CANADIAN THESES

THÈSES CANADIENNES

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

NL-339 (r. 86/06)

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Fairy Tales Re-Evaluated: A Feminist Reading of "La Belle et la bête," "La Chatte blanche," and Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty

by

Mila Francisca Joson Bongco

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Spring 1987

ISBN 0-315-37688-0

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR Mila Francisca Joson Bongco

TITLE OF THESIS Fairy Tales Re-Evaluated: A Feminist Reading of "La Belle et la bête," "La Chatte blanche," and Johnny Tifoso and the Proud Beauty

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED Spring 1987

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

(SIGNED) Mila Francisca J. Bongco

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

96 Scout Delgado, Kamuning-Diliman

Quezon City, Metro Manila

Philippines 3008

DATED 22 April 1987

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Fairy Tales Re-Evaluated: A Feminist Reading of "La Belle et la bête," "La Chatte blanche," and Johnny Tifoso and the Proud Beauty submitted by Mila Francisca Joson Bongco in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

.....

Supervisor

.....

.....

Date 22 April 1987

Para sa aking mga kapatid, kamag-anak, at higit sa lahat,

kay RayVi-- sa walang tigil na tulong at tiwala ninyo--

Maraming Salamat.

ABSTRACT

This study provides a feminist analysis of three artistic fairy tales with the theme of Beauty and Metamorphosis. Two tales are French: Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's "La Belle et la bête" and Mme D'Aulnoy's "La Chatte blanche;" while one tale is from the Philippines, Nick Joaquin's Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty. Theories and information from the field of feminist studies are used to 1) study the implications and consequences of the conventional portrayal of women in popular literary fairy tales; 2) to suggest patterns of maturation and growth suitable for female protagonists; and 3) present and develop strategies for appraising positive female characterization. With regard to this third component, particular attention is paid to the author's projections, the selection or inclusion of details, the motivation and actions of characters, and the context and explanation for character behaviour.

In a wider context, this study also examines the interplay between literary and cultural conventions which influence social development and participation according to gender, especially in the psychological and linguistic spheres. Thus, although the focus of this study has been literary fairy tales, the methods used and the conclusions provided may be applied to investigating literary compositions in other genres, particularly fiction by and about women.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Jon C. Stott, who encouraged and guided me throughout this paper. Many thanks are also due to Professor Milan Dimić whose invaluable suggestions and detailed criticism aided me in the critical organization of my reflections on the subject at hand.

Finally, I also wish to thank many friends who have helped me in the various stages of this project, most especially Ramon C. Sunico, Paul Morris, and Douglas Cheng.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

Feminist literary criticism seeks to study the implications and consequences of gender on literature and literary theory. This involves challenging the male biased perceptions which inform literary tradition and criticism. In this endeavour, feminists confront the dominant images and values in literature and analyze why these are essentially male-centered. In addition, they offer new critical analyses and interpretations of works of women authors which were heretofore ignored, or, if at all studied, were analyzed within the frameworks of a scholarship based on the examination of men's texts and men's language.

Literary fairy tales provide excellent material for a feminist approach to the study of literature. Literary fairy tales (*Kunstmärchen*) are deliberate artistic renditions or adaptations of traditional oral folk tales and folk fairy tales (*Märchen*), as well as free compositions based on certain formal and thematic elements taken from the folk tradition and its imitations. These literary versions are usually chosen and presented to children by parents and teachers perturbed by elements of violence and sex in the original, more candid tales. Thus, it has been the literary fairy tale, an authored version of a folktale, which usually has found its way into children's anthologies and been made into picture books of the twentieth century. Considering the pervasive and lasting influence of fairy tales, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they could have been significant in perpetuating stereotyped sex roles for women. Indeed, male protagonists have been usually portrayed as brave, aggressive, and triumphant. In contrast, literary fairy tales often reveal behaviour, goals, and values for women that encourage unquestioning passivity in the face of repression and subordination. Moreover, critical analysis of these tales, particularly psychoanalytic analysis, reinforces the suitability and acceptability of these sexually defined roles and values. Hence, there is not only a need to clarify the images of women in literary fairy tales, but likewise a need to lay bare and amplify the insufficiency of the critical standards in traditional male scholarship.

The first half of this study discusses the aims and concerns of feminist literary criticism, and outlines the need for a feminist re-evaluation of literary fairy tales. Clarifying the distinction between *Kunstmärchen* and *Märchen*, reasons are provided why this study is primarily concerned with the *Kunstmärchen*. Next comes a brief description of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French society which generated the rise of the literary fairy tale as a genre. In the process of the presentation, it is shown how dominant conventions within a society shape the contours of sex roles in literary fairy tales, and how literary fairy tales, in turn, propagate sex roles approved in that society.

In chapters four, five, and six, three fairy tales will be analyzed within the frameworks of feminist literary criticism. Two tales are French: Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's 'La Belle et la bête' and Madame D'Aulnoy's 'La Chatte blanche;' one tale is from the Philippines: Nick Joaquin's Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty. Each of these tales differ from the majority of fairy tales in that a female, instead of the usual male hero, plays the most active role. All three stories follow the popular theme of Beauty and Metamorphosis. They were chosen to illustrate varying depictions of female development.

'La Belle et la bête' is the most well-known, almost the standard story of how a beast changes into a prince when a girl agrees to marry him: Mme. Le Prince de Beaumont's rendition of this popular tale allows a feminist reading of it to clarify female motives and behaviour. The analysis here shows how this narrative expands and re-defines the process of female maturation that was outlined for women by a male-centered tradition.

In 'La Chatte blanche,' it is not a human male but a female cat who undergoes transformation and becomes a human princess. This tale alters the popular illusion that inactivity is common among fairy tale heroines. Likewise, the familiar expectation that fairy tale men are more powerful than fairy tale women is challenged. The interpretation of 'La Chatte blanche' will focus on the author's handling of fairy tale plot, motifs, symbols, and more particularly, language, to discover 'subversive' or 'rebellious' encodings beneath the more conventional form of the fairy tale. This method is employed following the feminist proposition that in works written by women, there are textual clues and meanings which are

not immediately apparent to readers in a culturally male oriented or even misogynistic society.

In Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty, both male and female characters undergo transformation. Of the three tales, this is the most recent and the only one written by a male. The analysis of this story is included to facilitate a broader cultural and linguistic perspective. This narrative provides an interesting contrast to the previous two. Although it shares the same theme and has a female for the principal active character, the narrative's conclusion, the use of symbols, the use of language and other textual clues negate the idea of an active and independent image of the heroine.

In the analysis of these works, I hope to raise crucial questions about the fiction of female development and suggest novel interpretations that may answer the following questions. If fairy tales represent psychological, not physical, struggles and triumphs, are we to accept the hero adventure as the ideal and only model of that journey, implying that male and female psychological development is identical? To what extent do these tales directly or indirectly portray female repression, female marginality, and female struggles against confines? What significant relations between women and language are revealed in these texts and how can language be instrumental in unshackling women from the bonds of male-defined limitations? How significantly will the answers to these questions contribute to literary analysis?

It is hoped that the answers will not only expose images of women imposed by male texts and male criticism, but also show how inextricably related the concepts of woman are to linguistic and social structures.

II. Literary Fairy Tales and Feminism

In the discussion of fairy tales in this study, it is not only necessary but important to make the distinction between literary fairy tales (*Kunstmärchen*) and folktales or folk fairy tales (*Märchen*). A literary fairy tale derives its materials and its organization from another, older form of narrative which is the folktale. Thus, the structural features, the tone, the themes, characters, motifs, and other trappings of the folktale are clearly manifested in literary fairy tales. However, while giving much evidence to its indebtedness to the conventions of traditional folktale, a literary fairy tale simultaneously shows evidence of the skill of its writer -- a *definite author* who fashions the features and elements of the folktale in a particular style. There is scarcely any limit to the ways an individual writer may appropriate and adapt the materials of folktales to transform them into elegant literary versions. But in re-fashioning the folktales, the writer's design, motives, intentions, ideologies, as well as intended audience interact and greatly influence the literary outcome. Thus, even if the writer cannot avoid being aware of the literary fairy tale as a derivative of the folktale, the literary version now amasses implications and significance essentially different from that of the folktale. In a sociological study of fairy tales, Jack Zipes notes that:

> Whereas it is extremely difficult to study the historical origins and social significance of a folktale (the relationship between narrator and audience) because we lack much information about primitive tribes and societies, it is not so difficult to define the historical rise of the literary fairy tale for children. It seems to me that any definition of this genre must begin with the premise that the individual tale was indeed a *symbolic act* intended to transform a specific oral folk tale (and sometimes a well-known literary tale) and designed to rearrange the motifs, characters, themes, functions and configurations in such a way that they would address the concerns of the educated and ruling classes of late feudal and early capitalist societies, (emphasis mine)[1]

It is hardly necessary to go into detailed study of the nature and origins of the folktale and literary fairy tale to notice significant distinctions between the two genres. While the

[1]Zipes, Jack. Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization. New York: Wildman Press, 1983. p. 6.

folktale is traditionally transmitted orally, and its author usually unknown, the literary fairy tale is *written* by a specific individual who decides the aesthetic arrangement and structure of the tales. In so doing, he endows new meanings, transforms, or eliminates the symbols and features of the folktale almost at will. Moreover, the features and configurations of the folktale are directed more to a collective agrarian or hunting society, while the literary fairy tale reflects another social order -- a city bourgeois society.

Such a society, believing the folktale to be too coarse for the well-bred, well-educated children it hopes to raise, necessitates a refined, tasteful adaptation of the traditional tales. The literary tales then, instead of the folktales, subsequently gain popularity and are continually adapted, published, or made into picture books until the present.

The feminist re-evaluation of fairy tales that shall be attempted in this study is primarily concerned with literary fairy tales since these are more directly and obviously related to modern society and because these are the ones which have been widely disseminated in their memorable forms and have become culturally pervasive. Hence, there is a great possibility thay they may have helped perpetuate sex role stereotyping in literature and society. [1]

Folktales are extremely difficult to study in their historical context. There is inadequate historical and sociological information about them. Moreover, folktales experience re-workings and transformations that are hard to pinpoint or even describe. In addition, conclusive world wide studies regarding assumptions about female characters in folklore do not exist, and even those limited to European folktales yield a much more complex picture than that which could be seen from the popular literary versions. So that while there seems to

[1]The terms 'literary,' 'artistic,' or 'authorial' to qualify the fairy tales to be discussed in this study are quite cumbersome and often detract from the flow of the text. Hence, simply the term 'fairy tale' is mostly used for the remaining part of the study. The term refers mainly to literary fairy tales, and only very seldom to folk tales or folk fairy tales. More specifically, 'fairy tale,' as used in this chapter, refers to the stories that have become very widely-known such as "The Sleeping Beauty," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," "Rapunzel," "Puss in Boots," "Rumpelstiltskin," and other similarly popular narratives, which have been translated and adapted widely through time and culture. This qualification is very important. There are numerous other literary fairy tales, of great artistic merit, which did not gain as much popularity or social approval as the abovementioned. And underlying a feminist re-evaluation of literary fairy tales is the analysis of the relations between the concepts and values in the more popular narratives and those of the societies which approved and disseminated these stories.

be a predominance of male protagonists and somewhat frequent negative description of women in folktales, the complexity and alterability of the tales obviate any generalizations about female roles or influences in folklore.

In comparison, literary fairy tales are easier to study and analyse. They are more recent and there are fixed texts which may be subjected to in-depth textual analysis. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that generalizations, whether in folk tales or literary fairy tales, must be taken with great caution.

An interesting feature in most of the literary fairy tales that have become very popular is the fact that females rarely appear as active and dominant principal characters. Inspiring and exciting roles are generally taken by male characters. Not only does it seem that there are more stories about men and their adventures, but the characterization of the heroes in tales are usually more favourable than the characterization of women. Fairy tale male protagonists are usually endowed with wisdom or cunning, courage, physical and mental strength, and moral integrity. Meanwhile, the virtue and value of fairy tale women usually consist simply in being young, good-tempered, and beautiful. Moreover, beauty is strangely emphasized as being the most important feature a woman should possess. Marcia Lieberman questions and probes the legitimacy of such a longstanding notion in an article aptly titled 'Someday My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairy tale.'

> [There is an unusual] focus on beauty as a girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset. Good-temper and meekness are so regularly associated with beauty, and ill-temper with ugliness, that this in itself must influence children's expectations.
>
> It is a psychological truth that as children and as women, girls fear homeliness (even attractive girls are so frequently convinced that they are plain), and this fear is a major source of anxiety, diffidence, and convictions of inadequacy and inferiority among women.
>
> Good, poor, and pretty girls always win rich and handsome princes, never merely handsome, good, but poor men. (If the heroine or hero is already rich, she or he may marry someone of equal rank.) Since girls are chosen for their beauty, it is easy for a child to infer that beauty leads to wealth, that being chosen (because of her beauty) means getting rich.
>
> The system of rewards in fairy tales, then, equates these three factors: being beautiful, being chosen, getting rich.[3]

[3] College English 34.2 (December 1972): 383-95. p. 384ff.

In addition to a tradition of characterization that favours males, fairy tale motifs and plots reveal patterns of and courses for initiation and maturity which not only extol male activity and aggressiveness, but encourage attitudes of docility and passivity in females. Fairy tale plots are often of a protagonist's coming of age. The hero, usually male, undergoes rites of initiation that are physically dangerous, as well as morally and mentally taxing. He overcomes cowardice, fear, and ignorance, and, in achieving victory, gains a prosperous kingdom taking the most favoured woman, usually a princess, as his bride. His completed passage to maturity culminates in a communal celebration wherein the hero is not only accepted by society but becomes a king who rules over a domain he now declares his own.

In contrast with the male journey to maturity, women do not have access to these rites of passage, to these processes of reconciliation and resolution which seem to be the key to social and psychic harmony and wholeness. Indeed, seemingly inherent in the majority of fairy tales that have become popular are patterns of maturation substantially favouring males over females: time and again, fairy tale boys are sent off in adventures to discover world realities through experiential suffering and thereby become leaders and rulers. What do fairy tale girls do in the meantime? They stay at home or are locked up somewhere, expected to develop hearth-bred patience and kindle yearnings for romantic fantasies of love and marriage. There are some tales which may prove to be exceptions, but few of these are well-known. Unfortunately, the majority of popular fairy tales encourage largely acquiescent, uninteresting women. Jennifer Waelti-Walters succinctly states that:

> Fairy tales reinforce in a girl the sexual stereotyping rampant in our patriarchal society. They offer a model in which she is deprived of her autonomy and teach her that she must become a passive victim, decorative, and dead, in order to be loved.
>
> The reading of fairy tales is one of the first steps in the maintenance of a misogynous sex role of stereotyped patriarchy, for what is the end product of these stories but a lifeless humanoid, malleable, decorative, and interchangeable that is, a 'feminine woman' who is inherited, bartered or collected in a monstrous game of monopoly.[4]

Karen E. Rowe shares Waelti-Walters's repugnance and disgust with the portrayal of these beautiful, passive females-- fairy tale women who are shuffled around as they meekly accept their fate. They cultivate domestic virtues in dreamy anticipation of a princely rescue,

---

[4] Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination. Montréal, Canada: Eden Press, 1982. p. 180.

at which time they may enter magically into marriage and fulfill their supposedly highest calling. Rowe criticizes the limited models that fairy tales offer women and suggests that maturity and wholeness can be attained by transcending fairy tale scripts.[5]

Re-evaluating fairy tales is an apt starting point for alerting readers to the misrepresentation of women in literature. Generations of children have known the popular fairy books, and in so doing, have absorbed far more from them than merely the outlines of the various tales. Children would have also learned behavioural and associational patterns, value systems, and the means to predict the consequences of specific acts and circumstances. In fact, although interest in these tales may wane after the first decade of a person's life, fairy tales have the uncanny ability of being unforgettable and remaining inscribed in adult minds, even exerting unconscious influence upon people who are not aware of it.

It is hardly surprising that psychoanalysis continues to be a major approach in the study of fairy tales. The characters, motifs, and themes in fairy tales prove to be irresistible symbols for psychoanalysis to further advance their theories and conclusions about hitherto unknown aspects of the mind. Because of the high symbolic and allegorical content of fairy tales, psychoanalysts believe that these tales offer ample evidence of the unconscious and subconscious psyche which influence and animate apparently clear and simple human behaviour.

A study which has been valuable in illuminating texts and revealing underlying structures and psychological patterns in fairy tales is Bruno Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.[6] Bettelheim states that fairy tales, with their language of symbols, 'carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious.'[7] What he considers as exemplary works of the imagination, fairy tales can be perceived as providing a convenient entry point into the consciousness of a child. These tales provide access to deeper meanings significant to children at all stages of development--

---

[5]Rowe, Karen E. 'Fairy-born and Human-bred: Jane Eyre's Education in Romance.' The Voyage in Fiction of Female Development. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, et al. Hanover and London: University of New England, 1983. 69-89. p. 80.

[6]New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

[7]Ibid. p. 6.

especially at that stage when children confront the emotional and psychological problems of growing up. Bettelheim credits fairy tales with being attuned to a child's anxieties and aspirations. The tales can stimulate imagination and clarify emotions, and suggest solutions to existential problems, thereby aiding the child in gaining a feeling of selfhood and self-worth.

> While it entertains the child, the fairy tale enlightens him about himself, and fosters his personality development. It offers meaning on so many different levels, and enriches the child's existence in so many ways that no one book can do justice to the multitude of diversity of the contributions such tales make to a child's life.
>
> Fairy tales represent in imaginative form what the process of healthy human development consists of, and how the tales make such development attractive for the child to engage in.[1]

Through perceptive analysis and interpretations of well-known fairy tales, Bettelheim goes on to elucidate how fairy tale characterization and plot structures correspond to and represent the phases of human growth and the many phenomena attendant upon human development and maturity.

However, a critical reading of Bettelheim's book reveals concepts of character development in fairy tales which are largely male-oriented. Perhaps unknowingly, Bettelheim indicates the means by which fairy tales perpetuate character stereotyping, and a regulated process of human development which is gender based, i.e., males are continuously favoured over females. This is clearly seen in his chapter called 'Oedipal Conflicts and Resolutions: The Knight in Shining Armor and the Damsel in Distress.'

> The hero proves himself through slaying dragons, solving riddles, and living by his wits and goodness until eventually he frees the beautiful princess, marries her, and lives happily ever after.
>
> No little boy has ever failed to see himself in this starring role.
>
> A little girl wishes to see herself as a young and beautiful maiden- a princess or the like-- who is kept captive by the selfish, evil female figure and hence unavailable to the male lover. (emphasis mine)[2]

It is evident though that Bettelheim is not the only one whose analyses of fairy tales seem to favour male characterization and development over those of the female. Another example is Marie-Louise von Franz who studies fairy tales within the framework of Jungian psychology. In Jungian psychology, fairy tales are considered to be excellent materials to study the comparative anatomy of the psyche. Von Franz believes that there is much less specific

---

[1] Ibid. p. 12.
[2] Ibid. p. 111-12.

cultural conscious material in fairy tales, and therefore fairy tales mirror the basic pattern of the psyche more clearly.

> Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes. Therefore their value for the scientific investigation of the unconscious exceeds that of all other material. They reprpesent the archetypes in their simplest, barest, and most concise form. In this pure form, the archetypal images afford us the best clues to the understanding of the processes going on in the collective psyche. In myths or legends, or any other more elaborate mythological material, we get at the basic patterns of the human psyche through an overlay of cultural material. But in fairy tales there is much less specific conscious material and therefore they mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly.[10]

Like Bettelheim, von Franz credits the fairy tale with having a complex and far-reaching influence in the psyche. Interestingly, it is when von Franz starts applying psychoanalytic hypothesis and theories in the interpretation of fairy tale motifs and characterization that a male-prejudiced perception is disclosed.

> In fairy tales. . .the hero is courageous and never loses courage but keeps on fighting till he overcomes the enemy. The heroine will go on being tortured; she suffers her way through until she reaches her goal.[11]

> The effect of animus presence can lead a woman to deeper femininity, providing she accepts the fact that she is animus-possessed and does something to bring her animus into reality. If she gives him a field of action-- that is, if she takes up some special study or does some masculine work-- this can occupy the animus and at the same time her feeling will be vivified and she will come back to feminine activities. . .
>
> The more animus-possessed a woman is, the more she feels estranged from men and the more painful are her efforts to make a good feeling contact. Although she may compensate by taking the lead in erotic affairs, there can be no genuine love or passion in them. If she had really a good contact with men, she would have no need to be so assertive.[12]

In addition to Bettelheim and von Franz, there are many other scholars who perpetuate traditional, confining roles and values for women that may be found in fairy tales. This is because for a long time, fairy tale interpretations, and the definitions of characterization and protagonist development presupposed a range of potentials and possibilities of fulfillment available only to men and male development. In fact, existing psychological frameworks for *human* development are actually based upon, hence largely suitable for, males. In Sexual Politics, Kate Millet states that:

---

[10]Franz, Marie-Louise von. Interpretation of Fairy Tales: An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales. Texas: Spring Publications, 1978.

[11]Franz, Marie-Louise von. The Psychological Meaning of Redemption Motifs in Fairy Tales. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1980. p. 9-10.

[12]Ibid. p. 129.

> Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described. As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design. The image of woman as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs.[13]

When feminists advocate a re-reading and re-viewing of fairy tales, it is not to argue about the significance of the unconscious in human thoughts, actions, and subsequent development; neither is it to impute the value of fairy tales in a child's growth and maturation. Rather, it is to question and challenge the orientation of such growth and way of thinking. Characterization, patterns of development, and goals reserved for women in fairy tales are suffocatingly limited. Critical insights and interpretations reinforcing these concepts not only call attention to the popularity of those fairy tales which reinforce in a girl the sexual stereotyping rampant in society, but worse, give a stamp of official approval to these particular tales and the models of roles and behaviour they advocate. Thus, not only the texts themselves but critical analysis of these reinforce role stereotyping, and clearly help to acculturate children to an awareness of these stereotypes and the belief in their accuracy and/or desirability.

> Among other things, these tales present a picture of sexual roles, behaviour, and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex, which is important because of the intense interest that children take in 'endings;' they always want to know how things 'turn out.'
>
> A close examination of the treatment of girls and women in fairy tales reveals certain patterns which are keenly interesting not only in themselves, but also as a material which has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of children, in suggesting to them the limitations that are imposed by sex upon a person's chances of success in various endeavours.
>
> It is now being questioned whether those traits that have been characterized as feminine have a biological or cultural basis; discarding the assumptions of the past, we are asking what is inherent in our nature, and what has become ours through the gentle but forcible process of acculturation[14]

Fairy tales are an important repository of social, cultural, and historical information about predominant attitudes and shared values in a given society, at a given time. As an example, Jack Zipes, in his book Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion, shows just how social conventions in Europe were codified and reinforced in literary fairy tales.

