

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

Honors Theses, 1963-2015

Honors Program

1995

Tell Me A Story: Fairy Tales and the Feminist Conflict

Kathleen M. Noonan

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Noonan, Kathleen M., "Tell Me A Story: Fairy Tales and the Feminist Conflict" (1995). *Honors Theses, 1963-2015*. 532.

https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses/532

Available by permission of the author. Reproduction or retransmission of this material in any form is prohibited without expressed written permission of the author.

Tell Me A Story:
Fairy Tales and the Feminist Conflict

A Thesis
The Honors Program
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of English

by
Kathleen M. Noonan
April, 1995

Approval Page

Project Title: Tell Me A Story:

Fairy Tales and the Feminist Conflict

Approved by:

Mara Inulhna, O.S.B.

Assistant Professor of English

Angelina Spurgeon

Professor of English

Cynthia N. Malone

Assistant Professor of English

JP Early

Chair, Department of English

Margaret Roth

Director, Honors Thesis Program

Chris Lyk

Director, Honors Program

Table of Contents

Introduction

Establishing A Stereotype:
The Traditional Fairy Tale

Early Fairy Tale Feminism

Film, Fantasy, and Fairy Tales

The End of Happily-Ever-After?

Conclusion

Works Cited

Introduction

I was fourteen when I first saw the animated Disney version of Sleeping Beauty with my sister and her friend, Kate, who were home on vacation from college. When the movie ended, Kate and I waltzed into the parking lot, singing "Once Upon a Dream" and dancing our way to the car. From that moment, Sleeping Beauty became my favorite fairy tale. I read every version of the story that I could find, and have now seen the Disney movie at least five times. I was drawn to its beautiful heroine, captured by her voice, and enchanted by the seemingly perfect prince. When I grew up, I was going to fall in love just like Briar Rose and live happily ever after.

Of course, I have learned since that life is not a fairy tale and that happily-ever-after endings rarely happen. Life is a series of little triumphs and failures, and good doesn't always defeat evil. It seems that fairy tales can ultimately be deceiving.

On the other hand, I have also learned that fairy tales can be a wonderful escape from reality. Watching Sleeping Beauty or reading "Cinderella" can take me to the places that I dream about, away from the daily disappointments and drudgeries that seem so prevalent in the real world. Fairy tales can give me hope for the future, hope that perhaps a miracle may occur and good will succeed in the end. Perhaps the right princess will marry the right prince and everything will end happily-ever-after.

Although I have been held captive by fairy tales and

their promises of beauty, true love, and happily-ever-after endings, I have also learned through my studies in feminism and women's literature that these stories can ultimately be dangerous to women's self-esteem and to their struggles for equality. By promoting passive behavior, oppressive environments, and subservient female heroines, traditional fairy tales reinforce the very elements of Western culture which women have been fighting against for decades.

Having gained a broader knowledge of the feminist arguments against fairy tales, I now find myself in the midst of a conflict. While I cannot help but enjoy the narrative power, magic, and fantasy of fairy tales, I also agree that a feminist critique of fairy tales is necessary and important if we, as a society, are to bring forth women's fullest potential. And so while some feminists have rejected fairy tales altogether and many non-feminist readers are unaware of these issues, I believe that there are feminist readers, like myself, who are in the midst of a conflicting love for the traditional tale with all of its representations and a valid concern about the dangerous patriarchal traps that lurk beneath their narrative surfaces. This is the "feminist conflict."

We must remember, however, that fairy tales can be read on many different levels and that to speak of fairy tales only in feminist terms is somewhat limiting to the scope of these diverse and creative stories. But feminist analyses of fairy tales are fair limitations if other types of readings and meanings of these same tales are also recognized. The

fairy tale-feminist conflict is only one of many interpretations that have been suggested throughout the long history of fairy tales. And in order to fully understand the effects of this conflict today, we must first examine this complicated historical relationship of fairy tales and feminism.

Throughout the centuries, fairy tales have almost consistently remained an important part of daily life in Western cultures. They were often seen not only as a way to entertain both children and adults, but also as a means of communicating cultural values and societal expectations. Despite suggestions that they are simply children's bedtime stories, fairy tales have had a significant effect on the ways that people see and interact with the world around them. Our means of relating to society, our knowledge of proper attitudes and behaviors, are learned primarily from our first cultural contacts as children--many of which are associations with stories from our parents, grandparents, and large quantities of story books. As fairy tale editor and author Jack Zipes suggests:

. . . the social essence of the fairy tale in particular as well as the manner in which we continually return to it and reformulate it to conceive new worlds, or to reinforce our beliefs in the present one, indicates that we attribute great moral and ideological power to it in the process of socializing and educating our children. (Preface to Don't Bet on the Prince xiv)

And although the Grimms, the famous collectors and publishers of German fairy tales, once stated that they had no intention of "instructing" children in any way, most critics and psychologists agree that fairy tales have remained an important element in childhood development, and especially in terms of gender roles (Tartar 141). Fairy tales in the form of Disney movies and children's books have entertained, informed, and inspired children to react in certain learned ways in social settings and situations.

Extensive research by child psychologists such as Bruno Bettelheim has shown that children who read fairy tales learn from these stories their expected places in society, as well as the consequences of their actions should they choose not to obey these outlines for socially-acceptable behavior. Women in particular have been susceptible to this role-defining, although recent studies have found a similar effect on men as a result of male stereotypes in fairy tales. Traditional stories have generally characterized women as passive, submissive, and gentle heroines with no understanding of their intellectual capacity or physical capabilities. Author and critic Karen Rowe argues in "Feminism and Fairy Tales":

Fairy tales are not just entertaining fantasies, but powerful transmitters of romantic myths which encourage women to internalize only aspirations deemed appropriate to our "real" sexual functions within a patriarchy. (211)

Traditional tales reinforce oppressive, stereotypical female

roles which have been assumed by women (and for women) in centuries past, such as the passive, obedient heroine. (Older women in traditional fairy tales have also been characterized as evil stepmothers and witches who prey upon the naivete and simplicity of the beautiful heroine, but this split representation of women is not an idea which will be addressed in this paper).

The role of fairy tales has almost consistently remained a solid base upon which little girls and grown women have simultaneously learned the meanings of the contrary elements of self-respect and self-denial. Observes Rowe:

Romantic tales exert an awesome power over the female psyche--a power intensified by formal structures which we perhaps take too much for granted. The pattern of enchantment and disenchantment, the formulaic closing with nuptial rites, and the plot's comic structure seem so conventional that we do not question the implications. (218)

The effects of this power must be recognized if we are to understand the influence of fairy tales on our culture--and especially on our views of women and women's roles in society.

Both the creation of fairy tales and the reading of them have influenced and challenged the ways in which women have been viewed, as well as the ways in which they view themselves. Young girls take their cues from the fairy tale heroine, who is unfortunately not all she would seem to be.

Despite her heroine-status, the central female character is passive and dependent upon men to keep her warm, safe, and dry. She is no more independent than a child who needs constant care and attention.

So why are so many women, including myself, still attracted to fairy tales, when we know of their chauvinistic views on the treatment of women and particularly on the ways in which women view themselves? The question is a complicated one, and one which may not have a definite answer. Women have an especially difficult relationship with fairy tales, given the undesirable effects which traditional fairy tale role-models have had on feminine images in society. Yet, despite our anger and frustration, many women still enjoy a good fairy tale with its romantic happily-ever-after-ending and do not regret sharing these stories with their daughters and granddaughters. Nor do many women often consider the negative effects of fairy tales significant enough to prevent them from immersing themselves in the powerful narratives of these stories. Whether this decision is based on complete cultural ignorance or an educated, conscious decision, it is nevertheless significant that traditional fairy tales are still chosen as a source of entertainment and acculturation.

On the positive side, fairy tales have an uplifting effect on their audience. They provide an escape from the drudgery and depression of everyday life into a world of magic and mystery where the right couple always ends up together and the bad witch always dies in the end. This

predictability is not only satisfying, but it can be a refreshing change from the terrible heartaches and unpredictabilities of reality.

Many women today can feel torn between the wonderful romantic fantasies of our childhood fairy tales and the cultural stigma of passive heroines as negative role models for our youth. We desire to enjoy traditional fairy tales strictly as a source of fantasy and romantic love. But we also struggle against conforming to the constraining, stereotypical behaviors expected of women in these stories, knowing that we are capable of much more independence and strength. These two halves pull against one another, making this fairy tale-feminist conflict an intense circle of enjoyment and rejection. We wrestle with the appeal of being swept off our feet by a handsome prince and being told that we should be standing by independently as our prince rides off without us into the sunset. Karen Rowe describes the conflict this way:

Today women are caught in a dialectic between the cultural status quo and the evolving feminist movement, between a need to preserve values and yet to accommodate changing mores, between romantic fantasies and contemporary realities. The capacity of women to achieve equality and of culture to rejuvenate itself depends, I would suggest, upon the metamorphosis of these tensions into balances, of antagonisms into viable cooperations. (223)

The future of fairy tales in any form may depend upon this

rocky historical and contemporary relationship between the realities of women's lives and romantic fantasy. If feminists begin to discard such stories altogether, fairy tales and all they have to offer may have no place in the literary future. It is therefore crucial that we begin to acknowledge and comprehend the complex web of mixed messages these stories give that have surrounded fairy tales since their textual beginnings.

We can learn a great deal about cultural norms by studying the history of fairy tales and their relationship to societal expectations and gender roles. Culture and text share a reciprocal relationship, whereby one allows the other to influence its creation and definition. Critic Lutz Rohrich notes this relationship in "The Quest of Meaning in Folk Narrative Research":

The meaning of a text is not a fixed constant but is a variable, determined by the development of culture and ideas, fashions and trends, and dependent on rulers and ruling ideologies, not to forget the education and cultural awareness, the sex, age, religion, and ethnic group of the consumer. Cultures are systems of meaning. (2)

In order to understand the attitudes about women in our society, both historically and currently, fairy tales and their effects need to be examined. Only then may we begin to know where fairy tales and feminism have been and, consequently, where they might take us in the future. We must recognize the importance of fairy tales and their

messages, not only for the sake of our existing cultural standards, but for the benefit of future generations who must learn from our history as well. Explains fairy tale critic James McGlathery in his introduction to The Brothers Grimm and Folktale: ". . . to inquire of a tale's meaning is to ask, too, why the story was passed on, and ultimately why folk tales, generally, have survived" (x).

From the first German printing of the Grimms' fairy tale volumes in 1812 and 1815, the creation and re-creation of the genre of fairy tales has often placed heroines in traditionally passive roles. Many Victorian fairy tales written in England, because of cultural attitudes about women in the period, also reflect these same oppressive and constricting situations for their fairy tale heroines. But during the latter part of the Victorian era (1850-1900) some authors, especially women authors, began to question these traditional roles, both in and out of literature. They created a new genre of fairy tale, a precursor to modern fairy tales, which gave their heroines freedom and independence. They hoped that girls and women who read their stories would begin to emulate these roles in Victorian society and to accept them as socially-appropriate behavior. And these stories seemed to have made an impact both on authors and on audiences.

Unfortunately, the profound Victorian interest in fairy tales soon died with the dawning of a new century and a growing desire for "realism" in literature as well as in the arts and sciences. Historian Charles Dollar suggests that

Western peoples during this period wanted to know more about the reality of the world around them, placing greater emphasis on the sciences and less on fantasy and imagination (415). The genre of fairy tales slowly lost its place of significance in the literary body of the day, giving way to more realistic, socially-concerned stories about the horrors of the Industrial Revolution and its effects on society. With the exception of their use as amusing children's stories, traditional and Victorian fairy tales all but disappeared into the industrial haze of the late nineteenth century. While they remained familiar to parents and to children, they were for the most part not considered a useful or necessary form of communication or entertainment.

It took a man with a passion for animation and a mouse named Mickey to bring the classic fairy tale back into the daily lives and interest of families, parents, and children. With the horrors of World War I behind them and the Great Depression in its waning years, people wanted and needed something to give them hope and faith in the world again. Walt Disney gave them these in his first full-length feature Snow White, which appeared in theaters in 1938. Like Snow White, many subsequent Disney pictures closely adapted traditional Grimms' tales and therefore presented their heroines in passive, dependent roles--despite the social and political gains in equality which women had made over the years. But as times progressed, so did the Disney studio productions. The strength of the feminist movement in the sixties and seventies, and into today, pressed Disney studios

into creating stronger, more assertive heroines such as Ariel in The Little Mermaid and Belle in Beauty and the Beast.

In the past twenty years or so, scholars and critics have taken a particular interest in the negative effects of traditional stereotypes of women in fairy tales, and in their relationship to views of women in Western cultures. Feminist critics have slashed through traditional versions of such tales as "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," and "Snow White," accusing them of perpetuating negative attitudes toward women. Many feminist authors have even rewritten traditional fairy tales or composed new tales in such a way as to remove elements they consider to degrade women (in some cases even turning the tables on the male characters in the story until they have been accused of "male-bashing").

These criticisms are a necessary and productive way of recognizing the equality of women in Western culture, but they are also confusing and frustrating to lovers of traditional fairy tales. While it is true that fairy tales often present a negative view of women and affect the ways in which women are treated in society, men, women, and children continue to enjoy reading them in traditional forms and watching them in modern movie versions. These stereotypes about women do not seem to offend all readers enough to keep them from liking the tale, and may, in fact, contribute in some ways to their enjoyment of it. There may be some elements of fairy tales which people might essentially need and which are contrary to basic feminist beliefs. Furthermore, the removal of traditional fairy tale elements

such as romantic love, magic, passivity, and marriage from rewritten or original stories rarely succeeds in drawing a captive audience or in deterring audiences from traditional tales. Readers in the midst of the feminist conflict can acknowledge the dangers of these elements, but at the same time we cannot ignore the powerful narrative capacity of traditional tales which feminist fairy tales lack. These modern feminist stories just seem to lose their appeal.

Thus the most pressing question now concerning the relationship between fairy tales and feminism seems to be whether traditional elements such as submissiveness or matrimony can ever be reconciled with the feminist outlook that has brought women so far in modern society. How do we go about recognizing and rectifying the dangerous elements of traditional fairy tales and their detrimental effects on the treatment of women in modern society, while still maintaining and appreciating the wonderful creativity and appeal of these same stories? How do we settle the fairy tale-feminist conflict?

In the chapters that follow, I will trace the high points of the history of fairy tales, from the Brothers Grimm in the early nineteenth century to Disney's Beauty and the Beast and contemporary feminist fairy tales. I will show the conflict feminist readers face by examining both the negative, patriarchal influences of these stories and the positive, lasting appeal of the same tales, thereby showing that the feminist conflict is a complicated web of issues

involving the historical relationship between fairy tales and feminism. And it is an issue which many readers, like myself, struggle through in order to incorporate contrasting beliefs.

