid=96308757>>

originates. With this research I plan to explore how literature, namely fairy tales like Cinderella influence the personal, social and cultural development of a child, and how modern adaptations of stories can “resocialize” or change the way children think about the traditional and preconceived roles of men and women, and their place in society.

It is imperative to separate the good from the bad – not by killing the wicked witch, and rewarding the good princess with the coveted gift of immortality, but by providing children with a more accurate and contemporary look at society through modern retellings, so that both boys and girls can equally strive for the “happily ever after”, without one depending solely on the other to accomplish this.

II. CINDERELLA ONCE UPON A TIME

Origins of the Fairy Tale

Descendants of old wives' tales, fairytales have been around for generations, transporting children to a timeless realm of enchantment, allowing them to create new, imaginary lives in their very own castles. But before analyzing the origins of the fairy stories themselves, it would also seem quite apposite for the purpose of this investigation to trace the origins of the term "fairy tale". Firstly, the word "fairy" in the Roman languages points to a connotation of wonder or fairy tale, since it can be traced back to the Latin feminine word "fata" a rare variant of *fatum* (fate) which refers to a goddess of destiny. Marina Warner claims that "fairies share with Sibyls knowledge of the future and the past, and in stories which feature them both types of figure foretell events to come and give warnings."¹⁰

Another, favoured name for these stories, preferred among scholars is *Märchen*—German for "tale." As it is used in this context, a *Märchen* is a tale involving a succession of motifs or episodes of some length, moving in an unreal world without definite locality or characters.

Relevant to this study is also Vladimir Propp's interpretation of 'fairy tale', where he concludes that in most languages the word 'tale' is synonymous for 'lie' or 'falsehood'. As Russian narrators typically conclude their stories with "the tale is over, I can't lie anymore." Propp's interpretation can be quite suggestive of the 'true' messages in fairy tales and how much credit we can actually give these tales. Truths or lies?!...

Storytelling has always been a popular entertaining and instructive device throughout much of history, and oral tales have continuously been used to fulfill the needs of a variety of situations and diverse audiences. The fairy tale was part of an oral tradition, where tales were told rather than written down, and passed on from one generation to the other; as a result, it is difficult to pinpoint their exact origins.

Although the production and spread of famous wonder tales has predominantly been achieved by men, the original tellers of these stories are in fact women, for the stories that have been passed on actually come from intimate or domestic backgrounds. Storytelling has in fact been labelled as a highly known and regarded feminine occupation. Oral tales, passed on by women, peasants, slaves, and outcast groups like the gypsies, were used to both amuse and frighten children.

¹⁰ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 14-15.

Until the Renaissance, the main sources of children's literature in the Western world were the Bible and the Greek and Latin classics. However, the invention of printing in the 15th Century initiated a spark in children's literature and fairy tale magic.

During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, oral tales began to be recorded and were gradually transferred to the nursery, and recognized as children's and literary tales. The literary fairy tale, which was made possible by advances in printing methods, rose as an art form of the upper classes. This occurred nearly around the same time that literacy ascended, consequently establishing the middle class and increased differentiation between children and adults. Subsequently the literary tale was soon transferred to the nursery and read by governesses, grandmothers, nurses, who started to gain influence in the socialization of children.

Given that the authority pattern in these times was highly patriarchal, men were not only responsible for making sure things were running the way they should be in the home, but they were also responsible for representing their wives as well as their children in society. Due to the fact that it was the men running the home, most did not permit women to make any decisions, not even when it came to the socialization of their children. Thus, women had to find other means to pass on vital information that would help in their successful upbringing. Consequently, literature began to fill up with all kinds of advice and moral lessons, some of which are still present today, found in all kinds of children's literature, including fairytales, fables, nursery rhymes, and other children's stories. It was believed that "advice in rhyme might be remembered in times of temptation."¹¹ Maria Warner notes that "fairy tale offers a case where the very contempt for women opened an opportunity for them to exercise their wit and communicate their ideas: women's care for children... handed them fairy tale as a different kind of nursery, where they might set their own seedlings and plant their own flowers."¹² These oral folk tales were thus more than beautiful gardens to be looked at in awe, but contained deep-rooted messages that shaped the lives of those growing in it and around it.

Contrary to the oral tradition, the literary tale was written down so it could be read in private, though some times it was also read aloud in parlours. The written and recorded form of the fairy tale gave rise to elitism and separation of social classes, for it was written in a measurably high language that the folk could not read. Accordingly, the literary fairy tale also has its origins in salons in the middle of the 17th Century,

¹¹ Sheila Egoff. *Only Connect – Readings on Children's Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 46.

¹² Marina Warner. *From Beast to Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., p. xii.

where it was developed by upper-class women as a form of parlour game. In these refined salons, and through various types of conversational games, women could prove their intelligence and education as well as develop their ideas about morals, manners, and education, and confront the male principles that governed their lives. These women started entertaining each other through stories and eventually the trendy and familiar art form of women became the fairy tale. At the end of the 17th century, there was a feminist outburst, and at the centre of this struggle was the right of women to voice their opinions and retaliate against male supremacy. By the 1690s, the salon fairy tale had become so acceptably popular that women and men began writing down their stories and publishing them. As Jack Zipes elucidates, "the institutionalisation of the literary fairy tale begun in the salons during the seventeenth century, was for adults and arose out of a need by aristocratic women to elaborate and conceive other alternatives in society than those prescribed for them by men."¹³ At this time these tales were neither written for nor read to children but used by women as a means of liberation and expression.

The fairy tale only became well established as part of "children's literature" by the 19th Century, even though authors still continued to write stories that attracted a wide range of ages and audiences. Thus, fairy tales circulate in multiple versions, with diverse cultural variations, and their writings have derived from collective efforts. As a result, the precise origins of the fairytale genre are still somewhat unclear today. Though there are many published collections that attempt to represent folktales as they were first written, these are not necessarily the 'real' version because many of these stories have no actual 'real version'. These tales have evolved over time, and none is actually more real than the other. For example, the well-known Cinderella tale has over 200 different versions, depending on the country where it is told. Some notable fairy tale contributors like Charles Perrault, a French publisher, who, in 1697 issued a book containing eight¹⁴ popular fairy tales; and the Grimm Brothers, who published their first collection of old German folktales in 1812. Although their collected works are sometimes recognized as those pertaining to the literary fairy tales, both Perrault and the Brothers Grimm tried to be as loyal to the original oral stories as possible. Also, at this time there was controversial discussion about what was considered proper reading material for children but by the early nineteenth century,

¹³ Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994, p.23.

¹⁴ Of its eight stories, seven are still well known today: *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Blue Beard*, *Puss in Boots*, *The Sisters Who Dropped From Their Mouths Diamonds and Toads*, *Cinderella*, and *Tom Thumb*. The only fairy tale, which has not survived, was *Riquet with the Tuft*.

fairy tale writers had established certain criteria for stories, and by demand of the high and middle-class adults included Christian and patriarchal morals and teachings into the tales. Hence, fairy tale writers like the Brothers Grimm started to alter their tales in order to make them more educational and appropriate for children. Other prominent writers involved in redirecting fairy tales toward the moral education of children were Hans Christian Andersen, George Cruikshank, Wilhelm Hauff, Ludwig Bechstein and Mme. Ségur. In addition, literary fairy tale writers like Giambattista Basile, Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Mme. D'Aulnoy, and Charles Perrault, among others, contributed with more than entertaining childhood stories. Their tales were socially representative acts which reflected the rules, practices and principles of a hierarchically arranged society.

However, these morally and ideologically enriched stories, and seemingly protected kingdoms with princes and princess, wizards and fairy godmothers, may not be as charming and secure as they appear to be. While it must be acknowledged that many stories do personify all that is glorious and ideal for children, it is also important to recognize that fairytales harbour many unsavoury elements. Incidents such as: death, allusions to murder, decapitation, boiling to death, death by hanging, physical violence, stealing, devouring human flesh, torment and cruelty to animals, cannibalism, allusion to marriage as a form of death, and many other vicious episodes can all be found in these stories, specifically targeted toward children. Furthermore, since most literature seems to parallel the events of its time, the values and beliefs present in fairytales differ substantially from contemporary ideologies. From what is known of patriarchal society during that time, it is no surprise that in most stories women are perceived as weak, while the men are the heroes who always seem to come just at the right time to save the young girl in distress. Also present in these stories are the household duties of the husband who goes off to work, while the wife stays at home, cooks the meals, cleans the house and takes care of the children. Since most of these past stories still subsist today, the lingering possibility that the child may create preconceived notions about male and female sex roles before he has had a chance to 'grow up' remains. According to Sheila Egoff, "contemporary feminists especially, might very well find these novels objectionable. Their central message is that a comfortable home is heaven and that the perfect divinities to occupy the home are women who act much like children... the utopia these novels progress towards is actually a regressive

world of childlike innocence.”¹⁵ So what were these people really thinking when these tales were written? How could stories, written and told for entertaining and educating children be so seriously devastating? The answer to these questions is where a different perspective on fairytales is posited. According to Jack Zipes, and many other writers, philosophers, and researchers alike, there is a growing belief that fairytales were not actually intended for children but rather to entertain adults. Carter writes: “It has generally been assumed that fairytales were first created for children, and are largely the domain of children. Nothing could be further from the truth.”¹⁶ The fairy tale was part of an oral tradition: tales were told orally, rather than written down, and were then handed down from generation to generation. These stories were told around the fire, by people who generally had pretty short and cruel lives. The stories reflected the desires, dreams and wisdom of people facing problems of illness, hunger, and abuse. Thus, it is no surprise why they contain so much deception, violence and blood, and usually conclude with the helpless victim finally capable of conquering all her desires; triumphing over evil and its oppressors. Carter further comments: “From the very beginning thousands of years ago, tales were told to create communal bonds in the face of inexplicable forces of nature, to the present, when fairy tales are written and told to provide hope in a world seemingly on the brink of catastrophe.”¹⁷ Through story and make-believe, these people were able to escape their miserable lives to a newfound utopian world. Carter explains that “the timelessness of a tale and lack of geographical specificity (i.e. once upon a time; once there was...) endow it with utopian connotations. Over the past years, the history of the fairy tale has been of particular interest to scholars and researchers, thus many contributions have been made to the successful interpretation of this literary genre. In 1968, Vladimir Propp’s famous study: *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, outlines 31 basic functions, or plot elements that can be found in the magic tale. Although the actions can take place in different combinations, they occur in a very predictable series. Over the years, this list has been gradually simplified by scholars and has been revised into five basic elements, which are as follows:

1. protagonist discovers a lack;
2. protagonist goes on a quest;
3. protagonist finds helpers/opponents;

¹⁵ Sheila Egoff. *Only Connect – Readings on Children’s Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 51, 52.

¹⁶ Jack Zipes. *When Dreams Come True*. New York: Routledge, 1999, p.1.

¹⁷ Jack Zipes. *When Dreams Come True*. New York: Routledge, 1999, p.1.

4. protagonist is given tests;
5. protagonist is rewarded or a new lack develops.¹⁸

However, Propp was not the only who analyzed the fairy tale genre. J.R.R Tolkien, the fantasy writer, praised all over the world for his renowned books also explored this realm. At the outset, he starts off by explaining that: "fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy that is Faërie, the realm or state in which fairies have their being."¹⁹ Next, he identifies four well-known characteristics that all fairy tales have:

Fantasy – imagining things that are not real but providing them with "the inner consistency of reality";

Recovery – the ability to see things as we are (or were) meant to see them, as things separate from ourselves. After experiencing fantasy we can regain a clear view again;

Escape – the proposal of alternatives over the option of dealing with what is real as inevitable, even if these alternatives are seemingly impossible;

Consolation – the eucatastrophe, or the happily ever after, and the triumph of good over evil.²⁰

Other characteristics and recurrences commonly found in fairytales are: the famous opening and closing words "once upon a time" and "they lived happily ever after". Also, the inevitable happy endings where good triumphs over evil; the repeated use of the number three; the presence of heroes and heroines, princes and princesses who transmit the message that success and victory are unattainable without effort, among many other identifiable features. Most of these well-known tales also contain a richness of knowledge, sometimes amusing for children, but clearly aimed at and largely understood by adults. While they provide children with unbelievable worlds and transmit imperative ideas and values in cleverly disguised form, there are also other poignant and disparaging images hidden within these stories that children should not be exposed to. Due to the double vision that fairy tales consciously and subconsciously offer, they can take children into a whole new realm that they are not readily matured for. Zipes affirms that "the fairy tales we have come to revere as classical are not ageless, universal and beautiful in and of themselves, and they're not the best therapy

¹⁸ University of Wisconsin -- Department of Scandinavian Studies, 2006. 19 September 2006
<<http://scandinavian.wisc.edu/hca/glossary/propp.html>>

¹⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories" p. 4 12 January 2007 <<http://brainstorm-services.com/wcu-2004/fairystories-tolkien.pdf>>

²⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories" p. 15-22. 12 January 2007 <<http://brainstorm-services.com/wcu-2004/fairystories-tolkien.pdf>>

in the world for children. They are historical prescriptions, internalized, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives, by mystifying them.”²¹

When it first originated the fairy tale was designed not only to entertain children but also to teach, as a way to shape their true personality. Because childhood had started to become more distinguished as a separate phase of life, and was considered an important element for the future personality and individuality of the child, attention was soon focused on children’s attitudes, manners, education, clothes, toys and books. This also led to the increasing appearance of the fairy tale. And while some are still convinced it is nothing but a harmless form of entertaining, it has unarguably been considered as one of the vital socializing elements in Western civilization. As Marina Warner notes,

...tales are wrapped in fantasy and unreality, which no doubt helped them to entertain their audiences... but they also serve the stories’ greater purpose, to reveal possibilities, to map out a different way and a new perception of love, marriage, women’s skills, thus advocating a means of escaping imposed limits and prescribed destiny.²²

Allowing audiences the possibility to envision new options may just create the possibility of new worlds, or new ways of changing the things we struggle so hard to fight against every day. Because fairy tales are not told in the first person of the protagonist, the audience actually becomes three different people: the storyteller, the protagonist, and the person who reads listening to the story. This fusion is quite powerful in the sense that the reader almost actually takes a part in the story, in this way identifying very well with the mishaps and joys of the protagonist. As Warner explains, this form of storytelling “leaves a gap into which the listener may step...who has not tried on the glass slipper? Or offered it for trying?”²³

The search for the origin of the fairy tale may in fact create a fairy tale all in itself, where scholars must battle to overcome obstacles and search for the real meaning and voice on this long and ongoing quest for truth that will render them their success and happy ending.

²¹ Jack Zipes. *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Art of Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p.11.

²² Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 24.

²³ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 24.

Fantasy Lands

Fairy tales were the product of very different tellers and contradistinct voices told throughout various generations. While each new writer and era provided unique contributions to this literary genre in accordance to its social needs, a recurring addition to these tales appears to be their invariable setting. Though fairy tales are popularly known to be located somewhere in *once upon a time*, some believe that their roots are also buried in the realm of the fantastic. This however, is not a separate world on its own, but perhaps a secret passage, which upon entering allows readers to escape the ordinary and expect only the extraordinary. As Rosemary Jackson explains, "fantasy is not to do with inventing another non-human world: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* 'new', absolutely 'other' and different."²⁴ At the same time, however, it is a place that allows us to temporarily escape our own reality and experience the lives of those kings and princesses, wizards and magicians, whose lives may, on occasion, appear far more interesting than our own. Consequently, fairy tales may have derived from just that, and these stories are the mere reflections of an older generation's desire for a better life. Thus, fantasy is inevitably connected with human desire, "it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss."²⁵ Fairy tales have thrived for so many generations because humans thrive on desire: wanting what they don't or can't have, wanting what no one else has, wanting just for the sake of desiring.

While on the positive side, fantasy increases human yearning which may result in heightened imagination and realization of personal ambitions, on a negative note, it may also encourage the search for the impossible, the supernatural and the incessant need to desire. Though some might argue that persistence leads to success, and desire may be a result of that persistence, excessive longing may be hazardous. Furthermore, fantastic literature also reveals many unconscious desires which may not be socially or morally acceptable by society, and "whether it is termed spirit, angel, devil, ghost or monster, it is nothing but an unconscious *projection*, projections being those qualities, feelings, wishes, objects, which the subject refuses to recognize or rejects in himself and are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing."²⁶ While

²⁴ Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 8.

²⁵ Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 3.

²⁶ J. Laplanche and J. Pontalis in: Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 66.

psychologists like Bruno Bettelheim argue that in living others' unconscious desires, we are able to repress our own, and through fantasy children are able to resolve social and moral issues at a safe distance, this literary genre raises other concerns.

Another dangerous aspect of fantasy is precisely its distance from the real world, and not its absence. According to Joanna Russ,

The actual world is constantly present in fantasy, by negation... fantasy is what *could not have happened*; i.e. what *cannot* happen, what *cannot* exist... the negative subjunctivity, the *cannot* or *could not*, constitutes in fact the chief pleasure of fantasy. Fantasy violates the real, contravenes it, denies it, and insists on this denial throughout.²⁷

This can be fatal to those incapable of setting boundaries, or to those whose perception of these is still fairly undefined. For this reason, children may be ultimately victimized by the worlds of fantasy: placing them in familiar settings and distancing them from almost everything that is within reach. As Tzvetan Todorov writes, "the fantastic permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to it."²⁸

Despite the detrimental aspects of fantasy however, it is impossible to deny that there is also a magical aura that prevails in this realm and without it children could not be children, for they could not do what children do best, which is to imagine. Imagination which is "usually wrapped up with ideas like fantasy and make-believe. And these concepts are usually thought to be most fully embodied in the world of the fairy tale."²⁹ According to David Machin and Maire Davies, imagination and fantasy are of utmost importance not only because they are related to free creativity but can be a valuable asset which eases our everyday business.³⁰ The land of make-believe can be a place not only where children prepare themselves for the adult world but where children learn to develop rational thought through experimentation without becoming too practical in the process. Fantasy then, and those castles that it inhabits, are beneficial to the growth of children, and "various writers on children's fiction have

²⁷ Joanna Russ in: Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 22.

²⁸ Tzvetan Todorov in: Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 180.

²⁹ Machin, David and Davies, Maire Messenger. Opinion Dialogue, Review. "Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 106.

³⁰ Machin, David and Davies, Maire Messenger. Opinion Dialogue, Review. "Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 107.

concluded that fantasy is good for children.”³¹ Children are indeed recognized for being superior to adults in terms of imagination but must travel to the land of the fantastic in order to maintain this celebrated capacity, for “this in itself must be fed, protected and nurtured.”³² So let the children fly on their imaginary carpets, play dress-up in front of the mirror, and believe in magic and fairies, they are truly in another dimension, and the image in the mirror is a reflection of the *other* world. A world that they must explore on their own during an age that truly feeds on the fantastic. As developmental psychologist Hughes explains, “the years from three to six are generally recognized as the golden years of pretend or make-believe, play; at no other time in life is a human being so thoroughly involved in the world of fantasy.”³³ Seeing the world through a different perspective may increase current awareness by travelling to a new dimension or looking in from the outside. This explains the inclusion of mirrors, glasses, reflections, portraits, eyes in the world of the fantastic – “which see things myopically, or distortedly, or out of focus—to effect a transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar.”³⁴ Thus, fairy tales provide readers with unfamiliar settings, enchanted kingdoms and impossible possibilities, where they are free to dream and to explore and let their imaginations run wild. And even if the spell does break at the stroke of midnight, at least they still get to try on the glass slipper.

³¹ Briggs in: Machin, David and Davies, Maire Messenger. [Opinion Dialogue, Review](#). “Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child’s Imagination”. *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 109.

³² Machin, David and Davies, Maire Messenger. [Opinion Dialogue, Review](#). “Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child’s Imagination”. *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 110.

³³ Machin, David and Davies, Maire Messenger. [Opinion Dialogue, Review](#). “Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child’s Imagination”. *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 110.

³⁴ Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 43.

Cinderella Stories

Glass slippers, wicked stepmother, ugly step-sisters, fairy godmother... suffice to say that these are words suggestive and powerful enough to trigger bells in the minds of almost anyone who has ever taken the time to really be a child and to listen to a good story or two.

Cinderella is one of the oldest, best-known fairy tales of all time. Like most fairy tales, its origins can go as far back as centuries, and although it has suffered numerous cultural adaptations, and is recognized by many other names, its conceptual framework and unique individual elements can be found in almost every corner of the world. Due to its numerous replicas and variations, it is clearly impossible to count the number of existing Cinderella stories that have emerged throughout time, but it has been estimated that there are about 1, 500 versions of the Cinderella story worldwide.

The earliest known text to be written down was in China in the ninth century A.D., but Bettelheim believes it already had a past.³⁵ The Chinese Cinderella appeared in *The Miscellaneous Record of Yu Yang*, a book dating from the T'ang dynasty 618-907 A.D. The Chinese Cinderella, Yeh-hsein, described as very intelligent and clever, also had to endure the same hardships as the well-known Cinderella character. After losing her mother, and subsequently being mistreated by her stepmother and sister, Yeh-hsein comes upon a magical goldfish in the pond, which becomes her friend. When the step-mother finds out she has the fish killed but Yeh-hsein finds the bones and hides them in her room. The magical powers of the fish continue to thrive in the bones and provide Yeh-hsein with everything her family denies her. On the day of the town festival the bones give her a cloak of kingfisher feathers and tiny golden shoes. While running back home, Yeh-hsein loses a shoe that is sold to a warlord who also begins an incredible quest to find the woman of the tiny feet, as in the Chinese culture small feet are a highly coveted characteristic in women, and foot binding was a violent act that used to be practised on highborn women. Yeh-hsien finally reveals herself and becomes the warlord's chief wife. The fate of the stepmother and step-sister is not as blissful as that of Yeh-hsien, and they are punished for their wrongdoings by being stoned to death, and their grave "The Tomb of the Distressed Women", becomes a local shrine.

The next oldest known tale of Cinderella is the Egyptian version which is a mixture of fact and fable. This Cinderella was known as Rhodopis, said to have been

³⁵ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 236.

born in Greece, kidnapped by pirates when she was a child and subsequently sold to a very wealthy man on the island of Samos. When she was nearly grown up, she was taken to Egypt, bought by a Greek man named Charaxos, who bestowed her with many gifts including rose-red slippers. What is known as fact is that a Greek slave girl named Rhodopis actually married the Pharaoh Amasis (Dynasty XXVI, 570-526 B.C.) and became his queen.

There are, however, many other versions of the famous “rags to riches” story, which have been altered, embellished, tarnished, revised and adapted to fit the beliefs and value systems of each culture. As a result, the American Cinderella as we know it is known in other parts of the globe as: *Hui Gūniang* (China), *Askepot* (Denmark), *Assepoester* (Holland), *Tuhkimo* (Finland), *Cendrillon* (France), *Aschenputtel* (Germany), *A Gata Borralheira* (Portugal), *Kopiuszek* (Poland), among many others. Though many of these tales are the modern Disney version, as we know it today, there were many other analogous tales, like that of Rashin Coatie, La Gatta Cerentolla, Finnetta the Cinder Girl, Grimm’s *Aschenputtel*, and Perrault’s Cinderella which undeniably contributed to and influenced the celebrated Cinderella story.

Rashin Coatie

This story is the oldest European Cinderella version, and appears to have originated in Scotland in 1540. It was named after the garment of rushes a king’s daughter had to wear because of her wicked step-sisters. While there are several similarities to Perrault’s and Grimms’ story, it also contains many differences. In this version, like in many others, there is no fairy godmother. While being ill treated by her stepmother and ordered to do all the household chores, Rashin Coatie befriends a red calf, who becomes the grantor of all her wishes and provides Rashin Coatie with things that not only make her happier but even more beautiful. When the evil stepmother finds out of the calf’s power, she kills it. However, the dead calf speaks to Rashin Coatie and tells her to collect the bones and bury them under a grey rock, where she could go to whenever she wanted to make a wish. One Christmas day, as the step mother and step sisters are all getting ready to go to church in their finest new clothes, Rashin Coatie is told that she must stay home because she is too dirty to go to church with them. However, Rashin Coatie quickly proceeds to her slaughtered calf, which gives

her the most beautiful dresses. At church she catches the eye of a prince, who falls in love with her, and when they meet she also loses a slipper. The prince promises to marry the girl whose foot fits the slipper, but is unsuccessful in his quest for the lost girl. Finally, he arrives at a henwife's house, whose daughter had very little feet, but not small enough for the shoe to fit, so the mother "paret her feet and clippit her toes" until the shoe went on, and the prince agreed to keep his promise. On the day of their wedding, a little bird flew in the air and sang

*Clippit feet an' paret taes is on the saidle set;
But bonnie feet an' braw feet sits in the kitchen neuk.*

The prince realized he was making a huge mistake, and went straight to the kitchen to get Rashin Coatie, the real princess with whom he lived happily ever after.

According to Bruno Bettelheim's study, versions of Cinderella which use a milk providing animal, like the calf, or in Mediterranean cultures, the she-goat, are said to be symbolically representative of the biological mother, who also nurtures and sustains the life of the child with her milk. As Bettelheim indicates, "this reflects the emotional and psychological connection of early feeding experiences which provide security in later life."³⁶ In the child's initial phase of life, milk is the existential provider for the child as is the dependence on his or her mother. Without milk the child cannot survive, in the same way that Cinderella cannot overcome the hardships imposed on her by her newly acquired malevolent family without the aid of the helpful animal caregiver. Even when the stepmother has the cow killed, the spirit of the dead cow and its bones still keep on providing Cinderella with the help and courage she needs to defeat her troubles. This demonstrates to readers that courage and willpower exist in our minds and do not depend on other's influences to ensure our own success. The cow and the bones are mere metaphysical objects and representations of Cinderella's mother, and even though she may no longer be with her any more, she is alive in her mind, and this gives her all the support she needs to make her dreams come true.

³⁶ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 258.