---

[13]New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.

[14]Lieberman. 'Someday My Prince Will Come.' College English. p. 388.

> Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time [15]

Many of the fairy tales popular around the world today have actually been circulated in their memorable forms and versions already infused with an ideological viewpoint. Folktales which pre-existed with an ideological significance of their own have been 'adapted' and grafted with a secondary cultural ideology.

This significant observation and its consequent stunning implications become clearer in Michel Butor's 'On Fairy Tales.' Butor shares Bettelheim's and von Franz's idea that the fairy tale serves a maieutic purpose, i.e., it is the midwife to a psyche being born. Significantly, Butor also notes that although fairy tales encourage and persuade a child to mature and hazard his first tentative evaluation of the world, it nonetheless introduces him to an adult view of a pre-formed world; 'the child knows about fairy tales only what the adults tell him'.[16] The child's consciousness, in its formative stages, is thus formed within the frames of the prevailing soocial consciousness. A chaos of undifferentiated feelings, urges, and perceptions in the child is stabilized through recourse to more concrete and familiar images. Nevertheless, the child's imagination, stimulated by the tales, perceives, differentiates, and defines according to the prevailing social milieu. While the fairy tale is the clearing in which the child is encouraged to evolve her own stance in, against, and for the world, it is always bounded by social conventions and historical traditions which define and delimit the range of growth the child can experiment in:

> The fairy tale sends boys out into the world, encourages them to adventure, but it admonishes girls. For them, marriage is even more important than their brothers, and the road to it is strewn with many more dangers.[17]

Subtle expressions of misogyny regarding culturally prescribed roles and social mobility are inherent in most fairy tales and can, thus, have tremendous impact. Subliminal in

---

[15] Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization. New York: Wildman Press, 1983. p. 3.
[16] European Literary Theory and Practice: From Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism. Ed. Vernon Gras. New York: Delta Books, 1973. 349-62. p. 352.
[17] Ibid. p. 356.

nature, children-- even adults-- may unknowingly incorporate as basic assumptions a variety of principles that powerfully influence later behaviour: beliefs that perpetuate and maintain sex-typing, substantiate subordination of women, and uphold adherence to androcentric values.

It was in reaction to a culture which maintained rigid social conventions and in rebellion against manipulated stereotypes that a surge of opposing discourse began. Questions and protests arose against the chauvinism contained in the previous readings, chauvinism that has somehow accompanied psychoanalysis and formalism. Women, some hesitantly, others aggressively, started proferring critical re-readings and fresh interpretations of female characters in literature in general, and fairy tales in particular. These attempts then led to a more critical sensitivity to and questioning of the language and symbolic structures which perpetuate these roles and images. These were every significant attempts to point out some discrepancies between what a literary work purports to tell; what it has traditionally been interpreted to mean; and what a current, careful reading of it shows.

The most zealous attempts to investigate and clarify images of women and patterns of female development in literature occur in the field of feminist literary criticism.

> One of the first and major thrust of feminist criticism has been to study the 'images' of women, to explain women's characterization, and to analyze economic restrictions, social taboos, and cultural norms which govern women's behaviour. In a second phase, feminist crities have convincingly argued that since it is largely the works of men which inform our literary standards, then these reflect a male view of life.[18]

> (Feminine literary criticism) is especially concerned with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male-dominated literary traditions. . . (in the end)we must inevitably reject the values and assumptions of a society which created these paradigms.[19]

It is clear from the above quotations that feminist literary criticism goes beyond merely pinpointing stereotypes and oppressive images of women in text after text. Feminist critics likewise claim that double critical standards bias literary studies, and, going even further, that the masculine values that prevail in literature merely reflect an androcentric culture which has incessantly treated women as peculiar, marginal, and subordinate.

---

[18]Furman, Nelly. Women and Language in Literature and Society. New York: Praeger, 1980.
[19]Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974. p. 76.

The urgent need to contest this apparently masculine mode of aggrandizement which occurs both in fiction and criticism prompted feminists to try and construct a critical method which would effect a re-examination of sexism as it is found in literature, and as it is imposed on literature by critics. Thus, feminist literary criticism was slowly and painstakingly conceptualized to expose the tangle of misconceptions, distortions, and prejudices which frequently govern the depiction of women in literature, and the response of male critics to female characters, and to works of female authors.

Though it is clear to feminist critics that they all had a single opponent, i.e., misogynistic thinking, what remains unclear is how to resist and subvert this kind of thinking, which critical methods to use, what goals one is aiming for and perhaps even working to lead others to. Thus, it is very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to give an exact definition of feminine literary criticism. It is a new field for which both a descriptive and critical vocabulary has yet to be devised. In addition, the diversity of the inquiry herein easily eclipses the many efforts to define feminine literary criticism as a single, coherent system or a unique set of methodologies.

> The diversity of aims and practices enables current feminism to advance on several fronts at once, which is generally thought of as a strength which would be lacking in a monolithic feminism. The shifting of boundaries between one type of activity and another is seen as evidence of growth and transformation which are healthy signs in what is after all a 'movement' and not a fixity. Consequently, attempts to define it are looked upon with suspicion on grounds that definitions are bound to be premature at this stage and perhaps oppressively prescriptive.[20]

> It is impossible to *define*. . . and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which does not mean that it does not exist.[21]

Nevertheless, inspite of the diversities and factions within this 'movement,' there is a hypothesis underlying this criticism which serves as a common starting point: the hypothesis that all writing is marked by gender, and that non-feminist criticism is flawed because it fails to take this into consideration.

---

[20]Ruthven, K.K. Feminist Literary Studies. An Introduction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. p. 20.

[21]Cixous, Hélène. 'The Laugh of the Medusa.' Qtd. in Verena Andermatt Conley. Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. p. 32.

Feminist critics agree that in the realm of culture, where masculine values prevail, we cannot discount the possibility that the long and pervasive male dominance in literature, together with a male-oriented criticism, could have misread or underrated structures, language, symbols, narrative styles, and characterizations that are specifically female. For example, Vivian Gornick in Essays in Feminism, elaborates on a premise that many feminists have cited and complained about.[22] Gornick states that women were restrained and limited in, among other things, speech and thought, that it is highly possible that when women speak or write, they do so in codes, or in symbols, or in some other 'different' way so that their thoughts and experiences could be accomodated in the *man*-made language they had to use. Unacquainted with these symbolic structures and language, womanly concerns and preoccupations were dismissed by male readers and critics as undecipherable, meaningless, trivial, and uninteresting. This haughty dismissal is undoubtedly due to men's inability to understand, appreciate, and esteem women's experiences which they themselves have never undergone, or which the prevailing masculine culture have taught them to devalue.

It should be clear, however, that a gender-stressed reading of works does not mean to priviledge women over men. Women's desires and visions are not necessarily better, but indubitably different than those of men's. A mere reversal of roles is not the aim of a feminist critique for such a methodology could easily lead to a static and fixed concept of women. Rather, a gender-stressed reading seeks to nudge women out of their complacent passivity and unquestioning acceptance of roles and definitions men have imposed on them. At the same time, critical analysis with a gender point of view seeks to inform men that it is time that they, too, became aware of and realised the flaws and faults of their critical methods concerning women and women's works in literature.

The consideration of women in literary studies is not without radical implications and consequences. There is an inextricable relationship between the concept of women and society, and the disciplines of psychology and linguistics, among others. A gender-marked criticism employed by feminists defies the notion that there was or can ever be a criticism that is

[22]Gornick, Vivian. Essays in Feminism. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

without bias.

> There is no such thing as pure criticism. Criticism has an ideological value, it is inscribed in ideological discourse. The critical text is inscribed at a particular moment in the history of ideas.[23]

Women writers, readers, and scholars make up a community with distinct attitudes, perceptions, and ideologies. Together with other groups or schools which challenge prevailing literary canons and conventions, they shatter the illusion of coherence and immutability of canonized literature. In addition, the values and traditions of the society which supports such literature are exposed as being very narrowly defined.

Literature and critical theory must not be organized with a system of rigid differences, especially differences simply based on gender. The conventional modes of imaging, articulation of meaning to image, language, and the subjective engagement of readers are now very much in question. All these processes must be reformulated or posed anew without priviledging either sex or intrinsically judging according to better or worse. Feminist criticism does not seek to offer definite answers nor fixed results of theory but a process of re-thinking frozen categories. It makes us aware that critical studies may have been following paths that are not necessarily the only ones possible. A feminist critique seeks to open options to the linear, grammatical, univocal, logical system that regulates and defines institutions, structures, and society.

By examining fictional representatives of female development, we clarify the gender biases inherent in the traditional accounts of growth, formation, and relationships. Psychological conventions that have defined the manners and goals of development are scrutinized to discover their paucity and failure to account for specifically female experiences. At the same time, the viability and merits of alternative frameworks/patterns of female maturation, such as those offered by Penelope Washbourn in Becoming Woman. The Quest for Wholeness in Female Experience and Carol Gilligan in In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Woman Development are explored and tested.[24] Eventually, it is no longer a

---

[23]Théoret, France. 'Les femmes et les mots.' In the Feminine: Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots. Ed. Ann Dybikowski, et al. Canada: Longspoon Press, 1985. 95-8. p. 47.

[24]Washbourn, Penelope. Becoming Woman. The Quest for Wholeness in Female Experience. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977. Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological

matter of saying this is a stereotype or this is a false image-- the basis for these assertions must be clearly established. Thus, questions of sexuality had to be investigated, and so were questions of power, and questions of language. In the process, significant re-definitions and expansion of fictional development may be achieved that will help women in their struggle to sever themselves from the myths and roles that men have created for them.

In the questioning and challenging of established thought and structures, the most relevant, as well as the most problematic, prove to be the investigations in relation to language. Language is a symbolic strucutre which *signifies* and *represents*. It is one of the most significant means which provide access to other people's conscious and unconscious thoughts, and perceptions of reality. Likewise, psychological and social realities are defined, codified, and structured by and through language.

> The major challenge that feminist scholarship on language poses is to explain how there could be any interaction at all between language and an individual's thought, on the one hand, and the social and cultural contexts, on the other. Research on language and sex has already drawn a rich and complex picture of such interactions, providing considerate evidence that such connections do exist.[25]

Probing the connection of language to social life and individual psychology raises many questions about many of our most basic assumptions. It is almost impossible to think of the world other than in words. It is language which inevitably mediate all references to reality. Feminism posits a difference between male and female individual psychology and social existence. Hence, there must be a corresponding difference in women's use of language. Women today, especially writers and literary scholars, cannot help but grapple with language problems. Women are continually confronted with a system of signs hostile to us and used to dominate us.

> There is a problem both of concept formation within an existing male constructed framework of thought and a problem of language use in developing and articularting an authentic understanding of the world and one's relationship to it.
>
> Is it possible that language developed by one group in society within an oppressive relationship can simultaneously serve the same purpose for the oppressed group?[26]

Constant alertness to and re-evaluation of language show the significance of language in

---

[24](cont'd) Theory and Woman Development. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
[25]McConnell-Ginet, Sally. Sex, Power, and Language. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1980. p. 4.
[26]Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father. p. 7.

establishing, reflecting, and maintaining an assymetrical relationship between women and men.

In a very male-centered and male-controlled world, women are defined only in terms of men: relation to men or in opposition to men.

> There is no paucity in our language of words and images that limit, devitalize, and wipe out women both in giving credence to reality and in picturing her according to a prejudiced notion.
>
> Language designates women as less than whole, less than total, less than complete. Woman become less than human, less than capable, less than male, less than reasonable -- the reader who has read misogynist or feminist literature knows how long the list can be. The misogynist denigrates woman by diminishing her; the feminist is either combating what the misogynist has said or setting up a base on which to begin improvement.[27]

Current feminist theory is interested in language and posits a special relationship between woman and language. Feminists agree that the current operative discourse has no room for women's bodies, women's desires, and women's ability to experience the world as free and conscious objects.[28] Feminist critics, seeking to account for women's relative absence from mainstream culture, question the adequacy of language for expressing and representing women. Feminists maintain that language has been constructed by men to represent their experience and world view.[29] Language is a symbolic structure which developed and remains closely tied to a patriarchal social structure. Thus, awareness of gender is crucial in understanding language since all usage of language supports male dominance. There is a phallogocentric control of the configurations of language and definitions of meanings. Taking male-as-norm for syntax, grammar, and content, women then occupy a 'negative linguistic space.'[30] Because of this, women's meanings, developed from the specific contexts of their

---

[27]Bassein, Beth Ann. Women and Death: Linkages in Western Thought and Literature. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984.

[28]Forsyth, Louise H. 'Feminist Criticism as a Creative Process.' In the Feminine: Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots. Ed. Ann Dybikowski, et al. Canada: Longspoon Press, 1985. 87-94.

[29]This is a proposition that has prompted many feminist writings especially in the last five years. See for example, Furman, Nelly. Women and Language in Literature and Society. New York: Praeger, 1980.; Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron. New French Feminists: An Anthology. Amherst: University of Massachusettes Press, 1980.; Leclerc, Annie. Parole de femme. Paris: B. Grasset, 1974.; and particularly the works of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Mary Daly, and Julia Kristeva.

[30]Spender, Dale. Man-made Language. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

lives, can never be encoded as normal, accepted meanings. Instead, they will always remain those of a subculture, a colonized, marginalized minority.

A major concern exists in continually subverting the patriarchal language which persists in falsely defining and even excluding women from 'reality.' Attempts to create a new 'women's' language, to articulate values, issues, and actual experiences of women must be encouraged and lauded.

Yet I snatch this language that is foreign to me and turn it around in my fashion.[11]

The efforts of women, not only to scrutinize and question, but re-'create' language are represented by contemporary feminist writers who are trying to invent and redeem ordinary language, trying to create alternative modes of expression while experimenting with new forms of writing and speaking.

> . . . in recounting her-story (instead of history) form explodes with pressure of new concepts.[12]

Feminist criticism deems it important that readers should be sensitive to contextual confusion, fragmentation in language, and textual strategies that may have been ignored or missed, for therein lies the struggle of women to express themselves. Readers, in seeking out those places where the repressed and 'subversive' may erupt in the text should likewise be alert and guard against mainstream interpretative studies that are learned, historically-determined, and thereby gender-inflected.

As feminist criticism seeks to explore alternative ways to analyse and interpret fictional characters, it must likewise attempt to develop critical modes appropriate for the study of larger textual systems. In the words of Mary Carruthers, feminist literary criticism

> involve(s) exposing the sexual stereotyping of women in both our literature and our literary criticism and, as well, demonstrating the inadequacy of established critical schools and methods to deal fairly or sensitively with works written by women.[13]

To expose sexism in literary texts, a great deal of critical re-reading is required. It necessitates a kind of 're-visioning' the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of

---

[11] Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology, the Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978. p. 92.

[12] Leclerc, Annie. Parole de femme. Paris: B. Grasset, 1974.

[13] Carruthers, Mary. 'Imagining Women: Notes Towards a Feminist Poetic.' Massacusettes Review 20.1 (Summer 1979): 281-307. p. 282.

entering an old text from a new critical direction."[34] One must approach a text from an unexpected, even startling, point of view in order to wrench readers from vantage points into which they have comfortably settled, and force them to look at old texts from a new perspective. With this approach, one would be more observant in the use/mis-use of language, and recuperate signs and meanings inscribed in the text but heretofore overlooked. It is never the intention to be prescriptive; nor to establish a single authorial intention, both of which are unnecessary, even detrimental to one's aims. Inswead, one hopes to apply what are deemed new and essential interpretative strategies for present concerns, to translate the text's cipher into current and recognizable forms.

In this way, women can re-define themselves without really having to write 'new, liberating texts.' They do so through their inventiveness and creativity in the reception of texts.

> Reader is not a passive consumer, but an active producer of a new text. The reader's text is the medium which can give voice and visibility to a feminist literary consciousness."[35]

Through the creativity of reading, women can not only alter, extend and discover novel and contemporary meanings in our literary inheritance, but more importantly, they can take part in a bigger movement -- that of a sisterhood alert against cultural stereotypes, attuned to women's text, and challenging the very notion of writing and reading to bring about a new inscription of the feminine.

> Reading then is writing -- in an endless movement of giving and receiving, each reading reinscribes something of a text; adds things to what it tries to decipher but only by adding to that same intricate web continuously being spun for a text"[36]

The reader becomes an active participant in the making of the text. Reading, though, is still not reduced to a kind of unrestricted exercise of self-expression and of unbridled subjectivity. One's interaction with a literary work is still circumscribed by one's sensitivity and culture, as well as the properties of literary and critical discourse. Recognizing the creativity of reading makes it possible to cast the question of women's relationship with literature in a new

---

[34]Rich, Adrienne. 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision.' College English 34.1 (October 1972): 90-105.

[35]Furman, Nelly. Women and Language. p. 52.

[36]Conley, Verena Andermatt. Hélène Cixous. p. 156.

perspective which focuses on women as writers and readers. Whereas a literary text transmits explicit and implied cultural (read masculine) values, one now accepts as well that the reader is a carrier of perceptual prejudices. Women readers need not pretend to be anything else, need not be hesitant or revolutionary in admitting that they read and write from a gender-marked perspective and are comfortable in their differentiated perspectives and views.

The pluralism inherent in giving weight and credence to the responses of women readers is appropriate to feminist literary criticism which does not claim to posit any universal truths, does not insist on having the last word on a textual interpretation or criticism. Indeed, the opposite is true. Creativity of reading allows for many insightful and fresh explications that are essential in a new field which thrives on healthy controversies and discussions.

III. Literary Fairy Tales and France of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

In attempting a feminist reading of fairy tales, the inter-relation of tales to society is very important. It provides a perspective for investigating how dominant conventions within a society shape the contours of sex roles in fairy tales, and how fairy tales propagate limiting sex roles and behaviours based on values of the group in a society responsible for the approval and dissemination of these tales.

Of interest and help to research along these lines is the very informative essay of Marie-Louise Tenèze, 'Du conte merveilleux comme genre.'[9] Tenèze endeavours to elaborate on a structural approach to fairy tales which stresses the dynamic aspects and the changeability of the tales. In her survey of criticism dealing with reception aesthetics, she stresses the significance of specific narrators and audiences, their norms and values, all of which must be taken into account if one is to grasp the core of the genre, especially the significance of its development. This leads Tenèze to conclude that

> When we envisage it in its concrete cultural formations, in spite of the character of the world which we recognize in it, the magic folk tale needs to be inscribed in the functional totality of the system of expression of the community in question. Even more than this, it needs to be situated in the life of this community itself. This is the research which must be carried out now in studies of the European folk tale.[10]

Jack Zipes attempts just this and offers in Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion a very comprehensive study of fairy tales with a socio-historical point of view.[11] Jack Zipes asserts that fairy tales cannot be separated from their cultural context. He then proceeds to trace the historical development of fairy tales and the underlying social structures and power struggles which framed such development. He states that

> . . .it is not so difficult to define the historical rise of literary fairy tales for children. It seems to me that any definition of this genre must begin with the premise that the

---

[9] Approches de nos traditions orales. Ed. Marie-Louise Tenèze. Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1970. 11-65.

[10] Ibid. p. 28-9. Trans. by and qtd. in Zipes, Jack. Art of Subversion. p. 19.

[11] See also Zipes, Jack. Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales. London: Heinemann, 1979.

> individual tale was indeed a *symbolic act* intended to transform a specific oral folk tale (and sometimes a well-known literary tale) and designed to rearrange the motifs, characters, themes, functions and configurations in such a way that they would address the concerns of the educated and ruling class of late feudal and early capitalist societies.
>
> (In 17th-century France) the adaptation of folk material, an act of symbolic appropriation, was a re-codification of the material to make it suitable for the discursive requirements of French court society and bourgeois salons. The first writers of fairy tales had to demonstrate the social value of the genre before literary fairy tales could be printed-- for adults and children alike. The morality and ethics of a male-dominated Christian civil order had to become part and parcel of the literary fairy tale. This was a given, and it was with this rule in mind, whether one agreed with it or not, that the early French writers of fairy tales began writing-- acted symbolically.[40]

For example, writing literary fairy tales for children in France was predicated on their acceptance at Louis XIV's court and in prominent Parisian salons. Some oral tales which had flourished for a long time were already published and marketed but very often bought only by the lower classes. As a literary form, these tales were disdained by the aristocracy and bourgeois classes as sub-standard until they received courtly approval through Madame de Maintenon and Fénelon-- that is, until it could be codified and used to reinforce an accepted disciplined mode of social conventions advantageous to the interests of the intelligentsia and *ancien règime*.[41] Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time.[42]

The popularity of literary fairy tales in France after the 1690s affected all of Europe. The writing of fairy tales for children originated in a period of absolutism, when French culture was setting standards of *civilité* for the rest of Europe. The 'symbolic acts' of the early French writers of fairy tales must be viewed within a larger social phenomenon. These tales were disseminated at a point in history when more and more European writers began composing explicitly for children as separate entities, and when standards were first being set

---

[40]Zipes, Jack. Art of Subversion. p. 9.

[41]Teresa DiScanno. les Contes de fées l'epoque classique, 1680-1715. Naples: Liguori, 1975. 20-30.

[42]See Marc Soriano. Guide de littérature pour la jeunesse: courants, problèmes, choix d'auteurs. Paris: Flammarion, 1975; and 'From Tales of Warning to Formulettes: The Oral Tradition in French Children's Literature:' Yale French Studies 43 (1969): 24-43. See also, Isabelle Jan. la Littérature enfantine. Paris: Editions ouvrières, 1969.

for the development of modern children's literature. Children were being taken as a separate age group with a special set of characteristics. Thus, it was considered important to advance the cause of *civilité* with explicit and implicit rules of socialization so that manners and mores of the young would reflect the social power, prestige, and hierarchy of the ruling class. Exquisite care was taken to cultivate a discourse through the fairy tale for the pedagogical purpose of raising well-mannered children.[43]

Although the shape and configuration of the fairy tale discourse was indisputably molded by the European civilizing process, which was undergoing profound changes in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, Jack Zipes warns against seeing these tales merely in terms of manipulation.

