CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS A TOOL FOR GENDER APPROPRIATION

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Öz

Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Benimsetme Aracı Olarak Çocuk Edebiyatı

Toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri içkin değil, öğrenilmiştir. Bu nedenle çocukluk kişinin kendi rolünü öğrendiği çok önemli bir dönemdir. Çocuklar her türlü dış uyaran yoluyla cinsiyetlerine uygun davranışlar sergileyen erkek ve kız çocukları olarak yapılandırılırlar. Dolayısıyla cinsler arası farklılıklar ve hiyerarşi çocuklara en baştan dayatılır ve çocukların ataerkil toplumun cinsiyetlerine göre tektipleştirilmiş üyeleri olmaları sağlanır. Edebiyat bu sürece katkı sağlayan en etkili araçlardan biridir. Çocuklar kendilerini kurtaracak yakışıklı prensini bekleyen güzel ama zayıf prenseslerin öyküleriyle hem gerçek hem de mecaz anlamda uykuya yatırılır. Çocuklar masallar aracılığıyla hayatları boyunca oynamak zorunda oldukları rolü öğrenirler ve buna isyan edenleri bekleyen cezalara karşı da uyarılırlar. Sonunda rollerini kanıksamayı öğrenirler. Bu makalede çocuk edebiyatının toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin benimsetilmesi sürecinde nasıl kullanıldığı çeşitli bilimsel araştırma sonuçlarına dayanarak tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Cinsiyet, Çocuk Edebiyatı, Masallar, Ataerki, Eğitim, Cinsiyet Rolleri*

Abstract

Gender roles are not innate but learned, that is why childhood is a very important period in which a person learns his/her roles. Through all kinds of external stimuli children are constructed as boys and girls who behave in ways appropriate to their sex. Thus gender differences and hierarchy between sexes are imposed on children right from the beginning until they become gender stereotyped members of patriarchy. Literature is one of the most effective means of contribution

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to this process of appropriation. Children are put to sleep –not only literally but figuratively- with tales of beautiful but weak princesses waiting for a handsome prince to save them. By means of fairy tales children learn which part they should play throughout their lives and they are warned against the punishments awaiting those who rebel. In the end they learn to take their roles for granted. This article discusses how children's literature is used during the process of gender appropriation, based on various scientific research results.

Keywords: *Gender, Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, Patriarchy, Education, Sex Roles*

" 'gender' unlike 'sex' is an artifact of culture"
(Ellmann 21)

Roles are consistent, interdependent relationship patterns that are defined and organized through gender. As stated in the quotation above, gender roles are not innate or natural but a product of society, therefore childhood plays a very important role in determining and teaching one's gender. Children learn their sex-role identities from external sources such as their parents, text-books, their friends, and the media. Through all these means children are constructed as boys and girls who are expected to act and behave in ways "appropriate" to their gender. Gender identities and inequality between the sexes are imposed on them at this very early stage of development. There are things they should do and things they should avoid in order to remain within the boundaries of heterosexual femininity and heterosexual masculinity. In time they learn how to fulfill the expectations of adults and thus become gender streotyped persons. One of the most effective ways of contributing to children's sex-role identity development is through literature. This article aims at analyzing how gender roles are imposed on children through fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White*, or in other children's books such as *Mother Goose's Melody.* Gender bias in such works of literature will be discussed with regard to certain research results by various investigators and contemporary feminist rewritings of the tales will be analysed in order to find out if there has been any developments over the years.

It is an obvious fact that fairy tales have gone through significant changes as societies developed over the last two centuries. Originally, they were rather egalitarian stories told orally by adults to adults in matriarchal communities. Later on, at the beginnings of the seventeenth century women of aristocracy began to tell their own versions of fairy tales in the salons, using motifs from those folk tales. An important fact about the tales of that

period is that "the institutionalizing 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" (Zipes, 1994: 23). Therefore it all started as a female reaction against gender bias, but, ironically, as time passed, the stories became men's tools to foster their power over women. Especially when these tales started to be written down, the existence of the Phallus became even more obvious: "The first stage for the literary fairy tale involved a kind of class and perhaps even gender appropriation … since women in most cases were not allowed to be scribes, the tales were scripted according to male dictates or fantasies, even though they may have been told by women" (Zipes, 1999: 7). The more the tales were written down, the more women got tamed and put into their rightful places – their home and kitchen. Even in the tales composed by female writers, who began publishing their own tales in the eighteenth century, female desire is suppressed, virtues (which are determined by men) are rewarded, submissiveness and docility in women are praised and considered as real beauty (Zipes, 1994: 28-30).