La Gatta Cenerentola

Dating back to 1634, Giambattista Basile's tale "La Gatta Cenerentola" ("The Hearth Cat") is the Italian version of the Cinderella story. Basile grew up in a middle-class family in a village outside Naples. Although he studied and received an excellent education, he eventually became a soldier in many Italian courts, most remarkably the one in Venice, where he began to write poetry. He later returned to Naples and published *La Cunta de li Cunti Avera la Trattenemienta de Peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*), which was renamed *Il Pentamerana* (1634-36) in its fourth edition. This was his most lasting work and "can lay claim to being the foundation stone of the modern literary fairy tale."³⁷ Regardless of the book's original title however, the stories were intended more so for courtly audiences than for children. His stories are more refined than subsequent fairy tales and also appear to deal with more adult concerns. They incorporated rhetorical flourishes, references to popular culture and ordinary life in the late Italian Renaissance, and satire of court culture and literature - Basile was known to particularly criticize the upper-class behaviour of his time. His tales usually lack "happily ever after" ideals and are thus more appropriate for adults.

Basile's version of Cinderella begins with a rich widower and his beautiful daughter Zezolla. Again, the father remarries a wicked woman who mistreats Zezolla, the child complains to her beloved governess who advises her to get rid of her stepmother by breaking her neck. The father then marries the governess who only reveals her true colours after the wedding, and comes to be even more evil and conniving than the previous stepmother. Zezolla's new stepmother also has six daughters of her own, who then come to live with them, forcing Zezolla to sleep in the ashes of the hearth with the kitchen cat, and giving her the name "Cat Cinderella". In this version, the fairy godmother represents the "Fairies of Sardinia", who give her a magic date tree which allows her to ask for many beautiful things, including marvellous clothes so that she is able to attend the local feast where she enchants the prince. On the third day of the feast she loses her shoe, the prince initiates the familiar quest for the mystery girl, and upon finding her they both live happily ever after. The heroine in this story is not your typical passive victim and actually relies on her intelligence and trickery to fight her odds toward happiness.

³⁷ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 146.

Finnetta the Cinder Girl

Written by Madam D'Aulnoy, this story was already printed in English before the appearance of the Perrault publication. Unlike Perrault's version, it is told in a more conversational style, as it would be told in salons; this is true of most of her works. Her most popular works were her fairy tales and adventure stories as told in *Les Contes des Fees* (Tales of fairies) and *Contes Nouveaux ou Les Fees a la Mode*. Though most of her tales contain active female protagonists, they are no example nor close to suitable for children.

Finette Cendron, known in English as *Cunning Cinders* tells a tale of three children who are abandoned in the forest and taken in by an Ogre. Two of the sisters have a luxurious life in the home of the ogre while the other sister, Finetta, is obliged to be their servant girl. One day Finetta finds a magical golden key in the ashes of the fire. The key opens a chest which is filled with rich and astonishing gowns, allowing her to disguise herself as a beautiful princess, fall in love with her prince, and live happily ever after.

The Grimm's Cinderella

The Cinderella story and many of the other fairy tales also owe a great deal of appreciation to German brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm. These scholars, under the sponsorship of various German princes, were also legendary for their contributions to Indo-European and Germanic philology/linguistics. It was in fact due to this academic background that their fairy-tale collection was actually conceived, while looking for data on the German language for their linguistic studies. The Grimm brothers were very patriotic and by gathering examples of German folk literature and highlighting the distinctive German features of that literature, they hoped to influence and show the significance and value of German culture. The Grimms are said to be the first to gather and appreciate folk literature for its own sake and to record tales as ordinary people told them, as well as to identify the teller in their notes. When they first translated their work into English, in 1823, with the collaboration of Edgar Taylor, they instantaneously transformed fairy tales into a reputable topic for the study of antiquarianism and popular means of entertainment for children. Some question the Grimm's true extent of research into folk literature, accusing them of using sources from their own circle of acquaintances rather than broad-based research. There is also the allegation of editing and changing. However, by not staying true nor respecting the

quality of the original, they were able to decrease or remove visually and psychologically disturbing situations, like situations of increased violence and sexuality, or those fostering the payoff of crime. Unlike Basile and Perrault's stories, the Grimms' tales much more often include honest peasant heroes or heroines, and often show the royalty and aristocracy as deceitful towards lower classes, making them much more aware of status than other writers. Their fairy tales also cover a broader range of stories, like trickster tales and folk tales that contain no magic at all, as well as holy legends.

Accordingly, and unsurprisingly, the Grimm's version of Cinderella, originally referred to as "Aschenputtel", varies slightly from Perrault's version. The Grimm brothers gave the heroine of their story a voice, and eliminated some of the passivity we so commonly associate to the poor little cinder girl. Unsurprisingly, the Grimm's version of this tale also begins in a faraway land where we are at firsthand presented with an ill mother, calling upon her only daughter to grant her last wish to "be good and pious. Then the dear Lord will always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you."³⁸ After her mother's departure, Cinderella mourned her death by going to visit her grave every day and weep. Months passed and in the spring, Cinderella's rich father remarried, and his second wife came to live with them, bringing along her two daughters. "They had beautiful and fair features but nasty and wicked hearts."³⁹ They took away all of Cinderella's beautiful things and made her their kitchen maid. They laughed and belittled her, doing everything possible to make Cinderella's life miserable.

For instance, they poured peas and lentils into the hearth ashes so she had to sit there and pick them out. In the evening when she was exhausted from working, they took away her bed, and she had to lie net to the hearth in ashes. This is why she always looked so dusty and dirty and why they all called her Cinderella.⁴⁰

One day Cinderella's father went away to a fair and asked his daughters what they would like him to bring them back. The stepsisters asked for beautiful gowns and fine pearls and jewels, but Cinderella only asked that he bring her the first twig that

³⁸ Jack Zipes (Ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Cop. 2001, p. 465.

³⁹ Jack Zipes (Ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Cop. 2001, p. 468.

⁴⁰ Jack Zipes (Ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Cop. 2001, p. 469.

brushed up against his hat on his way home. The father granted his three daughters' wishes and brought them back all that they had asked for. Cinderella instantly took the twig from the hazel bush to her mother's grave and planted it on it, while crying so hard that the tears fell on the twig and watered it. The twig soon became a beautiful tree, and three times everyday Cinderella would go and sit beneath it and pray and weep, in company of a little white bird which would also come to the tree. Whenever Cinderella wished for something, the bird gave her what she wished. The little bird which is the answer to Cinderella's problems, is thought to be symbolic of the messenger of Ecclesiastes: "a bird of the air will transport the voice, and that which has wings will take care of the matter."⁴¹ The bird is a clear representation of Cinderella's mother's spirit; "the spirit which originally became implanted in the child as basic trust."⁴² It is this same spirit which gives the child support and hope to overcome all hardships and rise triumphantly in the end.

One day the king announced that he would be holding a three-day festival and invited all the beautiful young girls in the country so that his son could choose a bride. The stepsisters rejoiced at this announcement and ordered Cinderella to comb their hair, brush their shoes and dress them up. Cinderella did as she was told but wept because she too wanted to go to the ball. She begged her stepmother to let her go to the ball, and after several pleas her stepmother finally agreed, on condition that she pick out all the lentils that the stepmother had thrown into the ashes. Cinderella quickly called out to all the pigeons, turtledoves and birds to help her pick, "the good ones for the little pot, the bad ones for your little crop." All the birds came to help Cinderella, and soon all the work was done. Cinderella was pleased with her efforts and went to inform her stepmother that she could now go to the ball. However, the stepmother told Cinderella that she did not know how to dance, and could not go all dressed in rags, because everyone would laugh at her. Again Cinderella started crying and the stepmother told her that if she could pick two bowls of lentils out of the ashes within an hour, she would let her go. Once more, and with the help of her little bird friends, she did what the stepmother had asked. This picking of the lentils from the ashes, which appears to be an impossible task, can be representative of one of the obstacles which all heroes in fairy tales must accomplish, in order to triumph. In the Oriental versions, the picking of lentils is substituted with spinning, and in some

⁴¹ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 259.

⁴² Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 259.

Occidental versions the heroine must sieve grains. However, her accomplished task proved to be worthless to the stepmother who tells Cinderella to stay home, for her presence at the ball would only cause them shame. When the stepmother and sisters left, Cinderella hurried to her mother's grave and cried out: "Shake and wobble, little tree! Let gold and silver fall all over me." Immediately she was adorned in a beautiful golden dress and silk slippers embroidered with silver. She looked so beautiful that when she arrived at the wedding party, no one, not even her stepmother and sisters recognized her. The prince soon approached Cinderella, took her hand and danced with her all night long. Whenever someone came and asked her to dance, he replied, "she's my partner." When Cinderella felt she had danced enough, she went home alone, before giving the prince a chance to find her, and went to sit among the ashes again until her family came home. The following two days, the events of the previous nights repeated themselves. Again when the time came for Cinderella to go home, the prince wanted to escort Cinderella but again Cinderella left before he could take her. However, the prince was prepared this time and he had all the stairs coated with pitch and when Cinderella went running down the stairs to go home, her left slipper got stuck there. The prince held on to the slipper and the next morning announced that "No one else shall be my wife but the maiden whose foot fits this golden shoe." The prince went around the kingdom looking for his lost wife and when he arrived at Cinderella's house both stepsisters mutilated their own feet so that they could fit in the shoe. Twice the prince was fooled, and it was only on the pigeon's calling: "looky, look, look at the shoe she took. There's blood all over, and the shoe's too small. She's not the bride you met at the ball..." that the prince discovered that he had been tricked. The prince returned to the sisters' house and asked if there were any other daughters there, to which the father mentioned Cinderella, his dead wife's daughter, who's deformed. They told the prince that she couldn't possibly be the lost bride, but upon the prince's insistence, Cinderella tried on the shoe, which fit perfectly into the slipper. The prince looked dirty Cinderella in the face and realized she was the beautiful maiden who he had danced with. The stepmother and sisters were horrified, but the prince took Cinderella to his home and wanted to marry her at once. And because a happy ending can only be fully attained with the punishment of the evildoers, on the day of the wedding, the sisters come to share in Cinderella's good fortune but the pigeons appeared and pecked out one eye from each of them. On their way home the pigeons appeared again and pecked out the other eye. The stepsisters were punished with blindness for the rest of their lives due to their wickedness and malice. According

to Bettelheim, being blinded is a symbolic representation of the stepsisters' own blindness in believing they could rise in life by humiliating others; relying on external appearances and believing they could attain sexual happiness by (self)-castration (mutilating their feet to fit into the shoe).⁴³ Due to this blindness they, unlike Cinderella, are never really able to separate from their mother and create a personality of their own.

Perrault's Cinderella

Many agree that the worldwide popularity of Cinderella can be attributed primarily to Charles Perrault who first presented his version of Cinderella in "Histoires du temps Passé", published in Paris in 1697. Perrault was a high, royal civil servant, one of the first members of the Académie Française, an esteemed polemicist, and a major figure in literary salons. He was one of the members of the high bourgeoisie to be honoured by the court. He supported the Manifest Destiny of the 17th Century, and was one of the first writers of children's books who openly wanted to colonize the internal and external growth of children in the mutual interests of the elite bourgeois-aristocratic class. As a result he began writing fairy tales "for the most part to civilize children and to prepare them for roles which he idealistically believed they should play in society."⁴⁴ Most of Perrault's fairy tales were written in the period where the development of children's literature began to spread all across Europe. Thus, his works and those of other writers are an important contribution to the study of the fairy tale. When compared with the other Cinderella stories, Perrault's heroine is much nicer and kinder than the others; the story also includes other funny aspects which make this story more entertaining than the others. Perrault is said to have taken fairy tale material from Basile's version, or other versions familiar to him from the oral tradition, removed all things he thought of as improper, and polished some other features to make it presentable to be told at court. To match the story to his aesthetic conceptions, he created new details and altered others, inventing the tale of a newer and more refined Cinderella. Perrault's Cinderella is thought to be the most widely known for it gained further global recognition when Disney adapted it into his animated film version in 1950. This also undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of Perrault's tale, adding more magic, animation and a whole new accrual of stereotypes.

⁴³ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 273.

⁴⁴ Jack Zipes. *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Art of Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 14.

The success of the film also came to influence the way the story of Cinderella was perceived by young and old audiences, and largely contributed to an increase in the printing of Cinderella storybooks.

Perrault's story begins with the traditional "once upon a time", where Cinderella's father has just recently remarried shortly after the death of Cinderella's kind mother. Soon after the wedding, the stepmother's true colours are revealed and she instantly takes on her new step-daughter as the newfound housekeeper, ordering her to do all the most humiliating tasks in the house. When her work was over, Cinderella would *voluntarily* sit near the chimney among the cinders (in other versions, like the Grimm's story, she was *forced* to sit among the ashes), where the evil stepsisters nickname her "Cinderella. However, despite her dirty face, torn rags, and dishevelled hair Cinderella still remained more beautiful than the stepsisters, which caused them to become even more envious of Cinderella. Perrault's Cinderella is slightly different from other versions, being exceptionally sweet and dimly good, but completely lacking initiative, (which may have been one of the reasons Disney based his film on this version). One day, the King announces that he will hold a grand ball, and everyone of quality is to be invited. The stepsisters soon begin choosing their best gowns and finest jewels. They even accept Cinderella's help and opinion for they believed she had fantastic taste. Cinderella gave them her advice and even offered to help them get dressed and do their hair, while in the Grimm version she was ordered to help the sisters brush their hair and clean their shoes. Though the sisters continued to mock Cinderella about her unkempt appearance, she continued with her good ways and prepared them until they were perfect. When the moment arrived and Cinderella saw her stepsisters rush off to the ball, she began to cry. Her godmother instantly came to her rescue and asked what was bothering her, and Cinderella revealed her wish to go to the grand ball. In this story she takes no action, nor does she perform any impossible tasks in order to go, but simply relies on the assistance of her godmother. The godmother ordered her to bring her a pumpkin, six mice, and a rat, and six lizards, which she magically transformed into a beautiful coach, six handsome grey horses, a coachman, and six footmen. As for Cinderella's dirty old rags, these too were instantly changed into fine gold and silver garments covered with jewels. And to finish it off, she gave her a pair of beautiful glass slippers and a harsh warning that she was to be home by midnight, or the spell would break and all these magical things would turn back to their original form. Cinderella promised to keep her godmother's

request, and rushed off to the ball, delighted. The glass slippers and pumpkin made coach seem to be nothing more than pure inventions of Perrault, and are not found in any other version. Many believe that Perrault's invention of the glass slipper was meant as a joke since it is of common knowledge that a glass slipper would most likely break if it were to fall off a foot. Perrault appears to use these symbols to give the story ironic tones, as if to say that, if a poor, dirty girl dressed in rags, can be transformed into the most beautiful princess, then rats can be horses and coachmen. Perrault uses these additions to ridicule anyone who would actually believe in such a preposterous tale. His irony invalidates the possibility of people transforming themselves internally to achieve what it is they want in life, and suggests how simple exterior transformations can lead us to the achievement of our goals. This can perhaps be seen as another social comment on beauty, and again how exterior beauty is sufficient to get the prince and live happily ever after.

Upon Cinderella's arrival at the ball, the king's son instantly went to greet her and everyone was stunned by Cinderella's beauty and grace, and nobody took their eyes off this enchanting and mysterious princess as she danced the night away with none other than the prince. Suddenly, the clock struck midnight and Cinderella rushed out of the castle, and out of the prince's sight. When the stepsisters arrived home they bragged to Cinderella about their wonderful night and the beautiful princess who had attended the ball, completely oblivious to the fact that it could ever have been their dear stepsister. Cinderella became pleased with the stepsisters revelations, especially the announcement of another ball in attempt for the prince to find his mysterious princess. She begged her stepsisters to lend her one of their beautiful gowns but upon their refusal she called on the help of her godmother once more and again Cinderella attended the ball, looking even more beautiful than the night before. Cinderella was having so much fun that this time she forgot about her godmother's warning and when the clock began to strike twelve she rushed off as quickly as she could. The prince tried to run after her but found only one of the glass slippers Cinderella had dropped as she hurriedly ran home. When the stepsisters arrived home they once again told Cinderella about the night's mysterious events and how the prince was in love with the princess who left him nothing but one of her glass slippers. A few days later the king's son initiated a search for the lady, whose foot fit exactly the glass slipper, announcing he would marry her. He began trying it on the ladies of the entire kingdom, and house after house he unsuccessfully continued his search. Soon came the stepsister's turn

who forcefully tried for the shoe to fit, and after their failed attempts Cinderella requested that she try on the slipper. The sisters began to laugh at her ridiculous plea, but as soon as the slipper was placed on her little feet, the search was over, for it fit like a glove. At that precise moment that godmother also arrived and with her magic wand dressed Cinderella once more in the most beautiful clothing. The stepsisters stared in disbelief when they recognized Cinderella as the beautiful princess from the ball, and begged her for forgiveness for treating her so badly. Cinderella hugged her sisters and when she finally married the prince, she invited her sisters to live with her on the castle grounds and had them marry two great noblemen of the court. Of course, they lived happily ever after... As for the moral of the story:

Women's beauty is a treasure that we never cease to admire, but a sweet disposition exceeds all measure and is more dear than a precious gem's fire... Beautiful ladies, it's kindness more than dress that can win a man's heart with greater success...⁴⁵

Another moral: "it's undoubtedly a great advantage to have wit and a good deal of courage, or if you're born with common sense and other worthwhile talents that heaven may discharge."⁴⁶

However, these tales provided children with more than just seemingly enlightening morals and rich forms of entertainment. These seemingly harmless, and highly enchanting stories, not only reflect society's norms and expectations, they also accompany children through the process of socialization leaving important marks on their personalities and social interactions. It is pertinent that this influence not go unnoticed, but rather observed and understood to acquaint parents and educators with its social significance.

Perrault's Cinderella, as well as some of the other versions are filled with images and symbolism, which can be interpreted as a social comment of that time. The following are important symbols and give a double entendre to the stories; their meanings unarguably provide further insight to the understanding of this tale.

⁴⁵ Zipes, Jack (Ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Cop. 2001, p. 453-454.

⁴⁶ Zipes, Jack (Ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Cop. 2001, p. 454.

Glass Slippers

While some believe that the slipper made of glass derived as a mis-translation of Perrault's story, its symbolism is richly enthralling. In the earlier versions the slipper is often described as made of silk, or rabbit fur –"vair", which Perrault may have mistakenly confused with "verre" – glass. On the other hand, he may have deliberately chosen glass for its visible and non-stretchable properties. For glass objects, because of their transparent nature, are usually representative of an inner plane, transportation into a fairy tale world, transporting us into the fairy tale world of Cinderella that Perrault has created for all to see. Still, the imagery does not end there; according to Bettelheim, these slippers also bear sexual connotations. Colourless or clear glass is typically seen as purity, virginity and may also represent fragile, short-lived beauty. The subtleness used by Perrault when he states that the shoe is made of glass is because this material cannot be stretched and is very fragile. A miniscule receptacle where a certain part of the body can be introduced and that adjusts itself tightly can be seen as a symbol of the woman's vagina, and the non-stretchable, fragile and breakable qualities are representative of the hymen, which is something that can easily be lost at the end of a dance or a ball. The prince's chase or search for the bearer of the glass slipper can be easily understood as his quest for the virgin maiden; and her running away an effort to protect her virginity.⁴⁷ The stepsisters' aggressiveness and rush to try on the slipper in contrast to Cinderella's passive state of waiting to be discovered to try it on can represent the three women's different approaches to sexuality and to losing their virginity. However, by placing the slipper on her foot, Cinderella is telling the prince that she will also give in and be active in her sexual affinity.

Moreover, another meaning of the slipper can be the wedding ring. Cinderella sticks out her foot (finger) while the prince gently places the shoe (the ring) on her foot. The ring can also be another symbol of the vagina, and by accepting it on her finger the bride knows she will be faithful to her husband for he will have full possession of her vagina. Similarly she will also have full possession of the prince and all the riches which she believes will make her happy. As Bettelheim explains,

The slipper motif serves to pacify unconscious anxieties in the male and to satisfy unconscious desires in the female. This permits both to

⁴⁷ Bruno Bettelheim. *Psicanálise nos Contos de Fadas*. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1975, p. 334.

find the most complete fulfillment in their sexual relation in marriage. By means of this motif the story enlightens the hearer's unconscious about what is involved in sex and marriage.⁴⁸

Regardless of its material or its origin, it is believed that the slipper derived out of various and rather opposing unconscious thoughts, and thus also provokes numerous unconscious reactions in the audience. Nonetheless, shoes have been and continue to be strong symbols of feminine power, for after all, how else would Cinderella have found her prince? Whatever properties may be attached to these complex *so/e* seekers, the most obvious seems to be that they bring true happiness to both ancient and contemporary Cinderellas alike. Hence, if the shoe fits...wear it.

Small Feet

The tiny foot size in this story may be first and foremost linked to the story's origins, which to this day are still somewhat dubious. According to Bruno Bettelheim "the unrivalled tiny foot size as a mark of extraordinary virtue, distinction, and beauty, and the slipper made of precious material are facets which point to an Eastern, if not necessarily Chinese, origin."⁴⁹ It was the ancient Chinese culture that associated sexual attractiveness and beauty to the extreme smallness of the foot, as a result of their foot binding practices. These two features of the small feet and the beautiful slipper seem to have influenced the Cinderella stories that proliferated in Europe.

Furthermore, Cinderella's small dainty feet were representative of the feminine side and qualities, in comparison with the size of a man's greatness, power and masculinity. The fact that the slipper did not fit the evil stepsisters' feet, and in some versions, they actually mutilate the foot to fit the slipper, indicates they had extremely big, and masculine feet, which makes them less desiring than Cinderella. The fact that the stepsisters cut off parts of their own feet also indicates their attempt to try to become more feminine and more desirable to the prince. The blood in the shoe, as a cause of their self-mutilation can also be another feminine symbol representing menstruation. The birds warn the prince of the blood in the shoe and that therefore

⁴⁸ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 272.

⁴⁹ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 236.

they are not the true bride, or the “virginal bride”. Because Cinderella does not leave any blood in the shoe she can be portrayed as far more virginal than the sisters who have already menstruated. The blood that flows from the slipper is nothing but a symbolic equation of slipper-vagina; the vagina being now bleeding as in the period of menstruation. According to Nadia Julien,

In old customs and in art, footprints and worn-out shoes symbolized real presence. [The foot] is also an infantile phallic symbol: in the story of Cinderella, the slipper is a female symbol and the foot a phallic one. Feet are points of contact with the ground, good conductors of the magical or spiritual fluid with which a holy man is charged and which would disappear if in contact with the ground.⁵⁰

Feet are also said to bring luck and prosperity, and a means of direct contact with mother earth – or in this case, Cinderella’s deceased mother. Whatever symbolic undertones may derive from feet, as Marina Warner explains, “the fairy tale proposes a perfect foot from knowledge of the imperfections of feet and what they stand for; it offers a remedy in itself for the problem.”⁵¹

The number Three

The common use of the number three is found in many of the classic fairy tales. In these stories it is typical that there are three main characters, three incidents or three tasks; the Cinderella tale is no exception. Cinderella and her stepsisters are the three main characters of the story. The fulfillment of tasks is also present and extremely diverse. In some versions they include separating the lentils from the ashes, others include household chores and preparing the step-sisters for the grand ball, and in some versions, Cinderella must attend the ball three times before she is finally fully united with the prince. This unity and completeness is yet another symbol of the number three, and gives a sense of security to the teller and listener of the story who rely on this perfection and wholeness.

According to J.C. Cooper, “the power of the number three is universal and is the tripartite nature of the world as HEAVEN, EARTH and waters; it is MAN as body,

⁵⁰ Nadia Julien. *The Mammoth Dictionary of Symbols: Understanding the Hidden Language of Symbols*. New York: Carol and Graf Publishers, Inc., 1996, p. 163.

⁵¹ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 203.

soul and spirit; birth, life and death; beginning, middle, end; past, present, future; the three phases of the moon...three is the heavenly number representing the soul, as four is the body; three introduces the all-embracing Godhead -- FATHER, MOTHER, son...folklore has three wishes, three tries, three princes or princesses or witches... also signifies fulfilment... The chief symbol of three is the TRIANGLE...it is the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost..."⁵² The repeated use of the number three in the Cinderella story can reflect the position of the child in relation to the parents, and the challenges the child must endure to achieve his or her own personality in his or her journey through life. The number three may also even be symbolic of Freud's Structural Theory⁵³, where he identifies three separate aspects that work together to produce all of our complex behaviours. In order to be psychologically sound, the Id, the Ego and the Superego must be well balanced. The way in which a person balances the conscious and unconscious demands of these three components reflects their individual character or selfhood. By working through the various psychological efforts that this story includes, the child achieves this sense of self at the end of the story. By addressing a variety of issues children endure throughout the process of socialization, the child is also able to conform to his own surroundings and attain comprehensiveness or balance. As Hansjörg Hohn explains, "the combination of simplicity of form and complexity of content makes the fairy tale a powerful tool for perception of and reflection on emotions. The former renders openness to the text and a feeling of control to the child, thus allowing the child to relate to his or her own experiences."⁵⁴

The Mice

Bettelheim believes that unconsciously, mice can trigger phallic associations, which indicate sexual maturity and rise of interest. Apart from their phallic associations, transforming animals like mice, which are so poor and disgusting, into horses, coachmen, and footmen may in fact represent a sublimation. Cinderella's humble state while living among ashes in the company of mice must be sublimated as

⁵² J.C Cooper. *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978, p. 114.

⁵³ "Id, Ego, and Super-Ego." *Wikipedia. Wikipedia*, 2007. [Answers.com](http://www.answers.com). 4 February 2007.
<<http://www.answers.com/topic/id-ego-and-super-ego>>

⁵⁴ Hansjörg Hohn. "Dynamic Aspects of Fairy Tales: Social and Emotional Competence through Fairy Tales." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 44, No. 1 (2000), p.89.

she becomes an adult, reaches sexual maturity and prepares herself for the prince.⁵⁵ The appearance of mice may also be Cinderella's mother once again acting out in disguise, as mice are known to "represent the souls of the dead".⁵⁶ Furthermore, mice, also usually symbolic of siblings, may represent the relationship between the child's brothers and sisters. These seemingly useless and dirty creatures are actually the ones that help Cinderella on her way to the ball by becoming strong horses. This can help surpass problems of sibling rivalry and allow children to see their siblings as more than scoundrels of their parents' love but as "little helpers" willing to reach out through times of adversity.