> If this were its central role or function, one would have to speak about the genre as a conspiracy. As I have endeavoured to demonstrate, however, the literary fairy tale for children, as it began to constitute itself as a genre, became more an intitutionalized discourse with manipulation as one of its components.[44]

In the study of French fairy tales, one cannot ignore Charles Perrault, whom Jacques Barchilon calls *le conteur classique*.[45] Perrault initiated the development of those fairy tales which were to form the classical genre for children. His well-known tales, collected in Histoires ou contes du temps passé and published in 1697, initiated the general rise of French literary fairy tales at the end of the seventeenth century.[46] Exploring and tapping the riches not only of French folklores but the folk tales of other countries as well, Perrault set into motion the tremendous vogue of writing and circulating literary fairy tales in France for children and adults during the 1690s. Many French writers, usually educated people and intellectuals, and quite a number of them female, started writing literary tales. In the ensuing one hundred years, French high society was literally inundated with fairy tales. The rise of French literary fairy tales may be regarded as one of the two main sources of the flowering of

---

[43]Elias, Norbert. The Civilizing Process. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Urizen Books, 1978.
[44]Zipes, Jack. Art of Subversion. p. 46.
[45]Jacques Barchilon. Charles Perrault. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.
[46]Charles Perrault. Histoires ou contes du temps passé. Avec des moralitez. Paris, 1697. The most useful work on Charles Perrault is Marc Soriano's Les Contes de Perrault: culture savante et traditions populaires. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.

artistic fairy tales in Europe and America in the nineteenth century.[47]

Perrault's tales reveal that he had a distinctly limited view of women. His ideal *femme civilisée*, of upper class society, is beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, properly groomed, and knows how to control herself at all times. In 'La Belle au bois dormant' for example, the fairies bestow upon the little princess the traits which correspond to Perrault's idea of a *femme civilisée*.

> Cependant les Fées commencèrent à faire leurs dons à la Princesse. La plus jeune lui donna pour don qu'elle serait la plus belle personne du monde, celle d'après qu'elle aurait de l'esprit comme un Ange, la troisième qu'elle aurait une grâce admirable à tout ce qu'elle ferait, la quatrième qu'elle danserait parfaitement bien, la cinquième qu'elle chanterait comme un Rossignol, et la sixième qu'elle jouerait de toutes sortes d'instruments dans la dernière perfection.[48]

In another tale, 'Les Fées', the readers find out what happens to girls who do not behave 'properly.'

> [la fille aînee alla à la fontaine] mais toujours en grondant. Elle prit le plus beau Flacon d'argent qui fût dans le logis. Elle ne fut pas plus tôt arrivée à la fontaine, qu'elle vit sortir du bois une Dame magnifiquement vêtue qui vint lui demander à boire: c'était la même Fée qui avait apparu à sa soeur, mais qui avait pris l'air et les habits d'une Princesse, pour voir jusqu'où irait la malhonnêteté de cette fille. 'Est-ce que je suis ici venue, lui dit cette brutale orgueilleuse, pour vous donner à boire? Justement j'ai apporté un Flacon d'argent tout exprès pour donner à boire à Madame! J'en suis d'avis, buvez à même si vous voulez. -Vous n'êtes guère honnête, reprit la Fée, sans se mettre en colère; hé bien! puisque vous êtes si peu obligeante, je vous donne pour don qu'à chaque parole que vous direz, il vous sortira de la bouche ou un serpent ou un crapaud.[49]

In addition to the qualities aforementioned, the heroine of Perrault's tales is loyal, dedicated to her household chores, modest and docile, and sometimes a little stupid insofar as for Perrault, stupidity is almost a quality in women. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind, as in that of many men and *women*, beauty is an attribute of a woman just as intelligence is an attribute of a man.[50]

---

[47]The other main source is the concern and significance accorded artistic fairy tales during the period of Romanticism in German literature.
[48]Perrault, Charles. Contes. Ed. Gilbert Rouger. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1967. p. 98.
[49]Ibid. p. 148-9.
[50]Mourey, Lilyane. Introduction aux contes de Grimm et de Perrault: histoire, structure, mise en texte. Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1978. p. 40ff.

Perrault's ideal 'virtues' of a woman were not always shared by the other French writers of fairy tales. Yet, despite the differences in intention and style, it is significant that there seemed to be a general agreement in the portrayal of heroines in fairy tales. Beauty, for one thing, is a must. And although it varies in details and degrees, the female role is dictated by conditions of humility, submission, and extreme self-discipline to the point of self-abnegation.

It is not entirely surprising that Perrault and his associates, who were responsible for supplying French high society with its fairy tales, would essentially have the same roles, and ensuing behaviour, for their female characters. Once again, we must remember that the acceptance and popularity of individual texts depended on how well they expressed the favoured socio-political doctrines and how well the tales conveyed a model of the exemplary child based on the existing social standards of manners, dress, education, and sexual behaviour. Denise Escarpit, in La Littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse en Europe suggests that the purpose of these tales from the beginning was to instruct and amuse, that is, to make moral lessons and social constricts palatable.

> C'est une morale utilitaire qui enseigne à 'bien agir', c'est-à-dire à s'insérer dans la société avec docilité, mais astuce, en évitant certes de créer des ennuis à la société mais en évitant de s'en créer à soi-même.
>
> La chose est donc claire: il y a de la part du conteur trois ordres de manipulation: manipulation qui sert une politique culturelle personelle, manipulation d'ordre social qui présente une certaine image de la société, manipulation moralisatrice qui obéit au code de la morale bourgeoise du XVIIe siècle finissant. C'est cette possibilité de multiples manipulations qui fait la force du conte. Selon le déguisement dont on le revêt, il peut prendre des formes très diverse qui sont fonctions des impératif sociaux et culturels du moment. Et, de la même façon, selon ces impératifs sociaux et culturels, le conte connaît des périodes de faveur ou de défaveur. C'est ainsi qu'on le voit se transformer au XVIIIe siècle en conte érotique, ou en conte philosophique, ou en conte pédagogique et moral. Seul ce dernier s'adressera aux enfants. [51]

As French society became more regulated and more bourgeoise, the pressures placed on children to conform to role models became more severe. New models of male and female behaviour were created to exalt a more ascetic way of life. The standards of conduct, discipline, and punishment became stricter in efforts to rear children as prime examples of

---

[51]Escarpit, Denise. La Littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse en Europe: panorama historique. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981. p. 39-40.

civilité, the operative word in French society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Indeed, Jack Zipes had reason to fear that fairy tales were not simply harmless and entertaining as often thought. Instead, these tales have been largely constituted by the aesthetic norms and ideology of France's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aristocratic society. And as ideologically constituted, they have become an integral part of the West's general civilizing process, influencing even our contemporary literature and behaviour.

> My foremost concern is how fairy tales operate ideologically to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards which are not necessarily established in their behalf. (emphasis mine)[52]

This concern may well be echoed, perhaps even more urgently by women, considering the terribly confining roles and behaviours expected of them as indicated in popular artistic fairy tales. The description and expectations of heroines in these tales are exactly what, in feminist criticism, women are denouncing as unjustified and detrimental sex role stereotyping. This stereotyping-limited characterization of heroines, the credibility of their acts, the acceptability of their fates-- is controlled by literary conventions which in turn are highly dependent upon writers, readers, and critics within a social context. A feminist critique of literary conventions and texts, therefore, will inevitably have to define and analyze the culture that produced and approved of them.

The period in French history from the close of the seventeenth century up to the Revolution is an epoch usually associated with the Age of Enlightenment. True to the official rationality which characterized the period, eighteenth-century France denounced and renounced the belief in women's natural inferiority and professed a conviction in the moral, the intellectual, and even, to a certain extent, the physical equality of the sexes. Such an idea in previous history would never have found much support nor popularity. It was also at this time that France saw an outpouring of works on the education of women. This led to assurances that proper education and upbringing should not, and would never be, denied to women, in contrast to former practices where menfolk were educated often at the expense of their sisters or other female relatives.

---

[52]Zipes, Jack. Art of Subversion. p. 13.

Unfortunately, and frustratingly, the belief in men and women's equality in all aspects remained largely a *theoretical* proposition. If eighteenth-century France had been largely willing to declare women the equal of men in mental and moral aptitude, it was still not prepared to demand for them, much less accord them, the practical, real goals of the feminists of the past 150 years: an equality in social status and rights, priviledges and employment.

The dominant sentiments of the age still held that women belonged in the home, and that their chief glory and ultimate source of contentment resided in their devotion to their husbands, children, and household duties. So deeply embedded was this conviction that even in an age which prided itself on its rationality, the inconsistency between theoretical belief and actual practice went largely unnoticed.[33] There was, however, one area in which real progress was made during the course of the eighteenth century: *education*.[34] It was not, after all, an unlikely place to begin since education is fundamental to the totality of the women's other claims. The access to a better education, which most women never enjoyed before, started women with a long stride along the road to complete emancipation.

This atmosphere of a more liberal, albeit somewhat confused, attitude towards women pervaded at the time when more women began writing fairy tales for the French high society, as well as for the upper middle class. This is extremely interesting in the light of Sandra Gilbert's comments about women writers/artists in The Madwoman in the Attic

> (Women's creativity was) literally and figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives her cultured offered her.
>
> If she did not suppress her work entirely or publish it anonymously or pseudonymously, she could modestly confine her female 'limitations' and concentrate on the 'lesser' subjects reserved for ladies as becoming of their inferior powers.[35]

---

[33]Fortunately, it was not totally ignored. In 1792, for example, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects. Until the present, this book has been considered by feminists as a very important pioneering work.

[34]Gréard, Octave. 'L'education des femmes par les femmes.' Education et instruction. Paris: Hachette, 1889-1912. 4 vols. See also, Leonard Friedman. The Nature and Role of Women as Conceived by Representative Authors of 18th Century France. New York, 1970.

[35]Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. p. 57 and 64. This was the general trend, though there were also exceptions. Even before the 19th century, there were already very notable women writers. As early as 1559, for example, Marguerite de Navarre published Heptaméron in which she defends women from continued misogynous attacks. In

In view of this, we can see the proliferation of women writing fairy tales not as a defeat for these women who had to write 'beneath' themselves, but as a laudable struggle to triumph over the lip service that the pervading society was paying them regarding equality of the sexes. Seeing their efforts being thwarted in almost every endeavour, women, perhaps maintaining their mask of docility over rebellious passions, seized an outlet allowed to them and molded this into their advantage.

> (Women) cultivated accents of acquiescence in order to gain freedom to live their lives on their own terms, if only in the privacy of their own thoughts.
> . . .in publicly presenting acceptable facades for private and dangerous visions, women writers have long used a wide range of tactics to obscure but not to obliterate their most subversive impulses.[14]

It is according to this thesis -- that women's texts may contain messages and elaboration of women's experiences that were formerly missed or ignored -- that a re-interpretation of 'La Belle et la bête' and 'La Chatte blanche' will be attempted.

---

[13](cont'd) 1555, a well-known woman poet, Louise Labbé emphasized the importance of study for women. In 1662, Marie de Gournay in Egalité des hommes et des femmes and in Le griéf des dames opposes the continuing argumentations on natural inferiority of women's minds, and rejects altogether the superiority/inferiority schema.

[14]Gilbert. Madwoman. p. 74.

IV. Female Maturation in 'La Belle et la bête'

> Woman's inevitable consciousness of her own gender allows us to see meanings in what has previously been empty space. The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint.
>
> Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own

'La Belle et la bête' is a variant of the myth of Amor and Psyche written by Apuleius in the second century of our era. So far, there are hundreds of versions of the 'Beauty and the Beast' theme all over the world. In France, Mlle Villeneuve wrote a 200-page story of 'La Belle et la bête' in 1740. This has since then fallen into oblivion most probably because it was too cumbersome. About fifteen years later, Mme Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont published a more concise and stylistically superior rendition of 'La Belle et la bête,' which reduced the book to a 25-page tale. This then became the French version that became known the world over through a great many translations and editions, the one that has become 'la forme la plus connue.'

Mme Leprince de Beaumont was born in Rouen in 1711. After an unhappy marriage, she emigrated to England around 1745, where she became a governess. She was very interested in education, and wrote out of a deep involvement with the young. In 1756, she published Magasin des enfans, ou dialogue d'une sage gouvernante plusieurs de ses élèves de la première distinction, a book of mores and manners, which was widely read. Shortly thereafter, this book was translated into English. Likewise, the original was published in four volumes in France.[57] Interestingly, it is in this guidebook on social conduct that Mme de Beaumont also published ten tales, one of which is the popular 'La Belle et la bête.'

C'est dans son célèbre (en son temp) Magasin des enfans (1756) que Mme Leprince

[57]Leprince de Beaumont, Marie. Magasin des enfans. London, 1756. Translated into English as The Young Misses Magazine and published in 1761. This English translation is reprinted in Opie, Iona and Peter Opie. The Classic Fairy Tales. London: Oxford UP, 1974.

> de Beaumont a d'abord publiée une dizaine de contes de fées. Ceux-ci étaient originalement insères dans un plus large ouvrage qui consistait en vingt-neuf dialogues ou journées au cours dequels une gouvernante faisait la leçon à un groupe de jeunes anglaises. Ces leçons sont d'un caractère et d'une portée encyclopédiques: histoire; sainte, géographie, botanique, mythologie et ainsi de suite. Les contes des fées font partie de l'ouvrage a titre de 'récréation,' et ils comportent toujours une interessante dose de morale"

Due to this curious fact, most critics see Mme Leprince de Beaumont's tale simply as a didactic primer. It complied with the contemporary vogue popular with many French women then, who wrote guide books of mores and manners which perpetuated bourgeois conventions by disguising them in charming little fairy tales. It is along these lines that scholars usually view 'La Belle et la bête.' Jacques Barchilon maintains that Mme de Beaumont wrote her story preaching female submissiveness.

> Cette résignation féminine demande sans doute à être expliquée. Mme de Beaumont s'adressant à un auditore de petite filles pre-puberes, prend toujours soin d'insister sur cette note de résignation: elle veut les preparer à 'la vie,' c'est-à-dire, au mariage ordonnée selon des conventions bourgeoises normalement acceptées. "

This tale, Barchilon continues, prepares the young girls for a then normal custom in French society--young, pretty girls are urged to marry men, no matter how old and ugly, as long as the marriage will advance the girl's status in society.

Jack Zipes saw 'La Belle et la bête' as a classic example of how fairy tales exhort self-abnegation in girls. He stressed that de Beaumont purposely shortened and made her version moralistic so that when published in her guidebook, it could better serve to improve the manners of upper class youngsters.

> There is a distinct cultural pattern which emerges when we examine the treatment of the Beauty and Beast theme from Charles Perrault and Mlle Catherine Bernard to Mme Leprince de Beaumont or from 1696 to 1756. What began as a fairy tale discourse on manners with examples set for adults and children developed into a fairy-tale sermon primarily for children. . . a distinct constellation becomes fixed as a classic set of rules and behaviour for proper boys and girls in Mme de Beaumont's tale. Temperance and rationality reign in the end. The mark of beauty for a female is found in her submission, obedience, humility, industry, and patience; the mark of manliness is to be found in self-control, politeness, reason, and perseverance. Moreover, as the configurations were developed individually in each 'Beauty and beast' tale in relation to the civilizing process, it became clear that the female character could only assume her 'civil' form if she were willing to sacrifice herself for a beast-like male. By denying herself, she could obtain what all women

---

"Barchilon, Jacques. Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790; cent ans de féerie et de poesie ignorées de l'histoire littérature. Paris: Champion, 1975.
"Ibid. p. 92.

supposedly wanted and want -- namely, marriage in the form of male domination.[60]

This passage is quoted at length because it shows clearly what has dominated in the traditional interpretation of tales with the 'Beauty and Beast' theme. The psychological implications concerning basic fears, anxieties, and wishes connected with the various phases of development, leaving home, and confronting one's sexual partner are emphasized. For instance, Bruno Bettelheim asserts that:

> (Beauty and the Beast) foreshadows by centuries the Freudian view that sex must be experienced by the child as disgusting as long as his sexual longings are attached to his parent, because only through such a negative attitude toward sex can the incest taboo, and with it the stability of the human family, remain secure. But once detached from the parent and directed to a partner of more suitable age, in normal development, sexual longings no longer seem to be beastly -- to the contrary, they are experienced as beautiful[61]

Jacques Barchilon seconds this thesis in his essay on the subject:

> Not to be afraid of the beast is to make it disappear. This means abandoning infantile fantasies, becoming a woman and accepting a reality which is much more tangible and satisfying than dreams. Beauty matures. She accepts the sexual reality of the Beast with lucidity. Thereby, she gets rid of her taboos and infantile fears.[62]

Thus, the 'Beauty and the Beast' theme is usually perceived as a tale of the psychological development of a woman, as she experiences and overcomes her crisis of sexuality. All the way from the Amor and Psyche myth of the second century down to the many adaptations of de Beaumont's version, critics investigating the psychological influences from the tales have derived some kind of a universal and ageless statement/pattern about female psychological development.

In view of this, another interpretation of 'La Belle et la bête' seems extraneous. Nevertheless, it is offered because the prevalent psychological interpretations are perceived as inadequate and suspect, considering that these patterns of female psychological development are oulined for us usually by male scholars, prime examples of which are Jacques Barchilon, Bruno Bettelheim, Michel Butor, Max Lüthi, Erich Neumann. While it is true that they have been very helpful in illuminating some aspects of the theme, there arises now a need and

---

[60]Zipes, Jack. Art of Subversion. p. 40-41.
[61]Bettelheim, Bruno. Enhantment. p. 307-308.
[62]Barchilon, Jacques. 'Beauty and the Beast: From Myth to Fairy Tale.' Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review 46.4 (1959): 19-29. p. 27.

demand for a re-reading and re-interpretation of such fairy tales to clarify female motives and behaviours, and to expose distortions and inaccuracies in patterns of female development.

Certainly of interest to feminist readers of this tale is the very apparent fact that the most important and most active character is a female one, the heroine, Belle:

> qui étoit plus belle que ses soeurs, étoit aussi meillure qu'elles. Les deux aînées avoient beaucoup d'orgueil. . .Elles alloient tous les jours au bal, à la comédie, à la promenade, et se moquoient de leur cadette, qui employoit la plus grande partie de son temps à lire de bons livres. (Belle 59)[43]

Here we are already given hints that Belle is very different, especially as contrasted with her two sisters, the other female characters in the tale. While Belle spends most of her time *reading*, her two sisters are only occupied with beautiful 'robes, des palatines, des coiffures,' and other articles in an upper class Frenchwoman's *toilette*, essentially in *making* themselves up, for parading and displaying themselves to suitors and prospective husbands.

While the training of most eighteenth-century women advocated in most conduct books prepare them for appropriate social functions and actions, the conduct books and the upbringing usual to rich, upper-class women prove inadequate to meet crisis beyond spilt wine at dinner or preposterous gentlemen at dances. In the events that follow in 'La Belle et la bête,' we see that Belle, who is exceptional or different, thrives very well in the face of crisis, while her two sisters are ill-equipped for such events. When their father suddenly loses his wealth and they have to stay in a small house in the country, the two sisters did not know what to do.

> Ses deux soeurs, au contraire (à Belle), s'ennuyoient à la mort; elles se levoient à dix heures du matin, se promenoient toute la journée, et s'amusoient à regretter leurs beaux habits et les compagnies. (Belle 61)

Suddenly, they are at a loss as to how to occupy themselves. They keep wishing for their former lifestyles which they can not accept is already lost to them. We can say that somehow, they have become fixated, their world has stopped moving, and they have stopped growing. Belle's sisters define themselves in terms of their attractiveness to men. They base all values of themselves in their wish and need to be loved, to be chosen by men. Their sexual

---

[43]Leprince de Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie. 'La Belle et la bête.' Magasin des enfans. Nouv. éditions. Paris: P.J. Voglet, 1811. 57-82. All succeeding quotes for the tales shall be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by the page number preceded by the word 'Belle.'

attractiveness becomes the totality of their identity, and they are unable to rely on any other element of their personhood-- either physical, intellectual, or creative powers. They have no sense of self-worth but that which is defined from without and by the response that men give them. This belief is destructive because it fails to realise that personal identity cannot be shaped and given by others. In addition, the two sisters' over-dependence on their father and prospective husbands-cum-male friends highlights the economic vulnerability of women as dependents of men. Women constantly seek to align themselves with men of good social standing because they recognize men to be the economic providers, the bestowers of status, and marks of respectability.[4]

> . . .(elles) ne vouloient pas recevoir les visites des autres filles de marchands; il leur falloit des gens de qualité pour leur compagnie. . .(elles répondirent) qu'elles ne se marieront jamais, à moins qu'elles ne trouvassent un duc, ou tout au moins un comte (Belle 59, emphasis mine)

These sisters, having been led to believe that they are not and cannot be whole alone, seek happiness and wholeness through marriage. And not just any marriage, but only that which shall be economically and socially advantageous to them.

Distinctly, Belle does not simply assume the role intimated to her by the present dominant male in her life; neither does she fill her time priming herself up for the marriage market. On the contrary, she quickly learns to adapt to changes and new surroundings, and occupies herself wisely and fruitfully. Belle is portrayed as someone who is happy and content, albeit by herself.

> La Belle se levoit à quatre heures du matin, et se dépêchoit de nettoyer la maison et d'apprêter à diner pour la famille. Elle eut d'abord beacoup de peine, car elle n'étoit pas accoutoumée à travailler comme une servante, mais au bout de deux mois elle devint plus forte, et la fatigue lui donna une santé parfaite. Quand elle avoit fait son ouvrage, elle lisoit, elle jouoit du clavecin, ou bien elle chantoit en fillant (Belle 61)

In addition to these qualities, she is gifted with a characteristic not usually included in characterizing female characters in fairy tales: the ability to be perceptive and make resolute decisions. This trait is in direct contrast with the customary characterization of fairy tale heroines-- i.e., Snow White waiting in her glass coffin, Beauty sleeping in a bush-surrounded

---

[4]Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere. Woman, Culture, and Society. Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1974.

castle, Rapunzel singing locked up in a tower. And, as we shall see later, this faculty for honest evaluation and judgement on her part is central to the conflict and resolution of the conflict in this tale.

Early in the story, Belle (who was the most pursued for marriage among the three sisters) firmly decides that she would rather stay with her father and take care of him than get married.

> . . .la Belle, dis-je, remercia bien, honnêtement ceux qui vouloient l'épouser, mais elle leur dit qu'elle étoit trop jeune, et qu'elle souhaitoit de tenir compagnie à son père pendant quelque années (Belle 59-60)

As her family becomes poor, and her sisters' suitors stopped all offers of marriage, Beauty remains the only one priviledged with offers of marriage from gentilhommes. Nevertheless, Belle still opts to remain with her father and support him.

> Il y eut même plussieurs gentilhommes qui voulurent l'épouser, quoiqu'elle n'eût pas un sou; mais elle leur dit qu'elle ne pouvoit pas se résoudre à abandonner son pauvre père dans son malheur, et qu'elle le suivroit à la campagne pour le consoler et lui aider à travailler (Belle 60-61)

This short paragraph is crucial in the interpretation of Belle's development. Here, and in two other instances, Belle cites her father as the reason for refusing her suitors. Psychologically, a daughter's persistent choice of the father over and above any male has always been construed as indicative of a strong father complex. Thus, the usual reading of this tale which concentrates on the process of Belle's sexual maturity -- Belle's movement from father to other male -- cites this as the phase when a girl's strong desire for her father eclipses any desire for any other male. As long as she could help it, Belle wanted to maintain her uninterrupted, blissful experience with Daddy.