Establishing A Stereotype: The Traditional Fairy Tale

In 1812, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published Children's and Household Tales, the first volume in what was to become a series of studies dedicated to the narration, translation, and editing of traditional German folk tales. A second volume was soon published in 1815. The two brothers spent a large portion of their lives researching, rewriting, and adding to the already well-known stories of the German people, stories which they themselves by no means created. Jack Zipes, well-respected contemporary fairy tale critic and translator, points out in his introduction to The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm:

. . . the brothers were neither the founders of folklore as a study in Germany, nor were they the first to begin collecting and publishing folk and fairy tales. In fact, from the beginning their primary concern was to uncover the etymological and linguistic truths that bound the German people together and were expressed in their laws and customs. (xxiii)

Creating a collection of fairy tales for the sake of the stories themselves was far from their intentions. Yet the Grimms' fairy tale collections have not only remained an integral part of German daily life and culture, they have also been adopted into the hearts and minds of various other Western peoples. Told as bedtime stories, seen on movie screens, and discussed in classrooms, Grimms' tales are

almost indisputably the most popular, most recognized, and most studied Western fairy tales--having established themselves soon after the first publication as well-respected and comprehensive collections of German fairy tales. Critic Ruth Bottigheimer acknowledges the Grimms' success in Fairy Tales and Society:

Researchers wishing to investigate fairy tales . . . have typically turned to Grimms' Tales, despite the fact that it is only one of scores of regional and national fairy tale collections published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This choice . . . derives from a cultural designation of the Grimms' enormously popular book as the collection of choice. Positive readership response . . . had established the primacy of this collection by the last third of the nineteenth century. . . . In the minds of the reading public in Europe and North America nearly every other published collection was displaced by Grimms' tales. (13-14)

These stories have brought much enrichment and controversy into our lives, especially in their approach to and reflection of women and women's roles within Western society. Even in their infancies, these stories were read by and had an impact on audiences of all ages.¹

¹Because of its respectability with fairy tale critics, I have chosen to use Jack Zipes' recent Grimms' collection for my paper, due to his attempts to remain as true as possible to the original Grimms' texts.

Because these collections are so important and have had such a strong impact on cultural roles and norms, they have also been a major influence on the ways in which women see themselves and in their relationship to society. Consequently, as young girls and women today read and are told these fairy tales, their first exposure to the feminist conflict may begin with their first exposure to traditional fairy tale stereotypes--the oldest and most famous of which are the Grimms' collections.

By the time of the Grimms, storytelling had become an object of both study and amusement among the middle-class. In fact, many of the primary sources from which the Grimms received their fairy tales were not the "common" German folk as they would have their audiences believe. Fairy tale critic McGlathery confirms this in his introduction to Fairy Tale Romance: The Grimms, Basile, and Perrault: "We have since learned that the number of the Grimms' informants for stories from oral traditions was rather small. Moreover, these informants were almost invariably from the middle or upper classes" (7). It was through these sources, through the Grimms' editing, and through the basic content of the fairy tales themselves that the stories developed the meanings which were preserved in their printed volumes. Bottigheimer notes:

Despite the ancient and international lineage of many of the tales, the process of editing, codifying, and translating them produced a distinctly nineteenth-century text, incorporating

the gender-related assumptions of Grimms' informants. . . . (117)

The stories apparently had no pure form but were rather a combination of ideas and influences from around the world, and especially from the Grimms' circle of companions. These middle-class intellectuals did much to influence the content of the recorded fairy tales, incorporating the values and beliefs of their nineteenth-century world and the socially-accepted assumptions about women into the final texts. In an attempt to reach a wide range of readers, the Grimms often "sought to link the beliefs and behavior of the characters in folk tales to the cultivation of bourgeois norms," writes Jack Zipes in Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion (13-14). Many of these norms are reflected in the treatment and inclusion of women and of women's roles in fairy tales.

But to understand traditional, culturally-acceptable roles for women which were inserted into the texts by the Grimms and their nineteenth-century companions, we must first recognize the gender-related influences from the centuries prior to the Grimm collections. Primary in these fairy tales are views about women and by women from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which were, for the most part, retained through the lifestyles and writings of the brothers.

Although some advancements in equality were being made by Western women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the general attitude toward females was one of contradictions and stereotypes. Although upper-class women were treated as objects of majesty and charity, to be taken care of and

protected from the cruel world, they were sometimes also charged with prominent sexuality and blatant seduction, as were many lower-class women. Women of a prominent social standing should be chaste and demure, it was thought, not beings of passions and feelings. They were to be beautifully devout "angels"--pure and cold (Gilbert and Gubar 50).

Women in general had no individual legal or marital rights. Upon entering marriage, all possessions, including land and wealth, became the property of their husbands. Single women were allowed to hold property, but they were often legally discriminated against strictly on the basis of their sex. Women who tried to support themselves outside of marriage were usually reduced to becoming servants in the homes of the wealthy, doing tiring and unforgiving work which demanded most of the hours in the day and which provided very little pay--certainly less than was earned by male servants of the same household. Richard Altick writes in Victorian People and Ideas: "Domestic servants were to be had for a pittance--over 10 per cent of the female population were working as maids, washerwomen, and charwomen in 1851. . . ." (52). Although it gave women a chance to earn their own living, manual labor was a poor substitute for the security of marriage.

The stigmas associated with this type of manual labor were often worse, however, than the work itself. A lady of any true worth did not demean herself any lower than needlepoint or occasional sewing (nothing too rigorous or demanding). The job of the lady of the house was to instruct

the servants on how to do their work. And to be a woman in the fullest sense, whether servant or mistress, meant, of course, that acceptance of one's position was of greatest importance. Womanly virtues were expected:

"Convention dictated a rigorously stereotyped personality. [The Victorian woman] was to cultivate fragility . . ."
(Altick 53). Kindness and charity, politeness and purity were regarded as the highest virtues a woman could attain for herself, regardless of her social position. Such were the conditions for women in the culture from which the Grimms received their texts.

The Grimms once stated that they themselves had no interest in writing stories that would teach children either moral or ethical lessons, nor were they likely concerned with the positive or negative position of women reflected in or even set by the characters and situations in their stories. But these oppressive stereotypes for and about women are factors which cannot be ignored by contemporary culture. The retelling of traditional stories such as "Cinderella," "Snow White," and "Sleeping Beauty" has affected the ways in which little girls see themselves and their roles in society, as well as the ways in which society regards women. But by the same token, these stories have also entertained--and continue to entertain--audiences of men, women, and children without drawing concern for their negativity or destructiveness. In some sense, such fairy tales possess the narrative power to place their readers in a world of magic and make-believe, far

from the more concrete discussions of gender-roles and women's rights. It is therefore a crucial undertaking for us to understand the relationship between the culture and text, and to begin to recognize the positive and negative contributions of the Grimms both to literature and to societal and gender roles since the first printing of the Nursery and Household Tales.

Perhaps the most famous of all Grimms' fairy tales is the story of Cinderella. Found in variants all over the world, in Eastern as well as Western cultures, the "Cinderella" story has supposedly painted the picture of what is perceived to be every young girl's dream: to be raised out of a lowly station into the arms and castle of a handsome prince. But of course, an exact replication of the Cinderella story requires much more than simply a fairy godmother and a little magic. The messages contained in "Cinderella" send very specific signals as to exactly what type of girl Cinderella is and, therefore, how women should be seen and should behave. In many respects, Cinderella is the traditional fairy tale heroine. She is beautiful, kind, and demure, but she is also submissive, passive, and dependent upon a prince to save her from the wretchedness of her current situation. In Grimms' version, even in her lowly housemaid position, she is still the epitome of a woman of her day.

The interesting thing about Cinderella's beauty is that it is only as deep as the clothing which she happens to be wearing at the time. When her stepsisters want to torture

her and lower her within the ranks of the household, they strip her of her fine clothing and make her do manual labor-- the sure sign of an lower-class woman:

They took away her beautiful clothes, dressed her in an old gray smock, and gave her wooden shoes. "Just look at the proud princess and how decked out she is!" they exclaimed with laughter, and led her into the kitchen. They expected her to work from morning till night. She had to get up before dawn, carry the water into the house, make the fire, cook, and wash. Besides this, her sisters did everything imaginable to cause her grief and make her look ridiculous. (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 87)

Her stepmother actually tells Cinderella how unworthy she is and assumes that her lack of appropriate clothing and social graces will reflect badly on the rest of the household:

"Nothing can help you. I can't let you come with us because you don't have any clothes to wear and you don't know how to dance. We'd only be ashamed of you'" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 89). Of course, her poor clothing serves her well when she is trying to hide from the prince. He does not recognize her until she is actually wearing the glass slipper, since in his mind a woman of any worth would wear only fine clothing and certainly would not reduce herself to performing any servile duties. Even her stepmother and stepsisters are not able to recognize her in her ball gown: "She looked so beautiful in her golden dress that her sisters and stepmother did not

recognize her and thought she must be a foreign princess" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 89).

Cinderella, being kind and submissive, does not question the authority of her stepmothers and sisters, even when they are cruel to her. We are told that "Cinderella obeyed but wept because she too would have liked to go to the ball with them . . ." (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 88). Since the true worth of any woman is her submissive nature, whether or not Cinderella can endure such demeaning treatment while remaining truly gentle and beautiful in the face of evil is surely the ultimate test of her "womanly" nature. Yet not everyone believes in the negative influences of Cinderella's passive behavior. In The Meaning of Enchantment, renowned child psychologist and respected author Bruno Bettelheim also discusses the impact of fairy tales on children and childhood development. Bettelheim suggests that fairy tales project messages of independence and autonomy because the

hero has mastered all trials and despite them remained true to himself, or in successfully undergoing them has achieved his true selfhood. He has gone on to become an autocrat in the best sense of the word--a self-ruler, a truly autonomous person. . . . (128)

It is not clear here whether Bettelheim uses the term "hero" as a gender-neutral term, nor does he specify it as such. Consequently, his statement--especially in reference to a heroine such as Cinderella--loses its relevant meaning. Instead of becoming the "master" (or in this case,

"mistress") of her trials, Cinderella is forced to submit to them and to the aggressive nature of her stepmother and sisters. She is no more autonomous than independent. While it may conceivably be argued that she has remained "true to herself," it is more likely that she has only remained true to her society and to the expected nature of women of the day. If she were being true to her own nature, she would not have "obeyed but wept" when told she could not go to the ball.

In any event, Cinderella's dream finally comes true. She is rescued by, is married to--and becomes the property of--a prince. This marriage is the certain (and expected) fate of any traditional fairy tale heroine, as it was thought at the time to be the certain (and expected) fate of every decent or worthwhile woman.

Even during their courtship at the ball, Cinderella's prince stakes her out as his property: "The prince approached her, took her by the hand and danced with her. He would dance with no other maiden, and never let loose of her hand, and if any one else came to invite her, he said: 'This is my partner'" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 90). Of course, marriage and the passive, submissive "relationship" with a husband defined the ultimate role and end fate of women in Grimms' fairy tales as well as in the society of the day. And Cinderella was no exception to this rule. What else could any woman hope for but a prince to sweep her off her feet, to take her away to his castle to live happily until the "end of their days"?

In Cinderella's case, marriage is exactly what happens. She is not given a choice in the matter one way or another:

After she stood up and the prince looked her straight in the face, he recognized the beautiful maiden who had danced with him. "This is my true bride!" he exclaimed. . . . The prince took Cinderella on his horse and rode away with her.

(Zipes, Grimms' Tales 92)

In the times of oral traditions of fairy tales and into the early 1800's when the Brothers Grimm first began printing such stories, no ending could have been happier than this one. The best any woman could hope for was a kind, loving husband--or at the very least an indifferent one--who could save her from the certain poverty and hardships she would endure if left to become an old maid or to support herself as a servant in the home of the very wealthy. Even for girls whose families were well-off, marriage became a social standard of desirability and acceptance, and Cinderella's fate would have been the ultimate fantasy of upward social mobility in any young girl's dream. So if Cinderella epitomized the virtues of a good daughter and wife, she also represented the dreams of most girls and women of the period.

Cinderella is not the only passive, beautiful heroine who characterizes the social and romantic dreams of these women, however. Characters such as Sleeping Beauty and Snow White also prove to be just as oppressed, while being gentle, submissive, and stunning all the while. And these stories have remained just as popular as "Cinderella"

throughout the years.

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty (also known as Briar Rose) are closely tied for the role of most passive heroine in a fairy tale. Both "sleep" through their rescuing, and both are chosen by men for no other reason than their beauty. Snow White, however, confronts the source of her evil alone three times before truly submitting to "death" by the poisonous apple while Briar Rose simply pricks her hand and falls asleep without warning. So if complete passivity and dependence are in question here, perhaps Briar Rose fits the role in all respects. She appears to represent the ultimate in passive and submissive behavior.

Snow White, knowing that her situation was the worst it could be for a young girl alone in the forest, struck a deal with the dwarves and became their maid in return for their protection: "The dwarves said: 'If you'll keep house for us, cook, wash, sew, and knit, and if you'll keep everything neat and orderly, you can stay with us, and we'll provide you with everything you need'" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 199). As for Cinderella, this is a demeaning position for Snow White, who lived as a princess in her father's castle until her evil stepmother tried to have her killed. Nevertheless, a truly worthy woman does not complain about her position and is always kind and submissive to others--especially to men (or dwarves)--and Snow White accepts her humble position thankfully. To go back into the forest alone was certainly unthinkable for a young woman, and she was much better off in the company and protection of men. Women, of course, had a

delicate nature and were not intended to deal with the wilderness: "Meanwhile, the poor child was all alone in the huge forest. When she looked at all the leaves on the trees, she was petrified and did not know what to do" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 197). As Cinderella submitted to the criticisms and wickedness of her stepmother and sisters rather than give up her graceful and submissive nature, Snow White too considers herself better off and in her proper place as a housemaid and servant for the dwarves. Only a woman of kindness and humility in every situation--one willing to give up even her own dignity--is worthy of the love of a prince.

Traditional fairy tale heroines cannot rely upon their wit and intelligence to save them. That is why princes (or dwarves) exist. The dwarves have to remind Snow White time and again to watch out for the evil queen, even after they have revived her from her stepmother's attempts to kill her: "During the day Snow White was alone, and the good dwarves made sure to caution her. 'Beware of your stepmother . . . Don't let anybody in!'" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 199).

A woman's worth, therefore, could not come from her intelligence or common sense but only from her outward appearance or submissive nature. She had to possess enough beauty to entice a prince to save her and to marry her. This beauty is one quality which Snow White (and every other traditional fairy tale heroine) does possess: ". . . Snow White grew up and became more and more beautiful. By the time she was seven years old, she was as beautiful as the day

is clear . . ." (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 196). If all fairy tale heroines (including Snow White) have one outstanding feature, it is their beauty, their ability to attract a man--and not just any man, but a prince.