Fairy tales began to be written for children during the first half of the eighteenth century for two main reasons: to amuse the children and to teach them their sex roles. For instance, in 1756 Madame Le Prince de Beaumont published a children's version of *The Beauty and the Beast,* altering the tale to fit the moral standards of the already changed society: "That boys were to be treated differently than girls is apparent from the structure and contents of Madame de Beaumont's book, or in other words, *Beauty and the Beast* originated as a sex-specific tale intended to inculcate a sense of good manners in little girls" (Zipes, 1994: 32). Thus as society went through a change, the social function of children's literature changed as well. Such stories as *The Beauty and the Beast* were mainly aimed at teaching females to submit to patriarchal rule. They were taught to sacrifice themselves to males in order to find happiness. According to Tatar "in the historical context, this tale was told to quiet the fears of young women who were given in arranged marriages, often to older men" (qtd. in Candelaria, 2002: www.unm.edu). Thus these tales served, and are still serving, a dual purpose: amusement and "education."

In the nineteenth century the transformation was almost complete. Fairy tales were being revised for appropriation's sake. They had to be healthy stories teaching children good manners and morals. According to Candelaria, Perrault not only modified the tales themselves, but he also modified their tone: "gender distinctions were more finely honed and strictly

enforced, reflecting a social opinion previously unknown. Perrault's heroines are all helpless and have no control over their own fate … [He] placed great value on the beauty and submissiveness of the female. The goal of the female, and her greatest reward, is marriage to a wealthy and handsome prince" (2002: www.unm.edu). The tales have been so successful in gender stereotyping that even today these roles are taken for granted by almost everyone.

Other contributors to this change in children's literature were the Grimm Brothers. Especially Wilhelm Grimm made great alterations to the tales with the intention of making them "more proper and prudent for bourgeois audiences" (Zipes, 1999: 72). The Grimm Brothers took the earlier versions of the tales, took out the "inappropriate" sexual elements, added elements of Christianity and "emphasized specific role models for male and female protagonists according to the dominant patriarchal code of that time" (Zipes, 1999: 74). Wilhelm Grimm rewrote the tales changing them into stories that taught children "what *he* thought would be proper for children to learn" (my emphasis, Zipes, 1999: 74). A good example of their alterations in accordance with the patriarchal notion of sex roles would be *Snow White.* The Grimm Brothers had made many additions to the original manuscript and these are additions that specify Snow White's role and duties as a young woman who has to live in the same house with the male dwarfs:

> "Snow White" – Ölenberg Manuscript
> When Snow White awoke the next morning, they asked her how she happened to get there. And she told them everything, how her mother, the queen, had left her alone in the woods and gone away. The dwarfs took pity on her and persuade her to remain with them and do the cooking for them when they went to the mines. However, she was to beware of the queen and not to let anyone into the house.
>
> "Snow White" – 1812 Edition
> When Snow White awoke, they asked her who she was and how she happened to get into the house. Then she told them how her mother had wanted to have her put to death, but the hunter had spared her life, and how she had run the entire day and finally arrived at their house. So the dwarfs took pity on her and said, "If you keep house for us and cook, sew, make the beds, wash and knit, and keep everything tidy and clean, you may stay with us, and you will have everything you want. In the evening, when we come home, dinner must be ready. During the day we are in the

> mines and dig for gold, so you will be alone. Beware of the queen and let no one into the house. (Zipes, 1999: 72)

