



Gender And Ideology In Children's Fiction: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

The current study is qualitative in nature. It employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the ideological representations of gender in nine Algerian short stories. Drawing on Thompson's understanding of ideology, this study examines the presence of gender ideologies in the texts and identifies their symbolic form and construction. It uses specifically Thompson's (1990) schema concerning the typical linguistic modes through which ideology operates. The analysis focuses on particular strategies being more evident than others, such as universalization, rationalization, displacement, naturalization, and eternalization. The analysis shows that the writer's use of these strategies, whether consciously or unconsciously, as part of characterization and positioning, contributes to the (re)production of gender stereotypes and gender asymmetries.

Keywords: children's fiction, critical discourse analysis, ideology, gender asymmetries, gender representations

1. Introduction

In general, there is a growing academic interest in the portrayal and construction of gendered identities in children's literature (e.g., Clark, 1996; Lehr, 2001; Stephens, 2002; Cart and Jenkins, 2006; Wannamaker, 2008; Flanagan, 2008; Mallan, 2009). Prior to 2000, there was significant evidence of gender discrimination in children's literature; nevertheless, the sparse data after 2000 shows little or no change in the depiction of female characters. Recent studies (e.g., Gazda, 2015; Heinsz, 2013; Lowther, 2014; Ly Kok & Findlay, 2006) show that little has changed or that change is happening slowly (Tsao, 2008).

McCabe et al. (2011) provided the most extensive empirical examination of gender representations in literary narratives. They looked at 5,618 books released between 1900 and 2000 from three different sources: Caldecott award-winning books, Little Golden Books, and the Children's Catalog. McCabe and colleagues discovered that male protagonists were overrepresented in all sources as compared to female protagonists. The frequency of female characters increased during the twentieth century, although even the most recent novels in their sample (i.e., 1990–1999) featured male characters more often. McCabe et al. (2011) also discovered that various book elements influenced the percentage of male and female primary characters. The gender bias was most pronounced when major characters were

represented as non-human animals rather than humans, or as adults rather than youngsters. In a recent study, Shen (2019) looked at how a popular school story showed femininity. She found that the story supported a heterosexual politics based on male/female dualism and solidified traditional ideas of femininity that served patriarchal interests. Since the book came out, it has been very popular and made a lot of money. This is because the messages it tries to teach young girls and boys feed into societal expectations about femininity. Another recent study by Filipović (2018) involved the content analysis of 15 children's books, as well as reflective journal writing and professional discussion with eight educators from one early development facility in Dublin. The research revealed specific gender trends, such as female character underrepresentation and instances of gender stereotyping. The study also showed that teachers did not know about gender patterns and did not care much about how gender is shown in children's books.

My aim in this study is to investigate how gender and ideologies are constructed in discourse and how ideologically loaded narratives impact the construction of gender identities. Using Thompson's inventory of modes of operation of ideology, I attempted to demonstrate that ideologies are subtle and perpetuated through linguistic structures.

I selected children's literature to research gender representations for three reasons: 1) Examining gender stereotypes in children's literature allows researchers to learn how various ideologies affect children and women in real life; 2) Most studies on gender stereotypes in literary texts focus on content analysis and ignore the importance of linguistic analysis; and 3) There are not many studies like this in Algeria.

This work has therefore attempted to address the following research questions:

- Why is children's fiction an important site for addressing gender issues?
- How does ideology operate in discourse?
- How do characterization and positioning contribute to the production of gender ideologies?
- Does gender ideology affect the gender development of children?
- Which features of language are responsible for gender asymmetries?
- How are power relations shaped by linguistic choices?

This paper begins by providing some insight into critical discourse analysis as an approach, a theory, and a methodology for critically understanding and explaining how discourses construe and construct social realities. It will then go on to discuss how ideologies are expressed and construed by discourse. The focus, in this study, is on the part that children's fiction plays in the (re)production of gender ideologies and in the distribution of unequal power relations. The remaining part of the paper consists of the examination of ideological configurations in some selected literary texts.

2. Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis first emerged from critical linguistics, which developed at the University of East Anglia in the 1980s. The seminal works of Fowler, Kress, Hodge, and Trew (1979), Van Dijk (1985), Fairclough (1989a), and Wodak (1989) contributed to laying the foundation for an interdisciplinary, critical, and problem-oriented discipline. Unlike many other fields, such as pragmatics, conversation analysis, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, and ethnography, among others, CDA takes a unique approach to conceptualising, analysing, and applying data. It addresses social problems and takes particular interest in power relations, dominance, and inequality and the ways these are sustained or resisted by members of social groups through text and talk. In this way, discourse is seen as "a form of

social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258) because patterns of meaning are mostly made and kept alive within well-established social institutions.