However, one forgets that such devotion could also be nothing more than a healthy love and firm support for a parent, especially in a time of family crisis and misfortune. Belle was well aware of the situation and consequences: she knew her capabilities and thus knew where she was needed most. She knew that at this moment, she could best help her family cope with the crises, especially as her two sisters were incapable of managing the household. Belle's choice to stay and help and *run* the household need not be interpreted as a strong, secret desire for Daddy.

Simultaneously, Beauty's persistent choice to remain with her family instead of marrying could also point to her youth and naiveté. It is with the familiar that Belle feels most secure, happy, and fulfilled. She clings to the familiar and predictable routine of family life rather than confront the outside world which contains unknown dangers. Thus, Belle's life goes on peacefully and placidly until after a year of living quietly in the country, her father receives word that a vessel containing some of his merchandise has arrived. Thinking that the profit their father might make from the sales of these would signal the end of their sojourn in the country, the two older sisters ask for clothes and other accessories to prepare for life in the city once more. Belle's choice and request show her independence and contentment. She has learned to cope well and did not really need anything. With the genuine desire not to displease, Belle simply asks for a rose.

> Ce n'est pas que la Belle se souciât d'une rose, mais elle ne vouloit pas condamner par son exemple, la conduite de ses soeurs, qui auroient dit que c'étoit pour se distinguer qu'elle ne demandoit rien (Belle 63, emphasis mine)

Belle does not really want a rose. It was just on impulse that she asks for one, mainly so that her sisters would not jeer at her for wanting to be different and distinguishing herself once more. The rose, it seems, was a purely arbitrary choice.

However, it is the very act of asking for a rose which precipitates the conflict in the tale. In folklore and literature, the rose is a symbol for love, romance, beauty, sin, even death.[65] But the most common association of the rose is love and beauty. Indeed, it is the rose which signals to the Beast that Belle exists. And since the rose is a symbol for love, too, it likewise signals to the Beast the possibility of the beautiful girl loving him, and thereby ending his enchantment. However, the Beast, upon catching Belle's father in the act of cutting a rose, delivers a death sentence out of proportion with this simple crime. Why would the Beast demand a *life* in exchange for a rose?

> La politesse de cette bête dangereusse ne fait qu'annoncer une menace de mort, sentence bien sevère pour le vol d'une rose: 'Il faut mourir pour reparer cette faute; . . .' Cette mort pour quelques roses peût paraitre improbable, et même ridicule; mais

[65]For other symbolisms of the rose, see Gordon, Lesley. Green Magic: Flowers, Plants, and Herbs in Lore and Legend. England: Jolly and Barber Ltd., 1981. See also, Mercatante, Anthony. The Magic Garden: The Myth and Folklore of Flowers, Plants, Trees, and Herbs. New York and London: Harper and Row, 1976.

> dans le monde onirique du conte de fées, tout est différente, avec une signification inattendue pour le profane.
>
> Intrus dans le chateau, le marchand a commis un acte sacrilège. En effet, en psychanalyse, cet acte de couper signifie symboliquement que l'on a tenté d'enlever à la bête, son tresor: (ce que j'aime plus que toutes choses au monde) sa virilité. (La bête) demander au marchand de lui donner une de ses filles. Elle se trouve donc en concurrence avec le père pour l'amour de sa fille et en lui reprochant d'avoir coupé ses roses, semble lui dire: 'ne me castrez pas (même symboliquement) en coupant mes roses, parce que je veux votre fille.'[11]

In view of this, we can see that it is hardly a coincidence that Belle should, without thinking, ask for a *rose*; the very thing that the Beast

> aime mieux que toutes choses au monde (Belle 66)

because it, in fact, symbolizes her love and his virility. In asking for a rose, perhaps unconsciously, Belle was trying to call attention to her maidenhood, signalling her readiness for a love other than which her father and family could now give. In psychological terms, this seemingly impulsive act of requesting a rose marks that stage in the feminine psyche when a girl is ready to enter into womanhood, but as yet does not consciously admit it because the desire is not fully understood, or suppressed by strong desire to stay within the safety of the family.

As we shall see upon further reading, the father *had to steal* the rose from the Beast, in a vain attempt to please his daughter, Belle. It is this act which marks the separation of father and daughter. Another male now challenges the father's ability to gratify and provide for his daughter. Indeed, at this point, we realize that the Beast is better-equipped to satisfy Belle. He possesses the *rose*-- at the same time love and virility-- which the father cannot give to Belle. The Beast also owns the castle where Belle can further develop now that she has signified her unconscious desire to leave home. Belle's quick, unwavering decision and voluntary move to go to the Beast, in place of her father, once again affirms her capacity for decisiveness and activity. In contrast to her two sisters, who were given to making scenes, crying and wailing, spewing spontaneous insults, exhibiting infinite jealousy and vanity-- almost a parody of unrestrained female emotional reactions-- Belle is calm, more reflective and capable of action. Likewise, in contrast to her father and three brothers who, as

---

[11]Barchilon, Jacques: Le conte merveilleux, p. 8-9.

masculine egos, respond with struggle, protest, defiance and resistance to the demands of the Beast. Belle calmly accepts her fate, with hardly a show of uncontrolled emotions.

> A ce récit, ses deux aînées jetèrent de grand cris, et dirent des injures à la Belle qui ne pleuroit point. . .ses frères pleuroient tout de bon aussi bien que le marchand: il n'y avoit que la Belle qui ne pleuroit point.
>
> (disoient les deux aînées) mademoiselle vouloit se distinguer; elle va causer la mort de notre père, et elle ne pleure pas. Cela seroit fort inutile, reprit la Belle; pourquoi pleurerois-je la mort de mon père? Il ne perira point (Belle 68 and 70)

This subtlety of feeling and controlled emotions which Belle exhibits springs from her unconscious and is in profound accord with the situation of *death*. With absolute clairvoyance, she perceives the underlying meaning of what is happening and still makes her choice.[67]

> J'aime mieux être dévorée par ce monstre, que de mourir du chagrin que me donneroit votre perte (Belle 69)

She intuitively realises that nothing can be the same between herself and her family again. Even if she demures from going to the Beast, her father will die. In the face of change, Belle takes an active move towards the Beast, towards the 'other' male, even with the knowledge that she is somehow moving towards *death*. Death here could mean an end to her former Edenic, because innocent and virtually unchallenged, state. Belle, in choosing on her own to go towards the Beast, is making a choice of the yet unknown over the security and familiarity of the country home. This may be seen as the first step in the slow transformation in her natural process of growth, of maturity, and of transforming her feminine psyche. She perceives very vaguely that she has outgrown her childhood and must now leave her family. On her way to maturity, the rules and values of her former life are now rendered inadequate.

A false solution to the crisis at this point would have been for Belle to refuse to leave home, to give in to the wishes of her father and brothers, to depend on the males to take the necessary steps to solve the crisis, as they were persuading her to do.

> Non, ma soeur, lui dirent ses trois frères, vous ne mourrez pas; nous irons trouver ce monstre, et nous perirons sous ces coups si nous ne pouvons le tuer. . . (dit le marchand) Je suis charmé du bon coeur de la Belle, mais je ne veux pas l'exposer à la mort. Je suis vieux, il ne me reste que peu de temps à vivre; ainsi je ne perdrai que quelques années de vie, que je ne regrette qu'à cause de vous, mes chers enfans

---

[67]Neumann, Erich. Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine; A Commentary on the Tale of Apuleuis. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

(Belle 68-69)

Had Belle accepted these solutions offered to her, she would have shown unwillingness to break away from the childhood phase in which one depends upon parents and elder siblings for appropriate behaviour and proper decisions. It would have signified a lack of trust in one's self, and a lack of trust expressed by the family in the autonomy of Belle, in the rightfulness of her actions and decisions. But Belle remains firm in her decision and takes full responsibility in facing a yet unencountered situation and endure the pain and anxiety of acting without clear guidelines and parental approval. Unaided, she takes a full stride towards shaping her own value system and her own life. After all, as Penelope Washbourn reminds us in Becoming Woman,

> Self-awareness and consciousness become the key to discovering one's individuality and being responsible for it.
>
> A new faith, a new value structure, and a new sense of personal identity, depend on rejecting and separating oneself from the home and risking the journey of self-discovery[61]

For her journey, the isolation Belle experiences in the Beast's castle is significant. She now has a chance to individuate-- to experience things and grow towards herself, to integrate her conscious and unconscious, ~~and~~ *real*-ize her true self.

Interestingly, the motherless Belle who has not had any real support so far, is reassured on the soundness of her decision and action by *another woman*. This woman is similar to the wise, old helper in the hero monomyth. Such a helper does not really decide and tell the protagonist what to do and where to go, but simply affirms the soundness of the decision or action already made.

> Pendant son sommeil, la Belle vit une dame qui lui dit; je suis contente de votre bon coeur, la Belle: la bonne action que vous faites en donnant votre vie pour saveur celle de votre père, ne demeurera point sans récompense (Belle 71)

This reassurance is important to Belle and gives her courage. She recounts it to her father upon waking up, but her father does not put as much faith in it.

> La Belle, en s'éveillant, raconta son songe à son père, et quoiqu'il le consolât un peu, cela ne l'empecha pas de jeter de grand cris, quand il fallut se séparer de sa chère fille (Belle 71)

---

[61]Washbourn, Penelope. Becoming Woman. p. 5 and 22.

Belle also cries at their separation but is determined not to spend her time merely grieving about her fate. In accordance with her nature, courageous and resolute Belle does not give way to despair and boredom.

> mais comme elle avoit beaucoup de courage. . .(elle) résolut de ne se point chagriner pour le peu temps qu'elle avoit à vivre. . .Elle résolut de se promener en attendant, et de visiter ce beau château. . .Mais elle fut bien surprise de trouver une porte sur laquelle il y avoit écrit Appartement de la Belle (Belle 72)

Had Belle cried and sulked in one corner, she would not have had discovered this place. Thus, it is once again owing to her active disposition, to her determination to *do* something even in what she thinks are the last remaining hours of her life, that she chances upon this room. What follows in not unlike the concept found in Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own.[69] Indeed, it is here that Belle manages to turn her solitary condition into a 'creative confinement' where she pursues her interests and nurtures her creative talents in the arts.

> . . .fut une grande bibliothèque, un clavecin, et plusieurs livres de musiques. . .pendant son dîner elle entendit un excellent concert, quoiqu'elle ne vît personne (Belle 72-73)

In contrast to her father's house, where she could only indulge in these interests '(Q)uand elle avoit fait son ouvrage,' Belle now pursues them unhampered by the priority which, for women, society puts on domestic, household arts. This is an interesting detail for Belle, considering that this tale was written at a time when women were perceived as not having enough vigour, or attentiveness to sustain the tension essential in moments of artistic torment. In Lettre sur l'education des femmes, (1757), Mehegan states:

> Women do not ordinarily have that force of mind which invents and creates. [70]

Daillant de la Touche echoes this, focussing more on women's lack of creativity than on her lack of inventiveness.

> That blazing fire which makes a work come alive, that fire is lacking in woman and will be lacking in her compositions.[71]

---

[69]Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1957. This novel is a work important to feminist studies. Woolf writes about women and society, and posits some assumptions that women could be more creative and productive if they could be allowed to have their own space and freedom.

[70]Qtd. in Friedman, Leonard. The Nature and Role of Women. p. 6.

[71]Ibid. p. 27-8.

It was common then, in eighteenth century France, that women were expected to be educated in the *arts d'agrement*, but they should be accomplished only to the point of being a source of pleasure and beauty to their family, as an addition to their social graces. In general, efficiency and skill in the domestic arts was still more highly valued in a woman than these *belle arts*. Women were to be skilled, but the development of talent necessary to make one an artist was usually reserved for men.[11]

In the city, Belle's sisters waste time in their coquettish preoccupations and mock Belle who prefers to spend her time with books. After finishing the chores in their country home, Belle reads. And now, in the castle of the Beast, Belle's *appartement* opens to 'une grande bibliothèque.' Recalling the many clamours for equal opportunity in education among the sexes in 18th century France, Mme Leprince de Beaumont is here surely making a statement regarding the importance of education for women. Our heroine, who reads a lot, meets with a happy, beautiful fate in contrast to her sisters who were merely obsessed with women's passions for adornments. In her highly contrastive portrayal of Belle and her two sisters, Mme Leprince de Beaumont is calling attention to the silliness of women confined to their *toilette*. And if we recall her unhappy marriage, perhaps she is also advocating the advantages and liberating potential of being well-educated and sufficiently independent.

Belle has a degree of perceptivity and ability then uncommon to many women. It is thus not surprising given her intelligence, that Belle notices the significant lack of *esprit* in the Beast, at that time when good looks, wealth, and good social standing were sufficient qualities to make one a fairy-tale prince.

> Vous avez raison, dit le monstre; mais outre que je suis laid, je n'ai point d'esprit; je sais bien que je ne suis qu'une bête. On n'est pas bête, reprit la Belle, quand on croit n'avoir point d'esprit; un sot n'a jamais su cela.
>
> (La Bête) l'entretenoit pendant le souper avec assez de bon sens, mais jamais avec ce qu'on appelle esprit dans le monde (Belle 74 and 75)

---

[11] In 1687, Fenélon proposes a program of very limited subjects appropriate for women in Traité de l'education des filles. In 1783, Choderlos de Laclos, in De l'education des femmes, advises study that will make women more graceful in spirit without excess of knowledge. For more on this, see Friedman, L. Role and Nature of Women. See also Jacobs, Eva. ed. Woman and Society in 18th Century France, Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink. London: Athlone Press, 1971.

Belle was content with the three months she spent in the castle. She had time for herself, and an *appartement* where she could do things she enjoyed, such as indulging in artistic and creative endeavours. Having space and time to concentrate on herself and her own interests, Belle attained a certain status not easily available to nor wished for by women indoctrinated to be proper eighteenth century French ladies.

However, as a woman, she is really not yet fulfilled. *Creative-ness* in feminine psychology is not just limited to being imaginative and inventive, but even more it implies 'fertility and production' or the act of 'bringing something into existence.'[73] During her stay in the Beast's castle, Belle not only *creates* herself, by recognizing formerly repressed notions in her unconscious and integrating them with her growing consciousness, more importantly, Belle *creates* the Beast. Somehow, the Beast, because invisible and invulnerable, did not previously exist. No one interacts with him and, therefore, no one affirms his being. Belle's father, for example, although he sees the Beast, does not acknowledge the Beast as he really is. Instead, Belle's father resorts to false flattery for which he is severely reprimanded.

Belle, always sincere and true to her self, tells the Beast exactly what she thinks, never falsely complimenting him. In this way, not only does Belle genuinely help the Beast to preceive his 'self,' but also simultaneously affirms her own 'self,' by constantly being true to her own honest, kind, and perceptive nature.

> . . .je ne sais pas mentir; mais je crois que vous êtes fort bon. Vous avez raison, dit le monstre; mais outre que je suis laid, je n'ai point d'esprit; je sais que je ne suis qu'ne bête. On n'est pas bête, reprit la Belle, quand on croit n'avoir point d'esprit: un sot n'a jamais su cela. . . Vous avez bien de la bonté, dit la Belle, je vous avoue que je suis bien contente de votre coeur; quand j'y pense, vous ne me paroissez plus si laid. Oh dame, oui, répondit la Bête, j'ai le coeur bon, mais je suis un monstre. Il y a bien des hommes qui sont plus monstre qui vous, dit la Belle, et je vous aime mieux avec votre figure que ceux qui, avec une figure d'homme cachent un coeur faux, corrumpu, ingrat.
>
> Chaque jour, la Belle découvrit de nouvelles bontés dans ce monstre (Belle 75)

This is only possible as Belle herself develops towards an integration of her personal self. Gradually, as Belle matures, more and more aspects of the Beast are revealed to her. These aspects may have been there before, but it takes time for Belle to recognize them for

---

[73]Mitchell, Juliet. Psychoanalysis and Feminism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974. p. 88.

what they really are. The changes in the Beast could not have been possible without changes in Belle herself. She gradually forges the prince-form of the Beast only because she is developing as a woman herself -- maturing physically, emotionally, and sexually. As stipulated in the curse of the Beast,

> une méchante Fée m'avoit condamné à rester sous cette figure, jusqu'à ce qu'une belle fille consentit à m'épouser (Belle 82)

the Beast cannot become or be perceived as a Prince until a woman is willing and *able* to marry him. The progressing phases of Belle's encounter with the Beast unfold/reveal the gradual changes in both of them: Beast to prince, and Belle from a naive, adolescent girl to a sexually, active, loving woman.

Belle's first, instinctive reactions to the Beast were of fear and apprehension. The Beast is repugnant and sexually threatening to the young Belle, who comes to him straight from home.

> La Belle n'eût s'empecher de fremir, en voyant cette horrible figure (Belle 70)

This repugnance turns to something like indifference as Belle, in her own *appartement*, discovers herself while developing her own talents. Furthermore, consistent, honest dialogue between the two of them, coupled with Beast's gentleness, gradually transform Belle's terrors to understanding and confidence.

> (dit la Bête) Dites-moi, n'est-ce pas que vous me trouvez bien laid? Cela est vrai, dit la Belle, car je ne sais pas mentir; mais je crois que vous êtes fort bon (Belle 74)

As she develops, Belle becomes more perceptive-receptive to aspects of the Beast beneath his physical appearance. Belle realizes that there was nothing to fear as she grew increasingly familiar with the Beast. She even learns to care for the Beast and to anticipate his coming every night.

> L'habitude de le voir l'avoit accoutumée à sa laideur; loin de craindre le moment de sa visite, elle regardoit souvent à sa monstre pour voir s'il étoit beintôt neuf heures, car la bête ne manquoit jamais de venir a cette heure-la. (Belle 75-6)

The gradual progression of Belle's relationship with the Beast makes Belle's awareness of her sexual readiness and maturity as a woman less terrifying than if she had been forced to face these challenges unprepared. Sexuality in this tale is disguised as a beast-- something

frightening-- because it is a subject which is usually taboo, especially for little girls.

> There must be a reason for the human mind to associate sex with bestiality. The idea of falling in love has dangerous connotations; it is tainted with the taboos and prohibitions from childhood. For the child unconsciously thinks that sex is terrifying. And as he grows, he cannot quite readily reconcile himself to the simple truth that sex is not terrfying. This belief is prohibited by conventions which cannot allow that sex is 'normal.' Thus, it is no wonder that in fantasies, dreams, and fairy tales, sex is presented as dangerous and readily symbolized as 'the monster.' Our story (La Belle et la bête) presents the humanization of the Beast and the 'bestialization' of his female companion. [74]

The tabooed forbidden aspects of sexuality are always impressed on little girls throughout their education. Such conservative, even oppressive, customs render girls ignorant of the reality of their sexuality and its *wholesomeness*. This ignorance can be costly since it makes girls unprepared for the time when they eventually have to confront their sexuality.

> The psychologist, Wilhelm Reich, perpetually stressed the importance of female sexuality. He saw the passive nature of women as a pathological product of a society committed to their suppression[75]

The gentleness of the Beast, as Mme Leprince de Beaumont protrayed him signifies that sexuality and sexual initiation need not always be forced, need not always be violent and terrifying, if one is given the proper time and manner to face it. In depicting Belle's willingness to go and live with the Beast, and her gradual acceptance of him, Mme Leprince de Beaumont is simultaneously portraying the wholesomeness of a woman taking a more active participation in a healthy sexual encounter. It is thus inevitable that only as Belle learns more about herself can she learn about the Beast. The Beast becomess less frightening because Belle gains a greater understading of him and herself, enough to counter the instinctive and conventional reactions society has conditioned her to make. And of course, this becomes possible only as Belle continues to form her own value judgements, based on her experiences, based on her reality.

The complete synchronization of both Belle and Beast, however, comes only when both are transformed. This occurs at the end of the tale as Belle completes her psychological integrations and thereby finalizes her emotional development. We know that this only comes at the end because even while Belle is staying with the Beast, she still secretly longs for her

---

[74]Boulet, Jean. Beauty and the Beast. N.P.: n.p., 1954.
[75]Mitchell, Juliet. Psychoanalysis and Feminism. p. 199.

father and their former home. She constantly wishes for these as she watches through the magical mirror in the library. Hence, her break with her former childhood past is not entirely complete. Belle's obsession with the welfare of her father is the final obstacle in her progression towards full feminine maturity. The Beast thus gives her one final chance to go home for eight days. At this moment, Belle knows, as we do, that it can never be possible to have both her childhood past and the Beast simultaneously. She has to make a choice between the past and a future with the Beast. Belle goes back home with full intentions of returning to the Beast, to whom she has already admitted

> je vous aime trop pour causer votre mort; je vous promets de revenir dans huit jours. (Belle 77)

Unfortunately, she does not count on her sisters's envy and malice. Her sisters have fallen prey to disastrous marriages, worthy examples of feminine subordination in a patriarchal state.

> . . .ses soeurs, qui accoururent avec leurs maris. Elles étoient toutes deux fort malheureuses; l'aînée avoit épouse un gentilhomme beau comme l'Amour; mais il étoit si amoureux de sa propre figure, qu'il n'étoit occupe que de cela depuis le matin jusqu'au soir. . . La seconde avoit épouse un homme qui avoit beaucoup d'esprit; mais il ne s'en servoit que pour faire enrager tout le monde, et sa femme tour la première (Belle 78)

It is interesting to note that her sisters are each married to husbands with the traits that Belle noticed are markedly absent in the Beast-- good looks and wit. The fate of Belle's two sisters, and their jealous reaction to Belle's fate, are implicitly used by Mme Leprince de Beaumont to emphasize the limited fate of conventional, passive females. Their judgment in choosing husbands was very typical. They were constricted by their social training, a very strict, conventional cultural upbringing derived from inherently flawed and deficient conduct books. Even though their husbands possess good looks and wit, the two sisters are not happy in their marriages because their husbands lack the very qualities which abound in the Beast-

> la bonté du caractère, la vertu, la complaissance, la Bête a toutes ces qualites (Belle 80)

Smitten with envy at Belle's good fortune, the two sisters plot to destroy Belle's happiness. They do this in a way totally consistent with a motif universal in tales-- 'the essential is not

the murder of Belle but that she should be persuaded to break the taboo."[14] In this case, the two sisters persuade Belle to break her promise to return after the eighth day.

> Ma soeur, dit l'aînée, il me vient une pensée, tâchons de l'arreter ici plus de huit jours; sa sotte bête se mettra en colère de ce qu'elle lui aura manqué de parole et peut-être qu'elle la dévorera (Belle 79)

Ironically, although the sisters's plan is negative and seemingly destructive, it actually instigates a subsequent development in Belle's feminine psyche--it opens to her the fact that she should really be resisting her forced isolation, and likewise makes the possibility of defying a 'male,' by breaking the promise to return in eight days, attractive and justifiable.