After years inside her glass coffin with the dwarves' protection, a prince comes into the forest and discovers Snow White. He asks the dwarves to give him Snow White as a "gift," claiming that he will "honor and cherish her as [his] dearly beloved" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 203). Snow White is in a passive state and is again regarded as a possession, the property of a prince and given by men to a man.

It is only because of her beauty that Snow White is saved from a fate of "permanent" death. In love with the sleeping girl, the prince orders her coffin to be moved. But in the process of moving her, his servants trip over a rock, the poisonous apple is dislodged from Snow White's throat, and the spell is broken. When Snow White awakens from death, the prince declares his love for her and actually asks her to be his wife. In reply, Snow White "felt that he was sincere, so she went with him, and their wedding was celebrated with great pomp and splendor" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 204). The marriage proposal by the prince is unusual for the fairy tale genre, as well as for the day, since most marriages were arrangements for economic and social reasons and were rarely for love alone--even love based on the beauty of the bride. Snow White is given some sort of choice in the matter, which--although rare--still results in her becoming the wife and therefore property of her princely husband.

In many respects, it could be well argued that Briar Rose is the most passive fairy tale heroine and the most dependent upon a prince to save her. It is certainly true that she is given less involvement in her own fate than are other fairy tale heroines, and most likely even less than the majority of women of the day. Her fate has been decided from soon after her birth by the curse of a wise woman who was not invited to the king's great feast, and despite the concerted efforts of her parents, she has no choice but to fall under the spell of the curse.

Like Snow White, Briar Rose is not trusted alone and needs to be taken care of: "It happened that the king and queen were not at home, and she was left completely alone in the palace. So she wandered all over the place and explored as many rooms and chambers as she pleased" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 186). It is this exploration that gets her into trouble, and so we are led to believe that if she had not been left alone, she would not have pricked her finger and fallen asleep. Madonna Kolbenschlag explores the larger consequences of the Rose's lack of independence in Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye:

Sleeping Beauty is most of all a symbol of passivity, and by extension a metaphor for the spiritual condition of women--cut off from autonomy and transcendence, from self-actualization and ethical capacity in a male-dominated milieu. (4)

Briar Rose thus becomes a larger reflection of women and their position in a dominating, patriarchal society.

Briar Rose's dependence upon males also becomes an issue for debate. On one hand, it could be argued that if the prince had not kissed her, she would not have awakened, for we are told that ". . . her beauty was so marvelous that he could not take his eyes off her. Then he leaned over and gave her a kiss, and when his lips touched hers, Briar Rose opened her eyes, woke up, and looked at him fondly" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 189). It could conceivably be argued from this event that it was the kiss which she needed to rise from her hundred year sleep. If she had never been kissed by the prince, she would have gone on sleeping forever and the entire kingdom have been doomed.

On the other hand, we are also told in the Grimms' edition that the day on which the prince reached the castle was also the same day on which the ". . . hundred years had just ended, and the day on which Briar Rose was to wake up again had arrived" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 188). The end of the hundred-year span could be the reason why the briar hedge has turned into "beautiful flowers that opened of their own accord, let him through, and then closed again. . ." (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 188). It did not engulf him as it did all who had tried to reach the sleeping princess before him. The traditional Grimms' version mentions no such "kissing clause" put in by the final wise woman who attempts to save Briar Rose from death by slightly altering the wicked curse, nor does the version written by Charles Perrault (who was another transcriber and translator of traditional fairy tales). This "kissing clause" was most likely an insertion by Disney

studios in an attempt to further romanticize the story. In fact, there is no mention in Grimms' version of a prince coming to "save" Briar Rose either. By all accounts, the girl would have awakened after the hundred years had passed whether the prince had arrived or not. Of course, the prince does provide a complete, happy ending for the whole story since Briar Rose, being the kind and beautiful heroine that she is, can not be left to the dishonorable and unworthy fate of spinsterhood. And so the prince has "saved" the passive sleeping beauty after all--from the humiliation of being unmarried.

Addressing the issues of passivity in fairy tales, Bettelheim argues that instead of persuading children that women should be kept in submissive roles awaiting their protector and hero, both the stories "'Snow White' and 'Sleeping Beauty' encourage the child not to be afraid of the dangers of passivity" (226). He writes:

Fairy tales do not render such one-sided pictures. Even when a girl is depicted as turning inward in her struggle to become herself, and a boy aggressively dealing with the external world, these two together symbolize the two ways in which one has to gain selfhood: through learning how to understand and master the inner as well as the outer world. In this sense the male and female heroes are again projections onto two different figures of two (artificially) separated aspects of one and the same process which everybody has to

undergo in growing up. (226)

While Bettelheim is certainly correct in saying that there are two ways--internal and external--in which a child has to learn to deal with the world, he neglects to point out that children were frequently told the traditional fairy tales in which women were almost always in submissive roles (and men usually in aggressive roles). These were the traditional tales which were first printed by the Brothers Grimm and which not only reflected, but also effectively perpetuated, the dependent, submissive, passive roles of women in their society and in the ages since. As author and feminist Simon de Beauvoir writes in The Second Sex:

Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of a woman; he slays the dragon, he battles giants; she is locked in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, she is chained to a rock, a captive, sound asleep: she waits. (271-272)

It becomes clear that the women portrayed in Grimms' fairy tales are effectively passive, physically and/or mentally. They represent a stereotype of females who are unable--or more correctly, not allowed--to demonstrate their ability to care for themselves in the world.

The general consensus of the day, of course, was that women who were given the chance to care for themselves would only get into trouble and would prove their need to be rescued by a man. One fairy tale which demonstrates this

conception is the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Little Red Cap," as it was called by the Grimms. Like "Cinderella," "Snow White," and "Sleeping Beauty," the message of "Little Red Cap" is certainly one of dependence upon men, but not so much of passivity. Instead, Little Red Cap is given the chance to prove that she is able to take care of herself in the "woods," but fails when she is eaten by the wolf and needs to be rescued by the huntsman--another version of the "prince."

One of the more obvious interpretations of "Little Red Cap" is that the child is "raped" by the wolf. The wolf follows the child to her grandmother's house, where he lures her into bed, saying of his big teeth, "The better to eat you with." But there are, in fact, two polar representations of men within the "Little Red Cap" story. The wolf is an evil man of society who wishes to take advantage of women, perhaps to treat them as objects of sexuality. The huntsman, on the other hand, is representative of a "princely" man whose duty it is to protect and defend the purity of women. And the overall message of "Little Red Cap" is that women, like children, should do as they are told and refrain from letting their curiosity get the better of them. Red Cap learns that her curiosity and failure to listen to her mother (and to society) are the root cause of her trouble. Likewise, her ignorance of the world contributes to the situation: ". . . and just as Little Red Cap entered the wood, a wolf met her. Red Cap did not know what a wicked sort of an animal he was and was not afraid of him" (Zipes, Grimms' Tales 102). The

message to young girls and about the women of the period was a warning about the supposed dangers of being a woman, the first of which was ignorance.

Yet as stated before, not everything about Grimms' fairy tales is negative or oppressive. Victorian men and women read such stories mostly for entertainment, much as we do today. Most readers did not stop to consider the depictions of women as either negative or stereotypical, though they were most certainly being influenced by these stories. Fairy tales were an escape from the hardships of everyday life. They provided hope of a better future, when they would be cared for and--at the very least--sheltered from the difficulties of the late nineteenth-century, when all that many women had to look forward to were fifteen or twenty years of hard labor and difficult childbirth. Fairy tales gave them something to cling to. They could at least lose themselves in the enveloping narrative strength of the fairy tale for a few moments. Pretending they were the heroine who finally found her prince, or the prince who finally found his love, both men and women could enjoy the magic and passion of fairy tales and somehow make a connection with their own daily lives. Whether or not these stories influenced the ways in which women were treated did not really matter to most men and women, as it often does not matter today. What did matter was the moment of joy and delight when the magic worked its wonders and the couple rode off into the sunset, happily ever after. At least for a few moments, everyone could imagine that he or she was the lucky bride or groom.

As critic August Nitschke points out, "Fairy tales as well as other stories . . . make one imagine places and, as we know . . . assign roles to oneself" (167). And for many contemporary readers, fairy tales and imagination are still a great form of entertainment.

For readers from the middle- and upper-classes who were already living the supposed fairy tale life, these traditional fairy tales also helped to reinforce the patriarchal standards and stereotypes of the day. These people were made to feel that they were the lucky ones, that all of their dreams were coming true because they were living the life that the lower-classes were dreaming about. So even for these higher-class readers, fairy tales played an important role as a source of entertainment and as a societal influence.

We can learn much from these stories in response to questions about how views of and relationships with women were thought about and, on some levels, carried out. By studying the Grimms' volumes today, we are given a glimpse into the lives and customs of cultures which became the foundations of our own contemporary societies, and which passed on to us these traditional stereotypes. Through these stories we can begin to comprehend the effects of established gender roles in fairy tales on the real men, women, and children who listened to them and, eventually, read them through the work of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm. As these stories were modeled after society, so too was society modeled after these stories. The Grimms' fairy tale

collections are the foundation upon which the study of fairy tales has been built. And if we judge our ideas of who we are and who we are to become as women against the ideals and values intrinsic in traditional fairy tales, then the Grimms' volumes are most importantly the basis upon which we must start our search for the conflicting--and yet combined-- patterns of both entertainment and social idealism.

II.

Early Fairy Tale Feminism

Even during the second-half of the Victorian period in England (approximately 1865-1900), society continued to maintain many of the oppressive and negative cultural roles for women as exemplified in traditional fairy tales and continued to assume that such fairy tale romances were the dreams of every girl and woman. Women were making great advances in equality and achieving many legal rights and opportunities during these years. But they also started to struggle between the temptations of enjoying the narrative realm of traditional fairy tales and of recognizing the dangers of believing and following such negative stereotypes. Consequently, many authors, both men and women, began to write their own versions of traditional stories as well as create original fairy tales which removed some of the negative female roles. They placed women characters in more respected and independent positions, while trying to retain the same excitement and romance (by which I am generally referring to the concept of romantic love) of the original fairy tales.

The late Victorian period brought great changes to women in both England and America in "the conditions of [their] lives, as well as in the formation . . . of a powerful female literary tradition" (Gilbert and Gubar 161). As attitudes about women broadened and legal rights were granted to them, new opportunities began to appear, particularly for many

upper-class women. This opening of opportunity was especially true in the literary profession. Women wrote more, and publishers became more willing to accept stories written by women. In many ways, this literary movement paved the way for important developments in attitudes of and about women.

As the Industrial Revolution wore on in England and in the United States, many people began to notice the perilous and hideous conditions in which most of the populace lived: slum housing, treacherous work places, disease-ridden streets. Workers and interested individuals started to demand their rights, as humans, to better working and living conditions. Many tried to organize unions, hoping that their joint power would force factory owners and managers to improve conditions and wages. Both men and women involved themselves in these efforts, hoping to better their lives. Women who had once worked only in their homes now moved into factory jobs in an attempt to help support their families in the increasingly difficult economies. Historian Laura Frader writes in her essay "Women in the Industrial Capitalist Economy":

As factories began to dominate the skylines of European cities, more women worked outside the home than ever before, and women's work experience changed dramatically. . . . Women who had formerly spun or [woven] in their homes found jobs in factories, where large-scale production of textiles created a demand for their unskilled, cheap labor.

Most of them were single and relatively young, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. (315) Slowly but surely, women were being let out of the house and into the workplace, whether by necessity or by choice.

In spite of low wages and poor working conditions, the changing forces of unions, lectures, and protests in the economies and social settings eventually contributed to the rising recognition of women as individuals both legally and intellectually. As Frader illustrates, "The very forces that oppressed women also created the conditions through which they forged links with one another and organized to fight oppression" (330). Writers like John Stuart Mill, who wrote the influential The Subjection of Women, took up the suffragists' cause and joined this feminist movement.

While the going was slow and the results often minimal, the struggle for the vote and greater legal rights for married women was eventually effective with English women gaining the right to vote in 1870, although women in the United States did not see the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment until 1920. Women also received the right to more and better education, gaining access to institutions of higher learning and opening doors to professions such as medicine and teaching. According to Frader:

The fact that young middle-class women began to enter the ranks of teachers and nurses reflected a shift in the ideals of domesticity. Cultural norms still demanded that women be nurturers and teachers in the home, but these values expanded to allow

middle-class women to take those roles into the public world as well. (327)

While women were still molded into traditional care-takers and domestic workers, they were at least given the opportunity to prove themselves worthy outside of the home. Society was slowly opening its doors to the female population.

At home, many men and women worked to change attitudes about the roles of women and their places with respect to men and to domestic life. In the past, women had been thought of only in terms of their "usefulness" and "ability to please" men (Gilbert and Gubar 168). They were objects of beauty and majesty, and upper-class women received the most societal pressure to maintain this sense of grace. Writes Historian Richard Altick: ". . . [ladies] portrayed 'ideal' specimens of Victorian girlhood and womanhood, wrapped in an aura of virtue and innocence" (56). And seeking to change these views, social and literary movements were put into action.

Fairy tales continued to constitute a significant part of this new social and literary development. Writes Jack Zipes: "To write a fairy tale was considered by many writers a social symbolic act that could have implications for the education of children and the future of society" (Introduction to Victorian Fairy Tales xix). In the area of children's literature and especially fairy tales, authors began to give young heroines more freedom from social constraints and provided them with power and choices both during their adventures and in looking ahead to their

futures.

For many women, writing was the only means by which they could fight for their rights and present their views. Critic and author Edith Honig confirms this view in Breaking the Angelic Image:

While the feminist movement of the late nineteenth century was fighting bloody battles, the mode of fantasy was fostering a quiet rebellion fueled only by pen and ink--one that held out great hope for the future equality of the sexes because it worked in a magical way on the minds and hearts of future generations. Imprinted on these young readers of fantasy was an image, almost subliminal perhaps, but nonetheless lasting, of the positive force of woman power. (9)

While some authors continued to write traditional versions of classic fairy tales (such as "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper" by George Cruikshank or "The Princess Nobody" by Andrew Lang), many writers--including women--took the opportunity to create their own stories, which broke from the mold of traditional tales and which allowed their female characters to make bold choices about their lives. Honig asserts:

With fantasy or fairy tale came the freedom to project the author's own conceptions of what females were really like, or at least what they had the potential to be, in a freer, less repressed society. (Honig 3)

Stories such as "The Spell of the Magician's Daughter" by Evelyn Sharp tried to shake loose the bonds of Victorian stereotypes and set their heroines on new paths to adventure with creative choices about their futures. And Lewis Carroll's short stories Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass became perhaps the most famous Victorian fairy tales to give their heroine the freedom and independence to step outside of society's constricting boundaries. This situation is also ironic because Carroll was male and was most likely not intending to write a feminist fairy tale. Yet his books have outlasted almost all other Victorian fairy tales or fantasies.