In the Grimms' version the list of demands is rather long and Snow White is asked to do all the chores that are expected of a housewife while her husband is out making money, whereas in the original manuscript she is only asked to cook for the dwarfs. Furthermore, she is passified in the Brothers' edition: she is saved by a male, "the hunter" who had "spared her life." The language is also much more patriarchal and authoritative: the dwarfs indicate that "dinner *must* be ready" when they return. Besides they emphasize that they would be digging "for gold" which means they will bring home money. Even the evil queen is passified since she is also a female. Unlike in the earlier version in which the queen herself leaves Snow White into the woods, in the second version "she had wanted to have her put to death." She asks the hunter, a male, to fulfill her desire. Passive voice is used and it is an implicit means of emphasizing a female figure's lack of action. Thus they altered the old tales in order to brainwash little children to manipulate them into becoming proper adults the society wishes them to be.

Another fairy tale edited by the two brothers is *Cinderella.* In this tale as well, the patriarchal, Christian, and misogynistic point of view is obvious. At the beginning of the tale Cinderella's father advises her to "be good and pious", and she obeys (The Brothers Grimm, 1997: 121). Therefore her "goodness" is a result of her piousness and passivity. The only quality she has other than those is her beauty. Regarding this point Bruce makes the following comment:

> Cinderella is apparently 'good' only because she is religious and passive. She never does anything aside from looking beautiful to warrant such praise. In fact, nearly all heroines in Grimms' fairy tales are beautiful –from Cinderella to Sleeping Beauty to Rapunzel to Little Red Riding Hood- and therefore 'good'. Specifically, Cinderella is good because she is beautiful, passive, innocent, and beguiled. (2012: Phallus Tales)

Thus, if a female is passive, lethargic, pious and dependent, then she is regarded as good and beautiful. This idea is imposed on human beings in their early childhood through these fairy tales. Children are taught that while females should remain passive and wait for the prince to save them, males should always take action and save the world. There are examples in which female characters are also in active positions, however, these are mostly exceptional cases where the women who have the power to act are nothing but the tools of patriarchy just as Cinderella's two wicked step-sisters and

step-mother. As Zipes suggests "whenever a woman in a fairy tale possesses or acts with power, they act in favor of the patriarchy" (1983: 148). Good women are never active and never have power, they are obedient wives who depend on their heroes for survival. Female children reading these stories, when they grow up, may become so gender stereotyped that they may choose to wait for a Prince Charming on a white horse to rescue them from their tower. They would never question the fixed roles but accept them as they are. The case is similar with boys as well. They are always expected to be the breadwinners, the heroes who never cry, who are never frightened and who should always take the first step.

The fact that such a presentation of females in Grimms' tales is intentional can be proven with reference to the original version of *Cinderella* which was written in the matriarchal tradition. In the original version Cinderella "does not turn her cheek but rebels and struggles to offset her disadvantages. In doing so she actively seeks help and uses her wits to attain her goal which is not marriage but recognition. The recovery of her lost slipper and marriage with the prince is symbolically an affirmation of her strong independent character" (Zipes, 1983: 30). However, in the Grimms' version Cinderella is obedient, submissive, inactive, confined to the house and not witty at all. Her goodness is rewarded by a marriage to her saviour, the prince. An interesting difference between the two versions is the material used for the slipper. In the original tale it is made of silk: "This is not Charles Perrault's glass slipper, or the Grimms' golden one, this is a slipper that allows Cinderella to run" (Bruce, 2012: Phallus Tales). Thus, besides the language, tone and content of the tales, the costumes and what they symbolize contribute to the development of sex-role identities as well. Cinderella was confined to slippers that prevented her from running freely and taking hold of her own destiny.

While good women are submissive and religious, men are 'good' when they are aggressive, handsome, wealthy and powerful: "The male as saviour is dominant and protects the virtues of the humble female" (Zipes, 1983: 149). They are the heroes that always conclude the stories. They are the ones who act and save everyone. Sleeping Beauty does nothing but sleep for a hundred years, Snow White waits to be kissed by the prince, Cinderella does not even wait but it so happens that the prince finds her out. The absence of Cinderella's father is also disturbing. His daughter goes through all those pains; he does nothing, yet he is never criticized. He is "mentioned only once –to clarify that he is rich. He never appears to influence his daughter's fate. To the Grimms, he is only rich, therefore powerful, therefore 'good'" (Bruce, 2012: Phallus Tales). This is the kind of message that the

prospective fathers of the patriarchy should get from such tales: as a father your only responsibility toward your daughter is to be rich.