Once again, women guide Belle into further analysis and testing of the propriety and wisdom of her actions and decisions. Her acquiescence to her sisters can actually imply two things: either a regression--once more she chooses the baren and frigid Belle she once was, secure in her family and past, over the blossoming Belle in the Beast's castle; or, the beginning of a higher consciousness--the testing of the lingering opposition in her mind between 'bête' and 'bon coeur,' is in this instance actually a reflection of Belle's refinement of her thoughts and feelings concerning the physical and spiritual aspects of the Beast, of herself, and their relationship.

Essentially, Belle has already chosen deep within her. Even as she stays on with her father, she feels uneasy and really wishes to be with the Beast. Perhaps her going back to her father and trying, but failing, to live a life akin to her former one made her decision all the more clear. Her inner consciousness became more and more important and pivotal as her outer life became increasingly negligible and trivial. Upon going home, although some forms of regression are experienced, this is followed by a counter-development which is more beneficial in sealing Belle's decision to go to the Beast.

> Cependant la Belle se reprochoit le chagrin qu'elle alloit donner à sa pauvre Bête, qu'elle aimoit de tout son coeur, et elle s'ennuyoit de ne la plus voir. (Belle 79)

Belle undergoes a period of re-discovery, one in which old experiences are re-charted and new worlds illuminated with fresh insights. In contrast to her family life, she begins to feel the

---

[14] Neumann, Erich. Amor and Psyche. p. 60.

effects of the consciousness of her recent personal experiences, and perceives the differences between the former Belle and the new Belle. Once again, the pattern of growth outlined by Vivian Gornick helps us to see what Belle is going through.

> Natural process of human growth. . . the adult body rises from the childish form, the mature mind flows directly out of the early personality. All is of one piece-- all clearly related, logically concluded. The conscious relatedness of one's entire existence is what produces the integrated self; the recognition that what one is now has always been-- to hold live in one's hand the sense of what one has always been-- is to have oneself. For the integrated human being there is no past; there is only the continual transformation of original experience.[11]

Thus, it is in a dream, when her conscious, logical mind is most relaxed and least restraining that Belle realizes that she really had chosen the Beast.

> Cependant la Belle se reprochait le chagrin qu'elle alloit donner à sa pauvre Bête, qu'elle aimoit de tout son coeur, et elle s'ennuyoit de ne plus voir. La dixième nuit qu'elle étoit passa chez son père, elle rêve qu'elle étoit dans le jardin du palais, et qu'elle voyoit la Bête couchée sur l'herbe et prête à mourir, qui lui reprochit son ingratitude (Belle 80)

Upon allowing her repressed unconscious to surface once more, Belle attains ego stability and becomes clearly conscious of her freedom and choice. She is no longer willing to follow merely the logical dictates of her 'former' self and of her family. She is now capable of truly perceiving the Beast, beyond his physical appearance, even beyond his lack of wit, which have hindered her from agreeing to marry him before.

> Ce n'est pas ni la beauté ni l'esprit d'un mari qui rendant une femme contente, c'est la bonté du caractère, la vertu, la complaissance, et la Bête a toutes ces qualités (Belle 80)

Belle perceives and accepts the Beast for his own 'self'-- a self that Belle had really helped create. 'Beauté et esprit' were traits that her sisters's husbands possessed but which did not necessarily augur well for a happy marriage. Albeit unknowingly, Belle's sisters provided her with a chance to learn from experiences of other females, and look at husbands and marriages in real, practical terms, and not with eyes misted with romance. In addition, 'beauté et esprit' were traits that Belle possessed. Looking for these in the Beast can mean that Belle was attempting to make the Beast merely a reflection of herself, or even gauging herself as better since the Beast lacked qualities she had. Belle was at first using old guidelines, those which

[11] Gornick, Vivian. Essays in Feminism, p. 111.

she knew, in gauging and defining new encounters. But now, she is able to see everything from a different perspective, with a different consciousness. Belle's decision to immediately return to the Beast comes from a free and totally awakened consciousness. In contrast to her first trip, now she deliberately takes the decision upon herself to go back to the castle, this time not as a victim, but as an active, loving woman. From the perspective of her new consciousness, she experiences a transformation in which she discovers that the disparity between 'bête' and 'bon coeur' and likewise the incongruence between Beast the beloved are no longer valid. She has reached the awareness that love is not separable from sex, where sexuality goes beyond the physical dimension and may also be spiritually enhancing. It is only through the proper passage of time that the innumerable transformations could have taken place within Belle, for her to bring coherence to what were merely visions or unknown desires before.

> It is not the sudden insight or the moment of catharsis or the identification of trauma that is the analysis. Rather, it is the slow process of remembering, of recovering original experience, of holding it up repeatedly to the light of self-consciousness, that allows for the undoing of an old self and the creating of a new self. . .and the re-creation of the self brings with it the promise of emancipation"

The final scene, when Belle finds the Beast in the garden and transforms him into a handsome prince by throwing water on him, accentuates Belle's by now truly active image as a powerful, creative force.

> Non, ma chére bête, vous vivrez pour devenir mon époux; des ce moment je vous donne ma main, et je jure que je ne serai qu'à vous. (Belle 81)

This, of course, is actually the climax of the gradual psychological development of Belle to which, just as gradual, Beast's true form is revealed to her.

> The collective phase of the patriarchate with its subordination of the feminine gives way to the phase of 'encounter,' in which the masculine and the feminine confront each other individually. Then, in the phase of individuation, the woman frees herself from the decisive influence of the encounter with the masculine and is guided by the experience of herself as a feminine self"

The Beast's humanization is an aspect of Belle's individuation. Belle's feminine maturity, with its creative and transforming influence, embraces not only Belle but must

---

"Wasbourn, Penelope. Becoming Woman. p. 117.
"Neumann, Erich. Amor and Psyche. p. 130-31.

necessarily seize hold of the Beast as well.

> His manifestation is dependant on her, he is transformed with, and through, Beauty. [10]

The marriage of Belle and Beast, with which the tale ends, signifies the unity of the different parts of the whole that did not seem to fit before, but only because perceived erroneously. The public marriage also notably sets everything right again. The antagonists are all punished, and the righteous abundantly rewarded. All matters are rectified not only for the couple, but for the entire community and kingdom.

> A maturing marriage is not an escape from the power of a parent to a husband but a statement to oneself and the community that the process of leaving the parental home, and every home, physically, and most importantly, psychologically, that has already begun can now take public form. [11]

This reminds us that in most tales, while the journey and struggles are individual, the success and triumph is communal. This is in accordance with the common motif of the outer world developing and progressing synchronically with the inner development of the hero or heroine.

This particular tale, however, ultimately affirms the power of the feminine principle to restore balance, to repair abberancy, and to make peace. We see that this is only possible through the complete freedom of self-determination, both physically and psychologically, which is independent of the parental, societal, ultimately pathological pressures and domination that abound and suppress the feminine principle from functioning.

> To achieve wholeness, they (women) must become artists; they must break through to the center of their experience, and hold that experience up to the light of consciousness if their lives are to be transformed. They must struggle to 'see' more clearly, to remember more accurately, to describe more fully who and what they have always been. . . If only one could describe fully what one is! Then, one would be free. [12]

---

[10] Ibid. p. 107.
[11] Washbourn, Penelope. Becoming Woman. p. 86.
[12] Gornick, Vivian. Essays in Feminisms. p. 120.

V. Sex, Power, and Language in 'La Chatte blanche'

> Women are, in fact, caught in a very real contradiction. Throughout the course of history, they have been mute, and it is doubtless by virtue of this mutism that men have been able to speak and write. As long as women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process.
>
> Xavière Gauthier,
> 'Existe-il une écriture de femme?'

Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville (c. 1650-1705) was born in Barneville-la-Bertrand. She was hardly sixteen when she married François de la Motte, Comte d'Aulnoy, who was then forty. Their marriage was not a happy one, and around the late 1670s, Mme d'Aulnoy had to leave France. She travelled to Spain and England, and wrote extensively about her travels.[13] In 1690, she went back to France and embarked on a long literary career which produced 'une dizaine d'ouvrages, formant un total de vingt-sept volumes.'[14]

Mme d'Aulnoy's collection of French fairy tales is probably the most well-known collection in and outside France, second only to Charles Perrault's Contes. Likewise, published in 1698, Contes de fées is undoubtedly 'l'oeuvre la plus fameuse de Mme d'Aulnoy' and contains the well-loved tales: 'La Belle aux cheveux d'or,' 'L'Oiseau bleu,' and 'La Chatte blanche.' These tales, together with Mme d'Aulnoy's other works, were first translated into English by various hands in 1721-22 as A Collection of Novels and Tales Written by that Celebrated Wit of France, Countess D'Aunois. The superb artistic quality of her tales has earned her the honour of being the first well-known female writer of 'contes de fées,' perhaps

---

[13] Of her observations about Spain, she wrote Relation du Voyage d'Espagne, 1690, and Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne, 1691. About England, she wrote Mémoires de la cour d'Angleterre, 1695. Her work about Spain is usually referred to for local colour in the histories and romances of that period. However, there are some disputes whether she actually went to Spain at all. See Hume, Martin. Queens of Old Spain. London: s.d., 1911.

[14] R. Foulché-Delbosc. Introduction and Notes. Relation du Voyage d'Espagne. By Mme d'Aulnoy. Paris: Libraire C. Klincksieck, 1926.

even the real innovator of artistic fairy tales in France.

The interpretation of 'La Chatte blanche' in this study is not to dispute the tale's artistic merits nor the capacity of Mme d'Aulnoy as a writer. Rather, it is to find out whether the writer's gender could have affected the conception and rendition of the tale. Mme d'Aulnoy's tales reveal that she was very well-attuned to fairy tradition. Many features and motifs of traditional fairy lore are skillfully embodied by her tales that are at the same time highly original. 'Le nain jaun,' for example, has a very unexpected ending for a fairy tale. Closer to our topic, so does 'La Chatte blanche.' Furthermore, 'La Chatte blanche' is a story of a female cat, instead of a beautiful princess or a handsome prince. Indeed, all throughout the tale, there are many more nuances and differences from traditional fairy lore. Using a feminist perspective, this study will attempt to discover the possible relation of these 'deviations' with the writer's gender.

'La Chatte blanche' is original and innovative, but not in the same apparent way that the tales of Oscar Wilde are, for example, where the usual happy endings are replaced with poignant, sad endings. On the contrary, Mme d'Aulnoy worked well within the prevalent conventions governing fairy tale writing. She used a traditional beginning, (Il était une fois,) and the typical fairy tale ending of a whole kingdom rejoicing over a royal wedding. She availed herself of common storylines, characters, and motifs. She even made references to other fairy tales.

> . . .qui représentait l'histoire de toutes les fées, depuis la création du monde jusqu'allors; les fameuses aventures de Peau-d'Ane, de Finette, de l'Oranger, de Gracieuse, de la Belle au bois dormant, de Serpentin vert, et de cent autres, n'y étaient pas oubliées. (Chatte 169)[13]

Indeed, nothing is forgotten, for a profusion of standard 'fairy tale ingredients' make up 'La Chatte blanche'. For example, Mme d'Aulnoy gives us not one but two tales here. There is a larger frame tale of three brothers competing for the succession to their father's throne. Within this story, there is the story of how a princess was transformed into a white cat that could be taken as a tale all its own. Although it is true that in tales of metamorphosis it is

[13]D'Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel. 'La Chatte blanche.' Contes de Fées de Perrault et de Mme d'Aulnoy. Paris: Didier, Libraire Editeur, 1972. All succeeding quotes from the tale will refer to this edition and the page indicated following the word 'Chatte.'

usual for an explanation to follow once the curse or enchantment is broken, the explanation in this particular tale is unusually long. Also, interestingly, it is full of incidents reminiscent of other fairy tales: a queen promising a yet unborn daughter for some forbidden fruits in a witches' garden; a small and ugly dwarf trying unsuccessfully to retrieve the promised baby; a dragon causing havoc in a kingdom; a princess locked in a tower; a rescue by a young prince thwarted by a witch, and so on. Even in the most cursory of readings, the readers' familiarity with fairy tales would have virutally insured the transparency of these and other motifs or episodes.

Taking advantage of this, Mme d'Aulnoy played both with the fairy tale conventions and the readers' awareness of these as set conventions. However, though she seems deliberately to begin with the standard or the typical, there are simultaneously subtle twists and nuances which signal differences and rescue these customary features from stereotyping and triteness.

Mme d'Aulnoy utilized what may be called deceptive conventionality. Although there was that quality of déjà vu which helped readers model their attitudes and expectations along familiar horizons, there were also hints of new interests which shattered meanings, pictures, or opinions conforming to the readers' pre-conceptions. Clearly recognizable figure-types and plots, previously accepted and defined by culture, were used. But these were altered, given new, even ironic twists, to jar the passive absorption and immediate appropriation of these figure-types and stories according to culturally-defined limits.

Mme d'Aulnoy created, then drew attention to, the discrepancies between traditional concepts and new renderings or re-appropriation of them. She deftly played with the tensions created by widespread past awareness of the typical and conventional concepts and their simultaneous undermining induced by excess and emphasis with differences. This deceptive conventionality-- the subtle process of calling to attention then subverting established norms-- may more broadly be called parody. While it is obviously beyond the scope of this paper to dwell at length about the debates for a singular, definitive meaning of parody, it is nevertheless necessary to mention that parody, as used here, means much more than the mere

mockery or ridiculous imitation it is usually associated with and limited to. Rather, it is both practical and advantageous to use Linda Hutcheon's simple, albeit broad, definition of parody as 'repetition with difference.'

> There is nothing in *parodia* that necessitates the inclusion of a concept of ridicule, as there is, for example in the joke or *burla* of burlesque. Parody, then, in its ironic 'transcontextualization' and inversion is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humour in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual 'bouncing,' complicity and distance.[6]

As 'repetition with difference,' parody then calls attention to the very norms it seeks to transgress. It calls attention to norms, while simultaneously contesting them, in its need to distinguish itself from an-*other*, which is the prior model or context. Thus, an-*other* always stands in the background. Usually, it is the conventional or canonical against which the new creation is implicitly to be measured, understood, and appreciated. The recognition of the inverted world in the new creation still requires knowledge of the order of the world which it inverts, and in a sense, incorporates. In this sense, parody implies shared linguistic and social specific codes or conventions between author and reader. There is always the tacit assumption that author and reader share a background and a set of values specific to the particular text or conventions being parodied if parody is not to be missed. The effectiveness of parody thus lies in the interplay of ambivalence between recognizable repetition and revolutionary difference. It is this unavoidable accouplement of complicity and distance from conventions that makes parody the site of an interesting inter-textuality. Since recognition of the model and its re-handling is postulated both on the part of the author and the reader, parody then demands involvement and activity not only in the production but likewise in the reception of a text. This is in direct contrast with passive absorption and immediate appropriation of stereotypes and clichés, and thus prevents blind acceptance of narrow, doctrinaire views of any particular group.

> Parody may fulfill a heuristic function in changing, or developing, the reader's horizon of expectations, while also serving the author in the task of freeing himself

[6] Hutcheon, Linda. The Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms. New York: Methuen, 1985. p. 12.

> from earlier models, giving this liberation concrete form from earlier models and the liberating effect of laughter usually implied in it.[17]

As parody marks the established norms only to question and subvert them, it reduces the inviolable quality and gravity of canons that have been associated with the form and material under question. Far from imposing a single meaning on the reader, the use of parody provokes scrutiny and critical re-assessment. The reading then accomodates itself to a plurality of meanings and urges a venturing beyond canonical texts. A singular, authoritative, 'right' interpretation is undermined. Instead, as readers pass through the stages of parody--recognition, shock, laughter, destruction of expectations, questioning,-- they are made aware of a multiplicity of sub-texts and meanings to be found in the text.[18] Moreover, parody raises awareness of how reality or the world is represented in a text, and how this representation is perceived and received.

> (The) heuristic function of dialectical parody in changing opinion is an issue which goes beyond specific textual analysis and may also be linked with its epistemological function of introducing change in the work of a writer, and into the broader context of the inherited literary tradition from within which she writes.[19]

Thus, more importantly, as questioning and re-assessment, even rejection, of definite structures loaded with established meanings occur, in many cases of parody, the existing state of society cannot be spared serious consideration. Emphasizing and questioning the popular and standard forms and contexts will inevitably lead to the realization that there are social and literary conventions maintaining these. If canons and conventions exist, there must, of necessity, be a generalized social discourse which make them prevail. To parody stereotypes and clichés so that a re-evaluation occurs is hopefully to expose the dominant ideology supporting them. It is also to call attention to the body of prejudices which constitute a world view and the system of values which affect reading. As parody exposes the limits of conventions and traditions, it jolts readers, forcing them to reflect and question the same.

It is always prudent to avoid the intentional fallacy of ascribing a particular intention to an author from the effect of the text. Hence, there is no claim here that Mme d'Aulnoy

---

[17]Rose, Margaret A. Parody, Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction. London: C. Helm, 1979. p. 63.
[18]Ibid. p. 60ff.
[19]Ibid. p. 74.

intentionally used parody with the modern writers' awareness of the function of parody to transform literary history."[9] On the other hand, neither is it implied that reader-reception of parody may altogether be subjective. For if anything, as already mentioned, in parody, constraints are deliberate and, indeed, necessary for its comprehension. One can never be too neatly schematic about the process of production and reception of texts. But in parody, it is at least posited that someone (author) must have imitated and transformed, before someone else (reader) can perceive these new textual relationships. When we call something parody, we posit some encoding intent to cast a critical and differentiating eye on the artistic past, an intent that we, as readers, can infer from the text's overt and covert inscription of it. By marking where she is coming from, then shocking and dis-orienting the readers as she subverts systems and structures, forms, and contexts, Mme d'Aulnoy reveals herself as a 'different' reader of the past traditions and conventions of fairy tale writing. She signals that there could be, and indeed that she has, an-other perception of all these canons. By using parody Mme d'Aulnoy reveals that she is a questioning reader of the functions and values of those texts or conventions she is parodying. Distorting that which she assumes to reflect, she complicates the 'normal' processes of text reception. Such a sense of play orients the reader to a more critical, even skeptical, stance in the interpretation of texts. Moreover, the writer shows the possibility of working within the system and still going beyond what is regulated and doctrinaire.

The stylistic imitations and distortions of the familiar literary structures of fairy tales in 'La Chatte blanche' are apparent enough in the many textual confusion and discrepancies perceptible in specific linguistic examples. However, much more germaine than the mere recognition of parody is the attempt to identify the new interests which are the source of Mme d'Aulnoy's difference, and the new directions she might be pointing her readers in. Highly noticeable, for example, is a deviation from the usual adventure of a hero undergoing the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return. This is the nuclear unit of the monomyth

[9]"Parody has served modernists such as Beckett and writers of the 'noveau roman,' with a form both of revolt against the past and a way of centering attention on the way in which the reflexive consciousness of the text is expressed, and then interpreted by the reader. Ibid. p. 65.

which is followed by most tales, stories, legends, and is the model for a patriarchal myth.

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[91]

In 'La Chatte blanche', the youngest prince undergoes this but in such a way that it is the story of the Chatte blanche, not his, that is unfolded. In fact, the ending leaves no doubt that it is the Chatte blanche, and not the youngest prince, who triumphs. This leads us to another noticeable deviation: the atypical portrayal of the leading female character. Not only is it *not* a beautiful, inactive, dependent young girl, idly waiting for a godmother or a prince, but it is a White (female) Cat who hunts, plays chess, is very well-educated, has tremendous power, and governs six kingdoms. In fact, at the end, it is not the prince but this Cat-princess who grants the boons to other people. In addition to this, Mme d'Aulnoy uses a common plot for the larger frame-tale: A king puts his three sons to a test as he searches for the one most worthy to be heir to his crown and kingdom. Usually, it is an enchanted, sick or aged and dying king, sending his sons to procure a cure for his sickness, root out the cause of some plague, or free the kingdom from some curse or enchantment. Instead, Mme d'Aulnoy gives us a king who does not want to relinquish power as yet, and tries to thwart his sons' bid for the throne.

> Il était une fois un rois qui avaient trois fils bien fait et courageux; il eut peur que l'envie de régner ne leur prît avant sa mort; Le roi se sentait vieux, mais son esprit et sa capacité n'ayant point diminué, il n'avait pas envie de leur céder une place qu'il remplissait si dignement; il pensa donc que le meilleur moyen de vivre en repos, c'était de les amuser par des promesse dont il saurait toujours éluder l'effet. (Chatte 168)

Thus, he asks for 'le plus beau petit chien,' 'une pièce de toile si fine qu'elle passât par le trou d'une aiguille,' and 'la plus belle fille' in that order from his sons before he would pass on the crown. For every condition, the youngest prince managed to obtain what the king asked for. Still, the king would not concede until the very end when the prince brings a beautiful princess for his bride.

---

[91]Campbell, Joseph. The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1977. p. 26.

In the youngest prince, we find a common fairy tale motif of the youngest son or the youngest prince as the unlikely hero who succeeds, aided by a mysterious, supernatural guide. Once again, Mme d'Aulnoy puts in some slight differences. Her description of the prince is unusual, altogether somewhat flippant and funny. She describes, of all things, the prince's teeth. And contrary to most tales graced by majestic, strong, noble, and courageous prince-heroess, Mme d'Aulnoy throws in a phrase about the prince's *valeur* almost like an afterthought.

> . . .mais je ne m'attache quà celles du cadet. Il était gracieux, il avait l'esprit gai et réjouissant, la tête admirable, la taille noble, les traits réguliers, de belles dents, beaucoup d'adresse dans tous les exercises qui conviennent à un prince. Il chantait agréablement, il touchait le luth et le théorbe avec une delicatesse qui charmait. Il savait peindre; en un mot, il était très accompli; et pour sa valeur, elle allait jusqu'à l'intrépidité. (Chatte 168, emphasis mine)

The underlined phrase is an example of how Mme d'Aulnoy makes use of the readers' awareness of fairy tales. She assumes they would know the usual, typical 'exercises' pertaining to a prince. One other subtle difference in Mme d'Aulnoy's youngest prince is that we are not given any reason why he was favoured in the tale over the two older ones. In most tales, the two older princes are usually wicked, unjust, scheming, greedy, and thus are deservedly deprived of crown and glory. However, Mme d'Aulnoy does not give us any reason to think the other princes were bad at all,

> Chacun prit une route différente: les deux aînés eurent beaucoup d'aventures; mais je m'attache qu'à celles du cadet (Chatte 168)

nor that they failed the tests. The two older princes do manage to obtain the king's desires and bring beautiful dogs, fine linen, and beautiful brides.

The only reason to suggest why the youngest prince found favour with the Chatte blanche, who helps him obtain the king's wishes, was a resemblance to a former prince the Chatte blanche loved, and who died. This approximated the condition for transformation posited by the witches who had turned a young princess into a white cat.

