

## **Feminist critical discourse analysis and children's fantasy fiction – modelling a new approach**

*Sanna Lehtonen, University of Jyväskylä, Finland*

Presented at "Past, present, future – From women's studies to post-gender research"  
14-17 June, 2007, Umeå, Sweden

### **Introduction**

In this paper, I want to consider the possibility of applying feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine gender in children's fantasy fiction. There are two major aspects in claiming that a critical linguistic, feminist approach to children's fantasy might be needed. Firstly, considering the earlier applications of feminist CDA and CDA, one should note that these approaches have rarely been interested in children's fantasy, or even children's fiction, or fiction in general. On one hand, this is not surprising, since according to Stephens (2006), in applying a linguistic analysis to literature one can expect to receive serious criticism from literary critics who are sceptic about using linguistic tools in studies of fiction. On the other hand, it is very much of a surprise that an approach that is interested in relationships between language, ideology, society and gender (feminist CDA/ CDA), would not be interested in children's literature, which is, in any case, an institutionally constrained form of socialisation. Recognising this view, there have been attempts to adapt CDA to children's literature (Stephens 1992, 2006), CDA to young adult fiction (Talbot 1995), and even feminist CDA to children's fiction (Sunderland 2004) – my purpose is to critically evaluate the possibilities of applying these approaches further in examining children's fantasy.

Secondly, although children's fiction has been one of the focuses of feminist theory right from the beginning of the second wave feminism (Paul 2005:116, Sunderland 2004:60), the criticism has mostly taken the form of liberal-feminist sex-role or 'images of women' theory (Marshall 2004:256, Clark 2002:285). Thus, the feminist influence on children's literature studies has led to rereading of classic books from a feminist point of view, identifying 'sexist', 'anti-sexist' and 'feminist' stories to provide guidelines for educators, and reclaiming previously neglected women authors (Paul 2005:116, Sunderland 2004:60). While these are important projects, instead of problematising concepts such as 'gender', 'girl' or 'woman', they have aimed at identifying stories "with female heroes who transcend their world in positive, *female-oriented* ways" (Mines 1989, cited in Brown and St. Clair 2002:26; *italics mine*), or "are true to the nature of both genders ... capture the essence of femininity and masculinity" (Huck 2001:viii-ix). Instead of allowing multiple possible empowering ways of

behaviour for girls – even ‘masculine’ ways of acting – these readings aim at finding essentially or ‘authentically’ feminine or female-oriented characters in stories to serve as suitable role-models for young girls. Although the importance of providing poststructuralist readings of gender in children’s books has been acknowledged by some feminist children’s literature critics (Paul 2005:123), not that many readings have actually occurred (Stephens 2006:133). Thus, I agree with Marshall (2004:256) who has plausibly claimed that poststructuralist feminist criticism was still a ‘new’ approach to children’s fiction in 2004.

Feminist approach to children’s literature, then, should be seriously updated, and I will argue that feminist critical discourse analysis could offer suitable tools for doing this, being an approach that aims at combining recent forms of critical linguistics as well as poststructuralist and third-wave feminist theorisations of gender (Lazar 2005, Sunderland & Litosseliti 2002). Furthermore, following Stephens (1992) and Talbot (1995), I will suggest that, in studies of children’s *fiction*, combining narrative theory to feminist critical discourse analysis might be a more insightful approach than an application of feminist CDA only.

Firstly, I will take a brief look at some general considerations about gender in fantasy. Secondly, I will map out the key premises of feminist CDA (Lazar, Sunderland and Litosseliti) and the applications of CDA to (children’s) fiction (Stephens, Sunderland, Talbot) and consider their advantages and problems. Thirdly, building on earlier theories, I will outline an approach that combines feminist critical discourse analysis to both narrative theory and theories of children’s literature – an approach that has not earlier been applied in book-length studies of children’s fantasy. In the final section of this paper, to illustrate my theoretical points, I will briefly refer to the work of a contemporary fantasist, Diana Wynne Jones, as an example of how feminist critical discourse analysis of gender in children’s fantasy can be put into practice.

