

Redefining Gender Roles: The Defense of All Things Feminine

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From a very young age girls become intrigued with princesses and everything that is associated with fairy tales. Yet the older they get the more they abandon this dream. The so-called “princess culture” has been relentlessly critiqued by most of society. In her book, *In Defense of the Princess: How Plastic Tiaras and Fairytale Dreams Can Inspire Smart, Strong Women*, Jerramy Fine gives a whole new meaning to what it means to be a princess. While she does write about princesses, Fine often uses “princesses” in place of women in general. Fine’s book itself can be viewed as an act of rhetorical criticism that discusses feminism and gender equality while using examples of princesses to convey the drastic gaps and differences between the two genders. Fine’s book also argues that second wave feminist beliefs, in particular the ways in which those beliefs were translated into practice through the socialization of the next generations of boys and girls, counterproductively led to greater restrictions on women and girls while actually granting a wider range of freedom and gender identity to boys and men.

After laying out the ways in which mainstream feminist theories have changed over time, I explain how rhetorical critics use gender criticism to explore what masculinity and femininity mean in our culture. In the analysis, I show that, through the use of sarcasm and humorous anecdotes, Fine identifies the drastic gender

inconsistencies that still exist within our society in particular as they relate to the appearances and aspirations of women and men. The final section explores how society would change if Fine's views on gender were accepted.

Tensions Between the Second and Third Waves of Feminism

The Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions of feminism are a "theory of political, economical, and social equality for the sexes" or "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests".¹ Yet these definitions are still so broad that many people have their own idea or definition of what feminism really means. It is here where we find a split among women, and every woman is claiming to know the true focus of feminism. These splits, better known as waves, are most easily defined and noticed generationally. "The first wave of feminism took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" and their goal was to "open up opportunities for women, with focus on suffrage."² This is a primary goal that most women agreed upon for the first wave.

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960's and continued until the 1990's. The second wave generally focused on sexuality and reproductive rights, as well as creating equal opportunities for women in the workplace. From there, tensions arose about the actual meaning of equality. This, among other reasons, is what sprouted the third wave of feminism. We are able to see these tensions even very

¹ "Feminism." Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 21, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>.

² Rampton, Martha. "Four Waves of Feminism." (Pacific University. November 15, 2017. Accessed November 21, 2018. <https://www.pacificu.edu/about/media/four-waves-feminism>).

slightly between critics when they describe the differences between the second and third wave.

For example, Susan Archer Mann and Douglas Huffman share in their essay, “The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave,” that there are some women who try to discredit second wave feminists by claiming that they ignored the differences between women themselves, such as racial and social class distinctions. They include that some second wave feminists are outraged at the rumors considering they claim to have also been involved in the Civil Rights Movement.³ Yet these rumors still exist, so one can not help but think that there might be some truth to them.

Natasha Pinterics, author of “Riding the Feminist Waves: In with the Third?”, explains that second wave feminists were “organizing and theorizing around women’s “sameness,” at the expense our differences.”⁴ This idea was heavily criticized, especially by women of color. They explained that colored women’s “experiences of gender in all aspects, including femininity, marriage, conceptualizations of family and relationships to paid labour varied immensely from those of middle-class, white women.”⁵ Therefore, without embracing the differences, the minority women of the second wave felt like outcasts. These women then, reportedly, helped created the aspects of the third wave of feminism.

³ Mann, Susan Archer, and Douglas J. Huffman. "The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave." (*Science & Society* 69, no. 1 (2005): 56-91. doi:10.1521/isis.69.1.56.56799).

⁴ Pinterics, Natasha. "Riding the Feminist Waves: In With the Third?" (*Canadian Woman Studies*. April 1, 2001. Accessed November 21, 2018. <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/6899/6083>).

⁵ Pinterics, “Riding the Feminist Waves”.

The third wave goes against a lot of the ideals of the second wave. This wave is also seen as the rebellious wave by numerous critics. It included colored women rebelling against the stereotypical white women who blocked them out and the daughters rebelling against their mothers who were second wave feminists. This generational disagreement is seen in Astrid Henry's novel, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third Wave Feminism*, and the book of my analysis, Jerramy Fine's book, *In Defense of the Princess*.

The third wave feminists are especially rebellious when it comes to the "sameness" concept. This concept is not only applied to women of color but also to men. While second wave feminists were striving for equality, they have, possibly unintentionally, tried to become more like men in a man's world. Second wave feminists often are against anything that is or resembles femininity. For example, they were the ones who began the protest of the Miss America pageants, claiming that they were a "degrading cattle parade" that reduced women to objects of beauty dominated by a patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or in dull, low-paying jobs."⁶ While some women may agree that pageants were degrading, many others claim that second wave feminists took this disapproval of femininity to another level.