> Elles (fées) me touchèrent; je me vis aussitôt sous la figure d'une Chatte blanche, . . .et je ne serai délivrée de ma chatonique figure que par un prince qui ressemblerait parfaitement à l'époux qu'elles m'avaient ravi. C'est vous, seigneur, qui avez cette resemblance (Chatte 196)

On the surface, this seems like any other idiosyncratic condition usually attached with fairy

tale metamorphoses. Here we discern something more if we see it in the light of traditional and prevalent fairy tale patterns where maidens or princesses are chosen or attain good fortune-- usually an economically enriching marriage-- through good looks. Many a destiny of female fairy tale characters were decided by their appearance; and thus the ironic twist since in this tale, a prince is favoured to gain solely on physical appearance. Moreover, simple possession of good looks was insufficient. The prince had to conform to the pre-conceived, static model of the Chatte blanche's former prince-lover. Usually, it is the female character who must conform to a pre-formed model of beauty.

'La Chatte blanche' ends with an almost canonical fairy tale ending; a marriage of the successful prince and princess who then live happily ever after. In fact, everyone lives happily ever after since the Chatte blanche has six kingdoms to distribute and pass around. Not only do the two older princes get a kingdom each, but the old king manages to hold on to his kingdom and get an additional one in the bargain.

> Seigneur, lui dit-elle (Chatte blanche), je ne suis pas venue pour vous arracher un trône que vous remplissez si dignement; je suis née avec six royaumme: permettez que je vous en offre un et que j'en donne autant à chacun de vos fils. . . Le roi et tout la cour poussèrent de long cris de joie et d'étonnement. (Chatte 197)

We appreciate Mme d'Aulnoy's brilliant use of parody in this happy ending injected with a very subtle ironic twist. With this simple statement, the Chatte blanche manages to twist the whole story around. First, she spurns the offer of the king's crown, having six kingdoms of her own, she has the advantage in dispensing favours and is more at liberty to be generous and benevolent. Secondly, the young prince and not herself becomes the conditional prize and merchandise for barter in an economically enriching marriage. Thirdly, the Chatte blanche manages to reduce the gravity and even to ridicule the over-concern of the king for possession, power, and authority. Lastly, the Chatte blanche ends up with three kingdoms, and thus remains the most powerful of them all.

The undermining of patriarchal power is likewise in the story of the Chatte blanche's transformation. But instead of a white cat-cum-beautiful princess, old and ugly fées triumph over another king.[92] The fées are indirectly aided by no less than the king's wife, the queen.

---

[92]In folk and fairy tales, there are good and bad fairies, and fairies who are ambiguous from a

'La Chatte blanche' provides us with seemingly stereotypical roles for women - a queen mother, nasty fées, and a princess-virgin. However, there are really many textual clues which signal to indicate that these stereotypical roles are otherwise.

The tale within the frame-tale starts with a pregnant queen longing to eat some forbidden fruits from trees growing inside a garden owned by the fées. Her desire was so strong that the queen fell ill.

> La reine ma mère eut une envie si violente d'en manger. . . .elle en voulait manger ou mourir; . . .enfin elle tomba dangereusement malade, sans que qui ce soit pût apporter le moindre remede à son mal (Chatte 183)

It was a maladie which no one could understand but which the fées knew about and had a cure for. The fées offered to allow the queen to eat the forbidden fruits in exchange for the yet unborn daughter the queen was carrying.

> Une nuit qu'elle s'était un peu assoupie, elle vit en se réveillant une petite vieille, laide, et décrépit, assise dans un fauteuil au chevet de son lit. . . nous trouvons ta majesté bien importune de vouloir avec tant d'opinâtreté manger de nos fruits; mais puisqu'il y va de ta précieuse vie, mes soeurs et moi consentons à t'en donner tant que tu pourras en emporter, et tant que tu resteras ici, pourvu que tu nous fasses un don. - Ah! ma bon mère, s'écria la reine, parlez, je vous donne mes royaummes, mon coeur, mon âme, pourvu que j'aie des fruits je ne saurais les acheter trop cher. - Nous voulons, dit-elle, que ta majesté nous donne la fille que tu portes dans ton sein. (Chatte 184)

In this meeting, where the queen makes a pact with the fées, there are some seemingly trivial phrases which I would like to pay particular attention to because of their significance in later discussion. The fée, described as old, ugly, and decrepit, calls the other fées 'mes soeurs,' while the queen greets her 'ma bonne mère.' Most importantly, the fées knew the queen was carrying a daughter, and not a son. And it seems that the daughter is exactly what the fées were interested in, in exchange for granting the queen's desire. They promise the queen that the child will be well-taken cared of, even giving hints of some advantages if the daughter was to be raised by them.

> . . .elle sera nourrie parmi nous, il n'y à point de vertus, de beautés, de sciences, dont nous ne la douions; en un mot, ce sera notre enfante, nous la rendrons heureuse. (Chatte 184)

The queen agrees to hand over her daughter to be raised among the fées. She was particularly

---

"(cont'd). human point of view. The fées in this tale correspond to what usually are perceived as bad fées, and for convenience, just the word fées will be used throughout the study.

reassured that her daughter would be in good hands after she herself had stayed inside the fées' garden and palace. At first, the queen herself wanted to stay. However, in the end, she decides to return to her husband, the king, who does not know of her encounter, much less of the pact she made with the fées. Upon hearing of the bargain, the king's first reaction concerned the relation of the events and consequences to him.

> Quoi! Il faut que vous n'ayez aucune amitié pour moi. Là-dessus il l'accabla de mille reproches, dont ma pauvre mère pensa mourir de douleur; mais il ne se contenta pas de cela, il la fit enfermer dans une tour (Chatte 186).

> Les fées n'ignoraient rien de ce qui se passait (Chatte 187).

All this does not escape the fées' notice. They were incensed at not having the baby but did not immediately use force to claim what they perceive to be rightly theirs. They proceeded the king's way, sending some ambassadors, interestingly, not only to retrieve the child but significantly 'pour l'avertir de mettre la reine en liberté.' However, the king did not concede anything to these small and ugly dwarves. The fées next set loose a dragon which ate 'les hommes et les enfants' and caused plants to die. The king, with his sages, physicians, and strong men, was helpless and powerless against the dragon sent by the fées. Finally, the king had to resort to

> une fée dont il était protégé dès sa plus tendre jeunesse. Elle était fort vieille, et ne se levait presque plus; et lui fit mille reproches de souffrir que le destin le persévutât sans le secourir. 'Comment voulez-vous que je fasses, lui dit-elle, vous avez irrité mes soeurs; les ont autant de pouvoir que moi, et rarement nous agissons les unes contre les autres (Chatte 187).

This fée remains true to her sisters and counsels the king to give up the princess and set the queen free. In the end, the king agrees to everything this fée tells him.

It is apparent that the fées are bound together by a strong sense of sisterhood. The queen instinctively recognizes this sisterhood, greeting the fée sent to her as 'ma mère;' agreeing to have her daughter raised by them, and expressing a desire to live with the fées herself. Otherwise, the sisterhood is mysterious or uncomprehensible and frightening, especially to the king and his men, as they deal with fées by law and logic, through doctors and strong men. We see in the tale that all the king's efforts to break the queen's pact with the fées are ineffective. It is very clear that the sistherhood can and dare defy the authority of

the king.

Along this line, feminists have recuperated the image of women as hags, witches, and crones.

> There are several reasons for using the witch as a positive image for woman. Among them are the subversive activities of witches throughout their history, as well as alleged characteristics of witches that some women see as liberation symbols."

The popular stereotype of these women is one of old, ugly, and decrepit ladies. In Gyn/Ecology, Mary daly states that 'ugly' may be considered as a compliment, for the beauty of strong creative women is 'ugly' by misogynistic standards. In another book, Daly argues,

> Our symbol systems and conceptual apparatuses have been male creations and do not reflect the experience of women but rather function to falsify our own self-images and experiences "

Our traditional and current phallocratic society follows an organizing principle and a set of systems that is male-centered and supports male dominance. In this society, where feminine gender means essentially non-power, it is not surprising that women who exhibit aggressiveness and assume power are regarded as displaying 'deviant' behaviour. Neither is it surprising that the terms to describe these women -- hags, witches, crones -- eventually accumulate derogatory, 'ugly' connotations in our culture, especially when cultural assumptions about women are built into the language.

But if the figure of the witch appears wicked, it is because she poses a real danger to phallocratic society. There are many reasons why patriarchs found such women too threatening for co-existence, and therefore tried to erase, marginalize, or de-territorialize, if not totally wipe them out of history." Women are traditionally excluded in the power structure, but witches have always exercised power and formed relationships outside hierarchies of the legal authority. Witches do not conform. Non-conformers usually risk some

---

"Dybikowski, A. New French Feminists. p. 220-21. The fées in this tale are not exactly the same as witches, or 'sorcières.' Nevertheless, many of the things that will be discussed about the witches similarly apply to some extent about these fées. In addition, witches, as used here, refer much more than simply to 'real witches' with supernatural powers, but more broadly, to women who do not conform to a patriarchal idea of women.

"Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father. p. 54.

"See Michelet, Jules. La Sorcière. 1862. See also Pol Pelletier. La nef des sorcières. Montréal, Quinze, 1976. Trans. by Linda Gaboriau as A Clash of Symbols. Toronto: Coach House, 1982.

social sanction ranging from silent scorn to exclusion. However, these have turned to fear and dread for witches for they are thought to have force and knowledge which dominant reality fails to understand.

Women who seek out roles that are contrary to those acceptable to the male-dominant society, especially those that provide women with power in their own right are said to be in league with something that is certainly not good. Furthermore, witches are usually a sisterhood of women. They support one another, they are a strong and essentially presence of women to and for women. Understandably, they become mysterious and somehow threatening to men. As Adrienne Rich says,

> patriarchy always will name whatever women do as a negation of what it is. They will always say that we are man-hating when we are women-loving women."[96]

Women-loving women are understandably incomprehensible to a world in which men make the rule and impose a relational definition on women. Women's status is very often bound up with that of men who share their domestic space-- fathers, brothers, sons, husbands. The old single or widowed female has an especially tenuous role in society. In part, when 'ugly' old women,' wise of the world, would not or could not conform to cultural ideals or womanhood, motherhood, and domesticity, they easily become objects either of suspicion or scorn.

In 'La Chatte blanche', the queen, who desires to partake of the fées' fruits-- perhaps to share with some knowledge and experiences the fées have that are not available to the general public-- is immediately considered ill.

> enfin elle tomba dangereusement malade, sans que qui ce soit pût apporter le moindre remède à son mal (Chatte 183)

She was believed to be delirious, burning with fever and incoherent. However, there is the possibility that she was diagnosed as such just because the queen's desire to know, see, and taste the 'fruits' of the fées was perceived as 'abnormal' by the majority.

> cependant les médecins étant entrés après lui avoir touché le pouls, et fait leurs cérémonies ordinaires, ne purent rien qu'elle fût dans une parfaite santé (Chatte 184, emphasis mine).

It was convenient to declare the queen, whose wishes and desires could not be understood, ill.

---

[96]Rich, Adrienne. 'Three Conversations.' Adrienne Rich's Poetry. Ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi. New York: Norton, 1975. p. 34.

Illness, like madness and hysteria, allow women an emotional intensity or scope not usually expected in conventional feminine roles."[11] If just upon expressing her desires, the queen was thought 'sick' and thus was restricted and strictly supervised, it is not surprising that she suffered more after making decisions and actions which did not conform to conventional expectations of her as a 'mother' and a 'queen.'

The confrontations between the king and the queen upon the queen's return is interesting. The king asks her where she obtained the fruits, and it is noteworthy that he asks the queen not once, but often and that the queen gives different answers.

Le roi demeurait surpris de tant de contrariétés (Chatte 186)

It is easy to see this as the queen's fear of reprisal. The overwhelming fear the queen feels is in itself indicative of how it has been inculcated in women's minds that patriarchal authority should not be defied, and terrible consequences await one who dares to do so. Moreover, aware of the strained relationship between language and women, we wonder whether the queen was misunderstood, or perhaps could not adequately express herself since what she was recounting did not really have any basis or credence within the patriarchal king's domain. The interrogation does not cease until the queen, once again, falls ill. The language Mme d'Aulnoy uses to describe how the king insists on discovering the secret pact between the queen and the witches is very revealing. It hints at a patriarchal insistence to be in control of everything. It also hints at the extent of suffering women who try to uphold their freedom by escaping from the constrictions imposed on them must undergo. Only after extreme pain would the queen finally tell the king, and in a mode he could understand.

> Le roi s'inquiéta, il pressa la reine de lui déclarer le sujet de sa tristesse; et après des peines extrême, elle lui apprit tout ce qui s'était passé entre les fées et elle et comme elle leur avait promis la fille qu'elle devait avoir. . Là-dessus il l'accabla de mille reproches, dont ma pauvre mère pensa mourir de douleur; mais il ne se contenta pas de cela, il la fit enfermer dans une tour, et mit des gardes de tous côtés pour empêcher qu'elle n'eût commerce avec qui que ce fût au monde, que les officiers qui la servaient, encore change-t-il ceux qui avaient été avec elle au château des fées (Chatte 186, emphasis mine)

The reaction of the king is not so surprising; neither is the mother's change in attitude and subsequent sickness with sorrow or regret. Because of social sanctions which classify

[11] Dworkin, Andrea. Woman Hating. New York: E.D. Dutton Inc., 1974.

strong-willed women as abnormal, ill, or hysterical, we find women being forced into situations where they can develop no other traits that those of the oppressed. These are the very same traits, however, which coincide with those that misogynists have decided all women have. The one domain in which women have felt their own power -- in the patriarchal sense of complete dominance, authority over, and control of another -- has been motherhood. And even this aspect has been wrenched away and manipulated to conform to male control. There is a strong patriarchal interest in the control of children because of patrilineage. Patriarchs want children to insure the disposition of their patrimony. In most tales, when a king does not have a son, he usually gains one through his daughter-princess. Whoever gains the princess for marriage also gets the king's kingdom and riches. Thus, the patrimony will eventually be still controlled by another male. The king's great concern for himself upon hearing of the pact now seems clearer. In the first place, he still does not know whether the child will be a boy or a girl. And as the king-patriarch, he wants to have the final decision concerning what is suitable or not suitable for his family.

Thus, the queen, who pursued her own interests and desires seemingly over her child's welfare, and would rather have had her daughter raised up among the fées was considered a non-conformist, sick, or delirious, and was promptly locked in tower. Many people, both men and women, think that there is something wrong with a woman who is not happy playing the role of mother or wife. And of course, under the institution of motherhood, the mother is the first to be blamed if anything goes wrong. It becomes clearer, then, why the fées were concerned not only with getting the promised daughter but likewise in liberating the mother.

> (les fées) envoyèrent une célèbre ambassade au roi, pour l'avertir de mettre la reine en liberté (Chatte 186)

It is important for fées to wrest power away from the dominant male, and assert their own identity and desires, at the risk of any social sanction. The fées continually defy the dominant male authority and therefore they have been continually marginalized and persecuted. This is perhaps why, upon getting the princess, the fées raise her in a tower where she does not meet any males.

> . . .je suis ravie de te voir raisonner si joliment, et je conçois que c'est la haine que

> j'ai pour tous les hommes qui me persuade quelquefois qu'ils ne sont pas éloignés de moi (Chatte 190)

This gives us a clue why the fées transformed the princess into a Chatte blanche upon learning she was planning to run away with a prince.

> . . .je me jetai dans la gueule de cet horrible monstre, voulant qu'il m'engloutît, comme il venait d'engloutir tout ce que j'aimais au monde. Il voulait bien aussi mais les fées encore plus cruelles que lui ne le voulurent pas. Il faut, s'écrièrent-elles, la réserver à de plus longues peines, une prompte mort est trop douce pour cette indingue créature. Elles me touchèrent; je me vis aussitôt sous la figure d'une Chatte blanche (Chatte 196)

For women like the fées, proud of their independence, power, and 'beauty,' death was too easy à punishment for a woman who would betray the sisterhood, and run off with a man. Recuperating the connotation of the word 'chatte' as referring to the female sex, much like the contemporary English slang 'pussy,' it is not surprising that the fées change the princess into a Chatte blanche. For the sisterhood, it is a fate worse than death to be perceived merely as a sex-object, a lure for visual-sexual pleasure. It is the representation of women pervasive in our culture that women like witches are rebelling against. Women considered as a 'sex' is one of the more prevalent forms of patriarchal erasures. Perhaps more than anyone, 'witches' know the perils of merely being a spectacle to be looked at, and worse, of the perception of the female body as simply the locus of lust and sexuality.

It was thus the youngest prince in the frame-tale encounters the princess as a 'chatte.' Seeing only a 'female sex,' the prince wonders why the Chatte blanche can speak.

> Madame la Chatte, dit le prince, vous êtes bien généreuse de me recevoir avec tant d'accueil, mais vous ne me paraissez pas une bestiole ordinaire, le don que vous avez la parole, et le superbe château que vous possédez, en sont des preuves assez évidentes) (Chatte 171)

Interestingly, the prince perceives that the Chatte blanche is not any ordinary 'chatte,' because of parole and property ownership. But while the Chatte blanche's palace and possesions make proper enough impressions on the prince, however much the prince wonders and questions, he could not fully understand the Chatte blanche and the 'language' in the Chatte blanche's palace.

> Fils de roi, reprit Chatte blanche, je te prie, cesse de me faire des compliments, je suis simple dans mes discours et dans mes manière. . .allons, continua-t-elle, que l'on serve, et que les musiciens se taisent, car le prince n'entend pas ce qu'ils disent.

> Sans doute, continua-t-elle, nous avons ici des poètes qui ont infiniment d'esprit, et si vous restez un peu parmi nous, vous aurez lieu d'en être convaincu (Chatte 171, emphasis mine)

The prince asks many questions but could not fully comprehend the Chatte blanche's replies. Even the musicians and other performers in the palace present a problem for the prince, and have to be *silenced*. All throughout the frame-tale, the prince is presented in the process or act of discovering, questioning, interpreting. Within the palace of the Chatte blanche, many things seem familiar yet new or strangely out of context for him, while these same things seem routine and ordinary for everyone else.

It seems Mme d'Aulnoy used the encounter between the Chatte blanche and the prince to raise questions about the nature of communication between the dominant patriarchial society represented by the prince, and the marginal women's sphere, represented by the Chatte blanche. In the prince, we see the inadequacy of his reality for the interpretation of the Chatte blanche's intentions and meanings. In the Chatte blanche, we see the difficulty of women who have to use the dominant language. While the Chatte blanche understands perfectly, even anticipates, the events in the prince's life and environment, for her, sometimes nothing but silence will do.

> Elle soupira, et devenant encore plus triste, elle garda un profond silence.
> Elle trouvait son souhait fort plaisant, et ne lui faisait que des réponses obscures, où il ne comprenait rien.
> . . .souvent même la belle Chatte composait des vers et des chansonnettes d'un style si passioné qu'il semblait qu'elle avait le coeur tendre, et que l'on ne pouvait parler comme elle faisait sans aimer; mais son secrétaire qui était un vieux chat, écrivait si mal, qu'encore que ne ses ouvrages aient été conservés, il est impossible de les lires (Chatte 171-73, emphasis mine)

It is 'un vieux chat'-- an old cat, a traditional male-- which renders the writing of the Chatte blanche impossible to read. The Chatte blanche attempts to express herself, but is thwarted. Clearly, Mme d'Aulnoy states here the problem encountered by women, perhaps by women writers in particular, in using language and/or being understood.

As Mary Daly says: (for women) there is deception embedded in the very texture of the words we use." It is not a deception of an inherent meaning or a call to return to a right meaning. It is a call to an-other meaning which expresses an-other reality. The prince, who

"Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father. p. 7.

does not know of the Chatte blanche's world, and applies normal, standard processes of communication, fails to grasp the 'other' meanings in the Chatte blanche's words and ways. In the end, the prince has to cut off the Chatte blanche's head and tail and throw them into the fire before she could tell her story and be understood. The transformation of the Chatte blanche back into a princess form is very disturbing.

> (elle repndait). . . c'était l'unique moyen d'empêcher que ses frères n'eussent la courone; en un mot, elle la pressa avec tant d'ardeur, qu'il tira son épée en tremblant, et d'une main mal assurée, il coupa la tête et la gueue de sa bonne amie la Chatte: en même temps il vit la plus charmante métamorphose qui se puisse imaginer (Chatte 182)

As a powerful Chatte blanche, she was in a position to speak with an energy and vision, in her own language and her own voice, sufficient to signal discrepancies, initiate perspective-change, and undermine patriarchal authority. She not only thwarts all of the king's schemes for parrying his son's ascendancy to power, but she succeeds beyond the comprehension and expectations of anyone in the king's kingdom. Her own domain and power were at the same time mysterious and threatening to the king and his men.

Inevitably, she had to be subjected to patriarchal erasure-- in a society where non-conformity means imprisonment, mutilation, or even death. The transformation of the Chatte blanche is, to be more exact, a *mutilation*. It is an example of how women are contorted and moulded to conform to men's conception of them. Her *mutilation* into a ravishing princess overshadows the cruelty and sadism involved in the process. This is akin to losing sight or the clouding over of many kinds and degrees of violence experienced by and done to women that have been culturally sanctioned: There are many chronicles of mutilation of women, a few of which are the Indian suttee, Chinese footbinding, African clitoridectomy or genital mutilation, European witchburning, even contemporary American gynecology.[11] Many are such prevalent and long-standing practices in society, some even elevated to ritual atrocities, that the brutality is overlooked. I am not sure yet that there is an adequate name for either the world view that makes such violence against women possible, or for the mechanisms by which it works. There have been many sugestions, among them sexism, male

[11]Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology. p. 45ff.

chauvinism, male supremicism, misogyny, phallism, manism, andocracy, and patriarchy; but these neither have the force nor the implications of Andrea Dworkin's Woman Hating. [100]

Just to be understood, the Chatte blanche had to be chopped and her head and tail burned. However, it is significant that the Chatte blanche recounts the reason for her enchantment in her princess form. Thus, we know that even in her princess-form, she remembers her past, her being raised by the sisterhood, and the reasons why she is where she is now. The remembering and recounting of the Chatte blanche's story takes on added significance.

> We must install the ME of our memories upon the HEad of his-tory in order to bring it down. MY mory instead of his-tory.[101]

Finally, the Chatte blanche went with the young prince to the latter's father's kingdom. She went, not as a beautiful princess, but as a Chatte blanche. To the very end, she was projecting and disclosing her own self to that kingdom, marking her difference, and not merely appearing as the patented version of a beautiful princess, which was demanded of her. To the very end, she unashamedly displayed her 'difference' and, as already cited, she makes the conditions for the culmination of the tale according to her own needs and perceptions, and in a way, influences the fate of the others, too.