Patriarchy

The heroines in Perrault's stories are typically beautiful, loyal, dedicated to the household and the chores, modest, docile and in some cases even a little stupid. For according to Perrault, stupidity is a quality belonging to women, and intelligence could be dangerous and even threatening to a marriage back then. In that time, Perrault and other men believed that beauty was a characteristic belonging to women, while intelligence belonged to men. According to Zipes,

The composite male hero of Perrault's tale is strikingly different from the composite female. None of the heroes is particularly good-looking, but they all have remarkable minds, courage and deft manners. Moreover, they are all ambitious and work their way up the social ladder... Unlike the fairy tales dealing with women where the primary goal is marriage, these tales demonstrate that social success and achievement are more important than winning a wife. In other words, women are incidental to the fates of the male characters, where males endow the lives of females with purpose.⁵⁷

In Perrault's Cinderella, our heroine is perceived as a passive self-sacrificing victim, who must endure the hardships of life and endless cruelty of her evil stepsisters in order to thrive, and become the princess she's always wanted to be. She does not appear to possess many signs of intelligence and it is only with the efforts of the fairy

⁵⁵ Bruno Bettelheim. *Psicanálise nos Contos de Fadas*. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1975, p. 332.

⁵⁶ J.C. Cooper. *Fairy Tales. Allegories of the Inner Life*. Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1983, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Zipes, Jack. *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Art of Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 26.

godmother and not outcome of her determination that she is able to go to the ball and to marry the prince. She passively waits while he finds her, but really does nothing to be found.

Upon analyzing the primary characteristics and actions of Perrault's male and female characters, it is obvious how he tries to set social normative patterns of behaviour for both genders and emphasize the principles of the educating progression set by the upper-class French society. In order to separate the low class people from the high social class, he used polite standards, articulate expressions and reflections. Furthermore, "Perrault used formal description to show the exemplary nature of his protagonists. For instance, Cinderella's transformation from slutty/maid to virtuous/princess, accomplished by the fairy godmother was in part an exercise in fashion design. Perrault wanted to display what superior people should wear and how they should carry themselves."⁵⁸

While Perrault's Cinderella version seems to include ironic features intended as a form of mockery on the readers, perhaps more than he intended, "Perrault, was responsible for the literary 'bourgeoisification' of the oral folk tale, and he paved the way for founding a children's literature which would be useful for introducing manners to children of breeding."⁵⁹

The Lentils

The lentils are symbolic of the overwhelming tasks that fairy tale heroes have to endure. In other versions of this story the lentils are replaced with sifting grain or spinning. The task that was given to Cinderella by evil step-mother in the Grimm version, to separate the lentils from the ashes, can also be symbolic of separating good from evil. By learning how to separate the lentils from the ashes or the good lentils from the bad ones, Cinderella is doing more than performing a degrading and meaningless task; unconsciously she is learning how to see the good people around her from the bad step-mother and evil step-sisters. Or, another interpretation can be that of how one must first endure hardships and go through bad times before one is

⁵⁸ Zipes, Jack. *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Art of Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Zipes, Jack. *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Art of Civilization*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 27.

worthy of good things and happy endings. This encourages children to make the most out of bad situations, and that "getting dirty" can be valuable if one is able to gain something from it.

Ashes

Ashes are also an important symbol in this story; hence the name "Cinderella" which is actually formed from the word "cinders" meaning ashes. We are told of Cinderella's fondness of the fireplace and the hearth, and because she is usually covered in soot, her stepsisters start to call her Cinderella. However, there is more here than meets the eye and it is obvious that the symbolism is clearly about grief. Ashes are often representative of the dead, and many mourning rituals involve contact with ashes. In the Catholic church Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of lent, a period of sacrifice and repentance, where a change in one's mind or soul should take place before the arrival of the festive Easter celebrations. By sitting among the ashes, Cinderella also undergoes a big sacrificial period that ultimately changes her and results in a festive marriage to the prince. Moreover, the ashes could also symbolize the good times Cinderella spent near the hearth with her deceased mother or the mourning period after her mother's death. When she finally leaves the ashes it is to live in the castle, implying that mourning time is over, and she can now go on with a happy life, where she will have protection again from someone who loves her just as her mother did.

Although living among the ashes is commonly interpreted as an undesirable state and a form of abuse and degradation imposed on Cinderella by her stepmother and stepsister, this place in the home bears other symbolic connotations. In old times, to be the guardian of the hearth was one of the most prestigious and envied positions for women. It was seen as a duty occupied by a Vestal Virgin which was a great honour in ancient Rome. The Vestal Virgins served the holy hearth and Hera, the mother goddess. To be a Vestal Virgin meant to be completely pure and innocent; and once the role was performed women soon entered into prestigious marriages, just like Cinderella does in marrying the prince.

The Hazel Tree

Since medieval times trees have been considered sacred, and have gained special prominence in certain cultures, just as the hazel tree bears powerful connotations in the Cinderella story. The hazel tree is considered to be a great tree of knowledge, and among the chiefs and rulers of ancient times, a Hazel wand was known to be a symbol of authority and wisdom. The hazel tree is planted on Cinderella's mother's grave, from a hazel branch given to her by her father. Whenever Cinderella encounters adversity in the story, she goes to her mother's grave, waters the tree with her tears and is given special powers from it. The presence of the hazel tree in the Cinderella story may be symbolic of the knowledge the heroine must attain to finally meet her destiny, symbolizing the Tree of Life... in Celtic countries it is the sacred hazel, the tree of wisdom, inspiration, divination and chthonic powers."⁶⁰ In addition, it may be a figure of maturity that eventually gives Cinderella enough knowledge to become a fully grown adult woman, ready to enter the stage of marriage. Because it was given by Cinderella's father and planted on Cinderella's mother's grave, it may further present an eternal link between Cinderella's deceased mother and her father, where the product of their love was Cinderella. Like parents, the hazel tree ensures that Cinderella has what she needs to meet her goals in life and provide her with the clothing she needs to attend the royal ball and capture the prince.

Mothers

Although not many illustrious and exemplary mother figures come to mind when one thinks of fairy tales, one that is typically concurrent to these tales is Mother Goose. This is the name given to the archetypal woman who is allegedly the creator of the Mother Goose stories and rhymes. Although no identifiable writer has been found with such a name, the first known mention of the term "Mother Goose" has been traced to Jean Loret's *La Muse Historique* where the line "comme un conte de la Mere Oye (like a mother goose story)" first appeared in 1660. Perrault later used the name in his 1697 published collection of *Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Bluebeard*, and others which he titled "Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye" or "Mother Goose Tales". The title page illustrated an old woman spinning and telling stories, which may

⁶⁰ J.C. Cooper. *Fairy Tales. Allegories of the Inner Life*. Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1983, p. 27.

have led to the belief that old women and stories go hand in hand. Like Marina Warner explains, "behind the old who tell the stories lurk the children they once were, listening and with that fantasy there rises the memory of the storyteller, the mother, the grandmother or the nurse who stood in loco parentis."⁶¹ When these stories are told there is instant recollection of the childhood voices, and the voice of the mother educating and loving the child. The voice is now cleverly disguised as that of a goose's. In French *cacarder* is used to describe the noise made by a goose, and caquet or chatter which is the goose's cry actually means women's talk. There are also other associations to geese that provoke erotic and scatological echoes; for these animals were sacred to Isis and Aphrodite who used them as her flying steeds. The geese were also known to be sacred to Peitho the nymph of Persuasion who stands by Aphrodite's side in sight of seduction – the personification of her sweet talking tongue. This undoubtedly leads to sexual associations and an inevitable connection to reproduction.⁶² The connection of fairy tales to that of old wives' tales may also be due to Mother Goose, known as "the immemorial storyteller, Mother Goose or Mother Stork or Mother Bunch, is a figure of fun, foolish, ignorant old woman, a typical purveyor of old wives' tales."⁶³ The point is that all of these connotations were associated to mothers and motherhood and how stories were used as moral educators in a time where the female voice was seldom heard in a well-built patriarchal society.

However, fairy tales are enriched with many other mother figures; from true mothers, to stepmothers, and dead mothers, all bear some social significance to the standpoint of women at that time. The first mother figure we are introduced to is Cinderella's real birth mother, who in most stories has already died when the story begins. We are not given much information or explanation about her death, except that she personified all that was good and kind, and as Perrault explicitly expresses in his version, she "was the best creature in the world."⁶⁴ According to Zipes, "by splitting the maternal role to envision however briefly, a protective mother who blesses the heroine with beauty and virtue, romantic tales assuage fears of total separation."⁶⁵ Cinderella's real mother is the first image of goodness that the story illustrates, and her death is the first problem which the young heroine must learn to overcome. It is also her death that leads to the bigger obstacle she will confront throughout the story.

⁶¹ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 190.

⁶² Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 157.

⁶³ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 165.

⁶⁴ "Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper", October, 2003. 11 February 2006

<<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault06.html>>

⁶⁵ Jack Zipes. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 213.

Without her death, there would not have been conflict, nor would Cinderella have endured all the hardship imposed on her by her stepmother. The death of the true mother may also have been a statement on the reality of birth before our modern era; where death in childbirth was the most frequent cause of female mortality. It was common that the surviving baby would be brought up by their mother's successor, or a stepmother. The reality in the Cinderella story is no different than that of every day life and her father shortly remarries after her mother's death, leaving Cinderella in the care of her stepmother, and in some stories never to be heard of again. One does not question the absence of the father, nor asks why he allows his daughter to be mistreated this way; perhaps because this would impede the stepmother to carry out her wickedness on Cinderella, and again there would be no narrative conflict. The inclusion of the stepmother is not only the source of evil and divergence in the story; it is also an overt contrast between good and evil, which helps the child to clearly distinguish and understand these dichotomies. As Bettelheim explains, the characters in fairy tales are not two-sided like real human beings; they are not good and bad at the same time, but rather one or the other. This is due to the polarization existent in a child's mind which allows them to see people as either good or bad, and nothing in the middle. "Presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life, with all the complexities that characterize real people."⁶⁶ The contrast of good mother versus evil stepmother may also serve to illustrate the coming of age, and female competition. The stepmother must compete against the father's only real daughter, who he not only adores but is younger and far more beautiful than his new step wife. The stepmother mistreats Cinderella because she is a competitor, whose beauty and youth stands between her own daughters' happiness and marriage to the prince. As Perrault states in his tale, "she could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious."⁶⁷ Women had to fight against each other because they wanted to sponsor their own children's interests, warrant that they would thrive over the progeny of a previous relationship. Winning the prince's love was the ultimate goal of these domineering mothers, for by accepting their daughters' hands in marriage they were victorious too, the victory of the successful mother – for their legitimate children only.

⁶⁶ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Charles Perrault. "Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper", October, 2003. 11 February 2006
<<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault06.html>>

As for the maltreated stepchild, she must learn to strive on her own against the stepmother: "the dark destructive aspect of the feminine principle, also typified by the witch or bad fairy,"⁶⁸ and the stepsisters who "depict the dark and evil powers latent in unkindness, manifesting as cruelty, in greed, envy, vanity and sheer stupidity."⁶⁹ Fortunately, the rescue from the stepmother's dungeon to the land of independent adulthood is usually carried out with the help of a good fairy, an old woman or a magical godmother. Appropriately, in many versions of Cinderella the godmother or mystical helper is not just a casual apparition but actually a re-embodiment of the real mother, for real mothers never ever ever abandon their children.

Fairy Godmother

The fairy godmother, present in only the Perrault version of the Cinderella tale clearly bears many symbolic interpretations that are relevant to the understanding of this story. The previously cited reference to godmothers in Perrault's Cinderella story moral (...but *all these may prove useless and you may indeed need others if you think you can have success without godfathers or godmothers.*) may in fact explain Perrault's inclusion of a fairy godmother, who appears almost as a *deus ex machina* to rescue the maiden in distress. This is yet another of Perrault's social comments, subtly warning that talent alone will never be enough for a young person's advancement in the world: a powerful godparent is required. "Godmothers acted as co-mothers, they stood in loco parents."⁷⁰ The act of god parenting created links between different social classes: the poor and the aristocracy and vice versa. The ties of godparents and children were so strong that according to the laws of affinity it was considered incest if they were to get married, because their spiritual connection in the Christian family made them true kin, even if they were not related by blood. The poor would look for the help of a stronger more powerful godparent to have a chance in life; and the nobility would seek a poor godparent, like a beggar, to inculcate Christian principles of humbleness onto children when they were still very young. Perrault's inclusion of a godmother was an allusion to the worldly society of aristocratic Paris back then, and the appearance of this *deus ex machina* godmother is actually what helped his heroine on her quest to social success. Inner beauty, fulfillment of household tasks were not enough for Cinderella to win over the prince, if it had not been for the fairy godmother

⁶⁸ J.C. Cooper. *Fairy Tales. Allegories of the Inner Life*. Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1983, p. 25.

⁶⁹ J.C. Cooper. *Fairy Tales. Allegories of the Inner Life*. Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1983, p. 25

⁷⁰ Marina Warner. *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994, p. 233.

who transformed her rags in gowns and Cinderella into a beautiful princess, she would never have gone to the ball, met the prince and gotten married. Moreover, the addition of the rat coachman, the lizard footmen, and the pumpkin coach that accompanied that godmother were also purposefully chosen by Perrault as yet another social comment on noble Paris back then; lizards were deliberately chosen because they are creatures that simply laze around in the sun all day and footman are known for their notorious idleness. At this time Perrault already knew that the fairy tale was a moralistic structure, often deeply disguising the truth but never running away from it. Furthermore, the Godmother figure may also be a derivation of Perrault's interest in magic. A large amount of his text is devoted to Cinderella's Godmother's magic and the belief that all the magic loses its power at midnight. Magic may in fact have been included because Perrault's fairy tales were first published in the early 1700s, a time when the lower classes still strongly believed in magic and in fairies. There are many instances of tales where a seemingly old beggar woman who meets the heroine by chance actually turns out to be a powerful fairy in disguise. These figures were used to instil hope onto the lower classes, making them believe that their salvation was still possible by means of a supernatural and magical force. The presence of the stepmother also ensures that role of the real mother is successfully accomplished; not only by teaching the heroine proper adult ways, but making sure she marries the prince – the final step from moving to the childhood family to creating her own family.

Cinderella is not a mere children's bedtime story. While many versions appear to have only seemingly entertaining purposes, its covert symbols provide more than ludic interaction between its tellers and listeners. Through the use of images like glass slippers, magic wands and mice that can be transformed into horses, Cinderella is believed to help children achieve victory in resolving complex issues such as jealousy, sibling and sexual rivalry. However, are these symbols always interpreted as such? Can problems such as these always be resolved with a story? Or is a story a mere step to temporary escapism from real life? While the answers to these questions are liable to be ambiguous and somewhat subjective, the voice that tells the story can be said to empower the listener, and this is not a negligible achievement.

Sex-Role Stereotyping

The *New Explorer Dictionary* defines a stereotype as “a simplified and standardized conception or image invested with special meaning and held in common by members of a group.” Stereotypes are all around us, and no matter how hard we try to be just and treat others with the same amount of respect as we would expect to receive, we have all, at some point in our lives, made an unfair, one-dimensional judgement of a person or group, based on sex, religion, culture, race, profession or hair colour. The media continues to perpetuate frequent misconceptions about certain people or groups, and because of the omnipresent influences of the media, these erroneous representations can overwhelmingly affect how we see others, relate to them, and value ourselves and our culture, gender or race.

Our experience with others is the best way to weed out the good people from the bad, but because children still have a very restricted experience of the world, they are particularly susceptible to being influenced by negative stereotypes. Moreover, the most frequent interaction young children have with others is actually through books, hence it is apparent that the language and images found in these books can be highly influential to their behaviours. Unfortunately, these seemingly innocent words and pictures are not only used for mere entertaining and bedtime purposes, but have become an instrument used to instil the proper roles of each gender. Gender roles are the roles society defines as correct and socially acceptable for boys and girls. These include characteristics such as physical appearance, attitudes, physical abilities, interests, or occupations, and serve to rightly guide boys and girls on their path to adulthood. But, because gender roles are sometimes already the product of gender stereotypes, what children actually absorb from their early primary source of education, are preconceived and obsolete ideas of how males and females should act. For, as Jack Zipes so wisely indicates, “when children are young, it is literature that carries such information best.”⁷¹ Through books children learn these roles when they are very young, before they have a realistic picture of society or of their own self-identity, eventually influencing the person they are to become. Unfortunately, the fairy tale versions children still read today have not been altered to adequately represent modern day practises or principles. And, because many of these tales were written

⁷¹ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 4.

before the feminist movement, and in a very patriarchal era, there are many gender stereotypes that prevail and continue to be passed on to children.

From the cartoons they watch, to the stories they hear at bedtime, to the friends they make in school, children are bombarded daily with stereotypes that may ultimately contribute to their personality later on in life. Disguised under dreams, fantasy and make believe, fairy tales reinforce gender, status and racial stereotypes deviously packed and ready to be consumed by a five or ten year old who is still unable to tie his shoes, or ride a bike, let alone determine a person's character based on such convoluted matters. Nevertheless, children's books have been around since the early 1500s, and because these served as a socializing tool to pass on traditional values from one generation to the other, they have been disseminating traditional but outdated principles, that prejudicially affect the way they interact with others, for centuries.

What children do best when they are growing up is mimic others, pretend to be like others, and act according to role models, or examples taken from the world around them. The way they see their father treating their mother, or their favourite female heroine being represented will undoubtedly affect the way they treat their friends and colleagues in a school or in a playground. Research shows that when children are around the age of five, they start to copy the behaviours of adults, grow more independent, and develop their own identity. So, while reading is intended to promote a healthy learning experience, and teach children about other people and cultures, it may at the same time be teaching them that all blondes are dumb, all black people are dangerous, all foreigners are villains and all immigrants are thieves, and all men are better and more powerful than women. Lorna Duckworth, social correspondent for *The London Independent* notes that:

Children's books are perpetuating outdated stereotypes by portraying women as submissive, emotional creatures who rarely work... Books for children under seven have more female characters than in the 1940s, when they were virtually invisible, but they continue to exhibit traditional attitudes to gender roles. Women are either depicted as homely, matronly types who busy themselves at the kitchen sink or as evil characters such as witches, researchers found.⁷²

What kind of messages are parents then sending their children as they put them to sleep at bed time? Certainly not educational or impartial ones. As a matter of

⁷² Duckworth, Lorna. "Children's Books Still Portraying Women Negatively." *The Independent* 5 July 2001: 11.

fact, in a study done by Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross, it was revealed that men and women are shown to occupy extraordinarily different roles in the world of children's books. The character descriptions portrayed women as passive and immobile, contrary to male leaders, depicted as active and independent. Men were also seen taking on higher career roles and on the whole males appeared eleven times more than females as the lead character, in the central role and even in the title. Findings in similar studies proved that in the majority of books men had careers and women were housewives; males were hardly ever seen taking care of their children or grocery shopping and doing household chores. Fathers were also minimally present, and when they did emerge, were presented as unaffectionate and indolent in regards to feeding, carrying babies and talking to their children. Mothers most often interacted with children, were affectionate, and took care of them. These messages are highly unpromising for women, and enforce the fallacy that their place is still at home while the men continue to be the rulers and all mighty dwellers of a society that is currently trying to create equity for all women. With so many misrepresentations, it is not surprising why it has become such an enduring battle for women.

Unfortunately however, it's not just children who are incapable of separating good from bad, adults, too, still hold on to the fixed negative notions embedded in their minds while they too were growing up, and rather than eradicating these concepts, instead they are passed on from generation to generation in the form of words, stories or behaviour. And because everything that is produced by a society or a group inevitably contains subjectivity, every construction holds social prejudices of that given society. An unfair society will produce unfair representations. A chauvinistic society will transmit chauvinistic messages. Unarguably, Disney films are by-products of the American society, and the American society is a stereotype all on its own. It is filled with compelling ideologies of feminine beauty and typical male and female roles, and regrettably these ideas continue to prevail because we want them too. Mothers want to tell their own children the same stories that were told to them by their own mothers and grandmothers, disregarding the fact that the principles of the society they grew up in have developed and changed over time. Old Disney films, like Cinderella that represented general social viewpoints of their time are still being viewed by children fifty years later. It's not surprising then that these stereotypes exist and will continue to flourish until new representations or stories are created, which show the most targeted people or groups in a new and far more just light.

Using images that people recognize is the easiest and most effective way to tell a story, but what a child sees or interprets when watching or reading a story is entirely different from an adult. A child sees a beautiful character or actress and automatically associates them to goodness, whereas an ugly one will undoubtedly be evil and villainous. A child may see salvation and happiness while an adult sees chauvinism and male dependence, but later on in life that same male dependence may be seen as a woman's only true route to happiness, rejecting their own female independence and self-worth.

Fairy tales are read by millions of children worldwide, which means that every day, many of their not so educational content is spread and absorbed by minds that have not lived, nor learned enough to make clear distinctions between fact and fiction. In a society that now encourages women to rely more on their brains than on their beauty, it is important that little girls are not influenced by stories where the heroine is always rewarded because of her good looks. From early childhood, girls are told stories about princesses who attain great riches simply because their beauty makes them unique, and that they should just wait passively because this is enough to get them the prince, and a lifetime of happiness. That is quite an influential message that is sure to restrain young women who feel they do not meet society's expectation of what it means to be beautiful.

In the study "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal", conducted by Liz Grauerholz and Lori Baker-Sperry, results showed that there is a direct association to feminine beauty and gender roles in children's stories. The researchers claim that "children's fairy tales, which emphasize such things as women's passivity and beauty, are indeed gendered scripts and serve to legitimize and support the dominant gender system."⁷³ As children are growing up they are more vulnerable to be influenced by their surroundings than when they are adults and with the already significant pressure from the media persuading young women to engage in daily beauty rituals, children are now more susceptible than ever. One cannot deny the social significance that has been placed on feminine beauty. According to Baker-Sperry, "beauty, or the pursuit of beauty, occupies a central role in many women's lives, especially relatively affluent Euro-American women who have the resources, time and energy to expend on acquired beauty."⁷⁴ Children already grow up with this

⁷³ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 11.

⁷⁴ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 712.

conception because it has been socially constructed for them from the start, and as soon as they are exposed to these constructs, they are victims of its power and propagation. However, it would appear that the media is not the only source accountable for this beauty brainwashing. Children's literature is also heavily responsible for transmitting important value concepts such as behavioral patterns, and beauty ideals to its young readers. According to Zipes, "fairy tales written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were intended to teach girls and young women how to become domesticated, respectable, and attractive to a marriage partner and to teach boys and girls appropriate gendered values and attitudes."⁷⁵ Furthermore, since the early 1970s, research indicates that direct and indirect messages about central authority structures, specifically those regarding gender are derived from children's literature. This trend reinforces the message to children that physical attractiveness is an important asset women should aim to achieve and maintain. Unarguably, beauty weighs more heavily upon women than men, and is one of the major ways that social status and self-esteem is acquired by teenage girls and women. Women know of its important influence on men, and therefore put great effort into obtaining and maintaining it, but to what extent do fairy tales contribute to the proliferation of these myths or social pressures? The results that were gathered by Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry were considerably noteworthy. To explore the cultural associations to beauty, they posed questions such as: "Is there a clear link between beauty and goodness? Are there instances where danger or harm is associated with beauty or desirability?"

And, if so, is beauty or desirability the cause?"⁷⁶ In the 168 fairy tales analyzed, 94% of the tales acknowledged physical appearance (in the character's looks, physiques, clothing, etc.) and of that, appearance was acknowledged nearly fourteen times per story. In one tale, references of beauty for women totalled 114, whereas mention of beauty for men never even exceeded one third of that. The following table⁷⁷ permits a more thorough analysis of the findings of this study.

⁷⁵ Jack Zipes quoted in: Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 714.

⁷⁶ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 716.

⁷⁷ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 718.

Average Number of References to Physical Appearance and Beauty/Handsome-ness by Character’s Gender and Age for All Books

All Tales (N = 168)

Reference	n	SD
Women’s Appearance	7.56	14.31
Men’s Appearance	6.00	7.10
Women’s Beauty	1.25	2.53
Men’s Handsomeness	0.21	0.56
Younger women’s beauty	1.17	2.11
Older women’s beauty	0.08	0.65
Younger men’s handsomeness	0.20	0.55
Older men’s handsomeness	0.02	0.11

Though these stories were written centuries ago, through modern cinema and current reproduction of the tales they are unquestionably a part of our modern culture today. Another interesting finding was that most of the tales that have actually endured into the 20th century are the ones that include characters with young, beautiful princesses. Findings reveal that “references to women’s beauty are associated with the likelihood that a tale has been reproduced many times, as is the number of references to women’s physical appearance.”⁷⁸ Other factors that may also be linked to the reproduction of the tales are recurring themes like romantic love or victimization. Of the 168 fairy tales, 43 have been reproduced in children’s books and movies, the most frequently reproduced is “Cinderella”, which, along with “Snow White”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Hansel and Gretel” account for more than two-thirds of all fairy tale reproductions. Another startling observation withdrawn from this study is that it seems that right when women are moving toward progress and gaining

⁷⁸ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 721.

recognition for something more than their physical features, is exactly when the reproductions of these beauty emphasising tales rise. For instance, there were only 46 reproductions of Cinderella before 1900, five or six for each of the time periods between 1901 and 1960, forty-two between 1961 and 1980 and 227 between 1981 and 2000. If societal norms have changed so much since the appearance of the first and early fairy tales, if women have acquired greater economic and legal status, why are children's stories, one of the principle vehicles of instilling societal norms in children, still placing so much emphasis on beauty? Perhaps because these stories (cultural products) are doing what they've done all along; according to Schudson, "cultural products embody societal values and provide a means to observe shifts in such values."⁷⁹ Of course children's stories have always been one of the most useful sets of cultural products for examining cultural motifs and values. According to Bettelheim they are a major source by which children assimilate culture. Consequently, if the emphasis on beauty is increasing in these stories, the same must be true of societal norms, regardless of all the tremendous landmarks women have conquered; it appears feminine beauty still holds a significant proportion in regards to their placement in society. In order to seek the desired image of female beauty, women may in fact be compelled to forfeit other pursuits such as careers or education, says Grauerholz. And with the powerful messages still being sent, women are letting an old and patriarchal society continue to dictate the proper career choices and personality traits for women, giving up anything that is not considered feminine. Grauerholz believes this persistent emphasis on beauty has become a means of control on women by society; "women adopt behaviours that reflect and reinforce their relative powerlessness, which can lead to limiting a woman's personal freedom, power and control."⁸⁰

Furthermore, researchers fear that girls who idolize female fairy tale characters will forsake education, intelligence and self-perseverance for beauty, which can get them into trouble later in life. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz claim that "feminine beauty ideal may operate indirectly as a means of social control insofar as women's concerns with physical appearance (beauty) absorbs resources (money, energy, time) that could otherwise be spent enhancing their social status."⁸¹ Women who place greater

⁷⁹ Michael Schudson quoted in: Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 713.