Driven by a strong sense of purpose, CDA researchers are generally treated as activists seeking to bridge the gap between their academic interests and socio-political engagement. They comment on society and take sides with the powerless and the oppressed. According to Wodak (1989), the real role of critical discourse analysts is to uncover subtle linguistic configurations of injustice, racism, and inequality. Coulthard and Coulthard (1996) argue that critical discourse analysts should consider discourse as a powerful instrument of power and control. Their role is to actively engage in social investigations aimed at revealing and clarifying how power and discriminatory beliefs are inscribed in and mediated by language. In the view of Coulthard and Coulthard (1996), the job of researchers in fields like critical discourse analysis, sociology, and anthropology is to "help create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age, or social class" (p. xi).

CDA has provided theorization as well as a variety of tools and methodologies for extensive studies of contextualised language use in visual, written, and verbal texts. Over the past few decades, a lot of research has been done, building on fields like linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, among others.

3. Ideologies in discourse

Connecting the social context to the linguistic context within the framework of CDA is intended to reveal any traces of ideologies embedded in discourse. Language, according to Wodak (2001a), should be regarded as critical in the (re)production of ideologies, as well as in the establishment and maintenance of social identities and inequalities.

Dominant ideologies are those that are held by the most influential groups in society. Therefore, powerful political and social institutions like the government, the legal system, and the medical community serve as mediators of the dominant ideology. According to Simpson (1993, p.5), the perception of these institutions is "shaped in part by the specific linguistic practices of the social groups who comprise them." Kress (1989b), on the other hand, maintains that any investigation of ideological assumptions through the analysis of discourse implies exploration of the social and historical contexts and any linguistic forms studied in isolation are just useless when the purpose is more than describing particular instances of language use. For Fowler (1996), even the study of these formal structures within a context requires the analysis to be profound and deep enough to uncover the hidden ideas. According to him, relying solely on linguistic forms to deal with ideologies in texts is insufficient. There must be a need to look at what makes up ideology in language in a broader way and pay special attention to the hidden meanings that do not have a direct surface structure representation.

There are many definitions and approaches to ideology, but it is commonly defined as a system of ideas and beliefs. Simpson (1993) believes that, from a critical linguistic standpoint, the term "ideology" frequently expresses the ways in which what we say and think interact with society. As a result, an

ideology emerges from the implicit assumptions, beliefs, and value systems that social groups share collectively (Simpson, 1993, p. 5). Thompson (1990) defines ideology as the social structures and processes within and through which symbolic forms circulate in the social world. According to him, it is important to investigate the social environment in which meaning is formed and communicated via diverse symbolic forms. In Wodak and Meyer's opinion (2001, p.10), "Ideology, for CDA, is seen as an important aspect of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. What these definitions of ideology have in common is the idea that language is crucial in the production and dissemination of ideas and beliefs, as well as their consolidation through society's various structures.

Various attempts have also been made to explore how ideology operates in discourse. In this respect, many questions were raised, such as how does ideology operate in texts? Is it possible to recognise those instances where language is at the service of ideology? In the view of Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996), it is possible to distinguish typical strategies of symbolic construction, which are the means by which the general modes of operation of ideology may be enacted. However, the analysts should provide sufficient evidence to justify their suggestions because no word or structure in language is ideological in and of itself. The context/co-text plays a major part in the identification process. According to Thompson (1990), for the analyst to be able to detect ideologies in discourse, they should conduct comparative studies of the representations in the same texts of the same genre. This may also help the analyst figure out how the author plans to fight against relationships of dominance through modes and strategies.

Researchers such as Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Van Dijk 1987, 1991, 1993; Wodak 1996, 1999; have attempted to investigate how hidden ideologies could be discovered and resisted in order to maximise the potential of language and promote social values such as justice and equality. Van Dijk (2000, 2004), who has spent a lot of time examining the construction of racism in discourse, argues that we need to pay special attention to the discursive aspects of ideologies if we want to know how ideologies can be communicated or hidden through language.

3.1. Gender Ideology

Many social movements have emerged in tandem with the establishment of CDA to challenge existing living conditions by strengthening minorities' empowerment and improving their access to basic resources. Third wave feminism, which began in the mid-1990s, was one of these movements. It was represented not only by political and social activists, but also by feminist discourse scholars who were and still are politically committed to finding the complex, subtle, and naturalised gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations in discourse that are at the root of many forms of gender inequality and oppression.