### **Gender in children’s fantasy fiction**

From the perspective of gender studies and feminist theory, children’s fantasy has not attracted as much attention as other ‘unrealist’ genres, science fiction (see Attebery 2002, Barr 2000) and fairy tales (see Haase 2004). One reason might be the popular assumption of fantasy as a genre reflecting conservative attitudes as regards gender. For instance, Stephens (1992:280), analysing gendered identities in Diana Wynne Jones’s *Castle in the Air* (1990), concludes rather discouragingly that “the tendency for ‘rounded’ characters to be alien to fantastic narrative discourse still exists, and ‘flat’ characters are stereotypes”. In contrast, another popular speculation about gender in children’s fantasy, presented by Sunderland (2004:62) in her discussion of gendered discourses in children’s fiction, is

that fantasy (as opposed to 'realism') provides more opportunities to play with the conventions and expectations of gender. Unfortunately, she does not proceed to show how this might work, nor discuss any examples. Examples are, however, provided in several studies of fantasy, such as Attebery's (1992:104) reading of women's coming-of-age stories. Indeed, Attebery (1992:87) suggest that both speculations about gender in fantasy are true: fantasy is both a genre filled with conventional structures and a genre that is "empowered to reimagine both character and story." The controversy between these different speculations is interesting, since it suggests that there can exist a multiplicity of gendered discourses in fantasy, some of them potentially conventional, while others possibly feminist, subversive, or empowering.

This multiplicity of discourses should be interesting to feminist CDA that is concerned both about unequal gendered power relations and forms of empowerment in texts. The reason why feminist CDA has not been interested in (children's) fiction, might be, as Sunderland (2004:61) suggests, that it is unusual for critical discourse analysis to treat a work of fiction as a suitable epistemological site, and fictional texts are considered as the province of stylistics. However, considering that fictional texts are a form of language use – although a highly specialised one – and a site where gendered identities are discursively constructed, there is no reason *per se* why feminist linguistic analysis could not deal also with fictional texts. What should be taken into account, though, is that there already exists a branch of theory that is specialised in analysing narrative fiction – and that insights from narrative theory can support the critical discourse analysis of fictional texts. This view will be elaborated below in the discussion of earlier applications of CDA in analysis of fiction.

Even if one accepts that feminist CDA might consider children's fantasy fiction as a suitable epistemological site for a linguistic analysis, the question remains what feminist CDA might offer to the study of gender in children's fantasy, which is not, after all, any new field of study. Although liberal feminist 'images of women' criticism and content analyses of gender are still fairly popular as regards children's fiction (Sunderland 2004:60, Marshall 2004:256, Clark 2002:285, see also e.g. Lehr 2001, Trites 1997), there certainly have been poststructuralist readings of gender in children's fiction (e.g. Stephens 2002; Wilkie-Stubbs 2001), recently especially Butlerian readings of gender have gained popularity (e.g. Flanagan 2005, Österlund 2005). One might then, quite reasonably, ask what it is that feminist CDA might add to these approaches. Here I follow Lazar (2005:4-5), whose answer to the question what CDA might add the feminist theory is that "CDA offers a sophisticated theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures [...] and a wide range of tools and strategies for close analysis of actual, contextualized uses of language." Thus, while (at least some forms) of feminist poststructuralist theory tend to remain on a theoretical level in their discussions of gender, feminist critical discourse analysis hopes to bring the analysis of gender closer to practice, by looking at the linguistic and discursive construction of gender in specific texts and contexts. Therefore,

the 'new' input is the detailed linguistic analysis of gendered discourses that CDA makes possible, by concentrating not only *what* is said or represented, but on *how* things are represented through language (Stephens 2005:73). This is also the suggestion that Talbot (1995:150) and Sunderland (2004:60) make, both providing guidelines for textual analysis, which will be discussed further below.

### **Key premises of feminist CDA**

Feminist CDA is a recent development under the broader branch of critical discourse analysis. According to Lazar (2005:2-3), motivations for the need of a feminist CDA was that key theorists of CDA (e.g. Fairclough, Van Dijk) have not been interested in analysis of gender, and also the need to combine those studies already done in the field of critical discourse analysis from a feminist perspective into a specific approach. Since feminist critical discourse analysts, as well as those theorists who have applied CDA to fiction, share many of the basic premises of CDA, I will start by discussing some of these.