⁸⁰ Amy Patterson-Neubert. "Experts Say Fairy Tales Not So Happy After All", 11 November 2003, Purdue News. 17 October 2006 <<http://www.purdue.edu/UNS/html4ever/031111.Grauerholz.tales.html>>

⁸¹ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 723.

importance on beauty are more likely to spend their free time in a shopping centre, a gym or beauty salon, as opposed to a library or a computer. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz also state that "women may 'voluntarily' withdraw from or never pursue activities or occupations they fear will make them appear 'unattractive' (e.g., 'hard labour', competitive sports)." ⁸² Competition over physical appearance among women may also inhibit the mobilization of this gender as a group. Greer Fox states that "value constructs such as 'nice girl' or 'feminine beauty' operate as normative restrictions by limiting women's personal freedom and laying the 'groundwork' for a circumscription of women's potential for power and control in the world." ⁸³

In such ways, the means by which children's literature promotes and glorifies beauty is not only hindering and putting more pressure on women today, it's also contributing to even greater gender inequality in a society progressively struggling to gain equal rights among men and women.

However, it doesn't end there. Beyond these already powerfully disturbing messages that are being internalized by children about physical appearance, the concept of beauty in fairy tales is usually even liable for dictating whether a character is good or bad. For instance a beautiful princess is always the good character, while the ugly stepsisters and ugly witch are always bad. In most tales, the ugly characters are always punished while the beautiful ones are saved and rewarded at the end of the story. Also based on their study, Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz found a direct link between beauty and goodness, especially in reference to younger women, and between ugliness and evil— 31% of all stories associate beauty with goodness and 17% associate ugliness with evil.⁸⁴

If children are to carry the principles and morals they learn in fairy tales and apply them later on in life, the result could be some pretty iniquitous treatments and surprises when interacting with people based heavily on their physical appearance.

With regards to beauty, another striking observation is the way in which women's beauty is referred to. Before children are even able to understand the concept of beauty, these superficially driven characters that are part of the world they do know, are already thrusting upon them strong allegations of its utter importance. Due to legendary fairy tale references like "so beautiful no other painter could make

⁸² Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 723.

⁸³ Greer Litton Fox. "Nice Girl: Social Control of Women through a Value Construct." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2 (1977), p. 809.

⁸⁴ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 718.

her look more beautiful" , "...everyone was dazzled by her beauty." ⁸⁵, and "the most beautiful that mortal eyes have ever seen." ⁸⁶ strong concepts are imposed upon children still trying to understand the world they live in.

Although the misogynistic messages seem to ring loud and clear in these stories, girls are not the only ones that fall victims to these fibs. Fairy tales also put a lot of weight on little boys, teaching them from the very start, that in order to marry a beautiful woman one day, they must endure many hardships, and rescue her from whatever obstacle is in the way. Fairy tales demote male weakness and emotional sensitivity, praising strength and courage as admirable and exclusive male traits. Though there is far greater emphasis on feminine beauty in fairy tales, good triumphant fairy tale heroes are also handsome and charming, whereas evil ones are scrawny and cowardly. As for tales that have been reproduced over the years, what was true for women, also holds true for men. Original fairy tale references to men's handsomeness totaled 0.15, whereas in reproduced tales this figure substantially increased to 0.37. However, "for men, physical handsomeness and appearance are not significantly related to a tale's reproduction, nor is the length of the tale." ⁸⁷

Furthermore, fairy tales not only provide children with misleading beliefs about their own genders but also about other cultures. If one is to closely study some of the most popular fairy tales available to children today, one will find that they fail to include minority groups. Especially absent from fairy tales are people of colour, immigrants, poor people and homosexual couples. This absence can give children the impression that because they are not part of their story time world, they also have no place in the real world. As one of the principle agents responsible for the education of children, rather than teaching their young learners that all minorities deserve the same fair treatment and respect as others, fairy tales seem to even promote further exclusion of these individuals from society. The few times that fairy tales do actually include groups that are not the norm, they tend to paint very negative pictures of them, again by associating them with ugliness and therefore evil. As Elizabeth Yeoman noted, "through such ubiquitous cultural forms, bloneness (especially for females) and certain kinds of bodies, clothes and so on, maintain their powerful associations with

⁸⁵ Tatar, Maria. (Ed.) *The Classic Fairy Tales*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999, p. 120.

⁸⁶ Perrault, Charles. "Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper", October, 2003. 11 February 2006
<<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault06.html>>

⁸⁷ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 721.

goodness, beauty and comfort and romance. Darkness, on the other hand, is still equated with the exotic, the occult, and, often, with evil."⁸⁸

Besides influencing judgement and male and female relations, fairy tales may also be accused of widening the gap among female interaction by demonstrating very few incidents of positive female-to-female contact. Very rarely are friendships among women present or established and in most fairy tales we actually see women actively seeking out to harm and manipulate other women. In his study on *The Absence of Women in Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Michael Mendelson concluded that "within the male canon, there is a good deal of camaraderie and cooperation; within the female canon, there is both scarcity of similar interaction and an unparalleled complexity in the relationships that do exist."⁸⁹ This may lead to further competition among women, again adding to an increasing focus on beauty, as well as building a stronger dependence on men.

Although it is apparent why fairy tales are almost instinctively pointed to as one of the true culprits for this sex-role stereotyping, some authors like Madonna Kolbenschlag and Colette Dowling explain that the fairy tale is not in itself responsible for the transmission of these pervasive models, but that more importantly and influential is the reflection it leaves amidst its readers. In Dowling's best-selling book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*, she states that:

... personal, psychological dependency— the deep wish to be taken care of by others— is the chief force holding women down today. I call this 'The Cinderella Complex' – a network of largely repressed attitudes and fears that keeps women in a kind of half-light, retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity. Like Cinderella, women today are still waiting for something external to 'transform their lives'.⁹⁰

In a world where women have made triumphant feats to equality and social status, Dowling illustrates how some women still psychologically trap themselves into playing the helpless role of Cinderella, leaving their lives to the hands of destiny, passively waiting for things to fall into place, rather than actively seeking to acquire their goals,

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Yeoman. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999), p. 438.

⁸⁹ Mendelson, Michael. "Forever Acting Alone: The Absence of Female Collaboration in Grimms' Fairy Tales." *Children's Literature in Education* 28, No. 3 (1997), p. 118.

⁹⁰ Colette Dowling quoted in: Zipes, Jack. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 8-9.

and fulfill their dreams and aspirations. Unsurprisingly, it is why many feminist critics still cling to the notion that fairy tales continue to have a powerfully presiding presence in the lives and actions of those who grew up listening to these stories. Not only do these patterns emphasize male hegemony but also hinder female progress, creating problems such as the *Cinderella Complex* and self destructive models of beauty and sex roles.

The following table displays some key concepts in the Cinderella complex as illustrated by Dowling (1981).

Women are enculturated to feel subservient and inferior to men.

Though outwardly many women present images of bravado, inwardly they often lack confidence and feel ambivalence about their lives.

Secretly, most women long for a daddy-like "prince" to take care of them.

Women who idolize their fathers often desperately seek male attention.

Success is often defined in terms of male standards of achievement.

Fairy tales and other children's media can be a fundamental mechanism which imposes important cultural values upon children. The global widespread of fairy tales conveys distinct messages to young boys and girls about the importance of one's physical appearance and place in society as a result of gender. In order for females to occupy an equal role to men in society, it is necessary to eradicate harmful presumptions from early childhood reading experiences, and rewrite new socialization experiences. Fortunately, with the appearance of contemporary fairy tale versions, old stereotypes are finally being discarded and replaced with far more just and reasonable representations of women in today's modern world. The language in children's reading material can be used to promote or to purge hurtful stereotypes; luckily the latter seems to be more sensible among contemporary writers. As Lisa Paul concludes in her insightful essay, "Enigma Variations", "story by story, the signs and plots of women's lives begin to find a rightful place, alongside the more familiar and male signs, in the mind's eyes of readers – male and female, adult and child."⁹¹ In a culture that is finally starting to recognize that women are just equally competent as men, it is essential that their roles in fairy tales and other children's literature also change; the future of children's lives depends on it.

⁹¹ Lisa Paul quoted in: Hunt, Peter. *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991, p. 163.

Hollywood Cinderellas

Hollywood's magical and far-reaching power is unquestionable. Movies have been making generations of young and old flee their overbearing trials and tribulations for ninety minutes of pure magical realism. By presenting audiences with fictitious characters and fabricated lives, complex problems and unrealistic solutions, cinema provides a form of escape from the real to the surreal. "Giving audiences what is real is precisely what movies don't do; they give the reimagined, reinvented version of the real. It may look like something familiar, but in actuality it's a different universe from the world of the real."⁹² In this surreal world of fabricated lives and dreams, echoes of the Cinderella tale also seem to ring loud and clear. Set in diverse times, cultures, settings and personified in all different forms, Hollywood love stories reek of the *Cinderella* fairy-tale. Whether it's Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, Jennifer Lopez in *Maid in Manhattan* or Drew Barrymore in *Ever After*,

...each strong but vulnerable heroine reminds us that it is tolerable to sit back every so often and let our men take control of our lives... Whether it's a stepdaughter in a kingdom far, far away or a prostitute on the streets of Los Angeles, the tale of Prince Charming riding in to save the damsel in distress speaks to the part of us that's a little bit princess.⁹³

Sure, "we all like to be rescued, whether it's from a flat tire or an evil stepmother"⁹⁴, but why must the men always be the rescuers? With all of the things women have struggled to achieve over the past years, it would be nice for a change to show these accomplishments; it would be nice to see a woman slaying a dragon, sweeping a man off his feet or just changing the oil and filter for their dear and beloved. Instead they are changing coffee filters and serving coffee and biscuits in their passive feminine roles of secretaries and mothers, minimized and sexually harassed by self-centred bosses with big male egos or taken for granted by their cheating husbands. The images being transmitted to us by Hollywood movies are not at all different from those in the stories we read as children, however their influences are far more damaging and

⁹² Bell Hooks. *Reel to Real – Race, Sex and Class at the Movies*. New York: Routledge, 1996, p.1.

⁹³ Avery Wolaniuk. "Love Lessons from the Movies," [Homemakers.com - Movie Club](http://www.homemakers.com/homemakers/client/en/Life/SpecialDetailNews.asp?idNews=235016&pg=1&idsm=466&special=1). 16 November 2006. <<http://www.homemakers.com/homemakers/client/en/Life/SpecialDetailNews.asp?idNews=235016&pg=1&idsm=466&special=1>>

⁹⁴ Avery Wolaniuk. "Love Lessons from the Movies," [Homemakers.com - Movie Club](http://www.homemakers.com/homemakers/client/en/Life/SpecialDetailNews.asp?idNews=235016&pg=1&idsm=466&special=1). 16 November 2006. <<http://www.homemakers.com/homemakers/client/en/Life/SpecialDetailNews.asp?idNews=235016&pg=1&idsm=466&special=1>>

profound. Through movies, Hollywood has been artfully triumphant at propagating American habits and lifestyles to the rest of the world. If it is successful in contributing to each distinct culture a little piece of American identity, what else is it capable of accomplishing? Its potential contributions are endless. No matter how good or bad a movie might be, the fact is that they all contain some social content. Movies affect the way we think about men, women, history, education, work, entertainment, our legal system, our country and the world, ultimately affecting the way we see and relate to other people and their cultures. Several people learn more about the multifaceted issues of race, gender and class from movies than from their regular everyday life experiences. As a result, their perceptions are significantly distorted.

Although women have always been noticeably present in Hollywood, the roles offered to them have not always been a reflection of the real world, but again, merely distorted representations. As Goldie Hawn in *The First Wives Club* points out, "There are only three ages for women in Hollywood: babe, district attorney and *Driving Miss Daisy*." Regrettably, we all recognize the stereotypes, and yet, continue to be bombarded with images of women as sexual objects, or as helpless, passive victims. By analyzing movies over the course of history, it is easy to observe that the lead protagonist roles and the successfully employed businessmen are played predominantly by men, whereas it is the women who take on the role of the meek, unemployed housewife. Through a study conducted on films from the 1930s to the 1970s, film researchers have identified four predominant types of roles played by women. Firstly, "The Pillar of Virtue"; types of roles played by Doris Day or Julie Andrews. This category also includes mothers and nannies, such as Hattie McDaniel's role in *Gone with the Wind*. Secondly, "The Glamour Girl", which typifies the sex goddesses and femmes fatales, rightly, Marilyn Monroe in *Bus Stop* and Marlene Dietrich in *Blonde Venus*. Thirdly, "The Emotive Woman", which displays sexually frustrated or seductive representations of women. Finally, "The Independent Woman", or the Katherine Hepburn type; such as Jane Fonda in *Klute*, who represents the liberated woman.⁹⁵

Since the 1960s, the women's movement has demonstrated great concern with the depiction of women in all media, but with all the false and negative representations of women in cinema, one wonders if the women's movement ever even reached Hollywood. It seems Hollywood was always far more concerned with the way a woman

⁹⁵ "Women in Film" 12 May 2006 < <http://www.geocities.com/albanystudent/wif.html>>

looked than what she had to say. Disappointingly, in many cases, this still holds true today. "Throughout much of film history, women have been depicted as manipulative, sexually repressed, or sexually overt. There was also a lack of sisterhood and films with women interacting with other women in a positive light."⁹⁶ In order to present women in a new way, and to portray them as people rather than sexual objects or accessories to men, it is necessary to change the narrative of films. Fortunately, over the past years Hollywood has developed in favour of women. With the presence of female screenwriters and producers and the urgent need to teach our sisters, mothers and daughters that they too have a fair chance in life, Hollywood has also produced some modern day versions of the Cinderella tale. A newer, modern day tale teaches woman how to out-smart the villains, ditch old stereotypes and filter out something other than coffee. For once we can see women take the reins of their own white horse or the wheel of their new Audi TT, fruit of their own perseverance and hard-work and not the reward of the fairy tale marriage or their husband's status quo.

Hollywood is finally to some extent on the same wave length as with contemporary society and is now giving its audience a more realistic version of the Cinderella tale, free from male oppression, domination and outdated and destructive principles. In movies like *Shrek* and *Ella Enchanted*, we finally see women taking charge of their own destinies, refusing to fall at the hands of the prince, and actually being valued for something other than their superficial beauty.

The Ella of *Ella Enchanted* lives in a magical world where children are given a gift from a Fairy Godmother when they're born. Little Ella's given the gift of obedience. As a result, she can't refuse anything. In a bid to gain control of her life, Ella goes on a quest to free herself from this curse. She must outwit a kingdom filled with ogres, wicked stepsisters and evil plots and still find her prince "Char" along the way. Ella is not your average meek, passive step daughter directly out of Perrault's notorious tale; rather she is a beautiful, intelligent young woman who holds her own in a medieval world. She refuses to accept any sort of help from Prince Char, has her own white horse and rescues the prince several times. As for the traditional happily ever after ending, those unmistakably famous lines are replaced by the lyrics of the song "Don't Go Breaking My Heart", as if to say that nothing should be taken for granted or as eternal, and that love and respect are two fundamental principles of any marriage. These lines could also be interpreted as a warning from Ella, telling the prince to be

⁹⁶ "Women in Film" 12 May 2006 < <http://www.geocities.com/albanystudent/wif.html>>

loyal and good to her, and not to break her heart, or she will not continue living ever after with him. This is the contemporary female role model, and the contemporary societal values. These should be the types of messages that stay in children's heads before they fall asleep, and not the *ever after* of never ending happiness for the compensation of the endurance of a period of sacrifice or good deeds.

Finally, with such animated versions, it seems that film producers are now not only acting in the best interest of princes and princesses, but are now starting to provide children with new versions of their old fairy tale favourites, complete with fat ogres and not so enchanting princesses after all. Another example of this are the satirical *Shrek films*, aimed not only at mocking old fairy tale versions but putting a much higher value on humanity and difference. Released by *Dreamworks*, these stories are now making front to the Disney versions which have been so intent on exaggerating the already abundant fairy tale stereotypes. The "kingdom of Far Far Away" is not only home to not so attractive ogres who can still become princes but is also a satiric contrast between Hollywood and the actual real world. The latter is not nearly as glamorous or perfect as the former, and not all problems in the real world have your typical happy ending. In real life beauty, expensive clothing, and fabulous mansions are not the key to success and fulfilment, while in Hollywood (just like in traditional fairy tales), it seems like the never-ending quest or the ultimate goal. The deconstruction of stereotypes in movies, like *Shrek*, is a true celebration of the importance of difference, and is able to show children that it is possible to fulfil their dreams without mesmerizing beauty, or by being taken to a castle on a white horse with handsome prince charming. These contemporary versions teach children that beauty is only skin deep and that even an ogre is capable of making any true princess happy. By displaying shallow and selfish representations of handsome prince charming, one can see that there is more behind beauty than meets the eye, and that people are not one sided, but that we all have good and bad features and perfection is an unattainable conquest. This is perhaps the most predominant message in these new versions, the fact that there is no one sided good or bad person. People are not one-dimensional, and all of us have perhaps a little bit of both, that is what makes us human and what truly unites us. This is the message that the media should perpetuate and not the traditional fairy tale drama. Unfortunately, one cannot ignore the Disney memorabilia that occupies children's shelves nowadays; from storybooks, to DVDs, to milk glasses and coffee mugs, Disney has made a landmark in the lives of children; the

question is if the coasters are strong enough to prevent stains and permanent imprints they leave in the minds of children.

Walt Disney's *Cinderella*

In a world that now relies almost entirely on technological communication, and has entered the information age at full force, the mass media have invaded global society and it looks as if they are here to stay. They have proliferated in all areas of our daily life, and their presence can not be overlooked. As a result, "mass-produced images fill our daily lives and condition our most intimate perceptions and desires"⁹⁷, whether it is through the television shows we gaze at, the advertisements we absorb, or the movies we are so keen to watch, we no longer give up the enjoyment these mass media forms can offer. As cinema outings continue to make up for a great part of our social habits, we cannot disregard that Hollywood films are an important part of all societies, consequently, Disney does not go left unnoticed.

As Disney continues to pierce cinema rooms worldwide through the release of animated films and films specifically targeted at a younger audience, one can firmly state that it has clearly marked a prevailing place in American and global culture. Audiences don't question the messages in these films because Disney has also strived in making itself known to audiences as a family oriented organization. Its movies however, "in trying to please the largest audience possible, send inconsistent messages, mixing moral values in ways that offend various people."⁹⁸ Today, Disney has become an important storyteller for children, but because, as A. Carter stated, "the truth is in the storyteller", society should not be oblivious to the truths that are being told. Due to, the pervasiveness of mass media in contemporary society, many traditional storybooks are now told in the form of video and audio through computers, television, and other recent technological advances. And because television and cinema combine narrative, visuals and music, it increases its ability to communicate its messages to children, thus more powerful than conventional storybooks. By using such powerful tools on such a susceptible audience, it is obvious that its influence can be quite astounding. According to Ward, "generations are now raised on Disney fairy tales, and original story lines are forgotten or dismissed as not the real thing. Disney rewrites the original tales for its particular version of American values."⁹⁹ However,

⁹⁷ Henry A Giroux. *The Mouse That Roared – Disney and the End of Innocence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1999. p. 2.

⁹⁸ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. xiii.

⁹⁹ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 2.

the peculiarity of culture is that it is not universal, and in a world where not all cultures resemble that of the fifty-two states, it is frightening to think that even fairy tales are now responsible for contributing to the *Americanization* of the world. What's worse is that these messages also shape children's views of right and wrong and their ethics, and because technological devices such as CDs, DVDs, etc, easily allow the possibility of repetition of these stories several times, at an instant click of a button, these messages are embedded strongly in children's minds almost in the form of propaganda.¹⁰⁰ Disney movies and adaptations of fairy tales can transmit powerful messages to children that parents and society cannot afford to ignore. Though these messages are varied and quite inconsistent and may be interpreted differently by each child, they still justify further analysis. The following table provides a summary of some of the mixed messages Disney movies send to children.¹⁰¹

What does it mean to be human – male and female?

Finding oneself through love is the heart's desire—for a woman	Finding oneself and love is the heart's desire—for a man
Females can be strong and Self-sufficient	Females are truly happy only when they have a man
What is inside is what is important	Physical beauty is important

What is the structure of society?

Females can be leaders	Male leadership ought to be the norm
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¹⁰⁰ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 124.

Family values are important

Disobey authority as needed

Responsibility is valued

Follow your heart

Stereotyping is wrong

Black means evil

All people are valued

Only lively, fun people are valued

Communication is key to
overcoming problems

The magic of the heart overcomes
problems

How does one know?

Truth is important and culturally
Known

Truth is what the individual
knows

Historical truth is valued

Tell only what will sell

By putting substantial weight on values that sell, Disney is sending cognisant or subliminal moral messages to children that can determine how they will respond and behave towards others, as well as dictate strong principles by which children will live their own lives. However, these messages don't just stop at the movies; their echoes endure and are continuously being reinforced with "the proliferation of film-character sponsorship."¹⁰² As Disney now produces everything from clothes, eating utensils, televisions, weekend get-aways and even luggage, it has ensured that every child has the essentials for the trip into make-believe, and away from reality. As Warder further comments, "For the hard-core Disney fans, who not only have to see films but also compulsively need to own the videos, T-shirts, toys, and other Disney-related products, Disney has made a significant imprint on their identity and on the way they interpret

¹⁰² Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 130.

the world.”¹⁰³ The fact that Disney has enough cultural presence and resources to control the messages that children receive daily is a concern that should not go left unrecognized, for its damages could be irreparable. William Damon argues that scientific evidence proved that children develop morality from very early experiences:

Morality grows readily out of the child’s early social experiences with parents and peers. It is through common activities like sharing and helping, as well as through universal emotional reactions like outrage, fear, and shame, that children acquire many of their deep-seated values and standards of behaviour. Adult influence, too, plays a crucial role; but it is a role that is necessarily limited as well as mediated through the child’s other life experiences.¹⁰⁴

Indisputably, it’s the morals that we acquire as children that will dictate and shape our morals as adults, and the morals that are being transmitted to children in the form of animated voices and pictures speak louder than one might hear or even realize.

Furthermore, because Disney is embedded in the history of many childhoods, past and present, currently it not only captivates children but also brings out the child in every adult. As stated by Giroux, “Disney’s power lies, in part, in its ability to tap into lost hopes, abortive dreams, and utopian potential of popular culture.” In this way, Disney films can be compared to the utopian aspiration of fairy tales. By creating new plots for old stories, it can revitalize those lost hopes, fulfil the abortive dreams, and also provide that fairy tale form of “heroic optimism”, resulting in diverse happy endings, which becomes the Disney worldview. Ward explains that,

Disney is selling its worldview. The promise of a world where evil is conquered and where happily-ever-after is possible through Disney, is an escapist utopia that can be bought and experienced, if only for a couple of hours (while watching the films), or longer if you own the exact replica of your favourite character in some form or another.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 130.

¹⁰⁴ William Damon in “The Moral Child”, quoted in Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. , p. 133.

¹⁰⁵ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 130.

Of course, it is up to the adults, to keep the real separated from the fantastic, and explain the true extent of the extraordinary to their children, so that the stories they are exposed to will also influence their own life story. As Walt Disney proclaimed, "I think of a child's mind as a blank book. During the first years of his life, much will be written on the pages. The quality of that writing will affect his life profoundly."

Disney has indeed filled up many pages in the lives of children, but what type of stories are they really writing for children? Of course what is written or what is told isn't always synonymous with what is heard, and although there are many interpretations available, however the ways in which these stories and the messages work on audiences is one that deserves a closer intervention. Disney has produced countless tales for children, and while each tale may write a different page in a child's life, the focus of this particular study is the Cinderella story.

Although the first Disney version of the Cinderella story was released in 1950, and many others have followed after that, all are still descendents of Perrault's earlier tale. The "Disneyfication" of Cinderella encourages children to keep on dreaming and waiting rather than working hard to achieve their dreams. Baker-Sperry and Grauelherz commented that "recent Disney films and even contemporary feminist retellings of popular fairy tales often involve women who differ from their earlier counterparts in ingenuity, activity, and dependence but not physical attractiveness."¹⁰⁶ The stereotypical Disney heroines are all curvaceous and highly attractive despite their race or colour, hardly ever take risks, and usually depend on beauty to overcome obstacles and prevail. Ward points out two different approaches when studying Disney films that may or may not be true: one, that "Disney films are 'only good entertainment', and two, that Disney is a 'hegemonic capitalist structure' that manipulates the minds of children."¹⁰⁷ But the real truth is that Disney plays a very real and significant part in the lives of our culture today, and "as such it functions rhetorically, influencing perspectives of morality either explicitly or implicitly", ¹⁰⁸ therefore, its presence should not be ignored. As Michael D. Eisner, chairman, CEO and president of the Walt Disney Company explains, "The Disney stores promote the consumer parks, which promote the theme parks, which promote the TV shows. The TV shows promote the company.

¹⁰⁶ Baker-Sperry, Lori and Grauerholz, Liz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 722.

¹⁰⁷ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 9.

Roger Rabbit promotes Christmas at Disneyland.”¹⁰⁹ The result is that Disney has become a cultural invader, not only occupying a place in the child’s bedroom but also in his or her inner conscious; and the effects can be detrimental.

“At issue for parents, educators, and others is how culture, especially media culture, has become a substantial, if not the primary, educational force in regulating the meanings, values, and tastes that set the norms that offer up and legit imitate particular subject positions—what it means to claim an identity as a male, female, white, black, citizen, non-citizen. The media culture defines childhood, the national past, beauty, truth and social agency.”¹¹⁰ It is up to parents and childhood educators to finally pay attention to what their children are watching so that they can be the ones to define what they hope their child is to become.