In the area of discourse and gender studies, a large and growing body of literature has investigated latent ideological representations of gender in discourse, revealing that gender ideology is hegemonic, dominant, and often goes unnoticed. This form of consent-based dominance has mostly been

consolidated through discursive means, particularly through the constant representation of ideological assumptions as commonsense and natural. Gender ideology appears to be renewable and resistant. It has been established and enacted through powerful social institutions and practices that serve perpetually to mediate between the individual and the social order. Connell (1987, 1995) argues that institutions are really made up of ideas about gender, so even if gender does not seem important in a given situation, it is in the vast majority of cases.

From a critical perspective, the most difficult task would be to demonstrate objectively the modes of operation of ideologies in discourse and their outcomes. According to Fowler (1996), showing the broad premise that ideology is pervasive in texts is the easy part; the tough part is doing the analysis. He points out that the analyses that have been published are insufficient. (p.8). Indeed, the investigation of the writers' intentions requires a close examination of the linguistic choices, which are not necessarily the result of a conscious effort on their part. Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996) argues that the way writers use language can create and maintain power relationships, even if they do not intend for their language choices to have an ideological effect.

Those researchers in favour of a linguistic model, according to Fowler (1996), are concerned with exposing misrepresentation and discrimination by means of critical reading and linguistic analysis of a multitude of modes of discourse such as newspapers, political propaganda, official documents, regulations, interviews, and so on. Sunderland (2011) investigated the way female and male characters, and gender relations, were represented in the language of children's fiction. According to her, "content analysis always needs to be done, as a background to linguistic analysis" (p.82). Fowler (1996) proposed a broader perspective, arguing that the study of formal structures within a context must be extensive and deep enough to reveal hidden structures. According to him, there must be a need to broaden our understanding of what constitutes ideology in language and, in particular, to incorporate implicit meanings that lack clear surface structure representation. Mills (1995, p.197) agrees with this point of view. She points out that language analysis alone will not be enough to show a link between language and ideology because focusing on individual language items risks making the context of the text disappear.

3.2. Gender ideology in children's fiction

Interest in ideology in children's literature arises from a belief that children's literary texts are very informative in terms of culture and morality. According to Hunt (1990), more than any other book, they depict society as it aspires to be, as it seeks to be perceived, and as it unintentionally shows itself to be. In the same vein, Mallan (2009, p.3) points out that children's literature has a significant and sometimes overlooked impact on how young readers perceive the world and their position in it. Levorato (2003) maintains that in today's ideological landscape, fairy tales can play a significant role in either supporting or opposing a socially established order. Similarly, Stephens (1992, p. 8-9) argues that every book has an implicit ideology, which often takes the shape of societal views and values. This taken-for-

grantedness makes it difficult to uncover the underlying assumptions since the analyst often entertains identical beliefs and values that they are ignorant of. In this view, the language of children's literary and non-literary works is a very effective socialising tool. Halliday (1978) maintains that a child learns about traditions, hierarchies, and attitudes through language. Therefore, the language of literature can help and encourage people to follow these social norms.

Data from several studies suggests that ideology permeates all parts of textual discourse, from story outcomes to expressive forms of language. Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996) include teen novels in their book entitled "Language and Control in Children's Literature." In their investigation of relationships of control, their goal was to examine the adult writers' degree of linguistic latitude when writing for children. They sought to highlight how confined such writers were by the patterns of discourse that were common at the time. In their major study, Gooden & Gooden (2011) investigated gender representation in notable children's picture books published from 1995 to 1999. As an attempt to update LaDow's content analysis method, their research demonstrates that despite a noticeable improvement as regards female representation since the 70s, gender stereotypes still exist in children's literature. Sunderland (2011), in her analysis of gender representations in children's fiction, devotes a whole chapter to the linguistic analysis of the popular young adult novel Harry Potter. Her research shows that women's exclusion and discrimination, as well as the way men and women treat each other, can be constructed in many different ways.

4. Materials and methods

A critical discourse analysis was undertaken in this study to explore the structures and strategies that serve to enact, legitimate, and reproduce particular beliefs and points of view about gender. I chose Thompson's (1990) models of how ideologies work because they helped me understand the complicated patterns of meaning better.

Thompson is a social theorist concerned with the examination of the ways meaning is mobilised in the social world to perpetuate relations of dominance and to support individuals or organisations in positions of power. (Thompson, 1990). His critical understanding of ideology gives CDA a good idea of how language, power, and dominance are connected.

Instead of working on many different texts, I selected nine short stories written by the Algerian author Wahid Sekkouti. My choice was based on the idea that focusing on one writer would let me follow his train of thought and, in the end, figure out his point of view by looking at how he uses certain language patterns over and over again.

Literature and other cultural materials, in my view, are very ambiguous and susceptible to several interpretations. However, to avoid a confusing and never-ending number of different interpretations, it was necessary to come up with a specific interpretation that was supported by textual analysis and theoretical points of view.