Paying attention to the images and roles of women in 'La Chatte blanche' is elating, at the same time sobering. For although the women here craved to aspire beyond the constricts imposed on them, their fate and hardships show what women must do to survive, and how precarious that survival is.

---

[100]This is the title of a book already cited on page 63 of this study.
[101]Bersianik, Louky, 'Women and Writing.' Dybikowski. p. 42.

VI. Deception in Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty

It is difficult to describe precisely the routes of communication between cultures, likewise, why folklore motifs and themes recur universally. Nevertheless, the correspondence of patterns, motifs, and plots of popular stories in varied cultures have been noted and many documentations attest to this interesting phenomena. In the Philippines, it is not surprising to find a story clearly following the theme of Beauty and Metamorphosis. After all, the Philippines was for a long time a colony: under Spain for close to four hundred years, and then the United States for the next five decades or so. Thus, it was inevitable that Philippine culture and literature would display many traces of Western influence. However, a truly comprehensive study of Philippine literature, particularly of the early period, is very difficult largely because of geographical and linguistic considerations. The Philippines is an archipelago with approximately 7,000 islands. Among these islands, more than seventy different dialects are actively spoken; dialects that are mostly mutually unintelligible. The problems in Philippine folklore study are further heightened by the destruction of the Philippine incunabula, some by colonizers who perceived this early 'literature' as pagan and too barbaric. However, 16th century Spanish chroniclers attest to the existence of native culture and literature, the exact nature of which, unfortunately, may be lost forever. However, whatever the difficulties in studying Philippine folklore and folk tales, one thing remains indubitably true: whatever was 'native' or 'indigenous' was radically altered by ethics, doctrines, and cultures that were not from the Filipino's native race and clime, but were a pervasive influence for over four hundred years.

The fusion of the many strains in Philippine literature can be seen in a famous Philippine writer, Nick Joaquin. Nick Joaquin, also known as Quijano de Manila, is one of the Philippine national artist, and has been often cosidered as the first truly great Filipino

writer in English.[102] He distinguishes himself among the Filipino writers by using English yet writing works mostly nostalgically evoking a Philippines in the Old World, full of European charm and tradition gained through 370 years of Spanish rule. Thus, Nick Joaquin is a Filipino writer in English with a Spanish, rather than an American, strain. He infuses his plays, short stories, and journalistic endeavours with native lore and tradition and testifies to the richness of Philippine culture before American occupation. Simultaneously, because of his choice of language, he shows the conflict between this older tradition and the advent of American influences.

In the late 1970s, Nick Joaquin ventured on a series of English adaptations of popular Philippine tales. He was commissioned by the Catholic Media Association to adapt Philippine folk lore and tales into English. In 1979, twelve of these tales were published in a series called Pop Stories for Groovy Kids by Nick Joaquin, where Nick Joaquin tried to adapt the old lore and tales into a contemporary setting, using very modern English. Unfortunately, these adaptations did not prove to be as worthy nor as popular as his other works.

One of the tales, Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty, is a very contemporary English transposition of a Spanish metrical romance popular in the Islands before the 20th century. It was first translated into Tagalog, which is the leading dialect used in the Philippines.[103] Considering the complexity of the language situation, the tale looks potentially rich for the analysis of textual confusion perhaps reflecting alienation in the use of language. The attempt of a very contemporary adaptation could reflect the use and/or power of tales in modern society. The infusion of the 'Proud Beauty' theme not originally in the metrical romance makes this tale likewise promising for the examination of the possible change and progress in female roles in present times.

Since this particular adaptation is not well-known, especially outside the Philippines, a summary is in order. A rich businessman meets with a helicopter accident in an isolated,

---

[102]Arcellana, Francisco. 'American Influence in Philippine Literature.' Solidaridad: Current Affairs, Ideas, and the Arts 2 (1967): 89-94.

[103]The Tagalog title is Ang Pinagdaanang Buhay ng Prinsipe Don Juan Tiñoso sa Kaharian ng Albanya. P. Sayo, 1889.

densely wooded area. He is saved by Johnny Tiñoso who, physically, is more beast than human. As a sign of gratitude, the businessman installs Johnny Tiñoso as the caretaker in his vacation house in Antipolo Hills. This he does much to the consternation of his spoiled, only child, Bellita. This is the beginning of the relationship between the beast, Johnny Tiñoso, and the Proud Beauty, Bellita.

Bellita's dismissal of and outright disgust at Johnny Tiñoso is portrayed as typical of her haughtiness. She also constantly defies society and her father, especially the latter's wish for her to marry according to her social status. Bellita is not against the idea of marriage itself. But she has made up her mind that she would only marry the man whom she herself considers as 'the best.' In the course of the story, Bellita is told by a dove three times that she could see her future husband. After the first announcement, Bellita sees no one but the monstrous form of Johnny Tiñoso. Following the second, she sees a beautiful naked young man with whom she falls in love. Finally, the third announcement reveals to her that the beast-like Johnny Tiñoso is also the handsome young man she constantly dreams of. Realizing that every night Johnny Tiñoso becomes the golden youth she loves, Bellita proposes marriage to him and breaks the curse on Johnny.

In breaking the curse though, Bellita unwittingly transfers the curse to herself. The Beauty and the Beast change places: Johnny Tiñoso becomes a handsome youth and Bellita shrinks to a little black hag with a hump on her back. Johnny offers to marry her regardless of how she looks. This offer of marriage, in contrast to the first one, does not effect a counter-transformation for Bellita. Nevertheless, the handsome Johnny Tiñoso and the deformed Bellita proceed with the wedding where for the first time, Bellita manages to put herself and her stubborn pride aside. With this change in attitude, she becomes the beautiful woman she once was.

Unfortunately, this tale is not as complex nor as fertile as the two French tales discussed earlier. Neither is it as productive in a search for tales with positive female images and characterization. In 'La Belle et la bête,' we tried to follow a psychological development of a heroine that is uniquely feminine, not punctiliously following the hero-adventure

monomyth. This has yielded an interpretation of the Beauty and the Beast theme that is more viable for tracing the phases in female growth and development than those traditionally offered, which were mostly patterned after male maturity. In 'La Chatte blanche,' we managed to see the strained relationship between women, language, and power, and how particularly difficult the access to the latter two is for women. In addition to these insights, we were able to disclose many examples of patriarchal erasure-- restrictions, imprisonments, illness, mutilation, even death-- for women who seek power and freedom beyond societal impositions on role and behaviour.

Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty is a more straightforward tale than these two. The phases and stages of the heroine's upbringing and growth are not given in as much detail as those of Belle; neither are we given a heroine who talks, exhibits, and wields powers as grandiosely and effectively as the Chatte blanche. Our heroine, Bellita, seems to defy patriarchy much less than Belle and the Chatte blanche. Nevertheless, she still dares to defy the impositions of male and societal authority and conventions and control. In addition, she is a very active female character and thus her story certainly merits a place in feminist 're-visioning.' However, close textual analysis, while trying to perceive the meanings and intentions behind the heroine's actions and words, reveals that mere activeness and outright defiance in a female character can be deceiving. In this tale, although a great deal of attention is given to Bellita's unusual actions and self-assurance, the over-all plot, particularly the ending, negates this boldness and independence.

Bellita means 'little Belle,' or little beauty. In this form, (adding -ita to a term or name), a name or a term would connote smallness of size, an endearment, or both. Moreover, in the Philippines, the practice of adding -ita to a girl's name is a practice only among the people of the upper class and thus would also connote a priviledged social status. While it is emphasized that she is a member of the social elite, Bellita, the heroine in Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty, is certainly not portrayed as small, physically or otherwise. The name might connote an endearment, but it is certainly not used by her father. Her father calls her nothing but 'daughter' or 'girl.' He never calls her by her name but by how he sees her in

relation to himself. 'Bellita' is only used by the dove who shows her the man who would be her future husband, and later on by Johnny Tiñoso. Interestingly, Johnny Tiñoso only calls her Bellita when he has gained his human form, and comes back to ask her to marry him. Before this, he never addressed her as anything except 'señorita,' which is a term used by someone to show deference to an unmarried woman, or, in the Philippines, the term with which the help would use to address the lady of the house. In contrast, with Bellita, Johnny Tiñoso is always called Johnny Tiñoso by everyone. It seems that his first name, Johnny, is always qualified by Tiñoso, meaning mangy and full of scurvy. Nevertheless, even as Johnny is perceived inextricable from 'tiñoso'-- a state of hideousness-- everyone sees his qualities of goodness beneath his physical appearance.

In this tale, Bellita constantly defies her father, especially when the latter insists on marrying her off.

> But now her father said she would have to marry. His accident would keep him in bed or wheelchair for a long time. His business and the family fortunes might suffer if he had no one to take over. Here was the heir of an old friend of his, this young man so long her suitor, who is rich, handsome, good, just the right one to take over the family business. (emphasis mine) [104]

Once again, we see here the patriarch-father's use of a daughter in an effort to manage and control heritage, as well as for financial gain. Marriage is seen in economic terms, and the woman merely as the barter item. One wonders why a woman as assured and as headstrong as Bellita is not seen suitable to 'run the family business.' At this point, the interesting use of the underlined phrase is revealing. First, it implies that the father is currently in control and specifically demands for a young, rich, and handsome man as 'just the right one to *take over*.' The father clearly wants Bellita to marry not just anyone, but a *rich heir of an old friend*. Thus, the marriage should not only be economically, but socially suitable and rewarding as well. Secondly, family business could mean just that-- running a family, which the father certainly wants to maintain under patriarchal-male control. Or, he sees the family as a 'business'-- for marketing goods (daughter), gaining profit (rich son-in-law), and expanding power through propagating more heirs, preferably male of course, so that the

[104] Joaquin, Nick. Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty. Manila: Mr. and Ms. Magazines, 1979. All succeeding quotes will refer to this edition. The book has no pagination.

family fortunes will not suffer. Only in this connection can we understand the intense interest the father takes in Bellita's marriage. She is perceived not suitable to run the family business, but is nevertheless necessary as the commodity to procure profit, in the form of a rich husband, and likewise as the procreative force to produce the heirs the father needs to extend his patrimony, and to ensure his patrilineage. Bellita thwarts her father's plans and does so publicly. her father does not ask for the reasons behind her actions. He only perceives the implications and consequences of her actions in relations to *himself*.

> On the night of the engagement party, Bellita ran away. As the guests were driving in, she was driving out in her car. . . (Next morning) She found her father in a fury. Last night's engagement party had gone on and on while he and his guests waited for her in vain. Never had he been so humiliated: the whole town was now laughing at him. (emphasis mine)

As a result of this incident, Bellita and her father's feud heightens. Bellita does not want to kowtow to her father's demands, and her father perceives this merely as haughtiness and pride.

> 'But I'll break this devilish pride of yours, girl. For the last time I ask: Will you marry this young man you should marry?'
>
> 'I will marry no one, papa, that I have to marry.'
>
> 'Then I'll give you to the man you most abhor. I'll give you to Johnny Tiñoso!'
>
> 'Nobody can give me away, papa -- not even you. But I'll go with this brute because I'd sooner yield to him than yield to you.' . . .'Nobody has to drag me anywhere, papa. I go on my own free will.'

Here we are reminded of a similar aspect in 'La Belle et la bête:' although the father causes the initial meeting and association of beauty and beast, the woman decisively takes the first move towards the beast. This move is seemingly instigated by events, but actually initiate the willing movement of the woman from past and family, to independence while living alone, and finally towards an equal, sexual relationship between a man and a woman. However, while this may be the case for Belle, and the assumption was significantly substantiated by later incidents and developments, Bellita's motives seem to be no other than those attributed to her by her father: haughtiness and pride.

> 'Nobody has to drag me anywhere, papa. I go of my own free will. You thought to scare me, didn't you? Ah, but I don't scare easy. Now take a good look at me, papa. See how stiff my neck is? And it will be just as stiff on a garbage dump. I promise you. Goodbye!'

And that very morning, she went away with Johnny Tiñoso.

In fact, after a year of living on the hilltop with Johnny Tiñoso, we are not given any reason to believe that Bellita undergoes any remarkable change or development either for herself, or with her relationship with Johnny Tiñoso. Her main concern is still to gain the upperhand over her father. And if she had reasons other than to maintain her pride, these reasons remain obscure.

> A year passed; and from her father came a note, just one line: 'Well, have you had enough?'
>
> Her reply was just as brief: 'No- have you?'
>
> She did not feel bored on the hill and missed company so little she seldom cared to go down to town. However, she had no doubt that sooner or later she would return in triumph to the city. All this would, of course, end with her father surrendering.

That pride seems to be uppermost in Bellita's mind is further attested by her response to the dove upon learning that she had unwittingly transferred to herself the curse that once was Johnny's.

> 'Then announce that my neck will stay stiff! I shall love or loathe as I please!' And nothing that happens can ever break my pride!'
>
> As the dove flew away, Bellita was seized over and felt her body shrinking. . . But she did not weep, she smiled, to see that horrid image in the water. Her limbs might be crooked but her neck was straight.

Bellita's motives and self-centeredness are in contrast with Belle's development and self-discovery which leads to the transformation of the beast into a prince. Indeed, it is quite surprising that Bellita does manage to still break the curse of Johnny Tiñoso. After all, Bellita in no way 'creates' nor 'wrests' Johnny's beautiful human form from his immediately apparent beast-form. In fact, Bellita's father and the people in the town where Johnny collects garbage affirm Johnny's intrinsically good qualities much more so than Bellita ever does.

> 'That was Johnny Tiñoso,' said the town mayor. 'Nobody knows where he comes from. . . He's a good man, though, whatever he may look like.'

On the hilltop, Bellita does things as she pleases--rides horses, bathes in falls, naps, reads, and plays cards. These activities pale in significance or meaning when compared to the activities of Belle or the Chatte blanche. Belle reads, sings and plays musical instruments,

attends concerts and has honest dialogues with the Beast. The Chatte blanche hunts, plays chess, listens to concerts, writes poetry, and governs six kingdoms. Bellita's activities are just recreational pasttimes which she indulges in while still remaining a pampered señorita.

Like Belle, as Bellita spends more time with the beast, she also grows accustomed to the beast-form of Johnny Tiñoso. However, unlike Belle, Bellita does not have long conversations with Johnny Tiñoso, and neither does she really perceive Johnny in the totality of his beastly appearance.

> When she returned to the hut, Johnny Tiñoso would appear and, carefully keeping himself in shadow, would ask if there was anything else the señorita wanted. At first Bellita merely shook her head without even glancing at him. But after a time, she began to reply to his nightly question.
>
> 'No, nothing, thank you,' she smiled at him. 'Good-night, Johnny.'
>
> It was the only time they spoke to each other. Her nights were made happy by the golden young man streaking through her dreams.

Also unlike Belle, Bellita goes to the hilltop house with Johnny not as a naïve, young girl. She went there already as a woman in love with a young man she has seen *naked*, and she dreams of this young man constantly. However, she does not know yet that this man is Johnny Tiñoso in his beautiful human form. When the dove informs her of her future husband, Bellita first sees Johnny Tiñoso in his beast form. The second time the dove appears, Bellita sees a young man-

> he was naked and he shone like gold and she knew she would never see anything as beautiful again.

Finally, she sees the complete process of transformation from beast-form to human, then back to beast-form which Johnny Tiñoso actually undergoes every night from midnight to one o'clock.

> He was naked, and she saw him in all his ugliness; the hairy hide like a mangy dog's, leprous and bald in patches, dry scab and ripe sore side by side. Whatever tenderness she might have begun to feel for him perished in the nausea that, again, he roused in her.
>
> [[Midnight struck]] The gross features reshaped themselves into the face of a handsome youth. And there he shone like a young god, his pure and perfect body golden in the moonlight.

The next morning, Bellita calls for Johhny and in effect, proposes marriage.

> And she saw him again in his ambling gait, his crouched posture, that nasty snout. She dropped her cigarette and crushed it under her heel.

> 'Listen, Johnny: my father gave me to you and we've been together for a year. I've been happy here and we get along with each other. Don't you think we should get married?'

Bellita obviously knew what she was doing when she proposed marriage. Note that when she sees the beastly and human form of Johnny Tiñoso, she notices the nudity of both. When she proposes, she already knows that Johnny Tiñoso as beast and the golden man of her dreams are one and the same. At this point, too, she can quell her disgust at Johnny's beast form long enough to accept him as the same man in her dreams. In fact, Bellita sees beyond Johnny's more readily apparent physical condition, not at his goodness of character, but only at the beautiful, young man underneath. If, as in 'La Belle et la bête,' we are to take sexuality disguised as a beast, then we can say that Bellita has a fully awakened sexuality when she makes this proposal. Sex and sexuality might, most of the time, seem repulsive to her. But she is ready for a sexual relationship with Johnny Tiñoso, and moreover, she knows that she can count on one hour every night when she will even look forward to it.

Although definitely against the 'economically-oriented' marriages her father wanted and tried to impose on her, Bellita is not in any way against marriage per se. But she has decided that she will only marry the man who is *rich*, *handsome*, and *good* enough for *her*. She has set her standards for a husband and will not settle for second best.

> Bellita had numerous suitors and she spurned them all. None of them was worthy of her. No one was rich enough, or handsome enough, or good enough for her. She would rather not wed, said she, than be wed, not to the best, but only to the next-best.

That Bellita entertains thoughts of marriage can be seen when she eagerly pursues the dove every time it announces that she may see her future husband. It is interesting how her criterion simply becomes good looks, as she sees the naked youth and vows she can never marry anyone else but him. Now, she who has spurned so many suitors before and rebelled against the pressures her father exerted on her with ragards to marriage, takes the decision on her own hands and proposes marriage to Johnny Tiñoso whom she has decided is, literally, the man of her dreams.

> 'Get married! The señorita must be joking. Why should she wish to marry someone like me?'

> 'Because I love you, Johnny.'
> At those words his face lit up with joy and rapture-- and suddenly his ugliness fell away like mist and what stood there in the moonlight was the pure young man of dazzling beauty. Bellita cried out and ran to him-- but touched only air.

The dove comes and explains to Bellita why the young man has disappeared. Bellita said the necessary words, 'I Love you,' to break the curse but her words were really empty. They were not directed towards the Johnny Tiñoso who appeared before her, but the golden youth beneath the beast form. In fact, Bellita expressed her love for Johnny, without the 'Tiñoso,' refusing to recognize the ugliness of the man who appears before her. Moreover, Bellita longs for the naked young man, and in effect, was proposing marriage not out of love for the totality of Johnny Tiñoso but more for her own sexual or lustful interests. Compared with Belle's act of returning to the Beast, Bellita's words did not mean anything much, especially for Johnny Tiñoso. Yet it still managed to break the curse for it still complied with the idiosyncratic condition for the end of the enchantment.

Johnny used to be handsome, but unkind. Once, he contrived with his friends to make life miserable for a leper, and drove the leper out of town. Before leaving, the leper put a curse on Johnny. The dove explains this to Bellita:

> And because (Johnny) is charming, he shall become loathsome. Moreover, for an hour every midnight, he shall recover his original form, so that he may daily suffer the anguish of seeing his pure beauty corrupted. And this shall be his fate until someone looking at his scabs and sores, shall say I LOVE YOU to him.

The conditions simply stated 'someone'-- no characteristics nor qualifications were specifically stipulated like in the majority of the conditions in transformation tales. For that matther, the 'someone' could have been either male or female. Likewise, the declaration of the phrase is enough-- there are no conditions nor consequences in breaking Johnny's curse. In 'La Belle et la bête' and 'La Chatte Blanche,' both the characters who put an end to the enchantment had to undergo severe tests and challenges, somehow to prove themselves worthy of the enchanted being. Only then can they be worthy of breaking the curse. Meanwhile, there are no indications at all in this tale why Bellita, and no other person, deserves or is chosen to break the curse on Johnny Tiñoso. We are not told that Bellita ponders and thinks about the motives behind and consequences of her actions. Neither does she even consider Johnny. More

and more, it seems that she is motivated purely by self-interests.

The interesting twist is that though the mere words 'I Love You' will end the curse, if they are not meant sincerely, the curse transfers to the person who breaks it as a punishment.

> (Bellita asks) 'But why have I lost him-- I who set him free from the curse, I whose love released him from the enchanment?'
>
> 'You loved him beautiful but you spurned him ugly-- therefore, you lost him.'
>
> 'Is that to be my punishment?'
>
> 'That, and worse yet, Bellita. Because you failed to love the unlovable, the curse that befell him will now befall you.'

The only conditions of breaking this curse seem to be sincerity and purity of intentions. In other tales, there are usually qualifications which specify some conditions based on personal merit, physical appearance, wealth or gender of the one breaking the curse.

Having incurred the curse upon herself, Bellita then becoms a 'little black hag with a hump on the back and a wizened face pitted with pox.' Her father surrenders and asks to have her back. Bellita goes back, only to spurn marriages once more, especially as these are obvioulsy from greedy fortune-hunters. In so doing, she exposes the farce and ridiculousness of some conventions in society which give too much importance to wealth and power. Even in her ugly state, Bellita does not cringe, nor weep, nor pity herself. She unashamedly parades her own self, although it was a figure markedly 'different' from anything society ever expected or wanted from a woman.

> Wicked Witch, Black Bitch, Unholy Terror, Naughty Damn Hunchback-- such were the names that her pranks earned for her. Yet to her pad still poured the cream of society; and for her hands still aspired the scions of the eminent.

Once again, we see the traditional connotations society has put on the terms 'hag,' 'witch,' and 'bitch.' A woman who is *ugly* or does not conform to society is perceived as a 'hag,' as Bellita is described now. It is useful to recall how these words are being re-defined by feminists. Witches, hags, and crones are perceived by a masculine society as *ugly* because they are in fact 'different,' powerful, or threatening. Interestingly, Bellita does exert more influence on society and other people as a 'hag.' As a beautiful woman, she was portrayed as someone who disdained society and other people, and therefore did not have much interaction with them. As a hag, she still spurns many suitors, she is serenaded as she wishes, and her

father surrenders. In addition, it is also as a 'hag' that Bellita is shown as gainfully employed and working. She takes over Johnny Tiñoso's former job of collecting garbage, and we are told that while she does so,

No one, from the mayor to the maids, is spared from her sharp tongue.

Finally, it is also as a 'hag' that Bellita finally gets what she wants: Johnny Tiñoso in his beautiful form.

Johnny Tiñoso remembers the former Bellita. He had not seen her change into the 'ugly hag' she is now. He has only heard about her predicament.

> He knew what had happened to her: the change into a frightful hag. He had suffered to hear of her antics in the city. But now this news that she had gone back to their old hut on the top of the hill intrigued him. At last, he decided to go back himself and see her.

The subsequent reunion of Johnny and Bellita is the only scene where Bellita's name is used by another person-- Johnny Tiñoso. It is interesting that he should call her thus at this point when the name most contradicts her physical appearance.