Another point to consider is that most of the time these female protagonists are victimized by other females and very rarely by men, since men are always good and heroic saviours. Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel are victimized by witches, Snow White by the queen and Cinderella by her step-mother, however they are all rescued by male figures. The females "never think, act, initiate, confront, or question, but are always saved in the nick of time by the handsome prince" (Bruce, 2012: Phallus Tales). The roles are fixed for males and females. Children are thus educated on how to develop their individual sex-role identities and when they become adults these roles are already established, internalized and automatized. This is a gradual process which includes many other variables such as families, teachers, friends etc.

Literature is one subtle means of gender stereotyping as Coltrane suggests:

> By paying attention to who gets to be the hero and who needs rescuing, we can see that men and women are rarely interchangeable in such tales and that the boys generally get the good parts. Although these tales are not presented as true, children take them much more literally than do adults, primarily because young children are less able to distinguish between what is real and what is fantasy. (Coltrane, 1998: 108)

Therefore most of the time this gender stereotyping is intentional in children's literature. Coltrane gives the example of nursery rhymes from *Mother Goose's Melody* and argues that the personalities of these rhymes are even more stereotyped by gender in order to "teach young people the cultural standards for masculinity and femininity. Many are cautionary tales about what happens when one violates those cultural standards" (1998: 110):

> When I was a little boy
> My mama kept me in:
> Now I am a great big boy
> I'm fit to serve the king;
> I can handle a musket;
> And I can smoke a pipe;
> And I can kiss a bonny girl,
> At twelve o'clock at night.
>
> Polly, Dolly, Kate, and Molly,
> All are filled with pride and folly.
> Polly tattles, Dolly wriggles,
> Katy rattles, Molly giggles;
> Whoever knew such constant rattling,
> Wriggling, giggling, noise, and tattling
>
> (Coltrane, 1998: 109)

Thus a distinction is made between boys and girls, and between the definitions of their roles. At a very early age the children who are read these rhymes or tales, learn what men do and don't do, and what women do and don't do. An interesting point is that even female writers served that distinction and preferred males as more powerful and interesting characters. The following table shows the choice of male and female protagonists by significant male and female writers who wrote children's fiction since 1990. The research is based on a collection of 112 works:

Tablo 1

	Focal Character(s)		
	Male	**Female**	**Mixed**
Books: male authors	16	5	-
Books: female authors	12	33	7
Picture books: male authors	9	1	1
Picture books: female authors	8	17	3
Total	45	56	11

(Pinsent, 1997: 76)

As it is obvious in the figures, although male writers do not tend to use female characters as protagonists in their books, female writers are willing to use male protagonists. The representation of their own sex affects children's preferences and expectations from the stories they read as well: "it is notorious that even children whose mothers have positions of responsibility and authority at work are likely to expect females in books to have traditional roles" (Pinsent, 1997: 77).

It is an established fact that children are affected by literature to a great extent during their developmental stages and their personal characteristics are affected accordingly. They reflect the relationships that they have been witnessing in the stories they read in their own lives. They create similar relationships with their partners and later on maybe with their own children. This situation was known all the while and that is why children's literature from the very beginning served the purposes of the dominant discourse:

> Children's literature emerged on a larger scale because at some time in the seventeenth century society began to recognize that childhood was a special period in people's lives and that children had their own special needs … literature was a means, and a very

> powerful one, for educating children … This pedagogical view has led to a certain bias in the general histories of children's literature. Only books that were considered 'suitable' for children have been included in reference sources, according to country, epoch, and the dominating view on childhood. (Nikolajeva, 1995: IX)