While translating the texts for the study, my goal was to investigate the language potential (lexical and grammatical structures) that serves to reflect social realities and experiences. I did the translation by finding the closest word in the target language that was the same as a word in the source language. This kept the semantic effects of the original texts.

The following is a list of the titles of the nine stories that are devoted to the research, in the order that they appear in the book:

The Blue Mountain (الجبل الأزرق); The Homeless Family (العائلة المتشردة); The Reward of Silence (جزاء الصمت); Tears and Joys (دموع و أفراح) ; The Bet (الرهان); The killer Lie (الكذب القاتل); The Unfaithful Woman (الخاننة); The Curse of Fate (لعنة القدر); The Price of Loyalty (ثمن الوفاء)

4.1. Thompson's Modes of Operation of Ideology

As previously stated, the obstacles that academics have encountered in investigating ideology in discourse are mostly connected to the methodologies of analysis. Some scholars have elaborated checklists for the ideological manifestations in texts. Thompson (1990) identified five modes of operation of ideology that include legitimation, dissimulation, unity, fragmentation, and reification. By focusing on this list, I hoped to investigate how ideologies can make gender meanings fixed and unchangeable.

4.1.1. Legitimization

According to Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996, p. 46), legitimization refers to the depiction of dominant relationships as legitimate. Thompson (1990) points out that narratives provide "particularly fertile ground for the portrayal of social relations and the unfolding of consequences of actions in ways that may establish and sustain relations of power" (1990, p. 62). The first strategy related to legitimization is rationalization. It refers to the chain of reasoning used by the producer of discourse to convince others that current social relations and behaviours are appropriate and justified. (Thompson, 1990). According to Thompson (1990), children's literature is replete with conversations between characters and the narrator in which dominance relationships are justified on rational grounds. In texts, the psychological relationship between character and reader is encouraged to urge readers to draw conclusions about what the characters enjoy, feel, require, fear, and so on. These details are not directly stated, but are suggested through the characters' behaviour, conversation, and thoughts (Knowles and Malmkjaer, 1996, p. 161). Another strategy associated with legitimization is universalization. This strategy is based on the assumption that universal benefit will accrue by supporting and recognizing the "institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some individuals... as serving the interests of all" (Thompson, 1990, p.61).

4.1.2. Dissimulation

It is a mode of operation of ideology in which relations of domination are concealed, denied, or obfuscated. Thompson (1990) distinguishes three strategies within this mode. To begin, "displacement occurs when a term which is normally employed to refer to one object or individual is used to refer to another" (p. 62). According to Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996), the displacement approach is also widely used in tales when the goal is to demonstrate that it is better to be poor than affluent and to dissuade youngsters from overindulging. The second strategy related to dissimulation is euphemization, whereby social relations are described in a way that denotes positive connotations. It is frequent and abounds in literature for children (Knowles & Malmkjaer, 1996). Trope is the third strategy linked to dissimulation. It means using words in a metaphorical way, which can include using synecdoche, metonymy, and metaphor.

4.1.3. Fragmentation

It illustrates the policy of "divide and rule". It may serve ideology by "orientating forces of opposition towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful or threatening" (Thompson, 1990, p.65). It is also described by Thompson (1990, p.65) as the "expurgation of the other". This involves the "construction of an enemy" towards which "individuals are called upon collectively to resist or expurgate" (Thompson, 1990, p. 65). Fragmentation can be promoted by differentiation, which occurs while emphasising the differences between groups. According to Thompson (1990), differentiation in children's literature often takes the shape of an exaggeration of the size disparity between various groups, particularly in tales featuring giants and fairies. Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996) argue that in fiction, "the other" may take numerous forms, from school bullies to witches, and, of course, tends to have the features that the writer finds undesirable. It is typical in fairy tales to magically superimpose "the other" onto a major character, but this phenomenon may also be handled more naturalistically in books that begin by alienating the reader from the lead character, whose path toward reform is then chronicled. This serves an ideological function by uniting the reader and writer against the negative features of "the other" and allows the writer to illustrate the good benefits of the forms of behaviour advocated by the writer and frequently the adult characters in the narrative. In other words, it brings together the "good" children and "good" adults to fight the same adversary, the "bad" children and "bad" adults.

4.1.4. Unification

On the other hand, unification refers to the inclusion of individuals in a collective identity, regardless of the differences that may separate them (Thompson, 1990, p.64). This ideology is characterised by two strategies. The first is standardisation, which refers to situations in which "symbolic forms are integrated into a standard framework that is marketed as the common and acceptable foundation of symbolic interchange" (Thompson, 1990, p. 64). Thompson (1990) uses the establishment of a national language as an example of how it fosters a feeling of national identity as well as a hierarchy among dialects within

a country. The "symbolization of unity" strategy is related to the unification form of ideology. Thompson (1990) defines this strategy as the construction of a "collective identity and identification, which are diffused throughout a group or plurality of groups" (Thompson, 1990, p. 64). This may involve the creation of symbols of national unity, such as flags, national anthems, emblems, and different types of inscriptions (Thompson, 1990).