Victorian authors were not always writing for children, however. The fairy tale form was used by many writers as a means of persuasion for adults whose opinions and ideas they wanted to affect and sometimes were written for both adults and children. As Zipes confirms, fairy tales for children were also intended to affect their adult audience:

The Victorian fairy tale writers always had two ideal audiences in mind when they composed their tales--young middle-class readers whose minds and morals they wanted to influence, and adult middle-class readers whose minds and morals they wanted to challenge and reform. It was through the fairy tale that a social discourse about conditions in England took place. . . . (Preface to Victorian Fairy Tales xi)

These stories in turn had a reciprocal relationship with the

women and girls of the Victorian age, pushing them to greater independence and power, and moving them into the beginnings of the twentieth century while at the same time influencing the writing and creation of new fairy tales by these very women.

Of course, traditions die hard, even when oppressive, and writers continued to encourage and defend the original versions and ideas of classic fairy tales. George Cruikshank's "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper" (1854) is one example of how many writers tried to continue interest in traditional versions. While Cruikshank himself turned to rewriting fairy tales as a means to further his fight against the use of alcohol after his father died of alcoholism, he continued to reinforce the roles of women and girls as beautiful, kind-hearted, and generous in the face of evil and abuse. Though it was most likely not his intention to do so, Cruikshank succeeded in furthering the Victorian notion of women as possessions, objects of beauty, and useful only as caretakers of children and households.

Cruikshank opens "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper" with an introduction to Cinderella and her kindly nature, irresistible charm, and good looks:

. . . everyone used to say upon seeing her, "Oh! what a lovely little girl! Oh! what a sweet little creature!" but although the little girl heard all these praises, they never made her proud or vain, for her disposition was even better than her looks.

Cruikshank also introduces Cinderella's biological mother in soft and gentle phrases, noting her beauty and kindness. He even excuses her wicked step-mother somewhat for her cruelty to Cinderella, saying that while "[i]t is the nature of women to love children, because the Almighty has appointed her to bring them up", Cinderella's step-mother had a few qualities, such as being "proud, selfish, and extravagant," which led her to be "unjust and cruel" (39). In identifying Cinderella's evil step-sisters, who treat her with contempt and cruelty as their mother does, Cruikshank softens the introduction by noting that it is " . . . a very unpleasant thing to speak ill of ladies, but the truth must be told . . ." (41). And since Cinderella is "of such a kind and amiable disposition," she does all of their work without so much as saying a word. Even when her step-sisters apologize later for the cruel ways in which they have treated her, Cinderella is quick to forgive them:

Cinderella's tender heart was touched at the repentant words of her step-sisters, and she also, bursting into tears, threw her arms around their necks, and kissing them one after the other, said: "Dear sisters, never say another word about it; I hope these strange changes will be the means of making us all the happier." (53)

Cruikshank dotes on Cinderella's generosity and kind heart throughout his narration, supplying the foundations for a view of women which depends upon a submissive and giving nature such as hers.

When asked by her godmother if she, too, wishes to go to the ball with her step-sisters, Cinderella becomes the dutiful daughter, saying:

While I would like to go . . . the thought of my poor father came into my mind, and I now feel that I should not like to go and enjoy myself, and be

merry whilst my father is pining
away in prison. (44)

Cinderella's godmother approves of the girl's conduct and suggests instead that she go to the ball only to make connections with men who may be able to help her get her father out of prison. So Cinderella goes to the ball, aided by her fairy godmother. Of course, the gist of the story is much the same as every other version of Cinderella. The prince takes one look at the beautiful girl and immediately falls in love with her, swearing that she is the only woman fit to be his bride: "[The young prince] was at once struck with her beauty and sweet expression, and fell deeply in love with her the moment he beheld her" (47). Cinderella once again becomes an object of beauty which the prince is determined to possess at all costs, even though he has never spoken to her and doesn't know anything about the girl or even where she comes from. None of this matters, for she is the most physically appealing girl in his presence.

By excusing the step-mother and her daughters for their wicked actions towards the generous and kind Cinderella , George Cruikshank perpetuates the traditional views of women

in the Victorian era as gentle, angelic, and generally good-natured. He also adds his own opinion about women to the story by noting that the "Almighty" has made women for the purpose of bearing and caring for children. While women were fighting their way into educations, professions, and independence, authors like Cruikshank hampered their efforts by implying and deliberately stating the proper place and nature--in his view--for women in Victorian society.

Andrew Lang's "The Princess Nobody" (1884) reflects many of the same views about women as Cruikshank's "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper," but in much more subtle ways. Not being a very creative or innovative author, Lang often took traditional fairy tale themes and expanded or changed them to fit his own stories. "The Princess Nobody" is one such example of Lang's variations, and it also exemplifies the oppressive stereotypes placed upon women in both fiction and reality.

Using major ideas from the traditional "Rumpelstilskin," Lang reverses the characters of the king and queen, having the king, not the queen, ask a dwarf for a baby, in return for which the scheming creature asks for "Niente." Not understanding what the word means, the king agrees, only to find out when he returns from war a year later that the baby has been called "Niente" (the Italian word for "nothing") in his absence, until a real name could be agreed upon. Here the baby girl not only becomes a possession for trade, she also is not even recognizable by a given name and is called only "Nothing."

When the dwarf comes to take his daughter away, the king begs the Queen of the Water Fairies to save her. The Queen saves the child, but takes her to Fairyland to live until a brave prince can find her and bring her safely home again.

The entire narrative of "The Princess Nobody" revolves around Prince Comical--who later becomes Prince Charming--and his efforts to find and return the Princess to her home. Not only is the Princess referred to as "Niente," but the knowledge of her given name (Gwendoline) gets the Prince into trouble and turns the Princess into white marble. The Prince must use all of his manly charms to convince the King and Queen of Fairyland to allow him to repent for breaking the laws of the land in finding out the Princess's real name. Meanwhile, the Princess is merely an inanimate object and possession which the Prince is seeking to own.

The only choice the Princess is given in the matter is during Prince Comical's marriage proposal--and even this is really only for dramatic effect:

And there, with all her long yellow hair, there sat the Princess Niente. And the Prince Charming laid his crown at her feet, and knelt at her feet, and asked the Princess to be his lady. And she did not refuse him (257)

There is, of course, no question of whether the Princess is going to marry the Prince. This is her sole purpose in life--to be an heir for the King and Queen, and to marry so that her children will become heirs as well. Though the "Princess Nobody" is even a little cross with the Prince for

guessing her given name and turning her into marble, she gets over it quickly: ". . . he chased her for a minute or two, and at last she laughed and popped up her head over the mushroom, and pursed up her lips into a cherry" for a kiss to forgive the Prince (261). Like Cruikshank's "Cinderella," Lang's fairy tale reinforces the values of women as beautiful, angelic, giving creatures who are to be married off to the best possible suitor with no choice of their own in the matter. Lang himself commented on the endings of his tales: "They are rich in romantic adventure, and the Princes always marry the right Princesses and live happily ever afterwards . . ." (247). Tales like Lang's were not as widely read and as influential as other authors', but they did succeed in reaching some portion of the population during the Victorian period.

While authors such as Cruikshank and Lang were dealing with fairy tales in traditional styles and with women in traditional roles, other authors were writing fairy tales for both children and adults which challenged the roles of heroines. Thriving on support from the significant changes for women being made in Victorian society (and sometimes without even realizing what they were doing), Lewis Carroll, along with such women writers as Evelyn Sharp, Harriet Childe-Pemberton and Mary De Morgan, succeeded in breaking free from the restrictive social bonds on women of Victorian society. They also provided examples and ideas for younger and older generations alike in rethinking women's roles. As Honig observes, their suggestions would become the basis for

strong fictional heroines--and real women--who would fight for rights in the years to come:

The notions of femaleness that Victorian children acquired from their fantastic readings would affect their life view and that of all whom they touched. The child readers of Victorian fantasy would, after all, be not only the future adult readers, but also the adult writers. (2)

Again, the reciprocal relationship between story and reality becomes apparent as we examine the effects of fairy tale heroines not only on other stories but also on the Victorian society in which they were written and read.

These tales also had a strong feminist influence on their readers. Concerning this feminist structure, Zipes notes:

The narrative strategies of these tales strongly suggest that utopia will not be just another men's world. What is significant about the "feminist" utopian tales is not so much the strength shown by the female protagonists, but the manner in which they expose oppression and hypocrisy. Here, the social critique is both implicit and explicit as it pertains to Victorian society. (Introduction to Victorian Fairy Tales xxvi)

Certainly, the fairy tale was not only a children's genre to the Victorian writer. Instead, it had become a means of changing society and creating a better future for children and adults alike, and especially for women.

Lewis Carroll may not have considered his volumes Alice in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking-Glass (1871) socially or politically ground-breaking, yet in many ways they are the earliest feminist fairy tales. They were also some of the most popular stories among both children and adults. Comments Honig: "Lewis Carroll's best-selling Alice's Adventures in Wonderland made such an impact even in its day that an enchanted Queen Victoria just had to have an audience with the author" (1). Alice's strength and intelligence fit perfectly with the powerful Queen's reign and personality and set the tone for new feminist fairy tales of the period. Suggests author and contemporary critic Camille Paglia:

Alone and lost, [Alice] shows courage and resourcefulness. Strange, menacing beings and disorienting alterations of space and time beset her. But she survives by her wits, reasoning her way through each problem. . . . (Introduction to Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking-Glass ix)

Carroll gives Alice the freedom to journey on her own, when the rule of the day--even in fairy tales--was that women and girls needed to be accompanied or chaperoned everywhere they went. Alice is allowed to make choices about where she will go and what she will do. Carroll writes his character with enough wit and intelligence to get her where she is going without relying at all upon her looks or her charm, as so many women were expected to do. Perhaps most significant of all is the fact the Alice is not rescued by, nor married off

to, a Prince (or any other royalty!) at the end of the story. Instead, Alice saves herself once again by using her mind-- and not her beauty.

A critical feature of Alice's character is that no reference is ever made to Alice's looks or personality. In fact, she is rarely described nor is her physical appearance even alluded to except during a brief conversation with some flowers (who criticize her "petals," suggesting that she is too pale and unattractive). Carroll instead demonstrates Alice's strength of character in her conversations and encounters with strange and wonderful characters, including some very pushy royalty. But while Alice is often frightened and confused about how to handle crises, she doesn't give up and even scolds herself for crying: "'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply, 'I advise you to leave off this minute!'" (24) More significant than Alice's maturity is her ability to think quickly in sticky situations and even to stand up for herself in conversations with everyone from a bed of live flowers to the Queen and King of Hearts and the Red King and Queen. She sharply responds to the King of Hearts' questioning about her knowledge of the Knave of Hearts' guilt: "'How should I know?' said Alice, surprised at her own courage. 'It's no business of mine'" (108). She becomes even bolder as her trial for talking rudely to the Queen wears on and she can find no logic in the proceedings:

"No, no," said the Queen.

"Sentence first--verdict afterwards."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Alice loudly. "The idea of having the sentence first!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the Queen, turning purple.

"I won't!" said Alice.

"Off with her head!" the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.

"Who cares for you?" said Alice. . . .

(164-165)

Alice's greatest contributions to the women's movement in the Victorian period may stem from her ability to think for herself and to handle difficult situations without relying on beauty or grace to see her through. Edith Honig agrees:

[Alice] brings to bear the armor of a good Victorian upbringing--politeness, good manners, obedience, a socially-acceptable education in the arts and sciences, modesty and reserve. At first she tries to meet all conflicts with these defensive weapons, resorting to tears when they fail. But, increasingly, Alice's eyes are opened. She sees that her Victorian virtues are failing her, and so she learns. She learns to deal with new situations by acquiring new weapons--not only defensive weapons, but at times aggressive ones, as well. She learns to be independent, resourceful, daring, adventurous, and even . . . assertive. (77)

Carroll may not have intended such a moral purpose in his

story, but one appears nonetheless. Alice becomes one of the first fairy tales heroines to rely completely upon herself and her intellectual capacities. This independence in turn helped give Victorian women who read about Alice a new sense of freedom and assertion in their own lives.

But it is not only Alice's intelligence which sets her apart from traditional fairy tale heroines. By rescuing herself from the dangers that she faces and in venturing alone and unescorted, Alice sets a new standard for women who are allowed to make their own choices and can fend for themselves without the aid of a man--or without marrying him in the end of the story. In fact, the closest Alice ever comes to such a fate is her encounter with the old White Knight, who fights bravely for her in battle only to take her to the end of the forest and leave her once again on her own. And the poor Knight never quite meets the traditional fairy tale standards. From the very beginning, both the Red Knight and the White Knight prove to be failures as horsemen as they fight for their prisoner, Alice:

This time it was the White Knight. He drew up at Alice's side and tumbled off his horse just as the Red Knight had done: then he got on again, and the two knights sat and looked at each other for some time without speaking. Alice looked from one to the other in some bewilderment. (295)

Throughout their journey to the edge of the wood, Alice is constantly assisting the elderly White Knight (who eventually wins the battle) to stay on his horse.

Even the White Knight's appearance is unkempt and unprincely: "He was dressed in tin armor, which seemed to fit him very badly"; he had "shaggy hair" and a "gentle face and large mild eyes" (298). Instead of a gallant, intelligent, handsome knight (or prince) coming to rescue Alice, she is, in essence, rescuing the White Knight from failure and despair by allowing him to escort her to the edge of the forest.

Marriage is not an option for this mismatched couple. The White Knight is much too old and backwards to be of any help or protection to Alice. She is much better off on her own. The traditional character of the "prince," the savior of the fairy tale heroine (and of the Victorian woman), is instead a mockery for Alice on her journey. There is no man to possess her and none to marry her, to take her away. The fairy tale knight comes to sweep her off of her feet, only to fall on his head.

The only other male in any position of royalty and power who may be of any assistance to Alice is the King of Hearts. But he is even less help than the White Knight and even more of an idiot. While he is kind, gentle, and quietly pardons the prisoners whom his wife has unfairly and unnecessarily sentenced to death, his abilities of both control and intellect stop there:

"What do you know about his business?" the King said to Alice.

"Nothing," said Alice.

"Nothing whatever?" persisted the King.

"Nothing whatever," said Alice.

"That's very important," the King said, turning to the jury. . . .

The White Rabbit interrupted: "Unimportant, your Majesty means, of course," he said in a very respectful tone, but frowning and making faces at him as he spoke.

"Unimportant, of course, I meant," the King hastily said, and went on to himself in an undertone, "important--unimportant--unimportant--important--" as if he were trying which word sounded best. (158)

It is in fact the White Rabbit--and not the King--who has any real intellectual influence. The power of royalty and kingship are not used--if they can be used by the King at all--for rescuing Alice but serve only to prove his mental deficiencies. He is hardly a dynamic example of the fairy tale prince in any form.