It seems that the omnipresent power of the mass media ends not only in the world of Hollywood, but has taken on new and highly listened to structures of control in the world of music. How can children rely on their inner strengths and personal abilities if the voices they listen to on the radio and on television are encouraging them to hold on to dreams and aspirations in order to achieve their lifelong goals? The renowned Disney lyrics in the Cinderella movie, vividly encourage children to surrender to the power of their dreams, as can be outwardly read in the following extract:

*A dream is a wish your heart makes
When you're fast asleep.
In dreams you will lose your heartaches.
Whatever you wish for, you keep.
Have faith in your dreams and some day
Your rainbows will come smiling through.
No matter how your heart is grieving
If you keep on believing
The dream that you wish will come true.*

It is explicitly obvious that dreaming will get you nowhere in today’s world. And if you have any ambition to make it to the top, or attain any adequate amount of satisfaction and happiness, there will be no rainbow that will take you up to the pot of gold. What

¹⁰⁹ Michael Eisner quoted in: Henry A. Giroux. *The Mouse That Roared – Disney and the End of Innocence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999, p.1.

¹¹⁰ Henry A. Giroux. *The Mouse That Roared – Disney and the End of Innocence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

we achieve in society, with the exception of the very odd case, is a product of our hard work and individual capacity to fight for what we want. No matter how your heart is grieving, it is only through endeavour that our dreams will come true. Perhaps Disney needs to alter these illusory lyrics, or assume shared liability for transmitting naive and wistful ideas to children.

The culpability does not fall solely on Disney though, in the music industry there are numerous song lyrics which imitate fairy tale prototypes and rely on this Cinderella tale premise of happy endings and everlasting love to enchant and captivate listeners. An overt example is *All For One's* modern adaptation of John Michael Montgomery's "I Can Love You Like That". Its lyrics openly refer to the Cinderella tale, and loudly reverberate of fairy tale connotations.

*They read you Cinderella,
You hoped it would come true,
And one day a Prince Charming would come rescue you,
You like romantic movies,
And you never will forget,
The way you felt when Romeo kissed Juliet.
And all this time that you've been waiting,
You don't have to wait no more,
I can love you like that,
I would make you my world,
Move heaven and earth,
If you were my girl,
I would give you my heart,
Be all that you need,
Show you you're everything that's precious to me,
If you give me a chance,
I can love you like that,
(I can love you like that, I can love you like that)
I never make a promise,
I don't intend to keep,
So when I say forever,
Forever's what I mean...*

Many songs such as this continue to implant conventional misconceptions into the minds of children and adults that modern day society is at long last increasingly

battling to exterminate. But, how can we ever hope to accomplish progress if we are hearing so many mixed messages all at once, and allowing these *easy listening* ideas to continue to obscure women's approaches toward men and marriage?

While *All For One* is melodiously convincing listeners that the passive waiting period is over and never-ending love is fully attainable, other musical interpreters are cautiously warning listeners of these suggestive undertones. Garth Brooks' blatantly contradicts fairy tale delusions in his "It's Midnight Cinderella" chant, and challenges women to accept their own reality and let go of conventional misconceptions.

*It's midnight Cinderella but don't you worry none
'Cause I'm Peter Peter the Pumpkin Eater
And the party's just begun.*

*I guess your prince charming
Wasn't after all
'Cause he sure seemed different right after the ball.
I guess more than horses are turnin' into rats
And by the way he's walkin'
I can guess where your slipper's at.*

*It's Midnight Cinderella time that you should know
There's gonna be some changes in the way this story goes
It's midnight Cinderella but don't you worry none
'Cause I'm Peter Peter the Pumpkin Eater
And the party's just begun.*

*I'm gonna help you get over
Bein' under that spell
You're gonna learn to love Midnight
Inside this pumpkin shell
I gotta few new magic tricks
Your godmother can't do
I'll show you what it means to
Bip, bip, bip, bip, boppity boo.*

Although these examples offer alternative versions to the lives and mindsets of women, it is crucial that previous detrimental accounts be eliminated in order to avoid contradictions and prejudices. Perhaps it is time society and the institutions that structure it were a bit more coherent in the messages they are broadcasting, for only then can progression be attained and debauched issues resolved, and only then will women finally gain an equal place in life. In order to ensure that women continue to take this option, it is up to society's most influential sources to offer women hope and alternate versions. Consequently, it is up to Hollywood (one of the most influential mediums in society) to continue portraying women in powerful roles. Roles where, women are able to find adequate solutions to oppression rid themselves of negative stereotypes that hinder their progress, and gain equality in a world where both men and women are entitled to be in the spotlight, and feel free to shine. As Wolaniuk sensibly proclaims, "if there is one overarching message that's central to the entire genre of romantic movies, it's to take a chance and go after what you really want. It may seem a little simplistic, but then again, so are explosions and car chases."¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Avery Wolaniuk. "Love Lessons from the Movies," [Homemakers.com](http://www.homemakers.com) - [Movie Club](#). 16 November 2006. <<http://www.homemakers.com/homemakers/client/en/Life/SpecialDetailNews.asp?idNews=235016&pg=1&idsm=466&special=1>>

III. NEW CINDERELLAS

Contemporary Re-tellings

Fairy tales have been around for centuries, but their presence on our bookshelves and night tables still carries with them an aura of inscrutability. Who are they really there for? Are they simply bed time stories to take us into a world of slumber? Or do they in fact awaken the lost child within? As critic Max Lüthi states, "Our attitude toward fairy tales is ambivalent."¹¹² On one hand fairy tales give children a distorted view of reality by creating a unique and potent world of fantasy that makes it difficult to separate fiction from reality. On the other hand however, the positive contributions that fairy tales bring to children should not be overlooked either. Various experts on children's literature have affirmed that fantasy is actually good for children in a way that enables them to develop their imaginations successfully. Bruno Bettelheim, one of the greatest forefathers of fairy tale investigation further developed this concept by attributing many roles to these fictions— especially notable is the way in which fantasy allows children to contemplate moral and social issues at a safe distance in the land of make-believe. Also significant is the way in which they help children to experiment with boundaries and cultural meanings.

Fairy tales help children on their trip to adulthood, and by temporarily passing the land of make believe, they are developing imaginative power which will then lead to mature and concrete thinking. Unarguably, there are children who are more imaginative than others, and because imagination is not believed to be an innate characteristic, there are certain phenomena that clearly develop children's imaginations. One of these phenomena is fairy tales and stories. Hughes, a developmental psychologist comments that "the years from three to six are generally recognised as the golden years of pretend or make-believe, play; at no other time in life is a human being so thoroughly involved in the world of fantasy."¹¹³ This world of fantasy unquestionably includes fairy tales, stories and pretend games, where children start to explore the world and their own lives by playing around with cultural values of good, evil, authority, freedom, sibling rivalry, friendship, love, etc. In this way, fairy tales could be viewed even as the Hollywood for children. In the same way that Hollywood provides adults with opportunities of escapism from their own lives, children's stories, and more recently children's fantasy films, also teach children how to deal with certain predicaments in

¹¹² Max Lüthi. "The Meaning and Form of Fairy Tales" and "The Image of Man in the Fairy Tale." In: Uebelhor, Anthony. "Unit 3 – Fairy Tales", *Fairy Tales, Myths and Other Archetypal Stories*. The Writing Program University of Kentucky. 14 October 2006 <<http://www.uky.edu/~aubel2/eng104/myth/unit3.html>>

¹¹³ F.P. Hughes. *Children, Play and Development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1991. p. 81.

life and offer solutions or means to solve these issues. In their study "Future Generations: the implied importance of the fantasy world in development of a child's imagination", David Machin and Marie Davies suggest that "fantasy should not be seen as something that is just something to do with fairy tale and magic... Stories are very much at the heart of the way humans think about and grasp the process of their lives in general. And the capacity for imagining is at the centre of this."¹¹⁴ Fairy tales have been giving children the possibility to broaden their imagination while at the same time creating important social bonds with the parents, friends or teachers who tell them. They have also become important daily rituals that children no longer go without. And, while children are learning about dragons and princesses and castles far far away they are also being taught important societal values and norms. Thus, it is impossible to deny the importance that stories have on the education and entertainment of children. According to social psychologist Jerome Bruner, in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, stories are primary to the individual understanding of the world. He argues that "when we think of ourselves and others going about our business, it is in the form of plots and characters." This is a capacity that underpins our ability to live and plan our collective lives."¹¹⁵

Bruner believes humans have two very different but overlapping modes of thought: paradigmatic and narrative thought. Paradigmatic thought allows humans to focus more on particular rather than general, whereas narrative thought is the mode through which we live and organize our daily lives. According to Bruner, humans see their lives in the forms of stories, "seeing themselves as characters in an unfolding plot."¹¹⁶ When people relate their experiences to others, this is usually done in the form of a narrative or story. Not only is it easier to describe things to others in story form, in terms of comprehension, it is also more effective. This can be supported by using journalism, for example, "most journalists are aware that a story about the life of one young prostitute working in the city centre at night will move people far more than statistics telling us that 1000 young girls do this sort of work."¹¹⁷ The point is that

¹¹⁴ David Machin and Maire Messenger Davies. "Opinion Dialogue, Review: Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood* 10, No. 1 (February 2003), p. 112.

¹¹⁵ Jerome Bruner in: David Machin and Maire Messenger Davies. "Opinion Dialogue, Review: Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood* 10, No. 1 (February 2003), p. 112.

¹¹⁶ David Machin and Maire Messenger Davies. "Opinion Dialogue, Review: Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood* 10, No. 1 (February 2003), p. 112.

¹¹⁷ David Machin and Maire Messenger Davies. "Opinion Dialogue, Review: Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood* 10, No. 1 (February 2003), p.

stories are vital to the understanding of human life and behaviour, because they touch people in a way that facts cannot. So if children are taught to do this early in life they will be much more successful in understanding fellow citizens in the future. Bruner believes that paradigmatic thought is only really developed later in life, and that when we are children we operate predominantly by narrative thought, consequently if children are given instruction in narrative thought they are more likely to perform the tasks correctly. The same can be applied to learning societal values and normative behavioural patterns.

Experimental studies (Astington, 1991) have shown that children's understanding can be vastly increased by putting information in a narrative frame. Bruner suggests that children rapidly come to learn about the canonical forms of story-telling, or accounting for one's behaviour, in a culture, as they come to tell about their experiences and realize that it is important to provide explanations in the light of these forms. Bruner suggests that it is in these stories that we hear, tell about ourselves, etc. That we navigate a sense of our biographies which are ever changing.¹¹⁸

So, if stories really do help children understand themselves and their world better, if they are known to be widely appreciated and used by children everyday, why not use this as an advantage to instil in them important life lessons, and transmit cultural values and ideologies through the voices of magical kings and princesses in kingdoms of dreams and make-believe?! The results are bound to be magically astonishing.

Stories are important vehicles of socialization and teachers of societal values and norms, and provide many of the first narratives children use to learn about the world but the way these stories are told is the key to the success of its messages. After all, as Marshall McLuhan so famously stated, "the medium is the message."¹¹⁹ What McLuhan meant by this was that the form of a message (print, visual, musical, etc.) will undoubtedly affect the ways in which that same message will be interpreted. McLuhan explained that modern electronic communications such as radio, television,

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¹¹⁸ David Machin and Maire Messenger Davies. "Opinion Dialogue, Review: Future Generations: The Implied Importance of the Fantasy World in Development of a Child's Imagination". *Childhood* 10, No. 1 (February 2003), p. 113.

¹¹⁹ Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964, p. 7.

films and computers would have sweeping sociological, visual and rational consequences, consequently shifting the ways that individuals experience the world. Accordingly, the ways children read or listen to stories also affects the way they perceive their meanings, the characters' actions and their moral teachings. In an era where children no longer rely on their parents' soothing voices to be put to sleep or read to or even educated, and where Disney has marked solid terrain in every mass media form, it is imperative to listen to the new voice on the radio, the interactive CD or DVD movie. For the "new storyteller" may have more to say than what is heard, and the images, sounds, gestures, etc. all made possible with the intervention of modern communication may actually speak louder than the voice itself.

Additionally, the voice itself should not be disregarded, for it has also been proved to be determinant. Many fairy tale scholars and critics revealed differences and similarities between men's and women's ways of telling stories and the bottom line is that men and women tell the same story in uniquely different ways. Fortunately the male domination of fairy tale writing which occupied an unyielding position at the end of the 19th Century, has been opened up to new voices, subsequently changing the tone and clarity of the new predefined message.

Therefore, generally, all stories, including fairy tales, are good for children; obviously its contents are of prime importance. Basically, if children learn through stories, and stories are filled with negative images and hurtful stereotypes, they will undoubtedly gain some pretty misleading lessons, but instead, if those messages are positive, educational and fair, than they are essential to the developmental growth of any child; this is where contemporary re-writings of fairy tales come in. By re-writing contemporary versions of fairy tales for children it is possible to change outdated worldviews to the ones we now live by, the ones we teach children or allow them to be taught. Storytelling is vital to every society as a means of looking for and sharing the truth, and if we can change the storyteller, we can also change what is told.

So, can we really afford to take the fairy tale books off the shelves? In her essay "The Tale Retold: Feminist Fairy Tales", Ruth MacDonald suggests that modern feminists have three solutions to the fairy tale predicament. The first solution is to leave the fairy tales unaltered and allow the possibility of harming and limiting a woman's career choices. The second solution is to diminish conventions of physical appearance and marriage and accordingly defy the original author's own opinions by

enforcing one's own language and preconceptions on the story. Or, thirdly, using folklore patterns but with less traditional endings, one may write new stories."¹²⁰

It appears that the third solution is evidently the most sensible and rewarding for children, providing them with all the wonder and awe fairy tales so rightly provoke in children, while educating them according to the new standards and principles of contemporary society.

I'm not suggesting that this bright side of fairy tales and children's stories compensates for their dark side, rather it is important to consider both sides, and yes, fairy tales should be removed from the shelves, but in their place it is vital to place modern contemporary versions of these stories which have always been loved by children and can teach them lessons about life that no other medium can. As Ward explains, "the stories children are exposed to will form the standards for testing the truth of other stories later in life... If children believe that what they see represents a true picture of life, then the potential for cultural growth is diminished."¹²¹

It is important that parents are alert to the books and television programs their children are exposed to daily, and also act as fundamental teachers in their children's lives. As Ward states, "it is possible for negative messages to be overridden by other influences in a child's life, as long as those influences are both positive and strong. That those messages are there in the first place..."¹²²

Fairy tales are more than just stories about princes and princesses in a far away land. Besides all the "tales" they do contain, they're also capable of doing one important thing, and that is to bring something great to look forward to. In a world where violence, racism, poverty and terrorism dwell, it's comforting to know that children can still live with hope. Not the hope of being swept off their feet by a prince, or living happily ever after, but the hope of finding some goodness in their future, hope of one day having a more peaceful world, hope of having a good education, and a job and a family that values them for who they really are.... And isn't that what all parents want for their children as they are tucking them in at bedtime?? Shouldn't that be the real purpose of these stories??

Fortunately, contemporary authors like Robert Munsch, and movies like *Shrek* and *Ella Enchanted*, are cultivating new principles, breaking free of the old fairy tale

¹²⁰ Ruth MacDonald. "The Tale Retold: Feminist Fairy Tales", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 7, Summer, 1982, p. 18.

¹²¹ Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 5.

¹²² Annalee R. Ward. *Mouse Morality – The Rhetoric of Disney Animation Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 5.

formats. Beautiful princesses can finally live happily ever after as ogresses, or dressed in paper bags, without depending on the handsome prince to rescue her from the dragon. These stories show the true extent of women's capabilities and worth, personifying their true strength and valour. Unfortunately, and although Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz note that "such retellings of fairy tales are rare, and the cumulative effect of the more traditional tales, in conjunction with the unidirectional nature of media, makes such agency difficult"¹²³, not all is doom and gloom. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz go on further to explain that "children (or their parents, through their readings of the texts to children) have the ability to use these texts to challenge or 'rewrite' these scripts (stories).

Jack Zipes further suggested that by "introducing unusual elements into the fairy tale...the child is compelled to shatter a certain uniform reception of fairy-tales, to re-examine the elements of the classical tales, and to reconsider their function and meaning and whether it might not be better to alter them."¹²⁴

So it looks like fairy tales are finally using their magical abilities to transform more than pumpkins into chariots. By creating new and more realistic worlds for children, where men and women have an equal share at both cleaning and dragon slaying, the fairy tale heroes of today are finally opposing conventional fairy tale notions, and revolutionizing the way these stories are internalised. As Cláudia Rodrigues concludes in her dissertation, *Reflexos e Reflexões Femininas nos Contos de Dadas: A Bela e o Monstro e A Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões*, "ultimately, to write a feminist fairy tale is to write with the hope that future generations will not adapt the forms and ideas found in traditional tales, but that they will arrange their lives in response to non-sexist social conditions and the different options presented in the feminist fairy tales which are still seeking to prove their humanitarian value."¹²⁵ The following stories are concrete evidence of this notion, and allow the imaginative side of fairy tales to strive among children who still believe in castles and fairy godmothers, while at the same time providing them with enough direction to get to the royal ball all on their own. As Elizabeth Yeoman concludes in her study on intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines, "stories are central both to children's shareable imaginative world and their

¹²³ Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 725.

¹²⁴ Jack Zipes quoted in: Lori Baker-Sperry, Liz Grauerholz. "The pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 15, no. 5 (2003), p. 725.

¹²⁵ Claudia Rodrigues. *Reflexos e Reflexões Femininas nos Contos de Fadas: A Bela e o Monstro e A Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões*. Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro, 2006, p.126.

practical understanding of the real world. They can both contribute to the reproduction of limiting meanings and challenge them in the language of possibility and hope."¹²⁶

The Paper Bag Princess

When the story begins, Elizabeth is already a beautiful princess, with pretty and expensive clothes. She is engaged to a prince named Ronald. One day a dragon appears, smashes her castles, burns all her clothes with his fiery breath, and takes Prince Ronald. Elizabeth decides to chase the dragon and get her prince back. Since the dragon had burned all her pretty clothes, the only thing she could find was a paper bag. So, she puts on the paper bag and follows the dragon, which was not difficult to find due to the trail of burnt forests and horses' bones. Elizabeth found the dragon's cave and knocked on the door, until the dragon finally agreed to talk to her Elizabeth outsmarts the dragon by questioning if he is the smartest and fiercest dragon in the whole world, if he can burn up to ten forests with his fiery breath and can fly around the world in seconds. In order to prove himself, the dragon burnt up 150 forests and flew around the world in seconds, twice. After the dragon accomplished all these tasks, he was too tired to talk and he lay down and went straight to sleep. This gave Elizabeth the chance to rescue the prince. However, in this case, the rescue wasn't enough to result in a blissful happy ending, for Ronald was unappreciative of Elizabeth's feats. The story doesn't end with the traditional, "they married and lived happily ever after", but rather, "they didn't get married after all."

In this story Elizabeth is already a princess; she does not need to rely on the marriage into a rich family to become royalty. She is beautiful as well, which can be associated to "goodness", since children tend to associate beauty with good characters, and ugliness to evil characters. Also, because of her beauty she is already engaged to a prince. In the first picture we can see Elizabeth's love for Ronald, and Ronald's stuck up ways. The dragon is the evil doer, but rather than kidnap the woman/princess and allow the opportunity for the prince to receive her as in traditional fairy tales, we see the prince/man as the helpless passive victim who is unable to free himself from the fierce, forceful dragon. Elizabeth's protective armour to fight against the powerful dragon is nothing but a paper bag, barely covering her body. Nonetheless, she is victorious and proves that knights in shining armour can also be

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Yeoman. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999), p. 439.

female. As a result children can finally begin saying that "It doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman, you can still be a knight in shining armour. All you have to do is get some armour and put it on."¹²⁷

The dragon leaves a trail of burnt forests and horses' bones, which lead Elizabeth to the dragon. This is very reminiscent of the trail of bread left by Hansel and Gretel in the forest and the legendary quintessential path to finding our own way – our destiny. Elizabeth does not make a usual grand entrance to rescue the dragon, but rather knocks politely on the door like the well-mannered princess that she truly is. The dragon opens the door and tells Elizabeth that he loves to eat princesses but he's already eaten a whole castle, and tells her to return the next day. Elizabeth ignores the dragon's requests and decides to outsmart him. Through this we can see that besides beauty/wealth and pretty clothes the princess also possesses intelligence, something some princesses in traditional fairy tales lack. The dragon is ignorant of Elizabeth's tricks, seeing only ability to prove his self-worth and power, and eventually wears himself out to sleep. By doing so, Elizabeth is given the chance to complete her mission and rescue the prince; this is contrary to the traditional "prince rescues the princess" theme. At the end of the story, there are no allusions to the happily ever after. Rather, Elizabeth sees through Ronald's shallowness when he tells her to only come back when she looks like a real princess. Ronald is not interested in Elizabeth's bravery or intelligence but merely in her looks. He says, "Elizabeth, you are a mess! You smell like ashes, your hair is all tangled and you are wearing a dirty old paper bag. Come back when you are dressed like a real princess." Elizabeth does not fit into the standards of archetypical princess beauty, and to Ronald that is the most important thing. The reference to ashes is also an echo to the renowned Cinderella tale, the heroine who sat by the hearth until the prince rescued her from her imprisonment, removed the soot from her face and gave her beautiful clothes and a lifetime of riches. Fortunately, and unlike the passive princess in the contemporary Cinderella story, Elizabeth knows that if he cannot accept her without the beautiful clothes – for the way she really is, she is better off without him. Elizabeth is an exemplary model of the liberated woman, the outspoken female who insists on making her own decisions – choosing her own ending. She tells Ronald "your clothes are really pretty and your hair is very neat. You look like a real prince, but you are a bum." This is not just a defensive outcry from our heroine but also another overt message on the deception of

¹²⁷ Quoted by Josh, a student included in Elizabeth Yeoman's study. Yeoman, Elizabeth. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999): p. 435.

physical appearances, and that things are not always what they appear to be, and that even handsome prince charming may not be so charming after all, but as Elizabeth blatantly puts it rather a bum. Through Ronald's actions we see how he puts beauty above intelligence and courage, and refuses to be with Elizabeth even though she's just rescued him and proven her self-worth. In the end, it is Elizabeth who shows her true value and character by telling Ronald that he's a bum. Elizabeth rejects Ronald, and the story ends with a happily ever after but without marriage and Elizabeth being alone. This story eliminates, any *Cinderella Complex*¹²⁸ or *Cinderella Syndrome*¹²⁹ that entails "the connection between the features of fairy tale, where girls wait for godmothers and princes to come to their rescue, and women's fear of independence in their adult lives."¹³⁰ The final image shows Elizabeth running off into the sunset, but unlike her fairy tale heroine predecessors there is no one running by her side. Elizabeth does not languish in solitude, she rejoices in it. She is alone, but happy. Ultimately, this story shows how it's possible for women to survive without a man in their life, destroys the preconceived patriarchal notions and gives a hint of optimism and the possibility for a new ending to an old archaic tale.

¹²⁸ Colette Dowling. *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. New York: Summit Books, 1982.

¹²⁹ Lee Ezell. *The Cinderella Syndrome: Discovering God's Plan When Your Dreams Don't Come True*. London: Harvest House Publishers, 1985.

¹³⁰ Ella Westland. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom." *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993), p. 237.

Anne Sexton's *Cinderella*

Sexton's poem, incorporating almost in its entirety the Grimm Brother's version of the Cinderella story, does not quite offer a contemporary retelling of the Cinderella plot, but sarcastically criticizes this story, fairy tale happy endings, and the characters that reside in these enchanted tales of make-believe. Sexton's attraction toward fairy tales, especially those of Andersen and Grimm, which were read to her as a child by her beloved Nana, gave origin to *Transformations*, a collection of reconstructed fairy tales where she questions the roles of men and women in traditional fairy stories, and urges her readers to rethink their positions in contemporary society. As she once told her daughter Linda, "the fairy tales had a lot to say about human behaviour, if you looked at them with a twisted mind."¹³¹ Not only did Sexton look at these bedtime stories in a new-fangled light, through her rewritings she urges readers to wake up and just forget their deceitful fabrications. As she explained, "I take the fairy tale and transform it into a poem of my own, following the story line, exceeding the story line and adding my own pizzazz. They are very wry and cruel and sadistic and funny."¹³² Anne Sexton was not just another rewriter of fairy tales, but actually *transformed* her own life and that of many other women through the messages conveyed throughout her poetry. Most women can easily relate and place themselves in her poems while reading, for her poetry seems to depict many Anne Sextons: "the 1950s housewife; the abused child who became an abusive mother; the seductress; the suicide who carried 'kill-me pills' in her handbag the way other women carry lipstick; and the poet who transmuted confession into lasting art."¹³³ Sexton used writing poetry as a form of escapism from her miserable life, and uses a very clear sardonic tone throughout her writing to promote that life is no fairy tale, and that sadly and in her case, it isn't always possible to have a happy ending. Through her writing she aspired to help others and in that heal herself, for she believed "the only way that an individual's pain gained meaning was through its communication to others."¹³⁴ Maxine Kumin, who wrote a number of children's books with Sexton, states that "Anne delineated the problematic position of women – the neurotic reality of the time – though she was not able to cope in her own life with the personal trouble it created."¹³⁵ In this collection

¹³¹ Diane Middlebrook. *Anne Sexton – A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, p. 336.

¹³² Anne Sexton in: Diane Middlebrook. *Anne Sexton – A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, p. 336-337.

¹³³ Diane Middlebrook. *Anne Sexton – A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. (back cover)

¹³⁴ Diane Middlebrook. *Anne Sexton – A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, p. xxiii.