Firstly, what these approaches share is a critical orientation. In the words of Jørgensen and Phillips (2004:69-70) this can be formulated as an aim to: "explore the links between language use and social practice. The focus is on the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social order and in social change." Broadly speaking, CDA is a social-constructivist approach maintaining that representations of world are *partly* linguistic-discursive, meanings are historically and culturally specific and knowledge is created through social interaction while social construction of knowledge has social consequences (Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:4-6). What differentiates CDA on one hand from social and cultural theory is its aim at a close linguistic reading of texts. On the other hand, CDA differs from purely linguistic models in its understanding that text analysis is not alone sufficient for discourse analysis, as it does not shed light on the links between texts and societal and cultural processes and structures, and thus an interdisciplinary perspective is needed in which one combines textual and social analysis (Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:66).

Furthermore, as also other forms of discourse analysis do consider the relationship between texts and socio-cultural contexts, the term 'critical' in the name of the approach indicates, according to Fairclough (1989), an approach that seeks to show up connections that may be hidden from people, such as the connections between language, power and ideology (cited in Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:19). Feminist discourse analysts have named this process also as demystification – or denaturalization – maintaining that one of feminist CDA's aims is to demystify taken-for-granted or common-sensical assumptions of gender by showing that these assumptions are ideological and obscure the power differential and inequality (Lazar 2005:7, Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:19,

Talbot 1995:151). These processes are based on the poststructuralist assumption of language and discourses as ideological, discourses working as 'sites of struggles' for gendered ideologies and assumptions and contributing to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups (Lazar 2005:5, Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:18). Feminist CDA is thus openly political, an emancipatory critical approach which is committed to consciousness-raising and social change through a critique of discourse (Lazar 2005:5; Jørgensen and Phillips 2004: 64, Talbot 1995:151). The openness about political agenda is not only a choice, but a necessity: like most feminist theorists, critical discourse analysts should "explicitly acknowledge the impossibility of impartial observation – for *all* analytical approaches" since also analysts' language choices and position are sociologically and ideologically shaped (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:21).

### **Feminist CDA, gender and discourse**

What differentiates feminist CDA from CDA is that the former has developed a more sophisticated theory of gender. The understanding of the concept of *gender* in feminist CDA has been influenced by third-wave feminist and post-structuralist theories. Gender is understood as a fluid and multiple variable which is continuously constructed as a range of masculine and feminine identities – or femininities and masculinities – within and across individuals of the same biological sex. These identities are partly shaped by discourse. (Lazar 2005:9; Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:1-2.) Gender is both socially and individually constructed (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:6; Weedon 1997:25) and it interacts with other aspects of identity – such as ethnicity, age, class, sexual identity – and with power relations, thus gender is not discursively enacted in the same way for women and men everywhere (Lazar 2005:10; Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:15). Seeing gender as discursively constructed, feminist CDA has found Butler's (1990) performativity a useful concept, although taking a critical stance to Butler's tendency to locate everything in discourse and overlook experiential and material aspects of identity and power relations. The main interest of feminist CDA is, rather than trying to provide an overall theory of gender, focus on empirical studies, and the ways in which gender is actually constructed in authentic texts and situations (Lazar 2005:12-13; Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:27). Although feminist CDA does not understand gender as merely a product of discourse, their focus is, however, mainly on the ways that gender *is* discursively produced. Since gender is dependent on context, in analysis the interest is on representations of gender (identities) and gendered power relationships in specific texts and their specific contexts (Lazar 2005:11).

What this means to analysis of gender in children's fiction, is that the analyst is not, for instance, looking for *the* feminine or *the* masculine in children's texts, nor trying to track down and decide what are the suitable or unsuitable roles for girls and boys. Instead, the focus is on the representation of

multiple possible gendered identities or gendered discourses in texts, and on the multiple possible ways of empowerment.

The concept of discourse, then, in feminist critical discourse analysis is understood both in the linguistic sense of language which communicates meaning in a context, and in the Foucauldian, social theoretical sense of being a form of social practice, meaning that language is used to construct identity, including gender, from a particular ideological perspective. (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:9-10.) However, in contrast to Foucault's (1972:49) idea of discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" which indicates that the individual is determined by structures, feminist CDA also builds on Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, which ascribes a degree of agency to all social groups in the production and negotiation of meaning. Thus, feminist CDA stresses that people can use discourses as resources with which they can create something new: the participants of discourse can rework and contest the assumptions embedded in discourses (Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:16; Lazar 2005:7; Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:18). Thus, although dominant, privileged gendered discourses, for instance, can shape the individuals' lives, they can also be resisted and transformed by the individuals participating in social situations, institutions and structures which are partly constituted by discourse (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:14; Lazar 2005:8). In this respect, feminist CDA is not only interested in forms of oppression but also in forms of empowerment through discourse. This idea is also suggested by Talbot (1995:145) in the context of fictional conventions: she claims that fiction as social, discursive practice is both enabling and constraining in the sense that new texts are created within constraints. In other words, fiction – including children's fantasy fiction – can be oppressive but it can also be a form of empowerment.