The problem is that (though it is considered a blessing rather than a problem by society) children identify with the characters of their own sex in the tales they read or are read to, and this has an influence on their attitudes. Therefore, as Pinsent suggests, if females are depicted as less important or weak, or if they are not included at all, this would affect children's perceptions of both their own place in society and the place of the opposite sex (1997: 36). In that sense animal fiction is important to consider because a significantly high proportion of animal protagonists are male and consequently there is too little representation of females in animal fiction which is widely read by children:

Tablo II

	Focal Character(s)		
	Male	**Female**	**Mixed**
Books: male authors	25	3	3
Books: female authors	9	1	3
Picture books: male authors	9	-	1
Picture books: female authors	4	5	-
Total	47	9	7

(Pinsent, 1997: 78)

This is important because the absence of female representation in literature would cause a feeling of absence on the part of girls since they wouldn't be able to find any character to identify themselves with. Children learn from these tales that women should conform to the norms of the society they live in, they should obey the rules and wait to be chosen by a wealthy, handsome man to be his lawful wedded wife. So thanks to these fairy tales "by the time they enter the primary school, many children have already formed a clear view about the roles of women and men in society and about their own role in relation to other children" (Pinsent, 1997: 75).

Added to the underrepresentation of females in pictures, titles and as main characters is the fact that they are most of the time given insignificant, secondary roles: "their activities were limited to loving, watching, or helping, while males engaged in adventuring and solving problems. Women were not given jobs or professions; motherhood was presented as a full-time, life-time job" (Kimmel, 2000: 155). Research made on the underrepresentation of females in children's books is proof of this. For instance, Ernst's analysis of titles show that male names were represented nearly twice as often as female names, which indicates male dominance. Further, she "found that even books with female or gender-neutral names in their titles in fact, frequently revolve around a male character" (qtd. in Singh, 1998: www.eric.ed.gov).

Besides the titles, the way boys and girls are represented is also worthy of consideration. In a study conducted in 1974, Rachlin and Vogt found out that "the most popular activities for boys were fishing, building and camping, while the most popular girl activities were playing in the sand, swinging and jumping rope" (qtd. in Tepper & Cassidy, 1999: 266). Another research done in 1996 examined the use of language in the descriptions of male and female characters in children's literature in the 1980s and 1990s: "Examples of the words commonly used to describe male characters were big, horrible, fierce, great, terrible, furious and proud. Examples of the most common adjectives used to describe female characters were beautiful, frightened, worthy, sweet, weak and scared" (Tepper & Cassidy, 1999: 268).

A fairly more recent study conducted by Baker-Sperry shows that fairy tales such as *Cinderella* keep on contributing to children's internalization of traditional gender roles. Before reading the tale together with her study group all of whom are familiar with Disney's movie version of the tale, Baker-Sperry asks them questions about Cinderella's appearance and personality: "The children's description of Cinderella's personality was…highly traditional, in keeping with the text. Cinderella was identified as beautiful, nice, deserving of friends, and as skilled in domestic tasks" (2007: 721). Baker-Sperry also mentions the fact that the female students "described the prince as handsome, although the text did not … Although the text does not identify the Prince as handsome, charming, or dreamy, these names were often linked to this character by the girls, particularly when asked (specifically and repeatedly) about his appearance" (2007: 721). In short the study shows that the girls identified with the main female character and took for granted her traditional roles whereas the boys ignored the tale saying that it is a "girls' book" (724): "*Cinderella* was not, however, about or for the boys. As a feminine tale, any association might be seen as

feminizing for them. This supports a traditional ideology associated with heterosexual masculinity" (Baker-Sperry, 2007: 726).

There is also research on the influence of stories on children's behaviour. For instance, an investigation made on nursery school boys in 1976 shows that they "persisted longer on a task after hearing a story depicting achievement behaviour by a male character than after a story depicting the same behaviour by a female character. The trend was in the opposite direction for girls" (Basow, 1992: 149). The boys identified with the same-sex characters and not with the female characters although female characters' stories were also stories of achievement. Therefore children respond to stories in accordance with their traditional sex roles. Further, this research shows that the behaviour of these boys changed by reading such a story only once. Basow also points at the problem the girls as female members of the society are facing: "given that more central characters in children's books are male and that females, when depicted, are less often shown in achieving roles, it is not surprising that women have been underrepresented in achieving roles in our society" (Basow, 1992: 149).