¹³⁵ Linda Gray Sexton and Loring Conant Jr. *Anne Sexton – The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981, p. xxxiv.

she "focuses on women cast in a variety of fictive roles: the dutiful princess daughter, the wicked witch, the stepmother"¹³⁶ and *transforms* their conventional happy endings into far more realistic revelations. Nevertheless, the archetypal fairy tale elements still persist and "we see the same family constellations in a fairy-tale setting, ranging from the Oedipal explorations of "The Frog Prince" to the stage-set adultery of "The Little Peasant."¹³⁷ However, besides the traditional fairy tale elements, many of Sexton's poems also blend fairy tale prototypes with present day ones, which make it possible to discard old stereotypes and misconceptions, by seeing the root of their evil. The opening line in her *Cinderella*, "you always read about it..." expresses the vast references to these familiar plots, and how the rags to riches story is known by everyone because it has been around for ages, read so many times, and heard everywhere: "From toiles to riches. That story." Her short and repetitive use of the line "that story" throughout the various stanzas, bears undertones of monotony, and reflects how Sexton has become rather bored of the same old story, the predictable happy endings with the triumph of the shallow heroes and heroines, who do nothing to really get what they want, but rather earn their happy ending due to pure luck and good fortune. This is the core of fairy tales, and without all the sugar and spice blended into the mixture, Sexton's poetry allows us to have an in-depth look at these hollow tales, and see their characters for who they really are, and not what they are made out to be. The message that Sexton transmits in the line "Cinderella went to the tree at the grave, and cried forth like a gospel singer: Mama! Mama! My turtledove, send me to the prince's ball!" is that Cinderella was a whiner and she went to the ball, not out of strenuous effort or hard work, but merely by crying and begging. Kind of difficult to admire a heroine who is successful and triumphant due to a little tear shed. And, exactly what did she really do to win the prince's love, but show up and look pretty? As the poem clearly states, this was not just a ball, "It was a marriage market. The prince was looking for a wife." It's not like they nonchalantly ran into each other and fell in love; he was already looking for a wife. So Cinderella happened to be the one. But who's to say she was actually *the one*, and not just a random guest who happened to look more beautiful than the rest because of some double-winged assistant. As for the dove, this was not your average bird of a feather. Sexton writes that it was "rather a large package for a simple bird", implying that such a job probably

¹³⁶ Linda Gray Sexton and Loring Conant Jr. *Anne Sexton – The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981, p. xxviii.

¹³⁷ Linda Gray Sexton and Loring Conant Jr. *Anne Sexton – The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981, p. xxviii.

had the hand of supernatural forces, for a simple bird could not have managed such a task on his own. This miraculous transformation is nothing but the work of Cinderella's deceased mother, who on her deathbed tells Cinderella to be good and devout and that "she will smile down from heaven in the seam of a cloud." The white dove and free wanderer of the skies and the clouds, has given Cinderella what the mother wanted to have given her daughter but did not have sufficient time on earth to do so, so she is sending it down. As the poem recounts "whenever she wished for anything the bird would drop it like an egg upon the ground." The egg is yet another hint to the real mother, and bears sexual connotations to birth and reproduction by the egg and the sperm. After leaving the ball, she hides from the prince by disappearing into the pigeon house. Again the repeated association to birds may be interpreted as Cinderella's return to the womb, the one place where she truly was safe. Also, returning to the womb, signals rebirth, and how Cinderella is soon to be reborn; start a new cycle by finally fulfilling her role as a wife and leaving childhood behind. This transformation is like being reborn again, and starting a new life in completely new surroundings. These events which we are told "repeated themselves for three days", may represent the pregnancy cycle, and the nine months, or three distinct trimestral phases.

Unlike the traditional fairy tale version, this is definitely not a story about love and romance, but actually epitomizes the whole courting process as a "market" where things are bargained, where people are looking for specific things on their shopping lists, and trades are made. This is how Sexton views modern day marriages where a trade is made to fulfil personal needs, not because there is love but because there is interest or an ulterior motive. Cinderella is not allowed to go to the ball because as the stepmother says "you have no clothes and cannot dance", meaning she really has nothing to offer, nothing to bargain with. Also, without all the fancy clothes, she will just be herself, and what successful relationship will that be if one is loved for who they are on the inside and not for their physical appearance? Love is blind, but then again the prince never really was in love with Cinderella, so how can this possibly be a story about love? He refers to Cinderella as "his strange dancing girl for keeps"; "strange" is hardly the adjective one would use to describe his or her other half and "dancing girl" almost also screams strippers and prostitutes – a highly unsuitable match for a prince. Then again what kind of prince is he, if only after two attempts at trying to find his *sole* mate he claims, "he began to feel like a shoe salesman"?

Whatever happened to the gallant hero who is supposed to search high and low, confront monsters and dragons all in the name of true love for his princess?

As for their so-called happy ending, how could it possibly have been the perfect marriage if they lived "like two dolls in a museum case"? Dolls are not supposed to be locked up in a museum, they are supposed to be played with, or they do not serve their purpose nor are they able to provide any sort of happiness. The purpose of marriage is to do just that, unite two people so that they will be happier together than apart. This happiness is officialized by living together, by spending time together, even if that includes mundane tasks like doing housework or having children, the simple things in life that bring the greatest joy. We are told however, that Cinderella and the prince were "never bothered by diapers or dust, never arguing over the timing of an egg, never telling the same story twice, never getting a middle aged spread." Cinderella and the prince got married and supposedly lived happily ever, but what Sexton is trying to say is that they actually stopped living. What's so good about living with Prince Charming if you live in a glass house, and have to pretend to be happy ever after, when you're not? They became museum like figures, with "darling smiles pasted on for eternity." The fairy tale romance, the dream-like couple, the one that everyone envies, but what is there really to envy? They don't communicate, they don't laugh, cry or have children, and if this is "happily ever after" then maybe they really should rewrite the endings. Sexton compares the "happy" couple to "regular Bobbsey twins", ageless/timeless American heroes, who will never age and always remain beautiful, timeless. Again Sexton is using irony for the referral to Bobbsey twins, which "has become a slang abbreviation for earnest wholesomeness and do-gooder duos."¹³⁸ This is the example you should follow echoes Sexton ironically, this is the story you should imitate. However, the couple's "plastered smiles" indicate deception; that they have to smile for the sake of the happy ending, but that it is a mask. Their marriage is a facade, they don't work, they don't play, they don't argue. They are the ideal couple of epitomized beauty and happiness but their marriage isn't real, they're not in love. This is a pretty clear analogy to some of the existing marriages out there today, and couples who are not in love but pretend to be in order to attain some sort of position or status, or simply to fit in with a society that still promotes and glorifies marriage and marginalizes those who don't follow the crowd. Though society has slowly made some progress since this poem was written in 1971, words like spinster,

¹³⁸ Carol Brennan. "The Bobbsey Twins". *St. James Encyclopedia of Pop Culture*. January 2002. [Find Articles.com](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_q1epc/is_tov/ai_2419100152). January 10th 2007 <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_q1epc/is_tov/ai_2419100152>

old maid, and prude are still thrown upon single women today, who choose to live life on their own and forfeit a matrimonial union in turn for a life of freedom and sovereignty, but living nonetheless. Through this poem like in so many other of her works, Sexton is speaking on behalf of those single women, and defending their right to choose the path to their own happiness, not the replicated one. According to Kumin, "women poets in particular owe a debt to Anne Sexton, who broke new ground, shattered taboos, and endured a barrage of attacks along the way because of the flamboyance of her subject matter... she wrote openly about menstruation, abortion, masturbation, incest, adultery, and drug addiction..."¹³⁹ Although she was highly criticized for doing so, she may have contributed to the way many people interpret fairy tales and deal with fixed notions of female beauty, providing readers with new possibilities and mindsets.

She made the experience of being a woman a central issue in her poetry, and though she endured criticism for bringing subjects such as menstruation, abortion, and drug addiction into her work, her skill as a poet transcended the controversy over her subject matter.¹⁴⁰

By giving contemporary examples, and perhaps even using experiences from her own life she is not only evaluating contemporary society but underlining how this tale continues to be more alive today than ever.

The petulance and resentment in Sexton's poem is definitely a comment on the dishonesty of fairy tales, and how not all dreams have happy endings, not all people are meant to live in eternal bliss, life is not fair, and she knows this extremely well, because she lived it. She was lied to by these tales, and underwent experiences and traumas that were anything but pages taken out of a fairy tale novel. She was a victim, who may at one time have believed in the things she read in those conniving stories, that give us the very first insight to the real world, that supposedly teach us how to be exemplary citizens or subconsciously help us deal with psychological traumas. But the stories betrayed Sexton, she did not make her entrance into the castle, her ending was far from happy, and her alcoholism and mental illness ultimately led to her suicide, and she hardly lived her "ever after." Unfortunately, she was not like the "plumber...who Wins the Irish Sweepstakes", or the nursemaid, "who captures the oldest son's heart",

¹³⁹ Linda Gray Sexton and Loring Conant Jr. *Anne Sexton – The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981, p. xxxiv.

¹⁴⁰ "Biography of Anne Sexton". *American Poems*. 21 December 2006
<<http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/annesexton/>>

or even the milkman who goes “from homogenized to martinis at lunch” who got lucky. Most ordinary people don’t, but then there are those who are blessed, who are given a second chance at a better life, sometimes not even because they earned it, but simply because they were in the right place at the right time like the “charwoman who is on the bus when it cracks up and collects enough from the insurance”, or they were just plain lucky. Symbolic references to luck constantly found throughout the poem like, “hearts like blackjacks” (reminiscent of casinos and gambling), the white dove (a renowned symbol of hope of good fortune), the number three (commonly referred to as “lucky number three”), and the Irish Sweepstakes (a long-distance gambling event) convey the idea that life is a big wheel of fortune, and while some are fortunate, others aren’t, and that’s the way life is. We can try our luck, and gamble with opportunities, but in the long run, we don’t really know how it’s going to turn out. Win or lose, just like in the casino.

Another underlying significance concealed in this poem may be the philosophy of the American Dream. This is implied with the enclosure of classical American icons, not just in this poem but also in many of her other poems in this collection. According to Kumin, her “poems are replete with anachronisms of pop culture: the Queen in ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ is as persistent as a Jehovah’s witness; Snow White opened her eyes as wide as Orphan Annie; and Cinderella in her sooty rags looks like Al Jolson.”¹⁴¹ But, besides the inclusion of this American jazz singer and actor, Cinderella also makes reference to the Bobbsey Twins – heroes of American children’s literature, and Bonwit Teller – a high-class department store in New York. In truth, the American Dream actually bears some resemblance to the Cinderella story – it’s a rags to riches cycle. Coming from another place, starting out poor but making it big, through a little struggle and hard work, but in the end being stuck in a “glass-case”, locked away from your native country, losing your own culture and identity and being added as just another ingredient to the big tossed salad. What good is happiness and success if you have to forfeit who you are, sell the devil your soul, or cut off your own body parts to fit in with society. This was another slightly different twist that Sexton gave *this story*. This time it wasn’t the mother who mutilated her daughters’ feet, they themselves cut off their own features to fit into the shoe. To win the prince’s love they had to sacrifice a part of who they were, a piece that belonged to them and that they voluntarily chopped off in order to belong to someone else, and to a different social class. The sisters tried to trick the prince by pretending to be someone they were not, ultimately

¹⁴¹ Linda Gray Sexton and Loring Conant Jr. *Anne Sexton – The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981, p. xxviii.

giving up their own self-respect, and ending up with nothing when the truth came out. If this is the price of happiness, then it really is time for a reassessment.

Contemporary retellings look at universal themes through a very high-focused lens, in comparison to the traditional fairy tale stories. For once we are finally shown the whole picture, not just a far-away glimpse or reflection into the kingdom of ever after. These are the stories that children should be reading; these are what allow the possibility for happiness. The understanding that we have the ability to choose, that there is no such thing as perfection, that hard work goes a long way, that prince charming may not be so charming after all but can still love us, and that men and women have an equal shot at happy endings and do not need to give up their identity to achieve it. As Yeoman affirms, "far from being just entertaining and innocuous trivia, these stories can be seen as part of a changing narrative theme where such resolutions are possible, where women do defend themselves and live interesting lives without marrying princes."¹⁴² These are the stories that should proliferate and invade the nurseries, night tables and classrooms of children everywhere, not "*those stories*". As Sexton monotonously and ironically resonates, "those stories" are old and outdated. We are sick of them. It is time to throw out the blueprints and create new foundations. New stories, new voices.

¹⁴² Elizabeth Yeoman. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999), p. 433.

Angela Carter's *Ashputtle* or *The Mother's Ghost*

Another renowned writer who has also given voice to the *Cinderella* story is Angela Carter, in her version, "Ashputtle or The Mother's Ghost". Like Sexton, Carter also invites readers to question the outdated tale by satirically rewriting this story in three versions entitled: *The Mutilated Girls*, *The Burned Child*, and *Travelling Clothes*. By providing her readers with three versions of the same story she is accounting for the many Cinderella versions that exist worldwide and implying that there is not in fact one true version. As Alison Lee explains, "Carter's three versions here add to the store of already-told tales and so draw the reader's attention to the impossibility of fixing on a single origin."¹⁴³ The worldwide spread and popularity of the Cinderella tale therefore instigated many versions and even more interpretations, again making it difficult to pinpoint its exact origin. However, Angela Carter's version does more than acknowledge the diverse spectrum and pervasive origins of the tale, it chiefly draws the readers' attention to the misogynistic and unfair representations reinforced by this beloved story and "plays in an analogously serious way with images, themes, and the audience's construction of 'Cinderella' tales."¹⁴⁴ In all three of Carter's stories a theme that seems to be prominent is the lingering presence of Cinderella's dead mother, and how she continues to watch out for her daughter even after her death. Despite all the hardships that Cinderella encounters before her entrance into the castle, it is the omnipresent mother and the unconditional love that she has for her daughter that allows her to thrive, overcome her obstacles and eventually be rewarded by marrying a prince. Unlike the traditional Cinderella tales, however, which seem to glorify marriage, the happy ending, and motherly love, in all three of Carter's versions these are the very things that are condemned. Carter desecrates marriage and compares this destined female finale to another inevitable ending which is death, in this case, the symbolic death of Cinderella's freedom and her total surrender to the prince: "her foot fits the shoe like a corpse fits the coffin! 'See how well I look after you, my darling!'"¹⁴⁵ By helping her daughter win the prince's hand in marriage, she is actually guiding her own daughter by the hand to death. "The turtle dove was mad for that, for her daughter to marry the prince. You might have thought her own experience of marriage

¹⁴³ Alison Lee. *Angela Carter*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997, p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ Cristina Bacchilega *Postmodern Fairy Tales – Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1997, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 116.

might have taught her to be wary, but no, needs must, what else is a girl to do?"¹⁴⁶ Carter is implying that even though the mother's marriage did not bring her the expected happiness, she still wants to subject her daughter to this unhappiness, as it is a woman's only option... "what else is a girl to do?" Marriage will not kill Cinderella but will. In addition, the title of the first version, "Mutilated Girls" also bears some significance toward predetermined roles for women, and the battles they must confront to receive male attention and be "fit" to marry. Carter refers to the traditional Cinderella tale as "a story about cutting bits off women, so that they will fit in, some sort of circumcision-like ritual chop"¹⁴⁷, and Carter's mutilated girls are the women that undergo beauty enhancing procedures, like plastic surgery in order to be selected by a prince at a ball. In her first version, Carter actually refers to the ball as "a curious fair"¹⁴⁸, similar to Sexton's "marriage market", where "all the resident virgins went to dance in front of the king's son so that he could pick out the girl he wanted to marry." This again is calumnious to women and warrants beauty as an indispensable prerequisite in the selection of a marriage partner. Alongside beauty, another feature essential in mate selection is virginity, this is represented by the glass slipper and again, separating the ones who *fit in* from those who don't.

While men could give their shoes to many women for trying, and "nothing in any of the many texts of this tale suggests the prince washed the shoe out between the fittings"¹⁴⁹, women were expected to remain pure and try on only one shoe. Recurrently, the shoe is symbolic of the vagina, and "if she does not plunge without revulsion into this open wound, she won't be fit to marry."¹⁵⁰ This process of selection not only ensures that men will marry true virgins but is once more responsible for generating female separation and humiliation. As Carter relates, "for the story is not complete without the ritual humiliation of the other woman and the mutilation of her daughters. The search for the foot that fits the slipper is essential to the enactment of this ritual humiliation."¹⁵¹ Carter insinuates, however, that this humiliation is brought upon by another woman, in this case, the mother who goes so far as to mutilate her own daughters to win the prince, "The other woman wants that young man desperately. She would do anything to catch him. Not losing a daughter, but gaining a

¹⁴⁶ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 114.

¹⁴⁹ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 116.

¹⁵⁰ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 116.

¹⁵¹ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 115.

son. She wants a son so badly she is prepared to cripple her daughters."¹⁵² This may be the older women's attempt to recapture her youth and lost beauty by reclaiming it through her daughters. It also clearly illustrates female separation and how women distance themselves from one another through continuous competition in order to be the object of male desire. This story alerts women of the price they must pay to enter this "curious fair", and how it is capable of destroying even the purest relationships, including that of mother and daughter. While the true mother does everything to protect Cinderella and ensure her well-being even after her death, the stepmother would sell her daughter's *soles* to recapture her beauty and come out victoriously. Ashputtle "feels both awe and fear at the phenomenon of mother love. Mother love, which winds about these daughters like a shroud."¹⁵³ In neither of Carter's versions is motherly love a purely laudable feature but rather the culprit liable for dictating Cinderella's fate.. This again, can be a social comment on marriages and how women marry to fit in with society, to please their parents or follow in their footsteps. The last of Carter's trilogy, "Travelling Clothes", Ashputtle is instructed by her dead mother to travel along her path, wear her clothes, "step into my coffin"¹⁵⁴. Her mother wants to warrant her daughter's happiness before she can finally rest in peace, believing that this will be accomplished through marriage, and all the things it can provide, "he gave her house and money. She did all right."¹⁵⁵ This attitude epitomizes marriage as being a mere provider of superficial needs and makes no reference to the true point of marriage, which is to unite and make things "all right" through love. By tracing her daughter's path, and ensuring she will marry, the mother feels she has fulfilled her maternal role, "now I can go to sleep, said the ghost of the mother. Now everything is all right."¹⁵⁶ Ultimately this is what fairy tales do, they predetermine gender roles, and guide men and women in the direction society wants them to. As Cristina Bacchilega explains, it "enacts the magic trick of journeying into a dead fiction (death itself, motherhood, women's subjectivity, generosity in small things, and most of all the fairy tale) to know it anew, rereading its worn maps and tracing one's own path."¹⁵⁷ Although traditional fairy tales were created exactly for the purpose of mapping out

¹⁵² Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 115.

¹⁵³ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 115.

¹⁵⁴ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 119.

¹⁵⁵ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 119.

¹⁵⁶ Angela Carter. *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. London: Vintage, 1994, p. 119.

¹⁵⁷ Cristina Bacchilega *Postmodern Fairy Tales – Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1997, p. 143.

tracks according to society's norms, contemporary revisionings should seek to deconstruct the old maps, and provide "a practical, ironic, and critical commentary upon the events."¹⁵⁸ Rather than trace the socially accepted path, these retellings should guide women in a new direction, based on personal desire and ambition and not on imposed or predetermined routes, so that women can finally learn to read the maps in order to find their own way.

¹⁵⁸ Alison Lee. *Angela Carter*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997, p. 15.

Practical Study

Once upon a time in the protected world of childhood nurseries and cribs, children are lulled with fascinating tales of make-believe, transporting them into a world where happiness seems to be the only acceptable state, not recognizing anything other than this blissful reality. Until one day, the veil over the crib is slowly lifted, and gradually they begin to witness and recognize incidents that not only hurt them, but push them deeper and make them want to crawl back to the world where all their dreams came true and happiness was just a shut eye away. The premature exposure of fairy tales to children creates an illusion of happily ever after, which they carry with them and incessantly look for throughout the rest of their lives. This exposure is usually carried out by the parental figures, through stories, books and other media, and by the time children enter school most already have a very distorted perception of what they consider happiness into thereafter. The Cinderella tale, a well-known and popular fairy story among children teaches them more about life than just princesses and shoes, but is enriched with implicit and explicit messages and paths to happiness, that will lead them to set off on a very elongated and strenuous journey; and what they stumble upon at the end may not be exactly what they sought to find. However, the purpose of this practical component was not meant to observe the aftermaths or the long-term effects fairy tales have on children but rather, their origins, so as to alert parents and childhood educators of the utmost importance of filtering and censoring what their children are subjected to in early years. The role of the teacher and her initiative to introduce contemporary retellings of the old tales may also be determinant in constructing childhood views. As Yeoman explains, "the teacher, through providing desirable alternatives and critical reading activities, may play a key role in developing children's intertextual knowledge and enhancing their ability to critique limiting stories and to understand and create new ones."¹⁵⁹

By analysing and questioning children about fairy tale worlds in the classroom, a familiar learning environment, where they may feel more at ease to disclose personal beliefs amongst each other, it was possible to observe how they react to these stories and the characters that live in these enthralling worlds. The study consisted of two groups. The first group integrated 65 pre-school children aged three to five years old. The second group was comprised of 50 elementary students, from the ages of eight to

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth Yeoman. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999), p. 438.

twelve. The entire study was based in Portugal and included children from four different early education institutions in the Aveiro and Coimbra region.

Results – Group I

Due to the children's young ages and reading and writing barriers, the first group was read a traditional version of Cinderella and *The Paper Bag Princess* – a modern adaptation of this tale. Although the response to both tales was positive, it is beneficial to separate and define both reactions. While the overall initial enthusiasm to *Cinderella* was greater, due to the fact that it is a widely recognized story, the attention span and interaction throughout the telling of the story was significantly higher in the reading of *The Paper Bag Princess*, since most children seemed intrigued by an unfamiliar story and the non-traditional roles, behaviours and dress apparel of Prince Ronald and Princess Elizabeth. Children continuously asked questions throughout the story, as this was a new tale for them. Also when asked which one they favoured, 55% of girls and 63% of boys showed preference for *The Paper Bag Princess*. This slight difference between girls' and boys' attitudes toward this contemporary version is surprising in comparison to the findings of Ella Westland's study on children's response to gender roles in fairy tales. She concluded that:

Girls favoured 'upside down' fairy tales with independent heroines while boys preferred more traditional male heroes. She argues that the girls' preferences were due to their familiarity with 'alternative gender images' and suggests that the reason for the difference between boys and girls was due to the need to identify with a hero/heroine of the same sex. Thus, the girls tended to identify with the independent heroines, but the boys did not, and nor did they align themselves with the weak and silly princes typical of this genre.¹⁶⁰

The contrast between these two studies may be the result of three leading factors: age, modern society and culture. Firstly, the age groups in this study were slightly lower than that of Westland's, which may in fact influence children's perception of the self and the world they live in. Younger girls are still playing dress-up in their preschool years and place more value on outer beauty than self-achievement. However, nine to eleven year olds, in grades three to five are starting to prioritise things like academic success, and this cannot be accomplished solely by good looks. At this age they

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Yeoman. " 'How Does it Get into my Imagination?': elementary school children's intertextual knowledge and gendered storylines." *Gender and Education* 11, No.4 (1999), p. 430.

identify more so with independent heroines because they too are becoming more independent and acquiring new responsibilities at home and in the classroom.

As for the second factor, since this study was carried out in 1993, society has undergone some changes over the last 14 years, especially in relation to male behaviour. Nowadays men are not only more sensitive, understanding, helpful in household duties, and more preoccupied with their appearance, but they are eager to please women in more ways than dragon slaying. They have traded the beer bottles for the baby formula, the office desk for the kitchen stove, and now rely on women to come and rescue and fight for them. And the best part is that they're not ashamed to admit it, so the image of the 'silly prince' no longer bothers them, because they know it will not depreciate their personal worth, but rather increase it. Finally, the third factor may also have had a significant influence on the findings of these studies, as culture plays a key role in interpreting morals and values transmitted in stories, and "historical work on fairy tale has shown how far its development depends on the dominant value system of the culture that appropriates it."¹⁶¹ Westland's study took place in Cornwall, England whereas this study took place in Portugal, two very culturally diverse nations with unique value systems, altering reactions and attitudes to the same story.

Despite the difference between these two studies, both demonstrated how children positively react to contemporary versions of fairy tales, and that the replacement of old stories with new ones would not in any way decrease childhood attention or hinder their learning process, as observed in this analysis. What children have been absorbing from the traditional tales until now are outdated morals and values, presenting them with new ones while they are growing up and forming their own personalities may just result in far more just and non-bias citizens. This is primarily done through school and education, which was also why it was beneficial to analyze children in their own learning environment. The same questions were asked to children in four different kindergarten classrooms. While this first group counted with children of different ages, backgrounds and social classes, their response to these questions was noticeably alike. Children shared an analogous fascination toward fairy tales, and were very keen to talk about and share their favourite stories.

¹⁶¹ Ella Westland. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom." *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993), p. 237.

The subsequent graph indicates their preferences.