> Getting a grip on himself, he walked up to her and greeted her.
> 'Ah, you recognize me, Johnny. Even the way I look now?'
> 'As you recognize me, Bellita, even the way I look now.'

This recognition may suggest that both of them are now open to each having an equal sexual relationship with the other, since both know and recognize the 'beast' and 'human' guise of each. Going back to 'La Belle et la bête,' we remember that 'beast' and 'human' may point to the contradiction in the perception of sexuality. Now, both Bellita and Johnny Tiñoso are well aware and ready to accept each other as both 'beast' and 'human.'

However, more significantly, Johnny accepts Bellita as the 'hag' she is now. he offers marriage, despite the fact that Bellita does not become beautiful even after Johnny Tiñoso says 'I Love You.' That she does not metamorphose into a beautiful woman just then is significant since Johnny sincerely meant his words. Apparently, the conditions for the breaking of the curse have changed. Johnny's sincerity and purity of intentions are commendable but not enough to transform Bellita. This does not deter Johnny Tiñoso from marrying Bellita. Johnny is, after all, portrayed as much more tolerant, kind-hearted, perceptive, and sincere than Bellita. Thus, the tale ends with a wedding between a handsome

Johnny and Bellita still an 'ugly, old hag.'

> But when she reached the altar and Johnny Tiñoso stepped forward to take her arm, her heart suddenly stopped at the thought that this beautiful young man so in love with loveliness, should be saddled all his life with an ugly, old hag. The thought so disturbed her that when the bishop asked did she take Johnny for her lawful wedded spouse, her eyes turned in panic towards her shining bridegroom.
>
> (And), bursting into tears, she ran back up the aisle. As she fled weeping, a change came upon her.

Johnny's marriage proposal initiates the final scene and consequent transformation of Bellita. However, it is significant that Bellita herself takes part in it. She marries of her own free will and choice; not for economic dependency nor just to rebel against her father's demands. But she chooses a marriage that changes her to a very traditional, submissive female.

> 'I won't saddle you with my ugliness; Johnny, just so I can spit back at the world! And if you--'
>
> 'Shut up, Bellita, and come! he roared.
>
> Firmly taking her by the hand, he pulled her into the baptistry and up to the marble font. There he bade her look at herself in the water... .The tears trembled in her eyes as she bowed her neck and whispered: 'If you'll have me,Johnny.'
>
> So they returned to the altar and the marriage service was repeated. This time the bride said yes.

We end up with a female who is told to shut up, goes where she is steered by the male, and when she does manage to speak up, defers to the male and says 'yes.' From a headstrong, self-assured Bellita we have encountered throughout the tale, we now have almost the exact opposite. It seems that it was really only pride that prompted her to be the strong character that she was, and no deeper sentiment towards a broader and longer-lasting freedom from impositions and stereotypes. It is very significant that she was moved towards her final, disappointing transformation, by her fear of saddling Johnny Tiñoso with 'ugliness' when she should perhaps have been more concerned with her spite and pride. Worse, even as Johnny Tiñoso accepts her as a 'hag,' Bellita herself begins to be conscious of herself as an 'ugly, old hag' in a very negative and derogatory manner. Recalling how we recuperated the terms hags, crones, and witches, Bellita should not have felt dread and shame at being a 'hag.' But she did, of her own accord, and in doing so, effects her final change into a beautiful, submissive, trembling bride.

Perhaps the fact that she sees her final form in the marble font in a baptistry will give us a clue to the very abrupt change in Bellita's attitude and appearance. A consistent

undertone in the whole tale is its Catholic slant. One very apparent indication of this is the seeming omnipresence of the dove as the guide or the source of wisdom. Another is the condition of the enchantment, which is more moralistic and didactic than imaginatively icorporated in the plot.

> Because you failed to love the unloveable, the curse that befell him will now befall you.

Finally, the final scene is at a Cathedral, in an altar and before a bishop, to be exact. Bellita sees her 'shining bridegroom,' is overcome by grief and flees weeping, whereupon the change comes upon her. This is almost akin to a conversion scene, where realization and change come quickly, followed by a reassurance or happy ending that all will be well, now that atonement is felt. Bellita even perceives her final transformation in a baptistry. Considering all these elements the sudden change in Bellita fits neatly into place. The renewal by water is a popular ritual in many religions, but is particularly strong in the Catholic Church.

> The Catholic Church speaks of *aqua doctrinae*, the water of the doctrine, the water symbolizing the quieting effect brought to an impassioned soul by dogma. The water in the bath has very much to do with the penetration of understanding-- and there is possibility of understanding only when the emotions are cooled and quietened.[105]

In the final scene, Bellita has been effectively subdued. The dogma of a male-dominated Catholic Church has effectively 'cleansed' her and transfotmed her from a 'hag' into a traditional bride. In a highly Catholic society, there is an all-poweful need for a reconciliation with the Father, a move towards making peace or appeasing the authority, which is specifically male. Thus, in the end, although Bellita marries of her own choice, her final words to Johnny,

> 'If you will have me.'

point to a totally submissive wife, willing to cater to man's wishes, willing to follow the 'dogmas' that have been imposed on her, and seeing herself more in relation to a male, in the end sacrificing self-identity and independence.

---

[105]Von Franz. Redemption. p. 35.

VII. Concluding Remarks

Throughout this study, I have tried to substantiate the convictions that initiated this research and the claims I made in the introduction: that a re-evaluation of literary fairy tales from a feminist perspective is necessary and justified; and that such an endeavour cannot be anything but beneficial to literary criticism in general. In the process, I have come to believe even more that gender is an important and valid consideration in textual analysis, and, more specifically, that attention to the concept 'woman' in literary studies is not without significant and radical implications and consequences.

I have argued in the preceeding chapters that the concept 'woman' is not only biologically determined, but is psychologically, linguistically, and socially defined. The portrayal and representation of women in texts are not only governed by literary considerations, but eventually are circumscribed by socio-cultural conventions. Feminist studies, which recognize these premises, add a perspective to literary analysis-- a new and different dimension which continually calls for the modification and amplification of existing methods and strategies. Feminist literary criticism necessitates a re-definition of both the subject and the methods of literary studies, expanding the range of texts which may be legitimately studied, as well as the manner of studying them. With this new expansion necessarily come new definitions of literature itself and the uses it may be put to. Thus, a feminist critical analysis eventually must re-shape literary criticism as it challenges the notions of what constitutes excellence in literary texts.

In this study, the analyses offered for the three texts by de Beaumont, D'Aulnoy, and Joaquin resulted in more than just pointing out character stereotypes of women in literary fairy tales. Rather, sensitive to the other concerns of the feminist movement as a whole, these interpretations perceived and gave significance to textual features which otherwise would have been invisible or considered trivial within conventional methods of criticism. This approach yielded new and different explanations and implications for point of view, characterization,

selection/inclusion of details, themes, and even structures of plot. Madame de Beaumont's 'La Belle et la bête,' for example, clarifies the distinction between a female-heroine quest for identity and/or re-integration into society and that of the archetypal hero journey-adventure. 'La Chatte blanche' by Mme D'Aulnoy gives even more evidence that the patterns of female development are neither the same nor the opposite of male's-- but altogether different in structure. As I have suggested, the disparity between male and female growth exists presumably because of the differences in their psychic and social experiences, as well as the limited range of options society has made available to women. In any case, both Mme Leprince de Beaumont and Mme D'Aulnoy not only defied but rendered clearer the inadequacies of traditional definitions of women. By putting a female character on centre stage and likewise presenting and developing a diversity of other female characters in varying situations, both writers managed to indicate how women can cope, even expand their horizons and possibilities within restricted circumstances. Their concept of active and positive female characters may be contrasted with that of Nick Joaquin. Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty makes us aware that the presence of a female protagonist or women characters is not sufficient for positive female characterizations. In assessing female characterization, the context and explanations of causes of behaviour, responses, and effects of actions take precedence over superficial prominence of a lead role. The viewpoint and thematic relevance of female characters, even those with minor roles, are significant, too. The reasoning and procedures involved in my analyses of the author's projections and intentions, character motivation, readers' response, and latent text structures, coupled with the conclusions I have drawn from these various textual clues could certainly augment feminist analyses of other genres. In particular, scrutiny of the patterns and motivations in female growth and maturation will undoubtedly be useful for interpreting the female *Bildungsroman*. In general, it becomes clear that a feminist perspective can reveal an increased coherency and complexity of texts, and therefore enhance and amplify previous critical analysis of many aspects of literary compositions.

More important than providing possible frameworks for analysing female characterization in other genres, the interpretations of the three literary fairy tales in this study have shown how feminist literary criticism must engage in investigations and clarifications of sexual discrimination even beyond literary texts. Feminists are aware that their primary concern-- the re-definition of the concept 'woman,'-- cannot be isolated from a wider social and historical context. In the same vein, feminist literary criticism recognizes that authors, texts, and readers do not exist in a social vacuum. Thus, although the focus of this study has been the evaluation of female characters in fairy tales, the questions continually being posed and the problems encountered were not limited to the realm of literary fairy tales, but are equally significant and present to the diverse considerations of feminist studies in general. Foremost of these is the realization of how inextricably linked the concept 'woman' is to cultural and political structures, most particularly to linguistic structures.

As indicated in other parts of this study, language is a symbol-making device which has the power to mould men and women into social beings. It is a feminist premise that language is a structure which has developed in and remains closely tied to a male-centered society. Hence, there has been a phallogocentric control of the configurations of language and definitions of meanings. Despite this, women can and do transcend to some degree the concepts presented by language and the restrictions placed on their use of it. Mme Leprince de Beaumont and Mme D'Aulnoy provide examples of how women can use the dominant 'man-made' language and still subvert it from within. On the surface, no change may be apparent in the individual words, grammar, or syntax. A feminist reading of their tales, however, reveals how language may be manipulated and expanded to allow for women's thoughts, desires, and visions. A feminist analysis can discover how both authors have adeptly wielded their pens to express desires and states of mind that could not be articulated in the social arena nor through the current operative discourse. Their creative expressions mirror the continual struggle of women to express themselves and understand each other through a language which attempts to control them.

Much like Mesdames Beaumont and D'Aulnoy, many contemporary feminists/women writers *invent* new strategies for writing and reading, new semiotic contents, and new signs. This means continuous experimentation, testing, expansion, and modification of the existing symbolic structure. All these innovations and diversifications in language are done to express a 'different' ideology, to symbolize and validate a 'different' reality. Although forms of communication have been coded and accepted as conventions, women's ideas of what constitutes reality have changed. Hence, women's different perspectives and ideology alter context, emphasis, meanings, and relevance of language in connection to social and psychological realities and constructs. The shifts and inversions in what are significant and valuable within a broader cultural context expose the limitations of legitimizing only one ideology and reality which purport to be universal. Therefore, feminist reflections on the complex relationships of gender and language call into play the transformational powers of language, its capacity to motivate change in society. As Catherine Clément notes:

> And that is precisely what feminist action is all about: to change the imaginary in order then to be able to act on the real, to change the very forms of language which by its structure and history has been subject to a law that is patrilinear, therefore masculine.[106]

Specific literary texts may contain textual clues as to the ways in which women have consciously or unconsciously responded to a prevalently male-centered society. But the codes or gaps-- that which is left open or deliberately unspecified-- in these texts remain inoperative and futile if there are no readers who will give significance to the elements which are repressed or only obliquely suggested in these works. The feminist reader must actively attempt to participate in and observe the play of possible meanings to which the text gives her access. Because women's creative expressions have been generally devalued by societal impositions, the feminist reader must seek to understand the text she is reading and the language used by its author without applying criteria that are quite invalid for the text, as too often happens when the literary 'establishment' interprets a woman's text. In this way, feminist literary criticism actively participates with other literary approaches such as deconstruction, post-structuralism, and reception theory, among others, which challenge the

[106] Clément, Catherine. 'Towards a Feminist Discourse.' L'Arc 61 (1975): 42-51. p. 49.

rigidity and stasis of literary canons and critical grids. Admittedly, a feminist perspective in literary criticism is not sufficient in itself to elucidate all aspects of the text. But it is almost indispensable for understanding fiction about women or written by women.

Other researches in feminist studies indicate how women have been subdued not only by language, but also by many other aspects of culture. In connection with these findings, the need for a feminist literary criticism becomes more apparent since the interpretation of literary works is of considerable importance in the shaping of cultural tradition. The literary works that have been assimilated into culture have undoubtedly come to influence the people's beliefs and values by being understood in a certain way. Feminists posit the idea that if these works had been understood differently, the cultural tradition itself would likely have been or become different. Thus, ultimately, a feminist criticism is an act whose aim is not simply to interpret the word, but to alter the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read. To create a new understanding of any literature is to make possible a new effect of that literature. And to make possible a new effect is in turn to provide conditions for changing the culture that literature both reflects and shapes.

In a broader context then, my study seeks to show how women today can participate in a movement of clarifying the concept of womanhood. One way of achieving this is to be more sensitive to the fictional representations of women, mindful of other women's issues in a wider context. The language, structure, and details of an existing text may not be altered: we cannot do more than interpret as readers in this century. But it is this re-interpretation that may render many of these texts valuable or valid for us, for our times.

Going back to the focus of this study, I must admit to a special concern for literary fairy tales in particular, and children's books in general. These are written for children who will play significant roles in the future. Although feminist analyses of children's stories may not be directly accessible to children, these re-evaluations are nevertheless undertaken for the adults who write, publish, choose, and eventually make these texts available to children. One must be sensitive to unacknowledged biases present in texts, and make these clear to children who are most easily influenced in their formative years. Feminist literary criticism seeks to

effect a habit-change in scholars and general readers. This does not mean the banning or devaluing of texts such as those of Perrault or the Brothers Grimm. Rather, it means alertness to sexism that may exist in literary texts, coupled with awareness of current changes and possiblities for women in their immediate environment, as well as in a broader, more complex context. In the end, perhaps it is only an anonymous, impersonal society which can create the situations and 'dangers' of stereotyping. An alert and enlightened reader, sensitive to the easy dissolution of particularity and individuality within the majority, can easily summon up examples and ideas which can effectively counteract generalities such as stereotyping and forced socio-cultural conformities.

VIII. Bibliography

I. Primary Sources

D'Aulnoy, Catherine. "La Chatte blanche." Contes de Fées de Perrault et de Mme d'Aulnoy. Paris: Didier, Libraire Editeur, 1972. 168-98.

Joaquin, Nick. Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty. Manila: Mr. and Ms. Magazines, 1979.

Leprince de Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie. "La Belle et la bête." Magasin des enfans. Nouv. éditions. Paris: P.J. Voglet, 1811. 57-82.

II. Secondary Sources

Arcellana, Francisco. "American Influence in Philippine Literature." Solidaridad: Current Affairs, Ideas, and the Arts 2 (1967): 89-94.

Bagdanavicius, Vytautas. Cultural Wellsprings of Folktales. Trans. Jeronimas Zemkalnis. New York: Maryland Books, Inc., 1970.

Barchilon, Jacques. "Beauty and the Beast: From Myth to Fairy Tale." Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review 46.4 (1959): 19-29.

---. Charles Perrault. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.

---. Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790: cent ans de féerie et de poesie ignorées de l'histoire littéraire. Paris: Champion, 1975.

Bassein, Beth Ann. Women and Death: Linkages in Western Thought and Literature. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Bersianik, Louky. "Women's Work." Dybikowski 155-64.

Bettelheim, Bruno. The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

Birrell, Gordon. Introduction. German Literary Fairy Tales. Ed. Frank G. Ryder. New York: Continuum, 1983.

Boulet, Jean, ed. Beauty and the Beast. N.P.: n.p., 1954.

Butor, Michel. "On Fairy Tales." European Literary Theory and Practice: From Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism. Ed. Vernon Gras. New York: Delta Books, 1973. 349-62.

Campbell, Joseph. The Hero With a Thousand Faces. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1977.

Carruthers, Mary. "Imagining Women: Notes Towards a Feminist Poetic." Massachussettes Review 20.1 (Summer 1979): 281-307.

Chawaf, Chantal. "Linguistic Flesh." Marks and de Courtivron 177-9.

Cixous, Hélène. "Le rire de la meduse." l'Arc 61 (1975): 39-54.

Clément, Catherine and Hélène Cixous. La Jeune née. Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1975.

Clément, Catherine. "Towards A Feminist Discourse." l'Arc 61 (1975): 55-71.

Conley, Verena Andermatt. Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.

Cornillon, Susan Koppelman, ed. Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives. Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972.

Cotnoir, Louise, "The Marked Gender." Dybikowski 99-104.

Culler, Jonathan. On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism. New York: Cornell UP, 1982.

Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

---. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

DiScanno, Teresa. Les Contes de fées. L'epoque classique, 1680-1715. Naples: Liguori, 1975.

Dworkin, Andrea: Woman-Hating. New York: E.D. Dutton, Inc., 1974.

Dybikowski, Ann, et al., eds. In the Feminine: Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots. Canada: Longspoon Press, 1985.

Edwards, Lee. "The Labours of Psyche: Towards a Theory of Female Heroism." Critical Inquiry 6 (Autumn 1979): 33-49.

Elias, Norbert. The Civilizing Process. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Urizen Books, 1978.

Elshtain, Jean Betke. "Feminist Discourse and Its Discontents." Signs 7.3 (1982): 603-21.

Escarpit, Denise. La Littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse en Europe: panorama historique. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981.

Fetterley, Judith. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

Forsyth, Louise H. "Feminist Criticism as a Creative Process." Dybikowski 87-94.

Foulché-Delbosc, R. Introduction and Notes. Relation du voyage d'Espagne. By Mme Catherine d'Aulnoy. Paris: Libraire C. Klincksieck, 1926.

Franz, Marie-Louise von. Interpretation of Fairy Tales: An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales. Texas: Spring Publications, 1978.

---. The Psychological Meaning of Redemption Motifs in Fairy Tales. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1980.

Friedman, Leonard. The Nature and Role of Women as Conceived by Representative Authors of Eighteenth-Century France. Diss. New York University, 1970. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1971. 71-5611.

Furman, Nelly, et al., eds. Women and Language in Literature and Society. New York: Praeger, 1980.

Gallop, Jane. The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984.

Garvin, Harry, ed. Women, Literature, Criticism. London: Associated University Press, 1978.

Gauthier, Xavière. "Is There Such A Thing As Women's Writing?" Marks and de Courtivron 161-64.

---. "Why Witches?" Marks and de Courtivron 199-203.

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the

Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Gilligan, Carol. In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Woman Development. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.

Gordon, Lesley. Green Magic: Flowers, Plants, and Herbs in Lore and Legend. England: Jolly and the Barber, Ltd., 1981.

Gormick, Vivian. Essays in Feminism. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

Gréard, Octave. "l'Education des femmes par les femmes." Education et instruction. 4 vols. Paris: Hachette, 1889-1912.

Herrmann, Claudine. Les Voleuses de langue. Paris: Les Editions des Femmes, 1976.

Hume, Martin. Queens of Old Spain. London: n.p., 1911.

Hutcheon, Linda. The Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth Century Art Forms. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Irigaray, Luce. Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977.

---. Speculum de l'autre femme. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974.

Jacobs, Eva, ed. Woman and Society in Eighteenth Century France. Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink. London: Athlone Press, 1971.

Jan, Isabelle. La Littérature enfantine. Paris: Editions ouvrières, 1969.

Keohane, Nannerl O., et al., eds. Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Leclerc, Annie. Parole de femme. Paris: B. Grasset, 1974.

Lieberman, Marcia. "Sexism and the Double Standard in Literature." Cornillon 328-40.

---. "Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale." College English 34.3 (Dec 1972): 383-95.

Lüthi, Max. Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales. Trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1970.

Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New French Feminisms. An Anthology. New York: Schocken, 1981.

Mercantante, Anthony. The Magic Garden: The Myth and Folklore of Flowers, Plants, Trees,

and Herbs. New York and London: Harper and Row, 1976.

Michelet, Jules. La Sorcière. 1862.

Millet, Kate. Sexual Politics. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970.

Mitchell, Juliet. Psychoanalysis and Feminism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Modleski, Tania. Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982.

Morgan, Ellen. "Humanbecoming: Forms and Focus in the Neo-Feminist Novel." Cornillon 185-93.

Moss, Anita. "A Feminist Study of Mythic Structures." Children's Literature Quarterly 4 (1982): 19-22.

Mourey, Lilyane. Introduction aux contes de Grimm et de Perrault: histoire, structure, mise en texte. Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1982.

Neumann, Erich. Amor and Psyche. The Psychic Development of the Feminine: A Commentary on the Tale of Apuleuis. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Pelletier, Pol, et al. La Nef des sorcières. Montréal: Quinze, 1976. Trans. as A Clash of Symbols by Linda Gaboriau. Toronto: Coach House, 1982.

Perrault, Charles. Contes. Ed. Gilbert Rouger. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1967.

---. Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralitez. Paris, 1697.

Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1977.

Soriano, Marc. Les Contes de Perrault; culture, savante et traditions populaires. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.

---. "From Tales of Warning to Formulettes: The Oral Tradition in French Children's Literature." Yale French Studies 43 (1969): 24-43.

---. Guide de littérature pour la jeunesse: courantes, problèmes, choix d'auteurs. Paris: Flammarion, 1975.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. The Female Imagination. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

Rich, Adrienne. On Lies, Secrets, and Silence. Selected Prose, 1966-1978. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979.

---. "Three Conversations." Adrienne Rich's Poetry. Ed. Barbara Gelpi and Albert Gelpi. New York: Norton and Company, 1975.

---. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." College English 34.1 (Oct 1972): 90-105.

Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere. Woman, Culture, and Society. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1974.

Rose, Margaret A. Parody, Metafiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction. London: C. Helm, 1979.

Rowe, Karen E. "Fairy-born and Human-bred: Jane Eyre's Education in Romance." The Voyage in Fiction of Female Development. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, et al. Hanover and London: University of New England, 1983. 69-89.

Ruthven, K.K. Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction. New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Simonsen, Michèle. le Conte populaire. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984.

Spender, Dale. Man-made Language. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

Stubbs, Patiricia. Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979.

Tenèze, Marie-Louise. "Du conte merveilleux comme genre." Approches de nos traditions orales. Ed. Marie-Louise Tenèze. Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1970. 11-65.

Théoret, France. "Territories of Criticism." Dybikowski 95-8.

Trilling, Diana. "The Liberated Heroine." Partisan Review 45 (1978): 500-22.

Waelti-Walters, Jennifer. Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination. Montréal, Canada: Eden Press, 1982.

---. "On Princesses: Fairy Tales, Sex Roles, and Loss of Self." International Journal of Women's Studies 22 (Mar/Apr 1979): 180-8.

Washbourn, Penelope. Becoming Woman: The Quest for Wholeness in Female Experience. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1957.

Zipes, Jack. Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales. London: Heinemann, 1979.

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