Although the aim of textual analysis in feminist CDA is to make connections between gender representations or gendered discourses in the text and social and cultural context, feminist CDA does not aim nor claim to predict certain 'reader response' – a text can involve several possible positions for readers – (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:17; Mills 1994:16), nor decide on the writer's intentions (Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:21). Since a text does not uniquely determine a meaning, multiple readings are possible, and, indeed preferred. Feminist critical discourse analysts emphasise intertextual and interdiscursive aspects of texts, the term 'interdiscursivity' coming from Fairclough's (1989, 1992) formulation of the Bakhtin's (1981) idea of the dialogicality or polyphony – multivoicedness – of all texts (Lazar 2005:14, Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:14). What this means with respect to gender is that one text, for instance a children's book, may employ several 'voices' or discourses representing different assumptions of gender, some of them possibly even oppositional (Sunderland 2004:81).

How does feminist CDA then apply the “sophisticated theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures” and detailed linguistic analysis in examining actual texts? An influential contribution to CDA has been Fairclough’s (1992, 1995) three-dimensional conceptualisation of discourse, i.e. *text*, *discursive practice* and *social practice* (reviewed in Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:20). The model is based on the principle that texts can never be understood or analysed in isolation, but only in relation to webs of other texts and to the social context (Jørgensen and Phillips 2004:70). A further elaboration of this model and a suggestion of how it might work in an analysis of Diana Wynne Jones’s text is presented below.

While all the feminist discourse analysts cited here use Fairclough’s general model in their analysis, considering the actual hands-on details of textual analysis, methodological guidelines in feminist CDA vary. Rather than presenting any new linguistic tools, critical discourse analysis builds on earlier linguistic approaches, such as stylistics and critical linguistics. Lazar (2005:14), for instance, lists choices in lexis, clauses/sentences/utterances, conversational turns, structures of argument, genre and interactions between discourses as possible foci of analysis, while Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002:22) emphasise an analysis of lexical choices. Considering these different possibilities, it must be kept in mind that in regard to gender, not everything in the texts is necessarily relevant, and that different books manifest different ways of deploying gendered discourses (Sunderland 2004:68; Talbot 1995:65). Thus, the analyst, as an interpreter, must decide which features of the text might index gendered discourses and what are the relevant linguistic features to analyse in each specific text. In deciding what kind of linguistic features might be relevant in regard to gender, the analyst can find plenty of reference materials in feminist studies of gender and language, which I will not try to list here (however, Mills 1995 and studies collected in Lazar 2005 work as a useful starting points).

### **CDA and fiction**

Theoretically, the feminist CDA approaches can offer a lot to analysis of gender in children’s fantasy. Methodologically, however, feminist CDA is lacking in respect to analysis of fictional texts. As the theorists that have applied CDA to fiction, Stephens (1992), Talbot 1995) and Sunderland (2004) suggest, fictional texts carry their own complexities for a linguistic analysis. Sunderland (2004:62) lists some of these: the complexity of point of view in fiction, the role of irony, satire and humour, and the use of fantasy. What needs to be added to a critical linguistic framework is a methodology of narrative analysis (Stephens 1992, Talbot 1995). While this may sound overwhelming, I believe that in actual analysis, in which the analyst focuses on a certain aspect of a text, such as gender, the different methods can be combined successfully without ending up with an analysis that fills in volumes. The purpose of interdisciplinarity is here not to provide an exhaustive new theory, but rather to combine

suitable concepts and tools from different disciplines to form an approach that can deal fruitfully with, in this case, representation of gender in children's fantasy fiction.