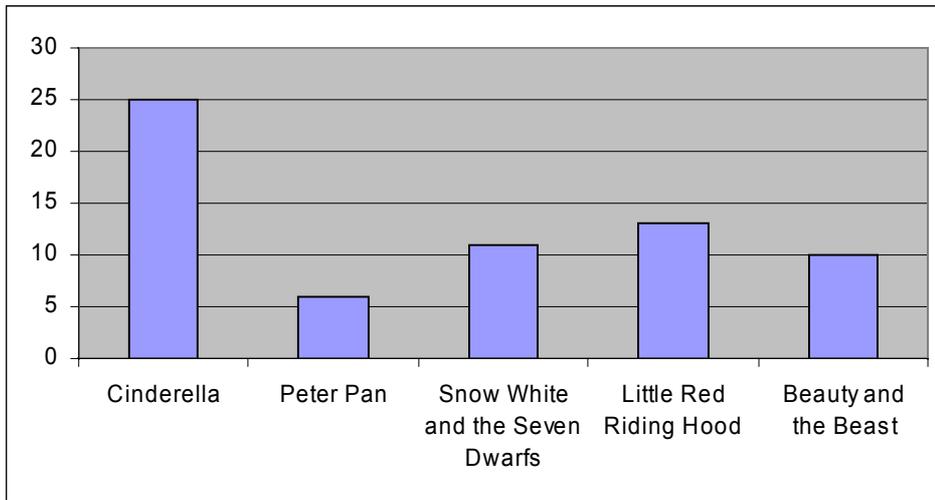


Figure 1.0 – Favourite Fairy Tales Among Pre-school Children

Non-surprisingly Cinderella was a common favourite among these children who appointed the magical and astounding elements of this renowned tale as being the most captivating. Children in this age group were both spellbound and startled by the protagonists and antagonists who surrounded their childhood dwellings. As expected, 86% of the children involved associated goodness with the beautiful characters and evil with the ugly ones. Beauty however, was not the only depiction mentioned; other adjectives used to describe the principal Cinderella fairy tale characters were identified as follows:

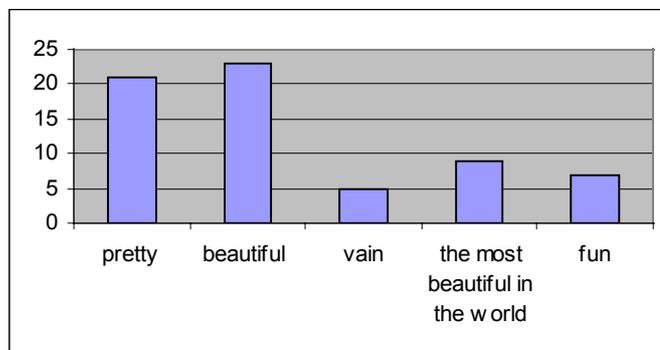


Figure 1.1 – Character Description of Cinderella

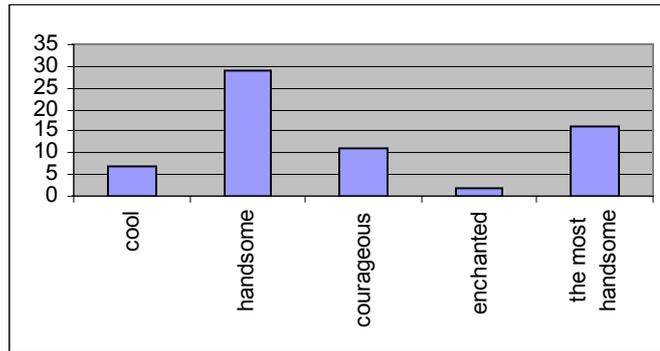


Figure 1.2 – Character Description of the Prince

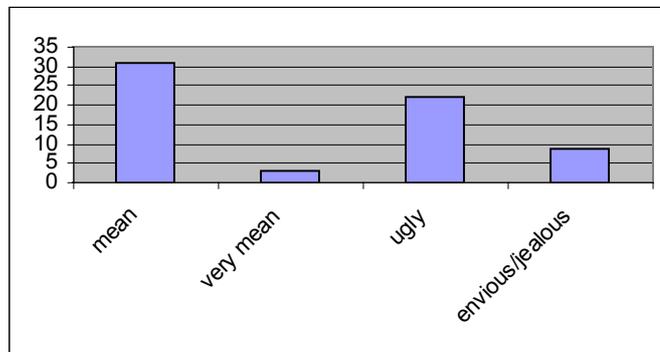


Figure 1.3 – Character Description of the Step-sisters

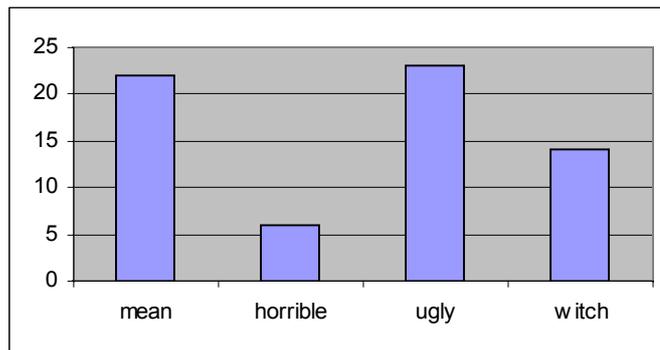


Figure 1.4 – Character Description of the Step-mother

All four character delineations fit the conventional paradigms of fairy tale heroes and villains further enforcing the conviction that the protagonists are all very beautiful and the bad characters are very misfortunate in looks. In a study carried out

by Turner-Bowker in 1996, which focused on words authors used to describe males and females in children's books (Caldecott Award winners and runners-up books between 1984-1994), "the 20 adjectives commonly used to describe female characters were different in traditionally stereotypic ways from the 20 descriptors used for males."¹⁶² Males were frequently described as big, horrible, fierce, great, terrible, furious and proud, whereas women were depicted as beautiful, frightened, worthy, sweet, weak and scared. Additionally, "the adjectives used to describe the male characters were rated as more powerful than those used for females. The adjectives used to describe the female characters, while not rated as being very potent, were rated as more positive than the adjectives used to describe males. Boys and men were also consistently described as being more active than girls and women."¹⁶³

Although the description of characters in the *Paper Bag Princess* may also parallel some of these findings, most of the adjectives in this contemporary story have suffered some harsh alterations, especially in comparison to the traditional Cinderella tale. The classic images of "beautiful" Cinderella and "the most beautiful in the world" were somewhat altered in comparison to those adjectives pertaining to the female heroine in the contemporary version.

It seems that intelligent, courageous and fun are now not only qualities pertaining to male fairy tale heroes but finally these features go hand in hand with the female protagonists too. Once a quality associated solely with male protagonists, courageous was the adjective most applied to describe contemporary heroine Princess Elizabeth by 30% of the children. Next were intelligent (22%) and fun (20%). This is an admirable example for girls just beginning to embark on their own self-discovery and shape their personalities in a world still striving for equality, and not only will it lead to more self-confident women but also eliminate many of the existing typecasts. Furthermore, the characterization of Prince Ronald will also help reduce the iniquitous belief that beauty and goodness are synonymous. Prince charming in the contemporary version of Cinderella was seen by children as anything but charming and not even his good looks fooled children into believing he was a real prince.

¹⁶² Clary A Tepper. "Gender Differences in Emotional Language in Children's Picture Books," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 1999. [Find Articles.com](http://www.findarticles.com). 17 January 2007
< http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2294/is_3-4/ai_54710016>

¹⁶³ Clary A Tepper. "Gender Differences in Emotional Language in Children's Picture Books," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 1999. [Find Articles.com](http://www.findarticles.com). 17 January 2007
< http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2294/is_3-4/ai_54710016>

The graph below is significantly different from the previous description of the typical prince in traditional Cinderella stories.

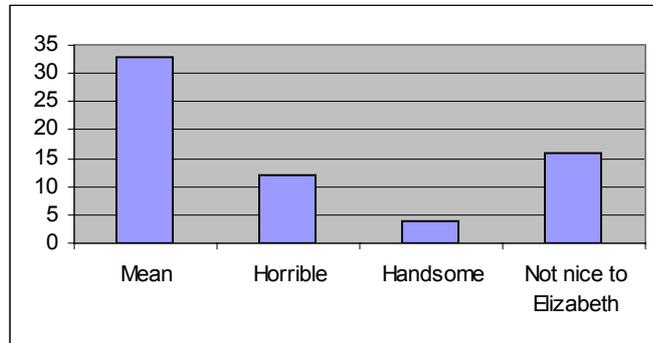


Figure 1.5 – Character Description of Prince Ronald

The fact that Ronald was disliked for his personality even though he was handsome, can teach children a lot about the importance of character over physical appearance and may result in less superficial human beings down the road. More and more, fairy tales prove to be very important educational tools and as Hansjörg Hohr revealed in his study,

The special pedagogical relevance of the fairy tale is, thus constituted by its formidable 'openness', which allows the child to carry his or her own existential questions and emotional experiences onto the playground and inspect them in symbolic action... once in the playground, the child lets go of the hand of the fairy tale and starts to travel on his or her own. ¹⁶⁴

The entrance of contemporary tales into kindergarten classrooms can indeed go a long way and allow children to start travelling alone, which may be the first step to shifting attitudes and behaviours without eliminating the component of enchantment fairy tales have to offer.

¹⁶⁴ Hansjörg Hohr. "Dynamic Aspects of Fairy Tales: Social and Emotional Competence through Fairy Tales." Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research 44, No. 1 (2000), p.100.

Results – Group II

As for the second group, and due to full possession of reading and writing capacities at these ages, they were not read *Cinderella* nor *The Paper Bag Princess*. Instead they were asked to fill out questionnaires, answering adequate questions pertinent to the understanding of the fairy tale realm and focusing mostly on *Cinderella*. Most questions were identical to those of the previous group, and were not only formulated to detect existing stereotypes, but mostly to confirm their existence. With this questionnaire I planned to show how fairy tale archetypes were alive and well among children in contemporary society. I sought out to prove how bewildering fairy stories and their messages could be for children, so as to elicit a solution to the discrepancies.

Although it is not hard to understand the spell fairy tales cast on children it is of relevance to this study to figure out what the common elements that attract them to these plots the most are.

The succeeding graph lists some common fairy tale elements and the most favoured ones among girls and boys.

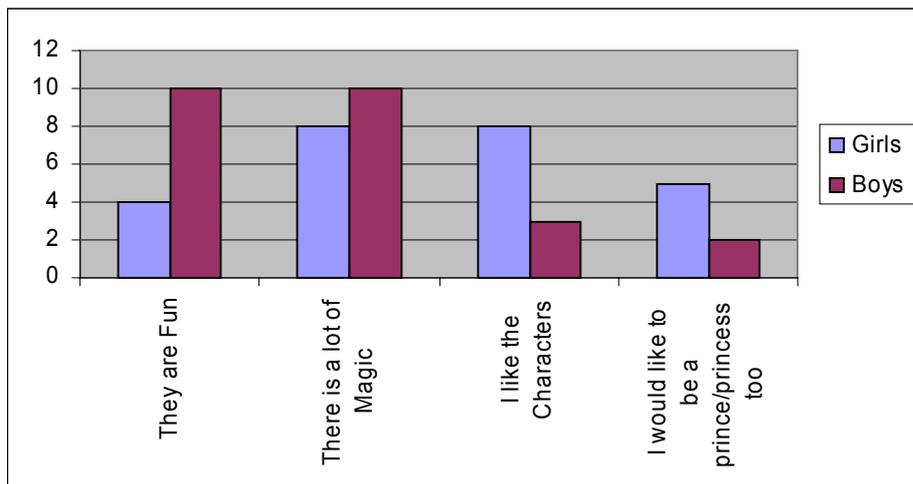


Figure 1.6 - Why Children Like Fairy Tales

It appears that girls and boys have different reasons to enjoy fairy tales. While boys seem to be more enthralled by the magic incorporated in these stories, girls simply like them because they are fun. Identification with the characters was also a common reason for girls who perhaps admire the poor servant girl whose life instantly transforms from rags to riches.

Although the Cinderella story is believed to be the most famous fairy tale in history, this study turned up slightly discrepant results; being 56% popular among girls, but only 16 % among boys. This not only shows how children use fairy tales as role models but that the role model is based on the gender of the protagonist, again someone of the same sex to whom the child can look up to. The following table shows the favouritism of Cinderella in comparison to other famous fairy tales.

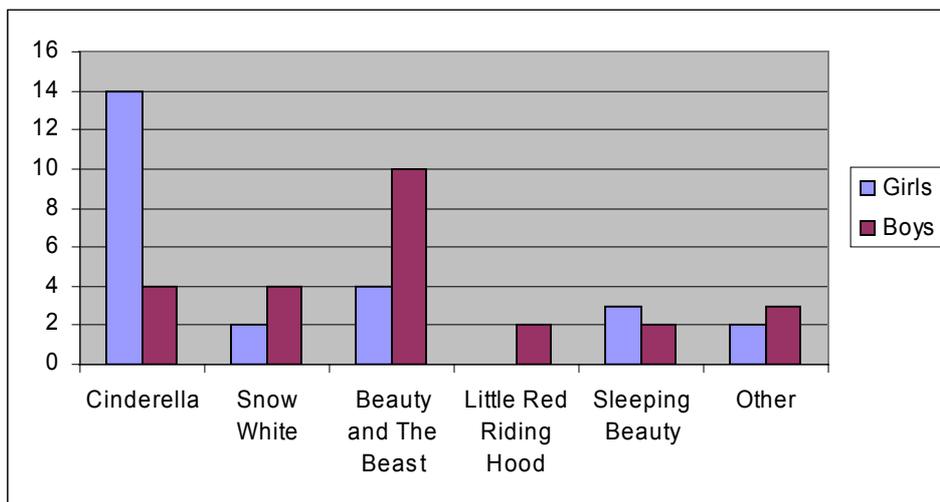


Figure 1.7 – Favourite Fairy Tale

While girls appear to admire the poor little cinder girl who made it to the castle on Prince Charming’s white horse, boys seemed to enjoy the atrocious monster who too was eventually rewarded with mesmerizing good looks and a dazzling princess to match. This may be due to male interest in superheroes and monsters and the female inclination toward beauty and fashion. As Westland found in her study, “many of the boys revelled in embellishments from other media where macho heroes, vicious enemies and bloody confrontations are staple ingredients.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Ella Westland. “Cinderella in the Classroom. Children’s Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom.” *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993),p. 242.

It may be of relevance to state that today some men love to have trophy wives and girlfriends to show off to their friends, and that many women are avid fans of clothing and shopping malls... is it necessary to ask where they might have gotten these preposterous habits?

Moreover, the roles of men and women in these tales were also of utmost interest as this is one of the instigators of many of the misleading stereotypes society has towards women. The two proceeding charts show habitual roles of men and women in the world of ever after.

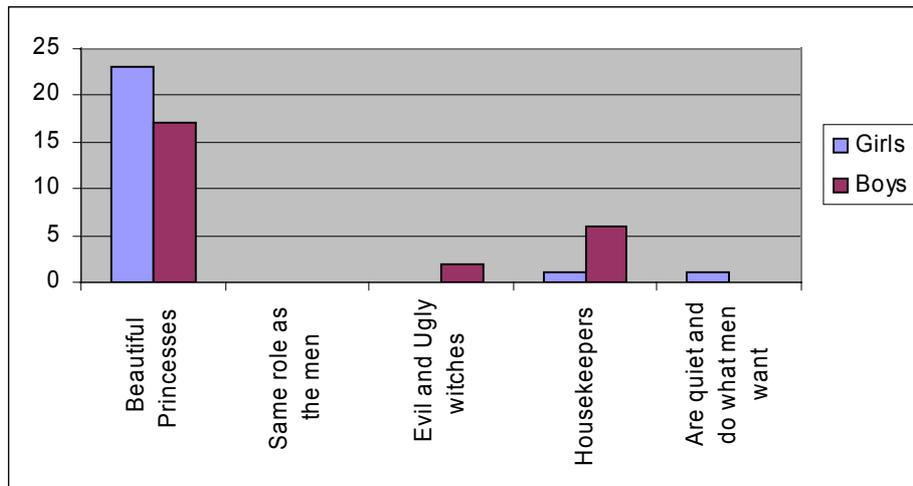


Figure 1.8 – Roles of Women in Fairy Tales

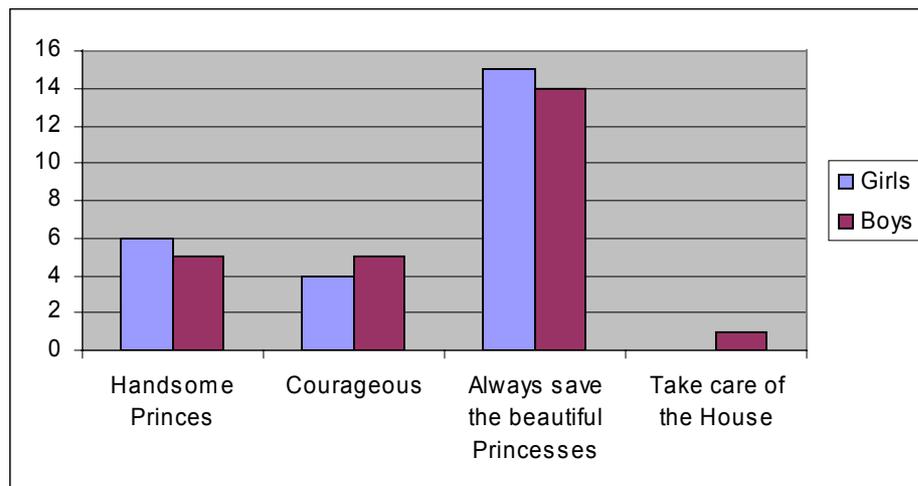


Figure 1.9 – Roles of Men in Fairy Tales

From this data it seems that the most obvious archetypal role in fairy tales is that women are the beautiful princesses and the men are the ones who save them. Surprisingly, there was little evidence of existing passive roles for women in the mindsets of girls, men being the ones who mostly attributed the duty of housekeeping as that of a woman. On the other hand however, the common belief that men are courageous and handsome still subsides, and as Lorna Duckworth claims, "The only times adult females are given more masculine traits such as self-reliance or strength is when they are depicted as bad characters such as witches."¹⁶⁶

It is not surprising then that 88% of girls and 72% of boys still associate goodness to the beautiful characters and ugliness to the evil ones. Again, this may be one of the reasons why children identify with certain characters and look up to them because of their beauty, courage or good ways. While boys and girls seem to identify the protagonist in the *Cinderella* tale as their favourite, when asked who they'd like to be like when they were older, the answers changed significantly among boys.

These changes are evident in the analysis of both the following tables.

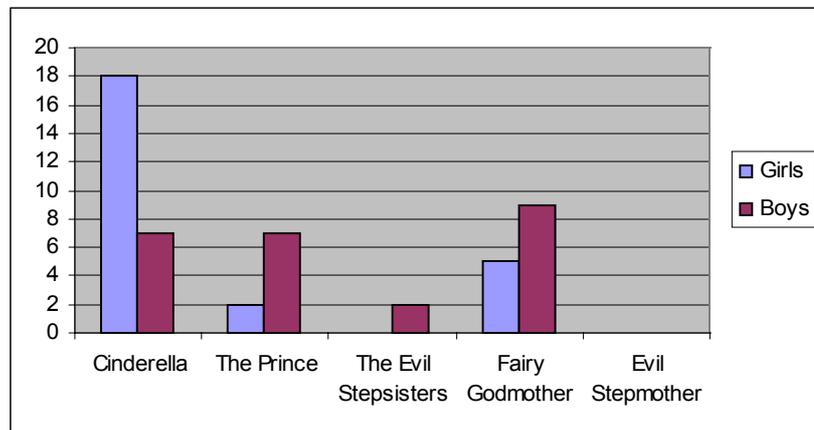


Figure 1.10 – Favourite Character in the Cinderella Fairy Tale

¹⁶⁶ Lorna Duckworth. "Children's Books Still Portraying Women Negatively," *The Independent* [London] 5 July 2001:11.

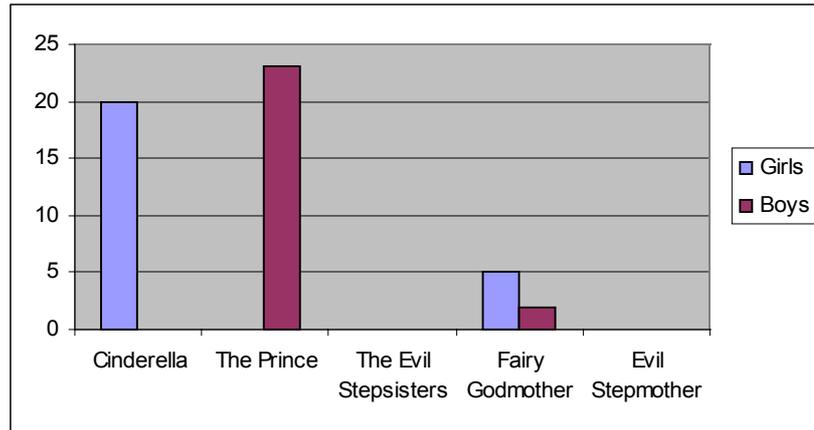


Figure 1.11 – When I’m Older I’d like to be like...

While the principles and morals are also a fundamental part of the fairy tale creation, most of the lessons children learn through these stories are counter-productive, as they are likely to lead to misconceptions and disappointments when applied to the real world.

According to children, the most widespread philosophies they learn in fairy tales are as follows.

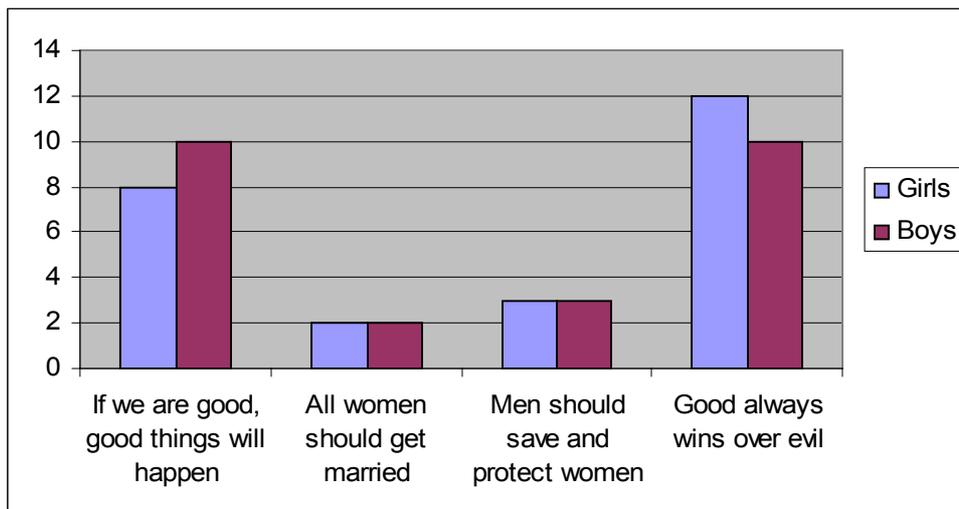


Figure 1.12 - Fairy Tale Lessons

While it is convenient or even opportune to tell children that if they are good and well-behaved their dreams will come true, the sun doesn't always shine on the horizon and everyone gets wet by a rain cloud once in awhile, no matter how good they really are. As for the triumph of good over evil, life isn't always fair and with innocent people being killed everyday because of war, poverty and crime, we can't always ensure that karma will kick in and give everyone what they deserve. Additionally and though substantially low, the numbers in the graph suggest that from fairy tales children are still learning that men are the protectors and saviours of women and that marriage is a predestined fate for women. According to the study, however, these ideas are not just coming from the books they read but probably from the movies and other media forms they are exposed to even more. When asked which Cinderella format they enjoyed the most, 92% of girls and 96% of boys prefer the movie version, and only 8% of girls and 4% of boys claim to prefer the book over the film. This shows how modern day technology has allowed for the propagation of fairy tales through mass media forms, and with the inclusion of sound, picture, and three-dimensional options, its effects can seem more realistic than an ordinary picture book any day.

Further proof of this is displayed in the following graphs that show other childhood story favourites, some of which not available in book form but a unique fabrication from the kingdom of Hollywood.

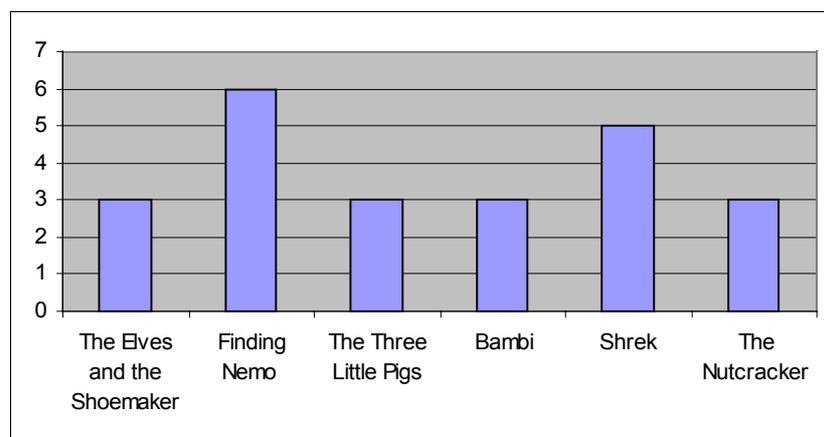


Figure 1.13 – Other Story time Favourites

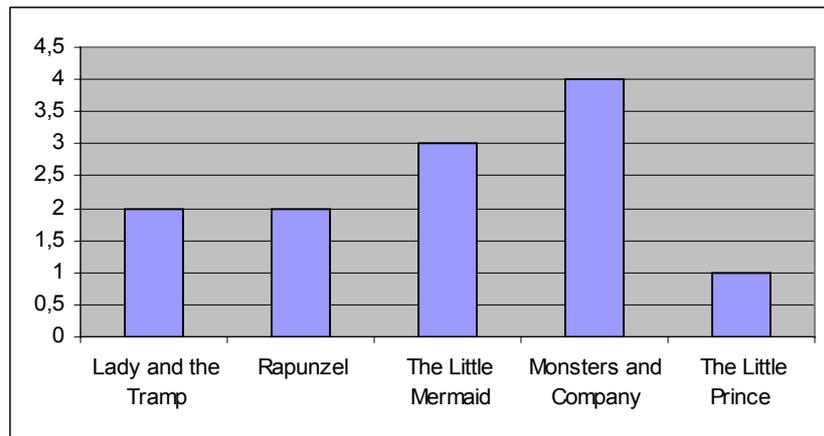


Figure 1.14 – Other Story time Favourites Continued

This practical analysis proves how fairy tales, though very much loved by children are contaminating their innocent minds with one-dimensional characters and alleged happy endings. Social agents such as parents and educational institutions can either diminish or further distort these perceptions of happiness, the result being the lifelong dreamer and damsel in distress or the practical fight-for-what-you-want to be happy, wholesome individual. In modern day society the latter seems to be the most sensible option. Unfortunately society has propagated so many destructive messages into the minds of the youth that at times the liberation from these forces seems to be the biggest quest. Yet it is not always that familiar victorious quest typical of the triumphant fairy tale heroes. This quest takes more than a prince in shining armour, it takes endurance and perseverance and most of all the conviction that it is possible to change and relish in these advances. Now that's a happy ending.