The depiction of females in modern literature has changed over the years. They are portrayed as less passive, more ambitious and as persons with careers, yet "they are still depicted as more interested in domestic life than boys are" (Kimmel, 2000: 156). However, there seems to be no difference in the depiction of males. A great variety of feminist fairy tales have been written recently; however, most of these are intended for an adult audience and therefore would not fulfill the task of challenging gender stereotypes. The main problem with such stories is related to their use of language which is usually quite sarcastic and rather difficult for a child to comprehend. A different version of *Cinderella* in a fairy tale collection entitled *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* is an example of the kinds of stories that target an adult audience. In this story certain words are spelled or used in different ways for the sake of being politically correct: "wommon", "mother-of-step", "sisters-of-step", "fairy godperson" (Garner, 1994: 31,32). This is not only difficult for a child to understand, but can also be misleading unless we want them to use such a vocabulary. Furthermore, sentences such as the following are not fit for a child's understanding:

> The prince was celebrating his exploitation of the dispossessed and marginalized peasantry by throwing a fancy dress ball […] They began to plan the expensive clothes they would use to alter and

> enslave their natural body images to emulate an unrealistic standard of feminine beauty. (Garner, 1994: 31)

The story mainly focuses on the perception of feminine beauty and women's confining clothes. The fairy godperson, who is a man, asks Cinderella the following questions: "So, you want to go to the ball, eh? And bind yourself into the male concept of beauty? Squeeze into some tight-fitting dress that will cut off your circulation? Jam your feet into high-heeled shoes that will ruin your bone structure?" (Garner, 1994: 33). After midnight when Cinderella ends up in her old ragged clothes, the other women see how comfortable she looks and decide to get rid of all of their confining garments. It does not end with a happy marriage and unlike in the other versions the women in this story collaborate in the end. Cinderella and her family open up a new business and call it "Cinderwear" (Garner, 1994: 37). For the adult reader who is familiar with the previous version of the tale and aware of its gender stereotyping this story may be entertaining. Yet, it still does not promote egalitarian relationships because men are ridiculed for their treatment of women and they are punished by being forced to wear the garments that the ladies took off. If Baker-Sperry's research results are taken into consideration it would be safe to assume that any boy who reads this story would not relate to it and it might still have the undesired effect on his growth in terms of internalizing gender identities.

A rewriting of *Cinderella* is Disney's version entitled *My Side of the Story: Lady Tremaine* which tells the tale from the step-mother's point of view. It cannot be considered a better version for several reasons. First of all, male characters are still in the background and female characters are again set against each other. Cinderella is portrayed as evil and the step-mother as a mother who needs to protect her innocent daughters. What is emphasized here, though unconvincingly, is that the step-mother does the things she does in the Grimms' version only to be fair and to protect her own daughters from the cunning, sneaky, lazy and selfish Cinderella. Otherwise the story is the same as the previous version: glass slippers, fancy ball gowns, the need to charm the prince and competition for his attention still remain. In the end Cinderella marries the prince and the relieved step-mother lives happily ever after with her daughters. Thus, a change in point of view does not bring together a change in what the story teaches the young readers.

Jack Zipes divides contemporary fairy tales into two categories according to their target audience in his book entitled *Don't Bet on the Prince* (1993). These are all feminist tales, some intended for young readers and others for old readers. Although Zipes, in his introduction to the book,