4.1.5. Reification

It is described by Thompson (1990, p. 65-6) as the process of creating control and subordination by describing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, and beyond time (Thompson, 1990, p. 65). Eternalisation (Thompson, 1990) is a strategy associated with reification. It is realised to obscure the evolution of institutions, customs, and tradition. Another strategy related to reification is naturalisation. According to Thompson (1990), this strategy serves to give people the impression that it is natural that things have always been like this or have always happened this way. History repeats itself and the events repeat themselves because they are natural. For Thompson (1990), such an ideology of naturalisation is rather institutionalized. "The institutionalisation of the division of labour between men and women is often portrayed as the outcome of physiological differences" (Thompson, 1990, p. 66) is an example of the mode of naturalisation of ideology.

5. Analysis

5.1. Legitimization

The two strategies linked to the legitimization process are rationalisation and universalization. Many examples that I was able to extract from the stories chosen for the study demonstrate the embedding of this mode of ideology operation. In *The Unfaithful Woman*, when the author tells the incident in which a husband kills his wife and children before turning the gun on himself, he provides the readers with a series of reasons that enable them to comprehend the murderer's motivations and stand by him. According to the author's perspective, which he wishes to impose on the reader, the woman deserves to be executed since she violated her husband's rights. The narrator presents the husband's dominance over his wife as rationally justified and legitimate.

في هذه اللحظة، عادت صورة أمه إلى ذهنه وهي تناشده أن يبعد ويترك تلك الزوجة لأنها ليست أهلاً لمثله ولسمعة أسرته الشريفة وأن زوجته هي الخائنة. وبدون تفكير رجع رابح إلى بيته واخذ بندقية الصيد وراح يطلق النار على أفراد أسرته الواحد تلو الآخر بادئاً بزوجه ثم انتحر

At that moment, he thought of his mother begging him to stay away from his wife and leave her, saying that she doesn't deserve his

likeness or the good name of his family, and that his wife is the traitor. Rabeh went back to his house, grabbed the hunting rifle, and shot his family members one by one, before committing suicide. (p. 254)

The same strategy is adopted by the writer in another story. In *The Killer Lie*, the protagonist murders his wife for the sole reason that she lied to him. However, the way the facts are presented makes the reader think that he was right to do what he did.

رجع برهان إلى البيت و بهدوء و برودة أعصاب طلب من زوجته أن تحضر له الطعام,
و بعد أن تناوله, توجه إلى غرفته و أخذ خنجرا و بدن أن يفتح زوجته في الموضوع
طعنها بضربة قوية على الصدر

Burhan returned home and calmly and coolly asked his wife to bring him food, and after he ate it, he went to his room, took a dagger, and stabbed his wife in the chest with a strong blow. (P.225)

To persuade the reader that the husband has every right to punish his wife or even his mother, the writer does not only recount the facts that convict the offender but also attempts to connect the events to the issue of customs and traditions. He even uses clairvoyants to reassure the reader that everything that has happened and is happening is in line with the prophecies, denying the young reader the opportunity to think and doubt.

تأثرت الأم لسماع هذا الخبر المفجع و فقدت على إثره حلاوة العيش, فصارت كلما غاب
زوجها الصالح عن البيت أشعلت الكانون و ملأته بعقاقير و بأنواع أخرى من البخور
التي أعطتها إياها العرافة لتبعد الأذى عن وحيدها 88

The mother was saddened by this bad news and lost the joy of life. So, whenever her good husband was out of the house, she lit the kanun and filled it with drugs and other types of incense that the fortuneteller gave her to keep her from hurting her only child.

The majority of the author's opinions and attitudes about women and men that he seeks to demonstrate via a series of arguments drawn from traditions and practises may seem rational and unarguable to the reader. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women using lexical and grammatical features

contributes to the formation of stereotypes and detrimental notions about women. For example, the repeated use of terms and collocations such as "poor mother," "obedient," "loving," and so on contributes to the reinforcement of stereotypes and bad notions about women.