Floribella

Another relevant theme to this study, which has become a present reality in many Portuguese schools and of particular interest to this project, is the popular Argentinean story *Floricienta* created by Cris Morena, or better recognized in Portugal as *Floribella*. This Portuguese soap opera aimed largely at children but bearing some adult themes as well, is based on the story of *The Sound of Music* and *Cinderella*. The heroine in this story, known as Flor, is a contemporary Cinderella who has traded the filthy ashes for fresh flowers and forlorn silence for a prevailing voice in a band where she debuts as lead vocalist. Just like Cinderella's tragic fate, this heroine loses her mother when she is young and her father is also absent from her life. The motherly figure Flor looks up to, who was her deceased mother's best friend, Tita, eventually takes her to the "Square of Perfect Love" where she will befittingly find her *perfect love*. Flor is not just a sultry maid in this version but an admirable teacher who makes her living as a tutor in the home of an upper-class family, where both household heads have died and left behind their six children. Flor does not need to get all dolled up to go to a ball so the prince will choose her for her mesmerizing beauty and fine clothes because her prince is actually her new boss. Although Flor's only belongings are hooked up to her old bicycle, the love she has to offer the aristocratic family is greater than all the money they possess. In this story Flor also has a rival, parallel to the ugly step-sisters, standing in between her and her prince and must prove her worth through her own character and not through mystical helpers or fine gowns.

In this study, both groups of children were asked if they considered *Floribella* to be a similar concoction to the *Cinderella* tale, where 72% of girls and 64% supported this idea and a comparatively low proportion denied it. A startling 92% of girls and 80% of boys also displayed preference to *Floribella*, perhaps due to the recent appearance of the story. Young children have a better sense of present than they do of past and future, and although they know the *Cinderella* story, they are not exposed to it everyday, like they are to each new episode of *Floribella* that invades their homes daily.

From learning to lose and fighting to win victoriously, the timeless *Cinderella* tale is more alive than ever in this Portuguese soap opera that's got Portuguese children marching to the heroine's drum with choreographically rehearsed dances, nonetheless. As witnessed throughout this study, on the mere referral to the *Floribella* name four year old children, who haven't even learned to read, can successfully recite

in uniform unison all the verses of the new *Floribella* anthem. She not only chants about the richness and importance of dreams over gold, but has subliminally convinced children to adopt even her latest fashion trends – the result, a classroom of little girls wearing resembling flowered skirts. It's not a coincidence either that her CD was last year's best-selling album. She not only flaunts it, she sells it too. Now that's flower power. This power, however, should not be used as a mere dictator of children's fashion or music, but instead applied to serve to a greater avail. If Flor can sell identical skirts to a generation of young girls, can't she also teach them how to deal with difference, accept people for who they are, and help them create their own ending to happiness?

While *Floribella* has suffered some alterations in relation to the traditional tale, it still continues to glorify love and romance and implant these perilous messages into the minds of young children. Network director of this program Teresa Guilherme warrants that "like Cinderella, who only needs to lose her shoe to marry the prince, everything will also fall from the sky for Floribella."¹⁶⁷ Are these the kind of examples children should really be following? Are things really handed out like this in life? Do our principal desires just fall from the sky without any real effort on our part? This contrast seems hardly educational for children, and is more likely to encumber their progress than to actually develop it. So, should programs like *Floribella* be completely removed from children's lives? Of course not. Their subject matter just needs to include the very things that make this type of program enjoyable for children without the things that obstruct their development, or promote the appearance of hurtful stereotypes. Children need to grow up believing in dreams and make-believe, it's part of the childhood process, and that's why they let enchanting heroines like Flor and Cinderella enter their lives everyday. So let them wear their flowered skirts and dance to the familiar florid tempo. To become independent adults they need to first be children and enjoy all the benefits that come with this wondrous phase, and if that includes watching shows like *Floribella* so be it; perhaps the boundaries just need to be better defined. If this doesn't start with the producers of this fairy tale promulgation, then it should start at home, and parents should not only monitor what their children are watching but also help them separate the extraordinary from the downright malice. Not by killing their favourite heroes and heroines but by helping them see their otherworldly nature. Besides parents, schools are also a good place to start changing the misconceptions

¹⁶⁷ "Floribela é a Cinderela moderna da nova novela da SIC", 16 February 2006, [Diário de Notícias](http://dn.sapo.pt/2006/02/16/media/floribela_cinderela_moderna_nova_nov.html). 22 January 2007
<http://dn.sapo.pt/2006/02/16/media/floribela_cinderela_moderna_nova_nov.html>

about the dome of happily ever after, so children can witness new realities. As British Member of Parliament, Diane Abbott announced to the National Council of Teachers of English, "it falls upon those who teach our children, whatever their colour, to teach all our children, whatever their colour, that heroes and heroines can be any shade or gender."¹⁶⁸ It is undeniable that fairy tales have been synonymous with children for years, and will undoubtedly continue to be for many generations to come. The solution is then not relegating them from their lives but reinstating them with new versions. This study identified and statistically demonstrated the stereotypes generated by fairy tales today, and how modern adaptations help to eradicate some of these biased convictions. It seems that the appearance of contemporary versions is finally giving children the possibility of continuing to dream and be mesmerized by the wonder of fairy tales while at the same time abolishing some very hurtful stereotypes. In order to ensure that children undergo socialization without being bombarded by very offensive and demeaning messages, continuance is essential. It is not an effortless mission but, without research, without obstacles, progress and success are hard to attain – and that's a recurring fairy tale moral all in itself.

¹⁶⁸ Dianne Abbott in : L. Bianchini & Headquarters Staff. "NCTE to You", *Language Arts*, 72 (1995) p. 234.

IV. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Fairy tales undoubtedly transport children to new realms and magical kingdoms, where there is no such thing as impossible. These stories give children the opportunity to travel, explore and most of all, to dream. They unarguably provide many positive contributions to the process of growing up. Nevertheless, to what extent are young children really capable of distinguishing between dreaming and being awake, between the real and the imaginary world? Fairy tales do transport children into a state of wonder and a realm of endless possibilities, where anything can happen through enchantment, magic and spells. However, again doesn't this go against the whole purpose of the fairy tale moral, which is to teach children to set boundaries and that there are limits which should not be surpassed?! Should we continue to foster these preconceived notions into children's minds, the same children who will grow up in a world ruled by walls and restrictions?

Over the years, a lot of attention has been dedicated to the attempt to answer this contentious query and as a result, fairy tales have received response from many fronts either warning parents of the detrimental and pervasive effects of these bedtime stories or purporting the good and psychologically healthy development they bring to children. On this basis, the *Cinderella* tale can be interpreted as more than a story about an unfortunate girl who lost her shoe, but as a multifarious account that both promotes and hinders a child's psychological growth.

On the one hand, *Cinderella* is a tale enriched with powerful teaching tools and moral lessons targeted at the righteous development of children, presenting to young boys and girls situations with which they can clearly identify with and relate to. Zipes explains that "when a story corresponds to how the child feels deep down – as no realistic narrative is likely to do – it attains an emotional quality of 'truth' for the child."¹⁶⁹ By offering children vivid images that relate to their overpowering, indistinct and nondescript feelings, the events in the stories appear to be far more believable to the child than his or her own experiences. This is how fairy tales extract their endearing influence on a child's thoughts and actions. They see themselves in the story, and they see the encouraging triumph of the hero or heroine, which gives them the hope of resolving their own individual predicaments. According to Bettelheim, who sees fairy tales as an honest lesson on how life behaves to girls and not how girls

¹⁶⁹ Jack Zipes. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 237.

should behave to life, Cinderella is filled with rich moral lessons. Firstly, it teaches children how to deal with sibling rivalry and the devastating feelings of outright desperation and humiliation spread upon them by their brothers and sisters. Cinderella is constantly mistreated and shamed by her stepsisters who not only mock her desolate life and tattered clothing, but oblige her to be their servant and cater to their every whim, not once showing any appreciation to her hard and dirty work. However, Cinderella finally gets her just rewards for enduring the cruelty with which she is treated by the evil stepmother and stepsisters, and her happy ending assures children that they too will be able to share Cinderella's triumph, and overcome the despairs of sibling rivalry. Awkwardly the stepmother and stepsisters' wickedness is also another aspect that appeals to children and also helps them deal with the angry thoughts they may have toward their own siblings. Whatever vileness the child may wish to convey upon their brothers and sisters it is in no way comparable to the stepmother and stepsister's evil ways. Hearing this story helps children get rid of some of the guilt they feel about their irate feelings toward their brothers and sisters, which also helps to confront and surpass the phase of sibling rivalry. Furthermore, by being presented with a very harsh reality of a young girl they can easily identify with, children are reminded how lucky they really are because, no matter how terrible their life is or how badly their family members treat them, it is nowhere near Cinderella's wretched fortune. Seeing Cinderella transform from this desolate state to a life of eternal bliss instils confidence in children to also have the power to surpass their insurmountable obstacles. Additionally, and through the many different Cinderella versions embedding Oedipal tensions, this narrative also helps children resolve and break free of their own Oedipal desires. In Cinderella versions circulating in France, Italy, Austria, Greece, Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Russia, and Scandinavia, Cinderella runs away from her father who wants to marry her; is banished by her father for not loving him as much as he wants her to, even though she does love him enough. A recurring feature in all versions however, is her victorious climax, where she gloriously defeats all of these Oedipal concerns, and enters a promising life as a young woman ready for marriage. This also helps children to better accept the inevitably horrifying stage of puberty, where nothing and no one is as they'd like it to be, as a temporary phase that too will pass, and help them transform from children to young adults. The magical transformation that Cinderella experiences prior to attending the ball is metaphorically representative of the pubertal transformations that change a girl into a woman. After the ball, she enters the phase of adulthood, and can now marry and have children of

her own. Additionally, the story's divided illustration of mothers and stepmothers offers a guiltless performance of Cinderella's uncertainties and through these fantastical enactments, children learn how to handle the conflicting urges of love and hate. Finally, another significant and overt lesson a child can understand from this storyline is the uselessness of external means to guarantee success in life. This is proved by the failed attempts of the stepsisters' use of externals – their beautiful clothes to hide their ugliness, the trickery of the mutilated feet to fit the shoe, in an effort to attain happiness. All these efforts are in vain, for as Cinderella demonstrates, it is only by holding on to internal strengths (i.e. the force she receives from her deceased mother through the hazel branch, the cow, or the fairy godmother) and being true to oneself, that one can hope to achieve success and happiness. As Bettelheim explains:

"Fairy tales, unlike any other form of literature, direct the child to discover his identity and calling, and they also suggest what experiences are needed to develop his character further."¹⁷⁰ This premise is also similarly supported by Jonathan Young, a psychologist, storyteller, an author, and a teacher. He believes that being able to see your lives through stories is a great mirroring experience, and thus trains psychologists to use myth, legends, fairy tales and sacred stories in clinical practices. Young believes that people are capable of healing themselves when they realize that their problems are a repeated and natural part of the individual journey, and that it is possible to change your own reality by reinterpreting the story that you see yourself living.¹⁷¹ One of the reasons we keep revisiting and rereading fairy tales all through our lives is because they handle and approach essential and significant matters that help us learn to control our lives while at the same time teaching us how to resolve important conflicts and struggles. As Jack Zipes explains, "most of the problems we experience as we try to become narrators of our own lives are depicted in fairy tales with the hope that we shall resolve them and can come out on top."¹⁷²

This may bear some truth and fairy tales may in fact help overcome disturbing ambivalences during childhood by helping children move from juvenile enslavement to adult independence; but, on the other hand, this story and others like it, also candidly forewarn dangers that cannot be ignored. As Karen Rowe elucidates, "more than

¹⁷⁰ Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 24.

¹⁷¹ Rob Wipond. Jonathan Young's World-Shaking, Psyche-Healing Stories", *Mythic Perspectives* November 1998, [Monday Magazine](http://www.folkstory.com/articles/perspectives.html) 7 January 2007 <<http://www.folkstory.com/articles/perspectives.html>>

¹⁷² Jack Zipes. "Little Red Riding Hood Goes to College: an interview with Jack Zipes", 2004, [Kiddie Matinee](http://www.kiddiematinee.com/jack_zipes.html), 7 June 2006 < http://www.kiddiematinee.com/jack_zipes.html.>

alleviating psychic fears associated with the rite of passage, however, tales also prescribe approved cultural paradigms which ease the female's assimilation into the adult community."¹⁷³ In this way, Cinderella wrongfully teaches children and categorizes women by putting them in very fixed and unwarranted roles in society. After all, what good was the attainment of Cinderella's adult independence if she promptly trades it for subordination by instantaneously marrying the prince? Through this story women are taught very passive approaches to life, are defined by their physical beauty, and rewarded for their dominant goodness and docility. Cinderella appears to have no personality, takes no initiative in resolving her problems, and willingly tolerates the abuse cast upon her by her stepmother and stepsisters, responding to it by being even nicer to them. The kinder Cinderella is, the worse she is victimized, and the nicer she is again. Is this the message that parents really want to pass on to their children: cater to others' desires unwearingly, smile and be nice, no matter how badly you're treated, and you will be compensated with something magnificent and miraculous which will make all your dreams come true and rid you of your life of servitude. Not much of a life lesson, but does Cinderella really do anything willingly to change her fate in this story? Unless crying can be considered as a successful means of solving your problems, so that a dreamlike fairy godmother can come to your rescue; I don't suppose so. Furthermore, being the sole executor of all the household tasks, without any assistance from the stepsisters or stepmother, may foretell Cinderella's near future of devoted wife and mother who happily carries out all these tasks with the reward of male presence who will protect her. Because Cinderella implements the conventional female virtues of tolerance, submission and dependence and gives in to patriarchal ideologies, she is able to reclaim her original place as princess and through marriage garners fortune and status once again – wrongly demonstrating to children that it is through submissive assimilation and not personal exertion that she is able to achieve her happy ending. These acquisitions, however, must be recognized as effortless feats and not laudable plaudits; as Karen Rowe lucidly sums up,

Portrayals of adolescent waiting and dreaming, patterns of double enchantment, and romanticizations of marriage contribute to the potency of fairy tales. Yet, such alluring fantasies gloss the heroine's inability to act self-assertively, total reliance on external rescues, willing bondage to father and prince, and her

¹⁷³ Karen Rowe. "Feminism and Fairy Tales", *Folk and Fairy Tales* 2002, 10 September 2006
<<http://www.broadviewpress.com/tales/feminism.htm>>

restriction to hearth and nursery. Although many readers discount obvious fantasy elements they may still fall prey to more subtle paradigms through identification with the heroine. Thus, subconsciously women may transfer from fairy tales into real life cultural norms which exalt passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a female's cardinal virtues. In short, fairy tales perpetuate the patriarchal status quo by making female subordination seem a romantically desirable, indeed an inescapable fate.¹⁷⁴

In order to guarantee equal positions for men and women in present-day society and the possibility to seek their own fate, these facts cannot and must not be overlooked or discredited. While many believe that the fairy tale preoccupation is outdated because children no longer read fairy tales like in the past, Ella Westland reminds us that "it is time to turn our attention to other media, especially magazines and video films, where different and more damaging narrative forms are having a far more potent influence on gender expectations and behaviour."¹⁷⁵ Disney and other prominent industries are still leasing fairy tale castles worldwide and while they may not be in traditional book format, children are still "under perpetual siege from the subtler forms of the Cinderella syndrome endemic in our culture, from classic novels and televised films to advertisements, beauty competitions, comics and newspapers."¹⁷⁶ By underestimating the *spell* these tales still cast upon children, their power is overlooked and will continue to spread incessantly corrupting innocent minds ubiquitously. Lest we forget, "Snow White is not dead, and saccharine princesses with their glazed smiles are still on prominent display on children's bookshelves and adult news-stands."¹⁷⁷ Fighting back with contemporary retellings is vital to every child's defence, so that women can finally be the sole proprietors of their own castles with or without a prince by their side.

After years of fighting against a regime which only repressed and hindered the progression of women's self-sufficiency, women are finally moving toward independence in a fairly revamped society which finally sanctions equal freedom and expression between men and women. Now more than ever, women are becoming the writers of their own stories, and *history* is at long last becoming *herstory* too.

¹⁷⁴ Karen Rowe. "Feminism and Fairy Tales", *Folk and Fairy Tales* 2002, 10 September 2006
<<http://www.broadviewpress.com/tales/feminism.htm>>

¹⁷⁵ Ella Westland. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom." *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993),p. 243.

¹⁷⁶ Ella Westland. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom." *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993),p. 243.

¹⁷⁷ Ella Westland. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in the Classroom." *Gender and Education* 5, No. 3 (1993),p. 243.

In her book, *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye: Breaking the Spell of Feminine Myths and Models*, Madonna Kolbenschlag analyzes the conventional way in which women have been forced to cling to certain roles and identities, and to advise men and women to consider alternatives to these commonly established myths. She believes that the fairy tales themselves are not the producers or influencers of these traditional role models, but are rather symbolical representations that strengthen damaging social and psychological blueprints of behaviour in our lives.

In an effort to confront and eradicate many of the conventional atavistic conceptions of gender roles and their philosophy of male domination, many women writers have felt compelled to write their own versions in order to define their own personal needs, and therein form their own identities, giving new voices to the old fairy stories. These new stories originate from an essential need to alter society and break conventional role models and ideologies. By doing so however, they ironically destroy the adjective feminist, envisioning worlds that are not preoccupied with sexism and domination; worlds where men and women can actively seek to define themselves.¹⁷⁸ The result can be seen in narratives such as Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), Anne Sexton's collection of poems in *Transformations* (1979) and Tanith Lee's *Red as Blood* or *Tales from the Sisters Grimm* (1983). In these stories, as well as in many other feminist revisions, the authors either provoke women into *transforming* by overtly and callously demonstrating male repression advocating the fundamental need for change; or exemplify women letting go of their submissive positions, and relying on intelligence rather than on physical appearance to overcome oppressive conditions. In none of these stories is marriage a necessity or an objective for women, but rather a possibility, and their lives and careers are not inevitably determined by marriage.¹⁷⁹ These examples finally initiate children on a quest to happiness without the protective and gallant prince riding by their side, but something that gives them just as much security to keep on fighting.

Due to the hundreds of Cinderella versions known worldwide and the assortment of mixed representations and undertones implicitly and explicitly embedded in this renowned tale, the Cinderella story has become a dichotomy of dreams and nightmares. On the one side, a feminist nightmare about a girl who does nothing to free herself from repression and outwardly surrenders to patriarchal canons of

¹⁷⁸ Jack Zipes. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 14.

¹⁷⁹ Jack Zipes. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 15.

servitude and righteousness to achieve her happy ending; and on the other, an enchanting and brightly illuminated path to the unconscious, providing children with a better understanding of oneself and using inner strength to reap rewards, while at the same time giving them the opportunity to dream. As previously demonstrated and thoroughly exemplified, the interpretation of these messages is highly controversial. The importance and meaning of this celebrated fairy-tale lies therefore in the ability to sensibly differentiate between dreaming and being awake. Contemporary retellings adjust familiar patterns and characters and reverse plots in order to challenge readers to rethink outdated social norms, values and positions for men and women, finally giving women a chance to make their own lives. However, as Carter and other contemporary writers point out, this path to Utopia is not effortlessly reached. As Zipes explains, "if women are to control their destinies, if there is to be a rearrangement of gender in child bearing, then blood will indeed be shed and it will not be simply the blood of one sex."¹⁸⁰ The path to Utopia may indeed be a *bloody chamber* or rocky path but if in the end women can finally earn an honourable and credible position in society, isn't it worth a little blood shed? After all the end is usually the beginning, hopefully this time, the beginning of the possibility to create a world where men and women can have an equal chance at whatever opportunity may come their way, or at least the hope thereof. And at the end of the road, a new hope may resound for women and children, and only then will they live happily ever after.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the omnipresent dangers of fairy tales and the pervasive messages that are conveyed to children through these seemingly innocuous stories, at the same time enforcing the need for contemporary versions. While society continues to disseminate harmful messages onto an audience that has not fully developed emotionally or psychologically, it is not only instilling very unjust and outdated social positions for men and women, it is breaking all of the magic spells and hindering the growth of the children who believe in them. Fortunately, through parental awareness and modern retellings children can finally create their own magic, and if that means abandoning the prince in the castle and running off with the farmer boy in the country, so be it... at least he won't mind the mice and pumpkins after midnight.

¹⁸⁰ Zipes, Jack. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 25-26.

So, should the traditional fairy tale stories remain planted on children's bookshelves? Should they continue to be shared among playmates during storytime, or read as bedtime stories to lull kids to sleep off to castles in far away lands? I say, yes! Let children be princesses and kings while they can, remind them that good is sometimes rewarded and evil is punished, and encourage them to pursue their dreams to *ever after*. But, also let them try on the stepsister's shoes once in awhile, let them take a bite of the poisoned apple and learn from their mistakes, caution them to be wary of the charming prince on the white horse, leave them the trail of bread crumbs but let them find their own path. Read them other stories, but let them write their own. Fairy tales may portray their characters quite unfairly and contemporary versions *are* vital in transporting children to new realms, but ultimately, we all need a little bit of magic in our lives, and if this pixie dust comes to us via once upon a time, why not sprinkle it around? Who knows if it might not make us a little happier *now*...

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VI. Annexes



Fairy Tales or Unfair Tales?!....

- How do children react to fairy tales?
- Does gender bias and violence in fairy tales promote immoral and sexist attitudes in children?
- Do children in different cultural environments respond differently to fairytales?
- Do children recognize gender bias and stereotypes in fairytales?
- How are men and women portrayed in fairytales, what are their typical roles?
- Do fairy tale stereotypes vary in different cultural environments?
- What important issues do fairy tales address for children?
- What attracts children to fairy tales?
- Does the violence in these stories appeal to children?
- What important moral lessons do children learn through fairy tales?
- How do children apply what they learn (good and bad) in fairy tales to real life?
- How do children react to contemporary versions of fairy tales?
- Do contemporary feminist rewritings of fairy tales eliminate immoral and sexist attitudes in children?
- Are there universal elements present in English and Portuguese children's stories, or are fundamental differences?
- Besides fairy tales, what other types of literature do children read in the classrooms and at home?
- How have fairy tales, shaped us, and how do the modern adaptations of these stories reflect our times/society/values?
- Do contemporary versions of fairy tales contain new stereotypes?



Nome: _____

Idade: _____

Fairy Tales or Unfairly Tales?!....

Qual é o teu conto de fada preferido?

Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões
A Bela Adormecida
Cinderela
A Bela e o Monstro
O Capuchinho Vermelho
Outro

Porque é que gostas de ler ou de ouvir contos de fadas?

São divertidos
Há muita magia
Gosto das personagens
Também gostava de ser príncipe ou princesa

Qual é o papel das mulheres nos contos de fadas?

São lindas princesas
Têm o mesmo papel do que os homens
São bruxas feias e más
São donas de casa
São caladinhas e fazem o que os homens querem

Qual é o papel dos homens nos contos de fadas?

São príncipes lindos
São corajosos
Salvam sempre as princesas lindas
Tratam da casa

Nos contos de fadas as mulheres lindas são sempre boas e as feias sempre más?

Sim
Não



Quais são as lições que se aprende nos contos de fadas?

Que se formos bons, boas coisas nos acontecem
Que todas as mulheres se devam casar
Que os homens devam salvar e proteger as mulheres
Que o bem vence sempre o mal

Qual é a personagem que mais gostam na história da Cinderela?

A Cinderela
O Príncipe
As Irmãs Más
A Fada Madrinha
A Madrasta

Gostam mais do livro da Cinderela ou do filme da Cinderela?

Livro
Filme

Quando forem grandes gostavam de ser como quem?

A Cinderela
O Príncipe
As Irmãs Más
A Fada Madrinha
A Madrasta

Gostam da novela a Floribela?

Sim
Não

Acham que a Floribela é como a Cinderela?

Sim
Não

Que outro tipo de histórias é que gostam?



Fairy Tales or Unfair Tales?!....

Como é que as crianças reagem aos contos de fadas?

Quais os estereótipos encontrados nos contos de fadas?

Como é que os homens e as mulheres são apresentados em contos de fadas e quais são os seus papéis típicos?

Quais os assuntos importantes que os contos de fadas abordam para as crianças, e qual a sua importância na socialização destes?

O que atrai as crianças aos contos de fadas?

A violência encontrada nestas histórias atrai as crianças?

Que lições morais importantes é que as crianças podem aprender nos contos de fadas?



Como é que as crianças aplicam o que aprendem (bom e mau) nos contos de fadas à vida real?

Como é que as crianças reagem a versões contemporâneas dos contos de fadas?

Como é que estas novas versões afectam o nosso tempo/sociedade/valores?

Estas versões contemporâneas também contêm novos estereótipos?

Como é que os contos de fadas nos têm moldado?

Qual é o conto(s) de fada mais popular(es) entre as crianças?

Para além de contos de fadas, que outro tipo de literatura é que as crianças lêem?



Nome: _____

Idade: _____

Fairy Tales or Unfairly Tales?!....

Qual é o teu conto de fada preferido?

- Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões
- A Bela Adormecida
- Cinderela
- A Bela e o Monstro
- O Capuchinho Vermelho
- Outro

Porque é que gostas de ler ou de ouvir contos de fadas?

- São divertidos
- Há muita magia
- Gosto das personagens
- Também gostava de ser príncipe ou princesa

Qual é o papel das mulheres nos contos de fadas?

- São lindas princesas
- Têm o mesmo papel do que os homens
- São bruxas feias e más
- São donas de casa
- São caladinhas e fazem o que os homens querem

Qual é o papel dos homens nos contos de fadas?

- São príncipes lindos
- São corajosos
- Salvam sempre as princesas lindas
- Tratam da casa

Nos contos de fadas as mulheres lindas são sempre boas e as feias sempre más?

- Sim
- Não



Quais são as lições que se aprende nos contos de fadas?

Que se formos bons, boas coisas nos acontecem
Que todas as mulheres se devam casar
Que os homens devam salvar e proteger as mulheres
Que o bem vence sempre o mal

Qual é a personagem que mais gostam na história da Cinderela?

A Cinderela
O Príncipe
As Irmãs Más
A Fada Madrinha
A Madrasta

Gostam mais do livro da Cinderela ou do filme da Cinderela?

Livro
Filme

Quando forem grandes gostavam de ser como quem?

A Cinderela
O Príncipe
As Irmãs Más
A Fada Madrinha
A Madrasta

Gostam da novela a Floribela?

Sim
Não

Acham que a Floribela é como a Cinderela?

Sim
Não

Que outro tipo de histórias é que gostam?