Thus little Alice is essentially on her own. There are no capable men to rescue her, as in traditional fairy tale form. And instead of relying upon her charm or good looks, Alice's most important attribute has nothing to do with beauty and everything to do with intelligence, ability to adapt to strange situations, and quick wit.

Lewis Carroll's stories about a young girl's adventures did much more than simply entertain adults and children in the Victorian period and in the century to come. Both Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass began a

revolution in the form and function of fairy tales. Honig believes that the doors were opened for new experiences for girls, in literature and in life:

Especially after 1865, with the examples of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland before them as a model, more and more writers felt free to depict little girls who could be independent, aggressive, and even rebellious. (69)

Carroll and Alice set an example that was to be followed not only by other Victorian authors but by Victorian women, both young and old, who believed in themselves and in their abilities--and not just in their beauty and relative usefulness to men. According to biographer Derek Hudson in Lewis Carroll: An Illustrated Biography, "about 159,000 copies of Alice . . . were printed in Great Britain during [Carroll's] lifetime, and by 1911 [the] figure had advanced to 733,750 with the appearance of cheap editions" (129). Alice's popularity must have contributed to her influence on women, children, and other Victorian authors as well.

Evelyn Sharp takes the relationship of feminism and fairy tales much further than Lewis Carroll. Being a feminist herself, her stories were specifically intended to encourage strong, independent behavior in young girls and women. Sharp became involved in the Women's Movement of the Victorian period while working as a reporter for the Manchester Guardian. Not only was she a "founding member of the United Suffragists," but she also "remained an outspoken champion of women until her death in 1955"

(Zipes: Victorian Fairy Tales 360). Her story "The Spell of the Magician's Daughter," published in 1902, marks the beginning of a new century and a new realm of thought both by and about women. Zipes confirms this new movement in literature:

In contrast to the Kunstmärchen traditions in Germany and folklore in general, which were stamped by patriarchal concerns, British writers created strong women characters and placed great emphasis on the fusion of female and male qualities and equality between men and women. (Zipes: Introduction to Victorian Fairy Tales xxv).

In many ways, Sharp's heroine "Firefly" represents some of the marvelous changes which Victorian women and girls were making. Her story of love and magic was also inspiring and entertaining for hundreds of readers.

Although Firefly is the youngest daughter of a magician, she has no intention of becoming a witch herself. In her opinion, there are much better things that she could do with her time: "'It is too much trouble to be a witch,' she said with a pout. 'Who wants to learn a lot of stupid spells and things?'" (361) But when her older sisters insist that, if she will not become a witch, she must do something else with her life, Firefly decides that marriage to the King's son is the right future for her: "Firefly rose to her feet and gave her short red frock a tug, to try to make it as long as a grown-up person's frock. 'If I must do something,' she said in a resigned tone, 'I will marry the King's son'" (361).

While the choices open to Firefly include one possibility which might give her a position of power and independence, she is still limited to either becoming a witch or getting married. No other options are open to her, so she must decide between the two.

Firefly goes off to the magic forest to think the situation over and meets a "tall, eager-looking boy" (362). He finally gets around to explaining that he is running away from home because it is inhabited by a giant who will not leave until a joke is found to make him laugh. Firefly proclaims that she is in fact a magician's daughter and can disenchant his home. Not really certain of what she is doing, she creates a spell and journey for the boy to follow and sends him on his way. She says to herself on the way home: "'Clearly, I must marry the King's son when I grow up. Anything would be better than trying to be a witch'" (365).

When Firefly gets home and finds that the young boy she has lied to is actually the King's son, she cannot believe her ears: "'Was that the King's son?'" exclaimed Firefly, in a tone of the greatest astonishment. "Well, I am disappointed!" . . . "'I have changed my mind, . . . perhaps I shall be a witch, after all'" (365). But Firefly feels so guilty for using her bogus abilities that she confesses the entire ordeal to her father, the magician. Her father, however, explains that the spell is real, because she "took it straight from [her] head and [her] heart and wove it round the King's son" (365). Firefly learns that it is up to her to set the spell right and she sets out into the forest

by herself. "So, the very next morning, as soon as the sun came up and began shining sideways through the tall, straight trunks of the pine trees, the magician's daughter kissed her father and her three sisters, and started on her travels" (366).

In many ways, Firefly's travels and encounters are much like those of Alice in Wonderland and in the Looking-Glass. She must convince the animals which she created with her spell to help her, using no magic but only her quick-wittedness. By pretending to know a great deal about her powers as a witch, Firefly persuades a large eagle to take her to the dragon of her spell's creation:

"What a magnificent bird you are!" she began in her softest voice. "How is it that you have grown so handsome and so strong?"

"By eating little girls," answered the eagle, sternly. Firefly secretly trembled; for she was decidedly little, and the eagle was decidedly big. However, she managed to go on smiling, and she reached out her hand and stroked his feathers boldly.

"That is hardly the way to speak to a magician's daughter," she said carelessly. "How would you like to be turned into a soft woolly lamb and carried off by your wife for her supper?"

(366)

By using her mind--and not her magic or anything else-- Firefly is able to convince the eagle, a dragon, and a whale

to do her bidding, and the spell is completed. The young boy, who by this time is no more of a boy than Firefly is a young girl, is able to meet all of the animals, and eventually meets Firefly, who has been waiting for him for many years. During this time, the "unpleasant boy" grows into a "tall and brave-looking" man, and Firefly herself grows into a beautiful woman in a "soft white gown, fit for a Princess to go to court in" (371). In the end, the giant is appeased by a joke, and Firefly and the Prince are married. Once again, the traditional theme of the romance fairy tale has been completed as the Prince says to Firefly: "'You are a real witch, . . . for you took a spell straight from your head and your heart, and you have woven it round the King's son.' Then he took her home and married her . . .'" (371)

What is unusual about this particular fairy tale, and what sets it apart from most other Victorian and traditional fairy tales, is the fact that Firefly is not aided by a man in her quest to finish the spell and that she does not rely on her beauty in any way. It is the last sentence of this story which makes it unique and which somehow gives women hope that marriage does not always mean losing power and identity: "So the magician's youngest daughter did marry the King's son, when she was grown up. But there is no doubt that she also became a witch, for to this day she can do what she likes with the King's son" (372). While most women, of course, cannot expect to use magic to "control" their husbands, the ending of "The Spell of the Magician's Daughter" changes the traditional "happily ever after" into

something which women could cheer for and believe in after years of being oppressed and objectified in society. Here the roles are reversed, and the woman possesses the power. Victorian women were finally getting a chance to explore themselves and their abilities. As Jack Zipes points out in the introduction to the story in Victorian Fairy Tales: "Oppression will no longer be tolerated." Certainly, in "The Spell of the Magician's Daughter: ". . . Firefly realizes her full potential as a unique woman by exercising her imaginative powers and striving to overcome tyranny" (360). Although she was not read about as much as Alice, Firefly may have given a little hope to the women of the Victorian period.

The enduring popularity of Carroll's "Alice" stories, which Sharp's "Firefly" lacks, bring to light important questions about the fascination and attraction to fairy tales. Why are we still reading about Alice today and not about Firefly? And more importantly, why are we still reading any fairy tales at all? What is it about fairy tales and fantasies which have kept them in our cultures for so many years, despite the many social and political changes we have been through, especially in regards to women's issues?

Part of the genuine appeal of fairy tales is, of course, the fantasy and the magic. Fairy tales let us imagine worlds and episodes which might not always be possible in reality, and yet we do not question their appearance in stories. They let us escape from reality into worlds which are very like-- and very unlike--our own. The horrors and frustrations of

our every day lives always result in happy endings for heroes and heroines. Fairy tales always end the right way.

Romance may be perhaps the most crucial element of the fairy tale. Although it is not always presented in the traditional "hero-heroine" form (as in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland), romantic love nevertheless plays an important role in the development and resolution of fairy tales. Almost everyone, at one time or another, wishes for the romantic dreams and adventures of the fairy tale princess or prince. Socially, they are the ultimate in love and affection, courage and grace. We strive to be as they are on the screen and in the books.

Why Alice survived through the years and Firefly faded into the shadows of Victorian fairy tales is a mystery. Perhaps Alice's outrageous, bold behavior drew more attention than Firefly's rather predictable ending. Perhaps the fact that Carroll was a male author and Sharp a female played a part in the popularity of the stories. One thing is certain, however. Because of Alice's endurance far into the twentieth-century, she contributed to the growing feminism in fairy tales and the fight for women's rights in society, both then and now. Whether we choose to recognize their contributions to the feminist movement, both of these stories have the power to entertain and thrill us in the ways that only fairy tales can.

But how we are to deal with the conflicting messages of any of these tales, traditional or early feminist, is a continuing struggle for feminists and non-feminists alike.

The early feminist struggle that began in the late Victorian period has not only continued into the modern period, but it has also drawn more definite battle lines. In fact, these Victorian fairy tales with their more independent heroines could be considered the the fore-runners to contemporary feminist fairy tales. And as the following chapters will show, the strength of the modern feminist movement and its fight against oppressive stereotypes such as those found in classic fairy tales is pushing ever harder against the powerful attraction of the traditional fairy tale narrative.

III.

Film, Fantasy, and Fairy Tales

For modern Western society, the popularity of traditional fairy tales has lain primarily in the hands of the movie industry and other forms of mass media. We look to these sources not only for entertainment, but also for ideas about how we should dress, eat, walk, talk, and generally behave in our cultural surroundings. So naturally, these media have contributed significantly to the role of fairy tales and, therefore, to the roles and attitudes women have assumed in the last fifty years.

In 1901, a young woman in Chicago gave birth to a baby who would change the world of fairy tales--and animation--forever. His work and the work of the artists who gathered around him would one day bring together not only animation and fairy tales, but would also gather thousands of people every day into magical fairy-lands filled with all of the familiar characters from his most memorable stories. His name and his company would become synonymous with fantasy, fairy tales, and fun. His name was Walt Disney.

Disney himself took years to become the success story that is now known all over the world. But his films, especially his animated versions of classic fairy tales, were instant hits and still remain popular. From his first full-length animated feature, Snow White, which was released in February 1938, to his company's most recent award-winning movie The Lion King (1994), Walt Disney's movies have become

an integral part of American life, as well as becoming a source of entertainment for people in every nation from France to Japan. Children and adults flock to theaters to see them, run to video stores to rent them, and gather at music stores waiting to buy the latest soundtracks. In a very real sense, Walt Disney brought the fairy tale back into the daily lives of people around the world, and brought back interest in imagination instead of the proof of science demanded by the Modernist period. Yet with the cultural and social changes that accompanied the dawning of a new century and the decades to follow, the strength of the feminist movement continued to grow, carrying with it a certain amount of disgust for the traditional stereotypes of Grimms' and Victorian fairy tales. Yet many readers who strongly oppose the negative roles assigned to women in and through these stories are nevertheless drawn into the powerful narrative structure of traditional fairy tales. Thus by bringing the fairy tale to the big screen, Disney also brought with them the continuing fairy tale-feminist conflict.

Snow White, Disney's first attempt at recreating a traditional fairy tale, brought sharp criticism only from art critics, who thought his human characters were crudely drawn and horridly misshapen. But the film was loved instantly by audiences everywhere. Based on the Grimms' fairy tale version of the story, Disney and his crew of animators, voice actors, and song writers created a Snow White which delighted children and adults with its lovable dwarves and catchy tunes such as "Heigh Ho" and "Some Day My Prince Will Come." The

main character of Snow White, voiced by Adriana Caselotti, swept audiences away with her sweet songs of love and romance, while the wicked Queen (Lucille LaVerne) frightened them with her evil cackle and cruel heart. Disney created a truly unforgettable version of the traditional "Snow White," bringing the characters to life on a screen that was larger than life.

Although Disney writers based their story on the Grimms' version, major changes in the plot were necessary to make the story suitable for the big screen. The Queen's death, the first meeting of the Prince and Snow White before she is banished from the Kingdom, and the dwarves' personalities were all added to increase the acceptability and depth of the tale. What was not changed, however, was the character of Snow White herself. Walt Disney may have added and subtracted from the story as fit his animation needs, but he left the submissive, angelic character of Snow White much as the Grimms depicted her. In fact, he might even have succeeded in adding to her passivity in the words of her songs, in the words that are spoken about her by other characters in the film, and in her relationship with the dwarves.

Yet for readers in the midst of the fairy tale-feminist conflict, it is difficult to dismiss the powerful narrative qualities that make this story so exciting--although most of these elements are contrary to strong feminist beliefs. Likewise, the appeal of the film in all of its romantic majesty and grace has not diminished in the 57 years since

its creation. Audiences still continue to enjoy Disney's creative and entertaining film without considering, or perhaps overlooking, the negative female stereotypes which it suggests.

The film itself does not even begin with a glimpse of the submissive, passive, and beautiful Snow White but rather with a long shot of the Queen's castle and then the Queen herself, dressed in the appropriate black cape of a wicked enchantress. It is from the Queen and her Magic Mirror that we first hear of Snow White, of her beauty and kindness which the Queen has tried to hide beneath rags and forced labor. Says the Magic Mirror to the Queen: "Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Alas, she is more fair than thee." And we fade to Snow White, who is scrubbing steps, surrounded by white doves and singing to them of her dream for a prince to rescue her from her labors. Snow White is joined in her song by a prince who has heard her voice over the castle wall. He falls instantly in love with her. And as she runs shyly away into the castle, he sings of his love for her. But she soon reappears, peeking out from behind the curtains as he croons of "one love only for you."

Like Snow White's friendship with the doves, relationship of a heroine with animals--or other small creatures--became a familiar and typical trait of Disney fairy tale films. And in creating this relationship, a bond is established between women and the land and the animals who live with the land. Men, who are frequently associated with destruction of the land or rape of the land, are then

contrasted with the gentleness of women. One example of this contrast is the job of the dwarves, which is to dig and pick in the mines, exploiting the land, while Snow White (in the same sequence) becomes friends with its inhabitants, giving the audience a sense of feminine connection with nature. Yet in one scene Snow White is also depicted as being afraid of the forest and the animals, contradicting the idea that she somehow has a better connection with nature than do the dwarves. So perhaps the message is that women are not capable of being alone with nature, while men possess the power to conquer it.