راحت الأم المسكينة تناشد ذلك العجوز بترك وحيدها

The poor mother started begging the old man to stop bothering her son. (p.15)

الام المسكينة تجلس واجمة غير قادرة على تحمل عبء هذه الكارثة التي ألمت بها
وبوحيدها

The poor mother, who looks very sad, cannot bear the weight of this terrible thing that happened to her and her son. (p.94)

يكون مع زوجته الطيبة المطيعة نموذجا من الأسر التي كانت تحضي باحترام الأهالي
كلهم

The husband, along with his good and obedient wife, is an example of a family that was respected by all. (p. 50)

In *The Curse of Fate*, Ali kills his wife because the band of gangsters convinced him that she was the source of evil. Through a debate between the gang boss and Ali, the author seeks to legitimise the act of killing. The operation of ideology in this sense involves the production of a chain of reasoning that explains why certain acts should be considered legitimate. The writer attempts to paint a grim image of the wife via the conversation in order to give the husband justification for murder. Even if the goal seems to be to give the reader information and help them learn moral values and rules that are important for their upbringing and guidance, dialogues between characters that include justifications and arguments, which are common in children's stories, may also help some bad ideas stick and stereotypes stay alive. The following dialogue illustrates this chain of reasoning:

نظر الأشرار إلى بعضهم البعض مبهوتين مندھشين، ثم قال لهم قائدهم: " أليس نحن
عصابة أشرار، نقتل وننهب ونفسد ونحرق؟ قالوا: "بلى!" قال القائد: " أصنع أجدنا في
حياته ما فعل هذا الرجل بأمه؟" قالوا: "لا... لا... أبدا". ثم طرقت القائد رأسه وأمر الرجل
أن يأخذه إلى بيته حيث الزوجة اللئيمة... أخرج القائد خنجره وأمر علي بأن يمزق صدر
زوجته مثلما فعل بأمه... وبدون تردد شد علي على الخنجر و بغضب شديد طعن به
صدر زوجته

The wicked were shocked and looked at each other. Then their leader said: "Aren't we a group of bad people who kill, steal, ruin,

and set things on fire? They answered "Yes!" The commander asked, "Would any of us ever do to his mother what this man did?" "No, No, Never," they said. The commander then hit him on the head and told the man to take him to his house where his mean wife was. The commander took out his dagger and told Ali to rip off his wife's chest like he had done to his mother. Ali did not hesitate to pull out the dagger and stab his wife's chest in anger. (p. 279-280)

In every story in which the husband murders his wife, the act is justified and legitimised. Another legitimization strategy is to associate the characters, their actions, and movements with an indefinite time and place. The lack of names, places, and times may make the reader think that the characters have always been the way they are. The witches, giants, women, and men, with their mental and physical descriptions, are depicted as universal and therefore normal.

5.2. Dissimulation

Another mode of operation of ideology is dissimulation, and the strategy associated with it is displacement. When writers insert characters by describing them, assigning them roles, and connecting them to events, activities, and locations, they also insert their points of view regarding values, habits, social activities, behaviours, people, and many other things. In many cases, the words they use to express certain meanings may later lead to the production of additional meanings, frequently in an unnoticed manner. The displacement process may be a deliberate strategy adopted by the writer to achieve ideological goals. What interests us in our research is how many gender preconceptions are reinforced by the writer's use of the displacement strategy. The writer's words, which are very simple since they are directed at children, and which may be covered by some familiarity and rationality since they reflect ideas and beliefs that have been established over time, may include many false beliefs and negative thoughts towards women and men alike. The author may not have intended to turn women into amusement or exploitation targets. His ignorance of the impact of the interconnectedness of linguistic, cognitive, and contextual structures on meaning-making, on the other hand, should be highlighted.

Through my examination of the discourse of the nine short tales, I was able to identify several instances of displacement. The writer frequently focuses on the female characters' appearance and age in his descriptions of them. When words like "Little Beauty," "Beautiful Girl," and "splendid Girl" are frequently used to describe a character, they may serve to perpetuate more stereotypes about beauty and its relationship to gender. The displacement process occurs here because the writer uses some vocabulary and draws on some beliefs to describe the female character, thinking that this would be a compliment to her, while this may unintentionally contribute to her confinement in a very small box,

making her vulnerable to bargaining and humiliation. More than this, the writer frequently presents the beautiful girl as a gift to the brave boy.

فابتسم الأمير وقال: "هذه هي زوجتك، إنها ابنتي الوحيدة التي وصفتها لك، إنها مكافأتك
على حسن اخلاقك ونبل مشاعرك وصدق لسانك

The prince said with a smile, "This is your wife. She is the only daughter I've described to you. It is your reward for your good manners, nobility of feelings, and sincerity of speech." (p.76)