claims that "[i]n none of these tales is marriage a necessity or a goal for young women, rather it is a possibility which may or may not enter their plans," the tales he has chosen to collect under the heading "Feminist Fairy Tales for Young (and Old) Readers" include tales in which marriage once again seems to be the only goal of the protagonist (1993: 16). For instance the protagonist of Desy's tale "had every gift but love, for in all the kingdom there was no suitable match for her" (Desy, 1993: 39). This is expressed in the fourth line of the tale and indicates the idea that every princess needs a suitable match. The Princess sits at the window of her "high tower", busy with her "embroidery" and dreams "of a handsome prince in flashing armor" (Desy, 1993: 40). Thus the main character is confined in a tower, all she can do is to wait for a prince- any prince since the whole purpose of her life is to get married. The only activity she is capable of is embroidery. All these are in line with the traditional gender stereotyped fairy tales. The tale is considered feminist in that it reveals the process of the Princess's realisation of her own stupidity. A prince comes to ask for her hand, however seeing that the Princess is as talented, tall and self-sufficient as he is, the Prince loses interest in her. He wants her to be weaker and more dependent so that he can feel like a man. The Princess makes three sacrifices for the sake of winning the Prince's heart. She stops standing up so that she won't be taller, stops talking so that she won't be smarter and finally she sacrifices her beloved dog so that the Prince won't be jealous and won't have to share her love. In the end the Princess realises how stupid she has been and changes her mind. The overall message of the tale is that one should not try to change who they are for the sake of marriage. A person who truly loves you will not ask for any sacrifice but will take pride in you just the way you are. This is the kind of prince that the Princess finally marries. Therefore marriage is a must and ideally it would be with a handsome prince. This anti-feminist message still remains in the tale. The title of the tale, "The Princess Who Stood On Her Own Two Feet", thereby becomes ironic since it is not about an independent woman but a woman in need of a husband to go on with her life.

Another tale from the same collection, "The Donkey Prince" by Angela Carter, is again educational from a certain perspective, yet this one as well ends with the marriage of a prince and a beautiful girl. The protagonist of the tale is the title character and as expected in the end the Donkey Prince, Bruno, turns into a handsome man. The moral of the tale is that discrimination should be avoided and everyone should be treated as equals. The female character of the tale, Daisy, is "a working girl" and as such her capabilities are emphasized throughout the tale. Each time Daisy and the Donkey Prince face a difficulty, it is Daisy who finds a way out and

Bruno appreciates her knowledge and skills. Daisy's replies in such cases seem to be aimed at pointing out her active role: "A working girl learns a trick or two" (Carter, 1993: 65), "A working girl learns to use her common sense" (Carter, 1993: 66), "A working girl knows how to use her wits" (Carter, 1993: 68). Thus unlike the protagonist of the previous tale, Daisy is not a passive female sitting in her tower. But then again she is not a princess. In the end, Daisy and Bruno's collaboration and success in setting the Wild Men free of their tyrannical leader and thus putting a stop to their discrimination by the rest of the kingdom, are rewarded by a traditional marriage ceremony.

Even though women are assigned active roles in these contemporary tales and their awakening is emphasized, their roles as wives of handsome princes have not changed at all. Nevertheless there has been progress in getting over gender bias in children's books, yet the existence of traditional gender roles everywhere else makes it an extremely difficult task to eliminate its effects on children. For instance, a study conducted by Peggy Rice shows that children do not respond to nontraditional characters. Rice in her study asks the sixth-grade boys and girls to retell a story in writing. However, the students, while retelling the story, describe the nontraditional characters from their own traditional perceptions of maleness or femaleness (Rice, 2003: www.bsu.edu).

To conclude, children are highly influenced by what they read. They begin to develop their ideas of the world when they are little. Everything they read, hear, see, or touch is a lesson for them through which they acquire knowledge of life. Literature invigorates the acquisition of certain knowledge in accordance with the demands of society. It is a tool of the dominant discourse and as such it fulfills one of its functions which is to promote gender roles in children, so that children do "not question existing social relationships", are discouraged from "expressing themselves" and are pressured "to behave in ways that are 'gender appropriate' rather than ways best suited to their personality" (Singh, 1998: www.eric.ed.gov). Nevertheless, there are also children's books such as *The Paper Bag Princess* (1992), *The Tough Princess* (2002) or *Princess Smarty Pants* (2005) which are written exclusively for young readers and therefore carry the promise that children raised reading such books may bring a change in the future.

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