While the plot of the story is basically true to the Grimms' version with only a few minor additions or diversions, Disney's characterization of Snow White goes much further than the Grimms' narrative in identifying the heroine not only as passive and submissive but also as stereotypically domestic and motherly. During an extremely well-animated forest sequence, Snow White is running through the trees, frightened by everything she sees and hallucinating about unfamiliar shapes coming out of the woods to get her, such as floating deadwood becoming alligators. She finally collapses, sobbing, until she is nudged by the small animals who have come out of the forest to help her. (Again, note the strong relationship between the girl and the animals). A conversation with the animals about what to do when things go wrong leads to another song as Snow White, clapping her hands, says gaily, "OOOh! You sing a song!" Eventually, Snow White convinces the animals not only to take

her to the dwarves' small cottage, but also to help her clean the place up. She happily sings "Whistle While You Work" as she and the animals clearly enjoy themselves in removing the dust and filth from the dwarves' dishes, furniture, and floor.

Maintaining the traditional view of women as beautiful and domestic, Disney also adds a new dimension to the image by suggesting that the dwarf, Grumpy, is not as taken with Snow White's beauty as the other dwarves are and that he fears her: "All females is poison. They're full of wicked wiles." And while the rest of the dwarves are busy washing themselves after Snow White insists that they do so: "March straight outside and wash, or you'll not get a bite to eat". Grumpy declares: "Huh! Women! Ya give 'em an inch and they'll walk all over ya!" In the end, of course, Grumpy takes as much pride in Snow White and her beauty as the rest of the dwarves, and even waits to get a kiss from her.

Perhaps the most important addition to the Disney version of "Snow White," and one which has become known all over the world as part of this story and Sleeping Beauty, is the "kissing clause" which Disney writers inserted into the plot line. In the Disney version--but not in the Grimms'--the Queen's potion will put Snow White to sleep only until "love's first kiss" touches her lips. The Queen dismisses the clause, assuming that Snow White will be buried alive. But in fact in the original Grimm's version of the tale, Snow White is revived only after the piece of poisoned apple is dislodged from her throat. "Love's first kiss" has

absolutely nothing to do with it.

While it is true that the Disney version of "Snow White" reinforces--and even reinvents--ways to keep women from becoming independent and aggressive, this film also brings a great deal more romance and passion to the story. Using careful animation techniques, Disney brings the familiar characters to life on the big screen. The voices are identifiable and dramatic, and the action is heart-stopping. Perhaps the presence of these animated elements are why the movie was and is so appealing to many people. And perhaps that is why the feminist conflict has become an issue for feminist readers in the years since Disney's first release. Although Snow White's passive nature becomes much more defined in the animated version, she also takes on more life and character, drawing audiences to her romantic tale despite her submissive ways. After the terrible years of World War I and the Great Depression, Snow White may have brought some life and hope and love back into people's lives. The film suggested once again that dreams could come true and that romantic thoughts could still exist, even in the face of all hopelessness. And it continues to do so after years of social change and feminist influences on views of women and romance. When Disney re-released Snow White into theaters and on home video in October 1994, millions of copies were sold around the United States and around the world. The movie grossed over \$41 million in theater sales alone (Armstrong 8). Snow White merchandise in everything from underwear to umbrellas also contributed to the movie's

popularity and commercial success.

The Disney version of the traditional "Sleeping Beauty" also reinforces oppressive and restricted images of women. But, like Snow White, Sleeping Beauty has continued to appeal to audiences of women and men and children because of its classic romantic style and its "happily ever after" ending. Disney released Sleeping Beauty in February 1959, after beginning the project in 1950 and taking only a two-year break from the film to concentrate on the opening of Disneyland (Maltin 154-5). Using Charles Perrault's version of Sleeping Beauty, Disney's most difficult task was adapting the plot for the big screen without making the story too similar to Snow White. Due to the familiar fairy tale elements of passive heroine, romantic story-line, and happy ending, the studio concentrated instead upon more subtle characteristics of the tale: aggressive Prince Phillip, the wicked Maleficent, and Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather (the good fairies). In doing so, Disney succeeded in bringing out--and adding to--the fairy tale's unique qualities. However, the character of Sleeping Beauty retains the passive characteristics of a traditional fairy tale heroine, while also becoming more dependent upon the other characters as the story progresses.

Although Sleeping Beauty is also referred to as "Briar Rose" by Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather during her life in the forest, this version of the story adds the name "Aurora" (which means "the dawn") to the list, ". . . for [the baby] brought so much sunshine into [the King and Queen's] lives."

This additional name reinforces the idea that the girl represents all of the beauty and hope that the sun brings into the day and into people's lives, again placing emphasis on her looks and demeanor rather than her intelligence or wit.

Disney's characteristic relationship between women and animals plays a large role in Sleeping Beauty, since the animals are used not only as companions for the lonely Briar Rose but as a means to bring Rose and Prince Phillip together. When the animals attempt to impersonate a prince for the day-dreaming girl, they end up stealing Phillip's clothing (which he has hung on a tree to dry after a spill in a creek). The charming Phillip, chasing after the little creatures, is enchanted by Briar Rose's singing and--as in Snow White--falls instantly in love with her: ". . . [her voice] is too beautiful to be real." He joins her as they both sing, ". . . you'll love me at once, the way you did once upon a dream."

Once Briar Rose is put to sleep by the spindle, the rest of the story concentrates on Phillip and his capture by Maleficent, who hopes to prevent him from waking the girl with "true love's kiss." The "kissing clause" is an addition to this story, as it is in Snow White, being a gift from Merryweather to the young Princess after Maleficent's evil spell. Also, no mention of a "hundred year's sleep" is made here as it is in Grimms' version. The three fairies help Phillip to escape from Maleficent's castle with the gifts of a "sword of truth" and a "shield of virtue." In vain

attempts to thwart his efforts to reach the sleeping girl, Maleficent uses her magic to surround the castle with thorns and finally to turn herself into a fire-breathing dragon. But with the help of the fairies, Phillip pierces Maleficent's dragon-heart with his sword and she falls to her death. The prince is then free to climb to his Princess and kiss her. As she awakens, she looks adoringly at her savior and the couple greets their waiting parents.

Briar Rose's increasingly passive behavior in this film reflects the traditional fairy tale heroine. She meets her prince, falls in love with him at first sight, is in danger, and waits patiently for her Prince to rescue her. But like Snow White, Sleeping Beauty was met with wild enthusiasm by audiences in the 1950's and in the decades since its release. Not only does the story contain the great romantic elements of the classic fairy tales, but Disney also makes the film action-packed and accessible to both men and women with its uncharacteristic battle between Phillip and Maleficent (perhaps also drawing men into the conflict between fairy tale ideals of masculinity and those of reality). At the time of the movie's release, many women were still hoping and waiting to be swept off their feet since marriage was the typical path for a woman's life to take. The romance and fantasy of Sleeping Beauty fit right in with the domestic dreams of little girls everywhere, who were waiting to be swept off their feet by a handsome prince and taken to live in his castle. And although women today are often offended by the chauvinistic and patriarchal standards set in older

Disney fairy tale versions, many still enjoy the fantasy and romantic nature of the stories though they may not wish to admit it, and the films continue to be classics. Magic and passion do not seem to have lost their hold on the traditional fairy tale and the modern woman. And many feminist readers, though they continue to argue against the oppressive stereotypes of Sleeping Beauty, also find themselves pulled into the romantic narrative of the story, further intensifying the fairy tale-feminist conflict.

Seeming to follow the historical path of feminist growth in their production of films, Disney moved from traditional fairy tales into the realm of Victorian fairy tales with a short, animated version of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland in 1951. And as the late Victorian stories were fore-runners to the modern feminist fairy tales, so too was Disney's Alice a transitional film between classic fairy tales and later films with stronger, more independent heroines.

Disney's Alice in Wonderland intensifies Alice's spunky nature and self-reliant attitude. Through vocalization and facial expression allowed by the animation, Alice seems even more adept at standing up for her beliefs and taking matters into her own hands. Other characters, such as the Queen of Hearts and the King of Hearts, also become much more defined on-screen. The Queen is a giant woman with a deep, booming voice who is always ordering her husband around. The King, on the other hand, is about a third of the Queen's size and begs of her in a very high, squeaky voice, "Please, please,

please!"

Although the story closely follows Carroll's original text almost word-for-word when there is spoken dialogue, Disney's addition of lighthearted songs and crazy animation techniques such as color changes and facial expression also takes the feminist edge off the story. It becomes instead a silly, benign, strictly entertaining piece of film. The physical humor of the courtroom scene contains much less dialogue than the actual text and therefore does not show Alice's intellectual capabilities. The film concentrates mostly on her awkward sizes in relationship to the other characters in Wonderland. It focuses on her child-like character and not the idea of a girl in transition between childhood and adulthood. For instance, Alice is told to stop crying by a talking, male doorknob instead of telling herself to stop crying. And the relationship between Alice and the rest of the characters is one of child-to-adult instead of character-to-character.

But while this Alice in Wonderland is not representative of the strong feminist themes which are often attributed to Carroll's tale, it is nevertheless an exciting and creative adaptation certain to please any audience of adults or children. As any reader in the midst of the fairy tale-feminist conflict will understand, sometimes a story is valuable just for sheer entertainment--despite what the feminists say.

As times changed, so did Disney films. Though Walt Disney died in 1966, the company has continued to make and

produce animated films, most based upon classic fairy tales such as Hans Christian Anderson's "The Little Mermaid" and the more traditional "Beauty and the Beast." The most recent feminist movement, with its influences on the political and economic aspects of society, also affected the interpretation of Disney animated features. While maintaining a strong tie with the fairy tale genre, Disney producers and story-writers began incorporating feminist influences into their plot-lines. Strong female heroines began to emerge in characters such as "Ariel" of The Little Mermaid (1988) and "Belle" of Beauty and the Beast (1990). Without sacrificing the romance and the passion of the traditional fairy tale, Disney's studio has been able to create more independent females--a difficult task. In some instances a passive female, dependent upon a man for her safety and well-being, is still apparent. But in many ways, the independent Disney heroine paved the way for the fairy tale heroine of the modern age.

Released in the mid-eighties, Ariel of The Little Mermaid set the standard for the independent heroine of modern Disney fairy tales. Ariel's stubborn reluctance to submit to her father's parental orders; her aggressive nature in courting Prince Eric; her courage in dealing with Ursula, the Sea Witch; and her ability to save Eric from drowning all contribute to her thoroughly modern feminist outlook. Ariel will let nothing stop her. She fearlessly explores dark, dangerous, sunken ships as her friend Flounder, a male fish, shakes with fear and stutters, assuring Ariel that he isn't afraid. "Flounder, you really are a guppy," says Ariel.

In dealing with her father, King Titan, Ariel declares firmly that she is sixteen years old and is "not a child anymore!" She dreams of becoming human: "Betcha on land they understand, bet they don't reprimand their daughters. Bright young women, sick of swimmin', ready to stand." (But of course, as we have seen, young women on land have just as many problems with a lack of independence as does Ariel).

After falling hopelessly in love with Prince Eric, a human whom she saves from drowning, Ariel finally defies her father altogether. She visits Ursula, who helps her to become human (in exchange for her voice) so that Ariel can be with Eric and make him fall in love with her.

With Eric, Ariel is aggressive not only in trying to make him fall in love with her but also in her exploration of his kingdom and all it has to offer her. She points and runs in all directions as Eric takes her into the village, dragging him with her. When Eric offers to let her take the reins on their way back to the castle, Ariel gladly accepts and urges the horses faster, frightening Eric and causing them to barely jump a large gap in the road. But after seeing how well she handles the horses, Eric relaxes and lets her drive the rest of the way home.

In the end, Eric and Ariel work together to kill Ursula and to restore King Tritan's throne. Seeing how miserable his daughter would be without Eric, Titan gives Ariel legs so that she may marry Eric and live on land with him. It seems her independence and stubbornness pay off, and thus the first of many strong Disney heroines was created.

Of course, a fairy tale would not be a fairy tale without the love, romance, or happy ending. Although The Little Mermaid does not seem to promote the prominent passivity and submissiveness as earlier Disney films do, it still incorporates many of these ideals. Ariel falls in love with Eric's stoic figure saying, "Isn't he handsome?" and "He's beautiful." Eric, too, falls in love with Ariel's beautiful voice before he even talks to her or meets her. Both characters seem to know immediately that they are in love. Declares Prince Eric: "When I find her, I'll know. It'll just, bam, hit me. Like lightning."

Ariel also has the familiar Disney fairy tale connection with animals. As a mermaid, however, she is connected both to the sea and to the land. Her many animal friends help to stall the wedding between Eric and the disguised Ursula until Ariel can get to the ship to warn Eric. Her best friend is a fish, not another mermaid. And she also has close relationships with Scuttle the seagull and Sebastian the crab, her father's diplomatic aid.

Perhaps the most traditional view of women in The Little Mermaid comes when Ariel is trying to make Eric kiss her. She receives advice from other characters on how to go about it. Ursula tells her that "body language" is the only way to get Eric to notice her and that talking is not a womanly activity: "The men up there don't like a lot of blabber. They think a girl who gossips is a bore. Yes, on land it's much preferred for ladies not to say a word. . . ." Even Sebastian attempts to give her advice on how to get Eric to

kiss her: "You gotta bat your eyes, like this. You gotta pucker up your lips, like this." Both characters try to convince Ariel that men pay attention only to how a woman appears outwardly, without paying attention to who she is inside. And perhaps the emphasis on appearance is a dangerous message relayed by the movie itself, as is the importance of marriage and Ariel's determination to be married to Eric. On the other hand, since both Sebastian's and Ursula's advice proves to be incorrect, Ariel can also be seen to possess many characteristics which allow her to remove herself from the expectations of the traditional fairy tale heroine mold. She is free to break new ground in feminine roles and images and to send messages of independence to audiences.

Just two years after The Little Mermaid, the creation of Belle in Disney's Beauty and the Beast solidified the role of the independent, stubborn heroine in Disney fairy tales. But Belle added a new dimension to the character form: intelligence. Belle's entire town talks about her behind her back because she is intellectual and likes to read. They think she is strange with "her nose stuck in a book." And Gaston, the man who determinedly pursues her only because she is attractive, is puzzled and concerned about her reputation among the townsfolk. He even goes so far as to declare: "It's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas and thinking. . . ." He suggests instead that she try to concentrate on more productive and socially-acceptable activities, telling her, "It's about time you got your head

out of those books and paid attention to more important activities. Like me." Belle's intelligence and delight in reading books is characteristically unacceptable in her "provincial town." She declares, "I want so much more than they've got planned."

In addition to her intelligence, Belle also displays a stubborn and courageous personality parallel to Ariel. As far as her future is concerned, she has more elaborate ideas about who she will become. She is dumbfounded as she listens to Gaston tell her about the life he has planned for them:

"This is the day your dreams come true."

"What do you know about my dreams, Gaston?"

"Plenty. Picture this: a rustic hunting lodge, my latest kill roasting on the fire, and my little wife massaging my feet while the little ones play on the floor with the dogs. We'll have six or seven."

"Dogs?"

"No, Belle. Strapping boys like me."