Another illustration is found in *The Price of Loyalty*. An angel is mentioned to add some spirituality to the scene of the sleeping girl. The inclusion of the angel's resurrection of the girl may lead the reader to believe that only strong love can be rewarded and that only beautiful women can be resurrected by a magical or spiritual force. When developing the character of the son in *The Reward of Silence*, the author tries to convey to the reader that he is not only courageous like his father but also can take good care of his mother. However, other meanings may creep into the mind of the reader, such as the possibility that the mother is fragile and feeble, and that she can only rely on her young son in the absence of her husband. This situation is extremely perplexing, especially given that the writer already stated that the child is only twelve years old. The hidden truth here is that mothers are incapable of taking care of themselves when their husbands are away. The author goes too far in his humiliation of women in *The Blue Mountain*. Despite being married, the protagonist's wife is portrayed as weak and helpless by making her appear obedient, polite, and willing to serve her male brothers. For instance, when her brothers force her to live with them rather than in a separate house with her husband, the writer does not give her the opportunity to complain or reject; rather, he offers her a compromise solution that satisfies everyone's needs and makes everyone happy. It is necessary for all of them to live in the same house for her to be able to properly care for everyone. The circumstances are described as if a woman is endowed from birth with the aspiration to fulfil everyone's needs.

عاد الفتى إلى زوجته فأخبرها بالحقيقة. وطلب منها ألا تخبر إخوتها بالأمر، بل تتظاهر
أمامهم أنها لم تعد تطيق البقاء معهم، حتى ما إذا أصروا على بقائها معهم، تشتترط عليهم
أن يسمحوا لزوجها بالبقاء معها في البيت

The boy returned to his wife and told her the truth. He asked her not to tell her brothers about it, but to pretend in front of them that she could no longer stand to stay with them. He asked her to pretend not to want to live with them anymore and if they refused, then she could stay with them on the condition that he could stay with them too. (p.46)

5.3. Unification and Fragmentation

In terms of the unification mode of ideology, Thompson (1990, p.64) refers to artefacts which have been adapted to a "standard framework" and are "promoted as the shared and acceptable basis of symbolic exchange". Different aspects of unification are apparent in the nine stories. More specifically, the strategy of creating a collective identity, or "symbolization of unity". This strategy is employed when the writer provides the reader with a set of beliefs and characteristics with the intention of promoting and diffusing them. The male characters such as Zachary, Samir, Manou, and Mahmoud create a collective male identity which symbolises bravery, adventure, courage, and strength. Whereas female characters like Zachary's mother, Aicha, Zahra, and Maria unify to represent the female identity, the symbol of obedience, kindness, devotion, and virtue. The characters that are shown within the framework of superstition, evil, greed, and jealousy, such as the fortune teller, the greedy old man, the witch, the giant, and so on, are also symbols of unification. They belong to the same category because they share the same traits and actions. This strategy, even if unintentionally used by the writer, would result in a lot of stereotyping of the characters and events. The classifications that result from unifying the characters in terms of attributes, feelings, and actions may have a negative impact on the reader by directing their thoughts and limiting their options. For instance, it is the primary responsibility of a daughter, sister, or wife to serve and care for their respective fathers, brothers, or husbands, even if this requires the woman to forego her own health and comfort. Another illustration would be that the stepmother belongs in the same group as wicked people, witches, and sorcerers because she shares their characteristics of being hateful and evil.

On the other hand, differentiation and expurgation of others are strategies associated with fragmentation. According to Thompson (1990), "fragmentation" is the polar opposite of "unification." Instead of appealing to a shared identity, "fragmentation" focuses on differences from the "other," which can either mean emphasising differences or portraying the "other" negatively or negatively (Thompson, 1990).

Several times throughout the nine stories, distinctions are drawn between male and female characters. The majority of the male characters are associated with jobs and outdoor activities, whereas the female characters are portrayed as passive and hesitant. As a result, the reader should assume that males and females cannot be categorized together.

In literary stories, especially children's literature, the strategies associated with fragmentation are differentiation and expurgation. In order to further consolidate the prevailing customs and beliefs, the writer resorts to creating a gap between characters and events based on elements such as age, gender, and good and evil.

5.4. Reification

The reification mode of ideology is to present historical state of affairs as natural or as the inevitable result of natural characteristics. (Thompson, 1990). The strategies connected to reification are naturalisation and eternalization.

In works of literature for children, it is not difficult for the author to persuade the young reader that what they portray for the reader in terms of characters and events, as well as what they express in terms of ideas and points of view, is what ought to be considered and believed. When you tell them, for example, that a boy should be able to leave home at a young age to explore the world and live an adventurous life, they will think that this is natural and part of a boy's nature, and that they must follow nature so they do not look like weak and scared girls.