As feminist critical discourse analysts, Talbot (1995:14) and Sunderland (2004:81) emphasise the multivoicedness or dialogics of a fictional text, which could be interpreted as intertextuality in a broad sense. A fictional text thus embodies several different voices (i.e. narrator's voice, different characters' voices, main and embedded narratives (Sunderland 2004:65)), reflected in the use of generic conventions, citations, allusions, literary pretexts and discourses circulating outside fiction (Talbot 1995:53-55). As stated earlier, Sunderland (2004:65) emphasises the heterogeneous nature of modern stories for children in terms of gendered discourses, concluding that there is a multiplicity of discourses at work in children's books. As I agree with the view of children's fiction as polyphonic, I suggest that the idea of multivoicedness of texts could be the starting point for the analysis of gendered discourses children's books. In the textual analysis, this would mean focusing on the different voices and discourses in the text, that is, on analysing narrator's voice, speech and thought representation and intertextuality. The following framework for analysis combines both tools for both narrative and linguistic analysis and is based on Stephens's (1992:18), Talbot's (1995:61-65) and Sunderland's (2004:68) suggestions for the foci of analysis.

Firstly, one should pay attention to processes of selection or *presence* in terms of topic (what is read, but includes both what is stated and what implied, and moreover, what is notably absent that might logically have been present). Secondly, one should analyse the different voices constructing gendered discourses or representations of gender. This would include analysing both the point of view (narrator point of view, character focalization) as well as the narrative processes: narrator's/ author's voice (including the mode of narration: narrative/descriptive/argumentative) and character's speech and thought representation (including, for instance, paying attention to reporting verbs, mental process verbs and verbal and mental process nouns). On all levels, the analysis is not only about *what* is said (contents) but also *how* it is said, thus paying attention to lexical choices and syntactic structures (e.g. active/ passive voice) where relevant. Finally, the intertextual elements also potentially contribute to gendered discourses. Intertextuality should not be understood only as a study of identifying specific 'pretexts' or allusion but the analyst should examine also the conventions of genre – in this case fantasy – considering that these conventions, such as character and situation types, frames or scripts may be gendered to begin with (e.g. the quest narrative is characteristically built around a male-career pattern (Stephens 1996:19)).

While not all of the above mentioned elements are necessarily relevant in regard to gender in specific texts under examination, the suggested list can work as a framework which enables the analysis of gender in text both from narrative and discursive points of view. Analysing fictional texts as such is



not, however, sufficient for feminist critical discourse analysis. Thus, in the following I want to suggest how Fairclough's three-dimensional model of text and its contexts could actually be used in feminist critical discourse analysis of children's fantasy by discussing a contemporary fantasist's, Diana Wynne Jones's young adult novel *The Time of the Ghost* as an example.

### **New approach in practice**

*The Time of the Ghost* (TOG) was published in 1981 and thus appeared well after the second wave of feminism in the beginning of the 1970s. As far as I am aware, the novel has been ignored by feminist critics, although it can be considered as an attempt to rewrite a feminine identity quest by employing an unconventional protagonist (a female ghost), and using narrative time-shifts and intertextual elements in de/constructing identities. The novel has not been chosen as a specifically representative example of children's fantasy fiction (providing such example would be an impossible task, considering the versatility of the genre), but rather because it deals thematically with female agency and empowerment and is thus of interest to a feminist analyst.

Since critical discourse analysis examines texts in their social contexts, it is worth defining what is meant by context in a critical discourse analysis. Context can be defined in several different ways: it can include linguistic co-text; genre; social situation, including specific (gender) relations between participants, and specific physical considerations; and cultural assumptions and understandings. From a *critical* perspective, however, for both the analyst and the language user, the context of a given text includes those *discursive practices* which pertain to the text in question, and the relevant *social practices* (Fairclough 1992 reviewed in Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002:20).

To start with the wider context, taking into account the relevant social practices in regard to gender means simply to examine the novels in their socio-historical context, that is, roughly, the Britain of 1980s. Worth considering in this context could be, for instance, the impact of second wave feminism in Britain (and elsewhere) on social practices concerning gender. Taking the social context into account does not mean that the novels are seen as representations of Britain of their time, rather, they might reflect some of the social tendencies of their time, while they might also reflect some tendencies of the past.