Beginning to understand the path of Gaston's archaic line of reasoning, Belle embarrasses him by refusing his marriage proposal on the grounds that she just doesn't "deserve" him. Determined to make more of her life than anyone would expect, she is adamant about not marrying a man like Gaston: "Can you imagine? He asked me to marry him! Me! The wife of that boorish, brainless. . . . No sir, not me. I guarantee it!" The audience is never told exactly what Belle has planned for her life, but we do know that it has nothing to do with

marrying Gaston or anyone else with his ideas about a woman's place--which is, of course, within his home and bearing his children.

When her father, Maurice, is captured by the Beast, Belle offers to exchange her own freedom for her father's with a great display of courage:

"Wait! Take me instead."

"You would do that?"

"If I did, would you let him go?"

"Yes."

"Come into the light. [Gasp!] You have my word." Despite the protests of her father, Belle is taken prisoner by the Beast and Maurice is taken back to the village.

With the Beast, Belle's stubbornness is more apparent. She refuses to accept his so-called invitation to dinner, and endures his wrath when he comes pounding on her door, demanding to know why she had not shown up for the meal. When he frightens her in the west wing of the castle--a place she has been forbidden to go--Belle runs away into the forest, only to be attacked by a pack of wolves. Coming after her, the Beast saves her life and collapses. In return for his valiant efforts, Belle takes him back to the castle and cleans his wounds, demanding that he "learn to control [his] temper." From then on, their friendship takes a whole new turn. And again we see that women have a contradictory relationship with nature. Although Belle is friends with all of the animals, she is also vulnerable in the forest and incapable of taking care of herself.

Of course, Beauty and the Beast has the characteristic elements of the traditional fairy tale, as well as feminist ones. Belle's relationship with animals such as the horse, Phillipe, and the enchanted dog-footstool is heightened by her personal feelings for the Beast, who in himself is an animal. Belle also has the extraordinary voice of Disney fairy tale heroines, and is noted for her beauty by the townsfolk: "It's no wonder that her name means beauty. Her looks have got no parallel." But if Gaston chooses Belle from all of the eligible women in town because of her looks, saying "[She's] the most beautiful girl in town. And that makes her the best," his shallowness is undercut by the overall message of the film, which is that beauty is "in the eye of the beholder." In its own right, the original story of "Beauty and the Beast" moves far deeper into the psyche of the reader than most fairy tales. Although the tale maintains the traditional elements of passion, enchantment, love, and happily-ever-after, it also proves that sometimes the quest for a fairy-tale ending can lead in entirely unexpected directions. These ideals of romantic love are not as easily met as "Sleeping Beauty" or "Snow White" would have us believe. Beauty and the Beast proves that traditional fairy tales can be appealing to the general public while still offering more than images of passive heroines and aggressive heroes. It also says that heroes and heroines need one another if they want to be saved from the evil of others, and that beauty often lies deeper than the surface of one's skin.

Walt Disney probably did not know how significantly his

films and his company would affect our modern culture and societal attitudes. Nevertheless, what has resulted from these films is an extraordinarily diverse group of fairy tale heroines, many of whom play very active roles in their story. By bringing back an interest in traditional tales and sustaining their popularity while adding new dimensions of feminism (such as independence, courage, and determination) to the heroines, Disney and company have helped to change the face of fairy tales--and the face of fairy tale heroines--forever. And more significantly, they have brought the source of the struggle between traditional fairy tales and feminism into the daily lives and minds of his audiences.

IV.

The End of Happily-Ever-After?

While Disney has been creating strong, self-reliant heroines on-screen, feminist forces are moving similar themes forward in literary circles. Recognizing the need to establish independent fairy tale heroines, feminist writers since the 1960's have begun to create a progressive genre of fairy tales dedicated to eliminating stereotypical patterns of behavior and carrying on the ideas of late Victorian authors such as Sharp and Carroll who tried to merge feminist roles into their Victorian fairy tales. Most often called "feminist fairy tales," the contemporary versions of traditional stories, as well as new tales, attempt to reverse stereotypical female roles and to redefine women's places in society. Jack Zipes explains the purpose of feminist fairy tales this way:

Not only do the authors challenge conventional views of gender, socialization, and sex roles, but they also map out an alternative aesthetic terrain for the fairy tales as genre to open up new horizons for readers and writers alike. (Preface to Don't Bet on the Prince xi)

Authors of modern feminist fairy tales are trying to put a new twist on traditional stories as well as attempting to bring about significant social changes in the behaviors and attitudes of audiences.

Feminist stories have been greeted with mixed reviews by their audiences, and in many ways these tales have become the

ultimate focus of the fairy tale-feminist conflict. Contemporary feminist fairy tales often include in their texts the demise of passion and romantic love, which many readers consider necessary elements of the fairy tale narrative. Consequently, readers are often disappointed and frustrated by the tale's lack of imagination and traditional fairy tale qualities--qualities which, unfortunately, also reinforce the stereotypical, oppressive roles of women in modern society. Yet as feminist writers are attempting to do away with negative views of women, traditional fairy tales have become more popular than ever, due largely to their multi-media fame and the power of Disney.

Two [indistinctly] different types of modern feminist fairy tales have developed over the last thirty years. The first type are tales which have been written or rewritten mainly for adult audiences but which are usually entitled as intended for "young and old readers alike" (as in Jack Zipes' collection Don't Bet on the Prince). Such stories often take a poetic form and have overtones of physical and mental abuse, unhappiness, and even rape. Anne Sexton's collection of poems entitled Transformations is one such example of these overly-aggressive fairy tales. Each of Sexton's poems takes a traditional fairy tale and elaborates on it, identifying real life adult problems such as arguments, marital discourse, or even incest (as in "Briar Rose [Sleeping Beauty]"), which are normally not dealt with in the rosy endings of traditional fairy tales. Sexton's poem entitled "Cinderella" ends with a satirical statement about

the happily-ever-after ending of all traditional fairy tales:

Cinderella and the prince
 lived, they say happily ever after,
 like two dolls in a museum case
 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,
 their darling smiles pasted on for eternity.
 Regular Bobbsey Twins.

That Story. (Sexton 82)

Although Sexton makes a valid point about the destructive nature of such stories, she also removes all entertaining or romantic elements from the narrative and essentially ruins the story. And in doing so, she takes the hopeful elements of fairy tales which we need in order to face our daily lives and turns them into disheartening and painful events.

Judith Viorst's short poem " . . . And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" takes the same ironic tone as Sexton's fairy tale poetry, but without the use of such controversial issues. Instead, Viorst reveals Cinderella's dissatisfaction with her prince's unbecoming appearance:

I really didn't notice that he had a funny nose.
 And he certainly looked better all dressed up in
 fancy clothes.

He's not nearly as attractive as he seemed the
 other night.

So I think I'll just pretend that this glass slipper feels too tight. (73)

Like Sexton, Viorst has turned the tables on our traditional expectations, namely that a prince is always attractive and desirable to the heroine. And she assigns our traditional assumptions about women and beauty to the prince instead.

Feminist fairy tales by Anne Sexton and Judith Viorst as well as others, such as those by the Merseyside Fairy Story Collective or "Little Red Riding Hood" by Olga Broumas are also intended for both children and adults, but they are not even remotely suitable for children. They lack the very qualities which have made fairy tales appealing to children in the first place, and replace them instead with dark, brooding, adult issues that children are not prepared to understand. All of the fantasy, the romance, and the fun have been removed in order to make a very specific point about the dangerous nature of traditional fairy tales and their unwanted influence on society and particularly on women. And without prior knowledge of traditional fairy tales and the original texts, children cannot even begin to understand why feminists are changing the stories and what effects those changes have on the fairy tale itself. These stories have no place as literature intended for children, who cannot understand their significance.

The second type of feminist fairy tales are those written for and directed at children between the ages of about six and twelve. Told in traditional fairy tale form but with a twist or two in the plot, these children's books

have gained popularity in recent years as parents scoop them up in bookstores and libraries in an attempt to raise strong, independent daughters and gender-conscious, non-chauvinistic sons. Bookshelves are crammed with these feminist stories, both original and rewritten traditional tales, which try to influence young minds and psyches. And though most stories attempt to make very specific points about the character of their young heroines, none misses any of the magic and fantasy which have made--and make--fairy tales such a popular form of literature for "young and old alike." Fairy tales need to include elements of love, fantasy, and romance if they are to retain their popularity. And although marriage is not an inevitability for every real couple, traditional fairy tales need the coming together of the right woman and the right man to make the ending complete. Even feminist readers have a desire for the predictable yet enjoyable happily-ever-after ending. Thus the nature of fairy tales seems to demand traditional stereotypes which may creep into texts as secondary issues, even in feminist children's stories.

Tsugele's Broom, an original tale written by Valerie Scho Carey, is a modern feminist fairy tale which brings the traditional elements of domesticity and marriage together with the independence and stubbornness of a young maiden named Tsugele. Tsugele's parents love her because she is good at household chores, and their plans for her include only marriage: "Her parents were certain that one day she would make a perfect wife and mother. 'The man who marries

our Tsugele,' they were fond of saying, 'will be a lucky man indeed.'" They intend to see the matchmaker right away in order to find a suitable husband for their daughter. It seems an arranged marriage is the only option for Tsugele. She is trapped by the cultural expectations of her community.

But Tsugele wants no part of either marriage or the men that her parents want her to meet. She is very happy with her chores and her broom and even tells her parents so:

With my broom, I sweep floors. With my broom, I chase cats out of the chimney in the winter. With my broom, I beat rugs clean and brush ashes from the bake oven. Find me a man as reliable as my broom and I will marry him. Till then I see no reason why a strong and clever girl should marry.

(Carey 3)

Although it is obvious that Tsugele's place is doing domestic work in the home, she is nevertheless described as a "strong and clever girl" who is able to take care of herself without the aid of a man. Independence and intelligence are notably important in this tale but then again so are traditional stereotypes such as marriage and domesticity.

The suitors whom the matchmaker sends to Tsugele are either too lazy or too vain for her tastes. They cannot perform the simple domestic tasks which she asks them to do, such as washing the clothes or churning the butter. And here the traditional sex roles are reversed in order to show how incapable these men are at domestic tasks, tasks which most women would not find either appealing or necessary in a

husband, since the women would be responsible for these domestic chores anyway.

As a result of her suitors' ineptness, Tsugele is determined to make her way alone in the world. Her disappointed parents let her go off by herself, and Tsugele takes a job in the neighboring town as a housekeeper. So although Tsugele is stereotyped as a domestic, she is also free to find her own work, travel by herself, and live her life without her parents' approval. When her new employers offer to find her a husband, she tells them, "I can do very well taking care of myself, thank you."

Yet in the end, Tsugele's reliable broom magically becomes a man (appropriately named "Broom") who literally sweeps her off her feet and asks her to marry him. Tsugele agrees. And they dance "about the yard, raising a cloud of dust in the bright morning sun" (Carey 29).

Two contrary interpretations are necessary for a complete and fair understanding of Tsugele's Broom. The first must include a traditional, stereotypical view of women which surfaces now and then in the story, such as Tsugele's domesticity, her relationship with her broom, and the inevitable marriage at the end of the tale. Although these elements do not present a complete view of Tsugele as a traditionally passive fairy tale heroine who is totally dependent upon a man either for her well-being or for her future security, they do play an important role in the tale, since the girl is seen as valuable to others only for her housekeeping skills.

On the other hand, Tsugele is certainly not a typically passive, dependent heroine who is constantly dreaming about finding a man as reliable as her broom. She states time and again that she is quite happy by herself and does not have any desire to marry. Marriage is only a societal expectation. Tsugele is strong and capable enough to earn her own living as a housekeeper, and although her friends believe she is lonely, she is satisfied with the broom as her companion.

The ability of Tsugele's Broom to send a message to its readers depends solely upon its appeal to young audiences. So by retaining the magic of Broom's transformation and by keeping the happily-ever-after marriage at the end of the story, this fairy tale not only reveals its moral of female independence and self-reliance, but it also satisfies the traditional fairy tale expectations and demands of even feminist readers who desire them and find them satisfying.

Similar to Tsugele's Broom, Tomie dePaola's Helga's Dowry: A Troll Love Story changes the traditional fairy tale form while maintaining the ending expected by many readers. Helga the Troll is the "loveliest Troll in three parishes," but she is also the poorest because she is an orphan. Handsome Lars wants to marry Helga, but since she has no dowry, the law says they cannot wed. Lars attempts to remedy the problem by asking the advice of Old Rich Sven. Instead of helping Lars and Helga, however, Sven convinces Lars to marry Plain Inge (Sven's daughter), who has a very large dowry. Afraid of being doomed to "wander the earth forever" as an unmarried Troll maiden, the frustrated Helga makes up

her mind to earn her own dowry. Asking Lars in a note to wait for her, she says to herself, "I'm a Troll and a clever one at that. I'll just go out and earn myself a dowry" (dePaola 4). Like Tsugele, Helga is determined to use her mind and her own skills to make her dowry. She refuses to be dependent upon the men in the village and is willing to take the risks involved with making her dreams come true.

But unlike Tsugele, Helga is able to use her Troll magic to complete tasks that are both traditional men's and women's work. She not only earns thirty-five cows by washing clothes and four chests full of gold by selling beauty cream but she also clears many acres of land, and stacks and splits logs. Despite Inge's attempts to stop her, her dowry ends up being much larger than Plain Inge's ever was. She proves that she can earn a dowry as well as any man could have done it for her. Helga's independence and creativity pay off.

In the end, of course, Helga refuses to marry the unfaithful and greedy Lars. She tells him:

I wouldn't marry you if you were the last Troll on earth. I'd rather be doomed to wander forever than be your wife! You never planned to wait for me. I want to be loved for who I am, not for what I've got! (dePaola 24)

Suddenly Helga is approached by a troll from behind, who tells her that he loves her for who she is. He says he has "no need of riches" (dePaola 25). So Helga marries him and lives happily ever after as the Queen of the Trolls.

By combining the story of the Trolls with a traditional

fairy tale form, dePaola seems to make the rare transition from traditional fairy tale to feminist fairy tale without sacrificing any of the passion or fantasy which makes such stories so appealing. When Helga rejects Lars, she has no idea that she will either marry or someday become Queen. Helga is thinking only of her own well-being and how she can take care of herself--not of how a husband could take care of her. Helga succeeds in proving to herself--and to the others--that women can take care of themselves and that there are more important things than beauty or money.

But first appearances can also be deceiving. Although Helga may seem different from other fairy tale heroines, she is actually setting out to accomplish many of the traditional fairy tale goals. She is seeking to marry and will do everything in her power to accomplish that goal, including defying the social norms. And in the end, she does marry, not only becoming a wife but also the Queen of the Trolls, achieving royal status with all of the power and prestige that it brings.