There are many examples of how the author, whether on purpose or not, used the normalisation strategy in the nine stories. In *The Blue Mountain*, for example, when the brothers agree to let their brother-in-law live with them as long as their sister keeps serving them as usual, no one expects the husband to agree to the deal. The author goes on to say, "They were all satisfied." The reader may believe that it is natural and normal for the sister to do whatever it takes to please everyone. The author never once raised an objection to the male characters' use of the mother, sister, or wife in such a demeaning manner; however, he does consider the mother's unflagging support of her husband and brothers to be a given and even an obligation. While examining the stories, I came across many sequences in which women demonstrate their unconditional devotion and obedience to men. The man asks the questions, the woman responds, the man gives the orders, and the woman follows them. From the author's point of view, the female character has no right to object or refuse. A scene in *Tears and Joys* exemplifies the author's portrayal of the submissive nature of women. Maria, afraid of the wicked woman, decides to take refuge in the tree. When the prince realises that the woman with the golden hair is Maria, he decides to ask for her hand in marriage and orders her to come down from the tree to accompany her to the palace. The unfortunate aspect of this scene is that Maria was unable to refuse the prince's request and even believed she was unworthy of being the prince's wife. The writer did not allow her to ask questions or discuss the terms of her marriage in her dialogue with the prince. The reader will think that Maria's decision to marry the prince is natural. Why should she say no?

يتعجب الأمير من هذه الشعرة الذهبية ويأمر الجميع للبحث عن صاحبة هذه الشعرة،
وسرعان ما يخرج الجميع للبحث، أما هو فيشدد بين أصبعيه هذه الآية من الجمال... ويبلغ
الناس أنه سيتزوج المرأة مالكة هذه الشعر.
فاحتارت ماريا من أمر هذا الأمير... أيتزوجها وهي الفتاة الفقيرة المسكينة؟ أيتنازل عن
عظمته وفتوته وبهائه لمثلها؟

The prince is amazed by this golden hair and tells everyone to look for the person who owns it. Soon, everyone is out looking, but the prince pulls this verse of beauty between his fingers and tells everyone that he will marry the woman who owns this hair.

Maria did not know what to think about this prince... Poor girl, will he really marry her? Will he give up his greatness, youth, and beauty for a girl like her? (p.168).

Other aspects of naturalisation concern the formation of social institutions, such as the family institution. The father's dominance is regarded as both sacred and natural within this institution. Typically, the father is rough and tough on his children. This image has persisted for a long time and appears to be unchangeable. The fact that children must obey these hegemonic values without questioning them has a negative impact on their self-confidence, independence, and creativity. Instead of developing their own values, they simply recycle what has already been provided to them. The strategy of eternalization is reinforced through the writer's reproduction of some of the story schemes already present in children's fiction for many years, such as searching for uncommon medicines or plants in order to save an ill girl, wife, or princess, and facing the challenges like slaying the dragon or ascending the tall mountain. In *The Blue Mountain*, the author uses tenses and adverbs like "used to" and "usual" to make the actions seem like they have been going on for a long time and are just part of life.

وأخيرا جاءت رائحة الطعام التي إلفها منذ زواجه بهذه الفتاة

He could finally smell the food he had grown used to since he married this girl. (p.41)

دخل الإخوة إلى البيت الضخم الكبير، بدأوا يتحسسون بأنوفهم: "ما هذه الرائحة الجديدة في البيت؟". إنها رائحة لم يتعودوا على شمها من قبل. قال أحدهم: "أين هو الطعام؟ لما لم تقدميه في وقته كالعادة؟".

When the brothers walked into the big house, they touched their noses and asked, "What's this strange smell in the house?" They have never smelled anything like it before. Someone said, "Where is the food? Why didn't you serve it when you usually do?" (p.42).

لما رأت عائشة هذه العجوز أشفقت عليها ودعتها للدخول إلى البيت وأن تشاركها بعض الكسكسي الذي حضرته لابنها كالعادة

When Aisha saw the old woman, she felt sorry for her. She invited her into the house and gave her some of the couscous she had made for her son, as she always did. (p.243)

6. Conclusions

Examining how ideologies function in the texts reveals subtle connections between the use of language and the depiction of gender in the narratives. The analysis helps to explain why gender stereotypes and prejudices persist; when writing, authors choose to adapt discourse and make it recognisable to readers by drawing on the shared knowledge of their society. Thus, the gender ideological system contributes to the (re) production of discourse.

According to the findings, all nine texts contain the modes of ideology identified by Thompson (1990). The two most common strategies are legitimization and eternalization. The language choices of the authors may lead the reader to believe that the female characters in fiction are always attractive, delicate, emotional, and reliant on the male protagonists, while the male protagonists are always strong, courageous, and self-reliant. Most ideas and assumptions about gender become common and accepted as a result of how language is constructed.

In conclusion, I think that future research should focus on children's literature, both in terms of how it is made and how it is read. It should look at how young readers understand gender-related messages in stories and examine other sources where children are exposed to gender stereotypes.

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