Examining the discursive practices around the texts involves considering the production and reception of the novels. Since feminist critical discourse analysis is interested in social emancipation, examining both the possible constraints for producing books and the influence of the books as reflected in their reception are important issues. The production in this case would involve the institution of children's

fiction publishing in Britain. Eccleshare (1991:20-21) suggests that in Britain in the 1970s it was identified that children's books failed to reflect the society in which children were growing up, which led to emphasis on the specific issues of racism and sexism, and more generally, to the tendency of social realism in children's books in the 1980s. Thus, feminism had begun to have an impact on children's fiction. In her essays, Jones herself (1989, 1992) also acknowledges the feminist impact and has explicitly described her project of revising a female hero in her novels of 1980s. She considers her revision in relation to the context of the production of children's fiction in Britain in 1980s, claiming that introducing a strong girl protagonist in fantasy in the 1970s would have been impossible for her. Whether or not Jones's intentions are truly reflected in the novels is not for the critical discourse analyst to decide. However, Jones's own writings about the production of her work certainly help to put her novels into the context of children's fiction publishing in Britain in 1970s and 1980s, which was beginning to reflect the impact of feminism.

The reception of the novels, in this case, would mean the critical reception of the novels – consisting of reviews, awards and scholarly writings – rather than child readers, since, as far as I am aware, there are not reader response studies on these novels. However, on the basis of general studies on children's reading habits in Britain, it could be assumed that the readership of these novels would consist mostly of girls, since boys are less willing than girls to read books which have a protagonist of the opposite sex (see Pinsent 1997:76-77; Swann 1992). Thus, whatever the gendered discourses in the novels might be, they would reach girl readers rather than boys. Considering the critical readings of *The Time of the Ghost*, it is worth noting that at its time the book did not receive any awards, in contrast to some of Jones's earlier novels, which indicates that at the time of its publication, the novel was not a huge success. However, later critics have read the novel as a young girl's successful quest for agency and commented on its complex way to construct a female identity (Mendlesohn 2005:34-35, Attebery 1992:75-78).

While examining the social and discursive contexts, the analysis should mainly focus on the actual text. Due to the limited space, I will not present a full textual analysis of the novel, but rather suggest some starting points for the analysis of gender from a critical, poststructuralist feminist view. Firstly, analysing the representations of gender in the text does not mean that one concentrates on the linguistic features and ignores the content or the story. Rather, one should analyse both what goes on at the level of narrative and content: the characters' actions and agency, but also to examine more closely the ways in which gendered discourses and representations are constructed through the multiple voices in the texts. As Stephens (2006:137) suggests, the text analysis should be based on both top-down and bottom-up processes of interpretation. Top-down processes are informed by the analyst's understanding of the discursive and social contexts, bottom-up processes involve paying attention to the text's structural features, such as suggested in the model for textual analysis above.

Considering *The Time of the Ghost*, examining focalisation and speech and thought presentation in the novel might prove out to be fruitful, since these elements are central in constructing the protagonist's gendered identity. Second important point in an analysis of gender would be not merely to concentrate on the representation of the girl protagonist. Rather, to map out different gendered discourses in the text the analysis should also consider representations of gender in regard to other characters in the novel and the power relations between them. Thirdly, taking the fantastic elements in the novel into account would include considering the allegorical and metaphorical aspects of the ghost, for instance, in regard to discourses of femininity.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, to sum up the contributions of feminist CDA to analysis of children's fantasy fiction, I have suggested that feminist CDA offers both a poststructuralist theory of gender as a variable, fluid identity category (as opposed to the liberal-feminist gender-role theory), and a model for detailed textual and discursive analysis of gender, examining texts in their social contexts rather than as isolated works. While this kind of approach can widen the understanding of gendered discourses in children's fantasy fiction, there are some challenges to applying it. Firstly, the major difficulty in interdisciplinary work is the conflicting, or at least differing, usages of key terms. Due to the limited space here, I have not discussed the differing meanings of concepts such as 'discourse' or 'intertextuality' in narrative and linguistic theory, a discussion which should certainly be included in a longer description of the approach suggested here. Another problem linked to the interdisciplinary nature of my approach is the fact that there exists certain amount of scepticism on both sides – that is, linguistic scholars on one side and literary scholars on the other – about combining methods from each field. As far as this is due to the difficulty of defining concepts, the analyst can overcome this challenge by a decent amount of methodological work. Furthermore, in my view, these two fields are not contrasting ones, since after all, there probably has not existed a time when these two fields had not been borrowing methods and concepts from each other. Thus, despite the challenges, considering the points I have presented above, applying feminist critical discourse analysis in examining gender in children's fantasy fiction might be worth the effort of interdisciplinary work.

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