The switch-the-prince ending of Helga's Dowry is one which is also used by other feminist fairy tale writers. In Petronella by Jay Williams, the young princess Petronella sets out to find herself a prince instead of waiting for a prince to find her. But the handsome Prince Ferdinand of Firebright, whom she spends so much time and energy rescuing, is conceited, selfish, and lazy. As determined as she is to return home with a prince, Petronella finds him agonizingly frustrating. When she first finds Ferdinand outside of

Albion the Enchanter's house (where she wrongly believes the Prince is being held captive), he is more concerned with his tan and his crossword puzzle than with her presence: "The young man yawned and stretched. 'I am Prince Ferdinand of Firebright,' he replied. 'Would you mind stepping aside? I'm trying to get a suntan and you're standing in the way'" (Williams 57). Despite his rudeness, Petronella is determined to rescue him. She even tells him that she is risking her life for him, to which he responds, "That's nice. What's 'selfish' in nine letters?" "You are," [snaps] Petronella (Williams 58).

After completing three difficult and dangerous tasks for the Enchanter, Petronella finally drags Ferdinand away from Albion's house. When she and Ferdinand are chased by Albion, she catches the enchanter in a magic ring which Albion had given her, only to learn that he is not chasing the Prince at all. Albion is chasing her. He tells Petronella that Ferdinand has only been visiting his house and is so lazy that he just wouldn't leave. But Petronella is the woman Albion has been looking for all of his life: "'I wasn't chasing him,' said the enchanter. 'I was chasing you. You are just the girl I've been looking for. You are brave and kind and talented and beautiful as well'" (Williams 60). With that, Petronella kisses him and the magic ring that is holding him vanishes. The two lovers go off to live happily ever after, "leaving Prince Ferdinand of Firebright to walk home as best he could" (Williams 61).

Petronella is not the traditional heroine of the classic

fairy tale. She gets on her horse with her sword swinging at her side and rides off to find her prince instead of waiting for a prince to find her as one of her brothers suggests. She has "flaming red hair" and a vicious temper instead of the demure, gentle, and quiet beauty of most traditional fairy tale heroines. She literally sweeps Ferdinand off his feet--though he does not care for it--and physically carries him with her in her flight from the enchanter's house instead of passively waiting for another man to help her. She is, in many respects, the epitome of feminist fairy tale heroines.

Still, the familiar fairy tale elements are not completely missing from Petronella's plot. She is described by Albion as "kind and talented and beautiful," and she has the definitive characteristics which make up the traditional heroine. The deep connection to and relationship with animals of Disney fairy tale heroines is also important to Petronella's success since she has to face the deadly hawks, horses, and hounds in order to prove herself to Albion. However, these are angry, dangerous animals instead of the gentler ones in Disney's Snow White or Sleeping Beauty. The story also has a complete and happy ending, with the Princess marrying the right man, who is an enchanter and not a prince. And, of course, the elements of romance and passion are still quite apparent in the telling of the story. Petronella is a fiery young girl who is determined, at any cost, to find her true love. All these factors combine to help make the story more appealing than other feminist fairy tales, both for children and for adults.

Of course, not all feminist fairy tales end with a marriage ceremony. Stories such as Jon Scieszka's The Frog Prince Continued or Robert Munsch's The Paper Bag Princess vary the happily-ever-after of matrimony with lessons on being satisfied with life and being completely independent.

The frustrated Prince of Scieszka's The Frog Prince Continued is not as happy in his "ever after" as he had hoped to be. In fact, both he and the Princess are "miserable." Although their story ends happily the first time, it doesn't seem to last long:

The Princess kissed the frog.

He turned into a prince.

And they lived happily ever after . . .

Well, let's just say they lived sort of happily for a long time.

Okay, so they weren't so happy.

In fact, they were miserable. (Scieszka 1-2)

The Princess nags the Prince about his froggy-habits and the Prince is unhappy being human. So the Frog Prince goes off to find a witch who will turn him back into a frog again. He runs into many witches from many other fairy tales, but none can seem to do the job correctly. The last one he asks to help him (the fairy godmother from "Cinderella") even turns him into a carriage. The depressed Prince wishes then that he were back at home with his nagging wife:

Oh, what an idiot I've been. I could be sitting at home with the Princess, living happily

ever after. But instead, I'm stuck here in the middle of this stupid forest, turned into a stupid carriage. Now I'll probably just rot and fall apart and live unhappily ever after. The Prince thought these terrible, frightening kinds of thoughts (and a few worse--too awful to tell), until far away in the village, the clock struck midnight. (Scieszka 24)

Luckily, at midnight, the spell is released and he thankfully returns home as a Prince to his worried wife, "who loved him":

The Prince kissed the Princess.

They both turned into frogs.

And they hopped off happily ever after.

The End. (Scieszka 27)

The Frog Prince Continued is a well-written combination of traditional fairy tale material and feminist fairy tales. The Prince and Princess eventually find happiness together and they do live "happily ever after," at least as far as we know. The magic of the witches who attempt to help him, the romance of his relationship with his wife, and the adventure of going into the woods all contribute to the classic fairy tale form which makes this text exciting and entertaining to read. But as a feminist story, it also temporarily reverses the idea that all fairy tales end happily and perhaps makes us question the endings of other traditional tales, although the stereotyping of the Princess as a nagging wife may be

detrimental to its effectiveness as a feminist tale. Yet this story too ends with the traditional happily-ever-after of other tales. By turning both the Prince and Princess into frogs, Scieszka is able to subtly reinforce the traditional fairy tale ending without seeming obvious about it. And in essence, this story does no more for feminist beliefs than other tales I have discussed.

In The Paper Bag Princess, marriage and traditional fairy tale endings have no place whatsoever. The beautiful and greedy Elizabeth must rescue her betrothed, the handsome Prince Ronald, from a fire-breathing dragon. But she learns along the way that there are more important things than living in a castle, wearing expensive clothes, and marrying a prince.

In the end, Elizabeth saves Ronald by tricking the dragon into using up his energy. Showing the Princess how strong and powerful he is, the dragon runs out of fire and tires himself out by flying around the world. Yet the snobbish Ronald is not at all impressed with Elizabeth's courage and intelligence. He is concerned only with her outward appearance, which is atrocious: "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" (Munsch 21). Poor Elizabeth suddenly realizes that all of her hard work is completely unappreciated by the selfish Ronald. She looks at him and says, "'Ronald, your clothes are really pretty and your hair is very neat. You look like a real prince, but you are a

bum.' And they didn't marry after all.
The End" (Munsch 22).

Besides encouraging independence and kindness, the moral of The Paper Bag Princess is that a prince isn't always recognizable by his outward appearance. Sometimes the things which might make a prince "princely" cannot be seen with the naked eye. In fact, sometimes they are not there at all.

This fairy tale's appeal seems to be limitless. Although it is lacking the usual marry-the-prince-and-live-happily-ever-after ending, Elizabeth's adventurous and passionate attitude toward Ronald, at least in the beginning of the story, keep the story rolling on its fairy tale wheels. And after finding out what Ronald is really like, who can blame our courageous heroine for giving up on him entirely?

The authors of feminist fairy tales such as these four stories specifically desire to change the ways in which women are viewed, not only in traditional fairy tales, but in society as well. As Zipes argues:

Ultimately, to write a feminist fairy tale is to write with the hope that future generations will not adapt the atavistic 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. (Introduction to Don't Bet on the Prince 33)

But the popularity of The Paper Bag Princess and other

feminist fairy tales, which are lacking traditional elements such as romance, fantasy, passion, or beauty in some form, is difficult to understand and is unusual. Feminist fairy tales, especially those by Sexton or Viorst, are often rejected by children and adults who find them too boring, depressing, or even frightening. They are only praised by feminists who desire to make a point--and not to tell a story. And although traditional fairy tales portray women in derogatory roles, the sweet romantic notions of these stories have nevertheless continued to retain their wide-spread popularity throughout the centuries and into today.

The fairy tale-feminist conflict is ultimately a question of social fundamentals. Feminists desire to teach children, and girls especially, how to be strong, independent adults, capable of controlling their own destinies and believing in themselves. For this reason, feminist fairy tales are a necessary part of the literary and film genres. But just as necessary as feminist foresight are the elements of romance, passion, and imagination in children's lives--and in adult lives as well. And so as readers in the midst of the fairy tale-feminist conflict, we struggle between what we believe is a crucial cultural change for the equality of women and what we want to retain as necessary traditional elements of the fairy tale genre.

Conclusion

Following the path of feminism down the fairy tale road, there can be no doubt that traditional fairy tales do not paint a very attractive picture of the ways in which women have been viewed in past centuries, either in literature or in social reality. The fairy tales which have been examined and discussed in this paper point to a chauvinistic, patriarchal opinion of women's capabilities and to a false definition of the limits of their independence. If we believed such nonsense, all women would still be kept in their homes by men who thought them incapable of an original idea or a self-assertive action. But feminist movements have tried to push society beyond these stereotypical ideas in all areas of life and especially in literature and films.

Nevertheless, traditional fairy tales have not faded from the cultural picture and their appeal seems to be stronger now than ever. Disney studios have sold millions of copies of their animated tales, with audiences eagerly awaiting the next new release, either on home video or in the theaters. Fairy tale board games, dolls, video games, and--of course--book collections are selling all over the nation, and not just as merchandise from Disney movies. Despite feminists' warning of the negative influences of fairy tales, these stories are still popular in the 1990's.

So why are so many readers--and feminist readers at that--still interested in these stories if they continue to bring women heartache and misery? And why do women seem to be the ones who want to buy the movies and read the books?

The answer, if there is one to be found, is complicated and not quite clear.

It appears that feminism, despite all its effort to maintain the appeal of fairy tales, cannot do so without the aid of traditional fairy tale elements--those same elements which, unfortunately, contribute to the oppression and domination of women. As romance, marriage, and happily-ever-after are removed from fairy tales, the stories lose some of the magic and the fantasy which has made them appealing to a wide variety of audiences for many centuries. The lasting qualities of fairy tales, those pieces which make the stories what they are and which make us love them as a form of entertainment, give us hope. They show us that life can have happy endings, that love can be real and true, that love can last forever despite the heartaches that we know also exist in the world. These fairy tales elements which feminists argue too vehemently against may just be the same ones we need to keep us going everyday and which give us hope for the future.

Also, without any knowledge of the original stories or the traditional stereotypes, it would be impossible for anyone--adult or child--to understand the significance of the feminist tales. The arguments and satire of marriage, submissive behavior, and beauty would be completely lost on an audience who had no prior knowledge of what feminists were fighting against. Feminist fairy tales would be useless.

Perhaps, in spite of the efforts of feminists to change society's acceptance of traditional fairy tales, the fairy

tale genre will always be in conflict with views of modern women. For until all readers can achieve an understanding of the gender-conscious fairy tale which is in line with the expectations and origins of the traditional tale, there can be no compromise. Feminists will continue to protest, and feminist readers will continue to buy traditional tales despite a possible feeling of guilt, knowing that we may be contributing to the further oppression of women and men. And so the next generation will be left to resolve the fairy tale-feminist conflict.

Works Cited

- Alice in Wonderland. Videocassette. Prod. Walt Disney Home Video. Released 1951.
- Altick, Richard D. Victorian People and Ideas. New York: W.W.Norton and Company, Inc., 1973.
- Armstrong, Larry. "Is Snow White Gonna Be Lizard Lunch?" Business Week. 20 June 1994: 8.
- Beauty and the Beast. Videocassette. Prod. Walt Disney Home Video. Released 1990.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. New York: Knopf, 1976.
- Bottigheimer, Ruth B., ed. Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- Bridenthal, Renate. "Something Old, Something New: Women Between the Two World Wars". Becoming Visible: Women in European History. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.
- Broumas, Olga. "Little Red Riding Hood". Don't Bet On the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Carey, Valerie Scho. Tsugele's Broom. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.
- Carroll, Lewis. Alice in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1994.
- Cruikshank, George. "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper". Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of Fairies and Elves. Jack Zipes, ed. New York: Methuen, 1987.

- De Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. New York: Knopf, 1983,
c1952.
- dePaola, Tomie. Helga's Dowry: A Troll Love Story. New York:
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1977.
- Dollar, Charles M., ed. America: Changing Times, A Brief History.
New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1980.
- Frader, Laura. "Women in the Industrial Capitalist Economy".
Becoming Visible: Women in European History. Boston,
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Norton Anthology of
Literature by Women. New York: W.W. Norton and Company,
1985.
- Honig, Edith Lazaros. Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in
Victorian Children's Fantasy. New York: Greenwood Press,
1988.
- Hudson, Derek. Lewis Carroll: An Illustrated Biography. New
York: C. N. Potter, 1977.
- Kolbenschlag, Madonna. Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye. New York:
Bantam, 1981.
- Lang, Andrew. "The Princess Nobody". Victorian Fairy Tales: The
Revolt of Fairies and Elves. Jack Zipes, ed. New York:
Methuen, 1987.
- The Little Mermaid. Videocassette. Prod. Walt Disney Home Video.
Released 1988.
- Maltin, Leonard. The Disney Films. New York: Crown, 1973.
- McGlathery, James M. The Brothers Grimm and Folktale. Urbana:
University of Illinois Press, c1988.
- . Fairy Tale Romance: The Grimms, Basile, and Perrault.
Chicago: University of Illinois Press, c1982.

- Merseyside Fairy Story Collective. "Snow White". Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Mill, John Stuart. The Subjection of Women. Sue Mansfield, ed. Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing Corp., c1980.
- Munsch, Robert N. The Paper Bag Princess. New York: Annick Press Ltd., 1994.
- Paglia, Camille. Introduction. Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking-Glass. By Lewis Carroll. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1994.
- Rorich, Lutz. Introduction to Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- . "The Quest of Meaning in Folk Narrative Research". Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- Rowe, Karen. "Feminism and Fairy Tales". Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 6 (1979): 237-57.
- Scieszka, Jon. The Frog Prince Continued. New York: Viking Penguin, 1991.
- Sharp, Evelyn. "The Spell of the Magician's Daughter". Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of Fairies and Elves. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Sexton, Anne. "Cinderella". Transformations. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, c1971.
- Sleeping Beauty. Videocassette. Prod. Walt Disney Home Video. Released 1959.

Snow White. Videocassette. Prod. Walt Disney Home Video.

Released 1938.

Tartar, Maria M. The Hard Facts of the Brothers Grimm. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Viorst, Judith. " . . . And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot". Don't Bet On the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales. Jack Zipes, ed. New York: Methuen, 1986.

Williams, Jay. "Petronella". Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales. Jack Zipes, ed. New York: Methuen, 1986.

Zipes, Jack, ed. The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm. New York: BantamBooks, 1992.

---, ed. Don't Bet On the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales. New York: Methuen, 1986.

---. Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization. New York: Wildman Press, 1983.

---, ed. and Introduction. Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of Fairies and Elves. New York: Methuen, 1987.