"An aspect of third wave feminism that mystified the mothers of the earlier feminist movement was the readoption by young feminists of the very lipstick, high-heels, and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression. Pinkfloor expressed this new position

⁶ Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism".

when she said that it's possible to have a push-up bra and a brain at the same time.”⁷ “For them, wearing pink, using nail polish, and celebrating pretty power make feminism fun.”⁸ But many critics did not see it the same way as they claimed the third wave was “light on issues and heavy on vanity, labeling it disparagingly as “babe feminism” or “lipstick feminism”.”⁹

Second wave feminists became so focused on having the same qualities as men, the very people they were seeking freedom from, that they disregarded the female traits that make them different. Jerramy Fine addresses this exact issue by stating that “too many women have been fighting for the wrong kind of equality -- the kind that requires a woman to act like a man in a man’s world.”¹⁰ And that “somewhere along the way, old school feminism made an unforgivable error: to belittle all things feminine in the name of feminism.”¹¹

Jerramy Fine’s book, *In Defense of the Princess*, was chosen to be analyzed because it provides a rather blunt and interesting take on feminism. Fine explains that she grew up with hippie parents and that her mother was a strong feminist. Throughout the reading, I inferred that her mother belonged to the second wave. But Fine was obsessed with princesses despite her mother’s concerns. While Fine attempts to defend the princesses and all that they represent, she defends women and the concept of femininity at the same time. Fine’s argument aligns with that of women from the third

⁷ Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism".

⁸ Mann and Huffman, "The Decentering of Feminism".

⁹ Mann and Huffman, "The Decentering of Feminism".

¹⁰ Fine, Jerramy Sage. *In Defense of the Princess: How Plastic Tiaras and Fairytale Dreams Can Inspire Strong, Smart Women*. (Philadelphia, PA: Running Press, 2016), 200.

¹¹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 201.

wave. She even confronts the issue with the second wave idea of “sameness” by stating that “equal in value is not the same as identical.”¹² Within her book, Fine provides personal stories, evidence, and analysis to back her argument for change in the way women, femininity and feminism are viewed.

Gender Criticism

Gender criticism can be explained as “how the symbolic actions of particular cultures define, inculcate, and impose performances of femininity, masculinity, and various sexualities.”¹³ This type of criticism challenges the definitions of social norms and draws attention to the ways in which expectations create boundaries and power relations that disadvantage and oppress women.¹⁴ By using gender criticism, we are able to see how Fine’s viewpoint of princesses and women is different than men and possibly other women. Gender criticism seemed like the clear choice because within Fine’s discourse, she provides a new definition for a princess. This princess definition can be translated to the way she views femininity and women. Throughout her book, while Fine explains the characteristics and behaviors she thinks princesses have and should embrace, she is redefining the roles of women as she sees fit.

¹² Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 207.

¹³ Burghardt, Carl R., and Hillary A. Jones. *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*. (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2017), 591.

¹⁴ Burghardt and Jones, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 591.

Redefining Princesses and Femininity

When analyzing Jerramy Fine's book, I found that her arguments could be separated into two categories: visual and aspirational. Within these categories, Fine makes arguments for how the traits and characteristics of princesses and women should be perceived in our world. Fine also makes various references to the inconsistencies of the way women are treated compared to men.

Visual

Within this category, I analyze how Fine points out all of the ways that princesses and women are criticized based on their visual appearance or visual characteristics that seem feminine. I also analyze how Fine claims that the current traditional views need to change.

Beauty

Fine recognizes that "one of the biggest criticisms continually aimed at the princess genre is that it seems to celebrate beauty."¹⁵ Society has long diminished the value of women's beauty, and princesses are criticized for this aspect. But Fine does

¹⁵ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 142.

not agree with this common perspective about beauty being undermined. Fine wonders what's so wrong with being beautiful and "can't a woman be powerful, kind, and beautiful all at once?"¹⁶ She ponders these notions as it seems like common knowledge to her, but she is aware of the fact that it is not accepted by countless others. Fine then continues to explain that "if you were a man, you would honor all your strengths and talents-- whatever they may be. Why can't women do the same? Women's biggest trump cards are too often dismissed, declared not only worthless but somehow foolish."¹⁷ As she points out, there is a clear difference between the way that women's beauty is perceived compared to men's. This difference forces women to downplay or be ashamed of something that could come naturally. Fine states that "even supermodels, who make fortunes off their looks, will tell stories about what ugly ducklings they were growing up."¹⁸ This type of behavior is fairly standard considering the traditional gender stereotypes. Observing that if a woman were to admit that she is beautiful, she would be labeled as self-centered among many other disparaging labels. Fine continues to explain how women are considered to be in second place compared to men in the current society. She also suggests that "part of the problem is that most strong women are also proud women -- and, for women, pride is often mistaken for vanity,"¹⁹ bringing to our attention again of how another trait that women hold is turned into something negative.

¹⁶ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 142.

¹⁷ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 143.

¹⁸ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 143.

¹⁹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 143.

While Fine presents the dramatically different way that women's beauty characteristics are viewed in society, she also provides a few real life examples showcasing the inconsistency between men and women. The first of which is how "Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo, took a huge bashing when she dared to pose for *Vogue*. But so what if she loves fashion? Do we think less of Larry Ellison for being photographed with his giant power boat or Richard Branson with his hot air balloons?"²⁰ Fine brings to our attention that because it was a fashion magazine, and Mayer was a woman, she received the criticism that the men did not. Fine asks all of these questions within her book to make the audience really think about the difference instead of plainly telling them there is a difference. Fine also includes that, "men are allowed to talk about sports relentlessly," complains Joanna Coles, editor in chief of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, "and yet we still take them seriously. I don't understand why women can't talk about fashion... and not be taken as seriously as men."²¹ Women are not only not taken seriously, but are actively belittled when speaking about fashion, beauty, or anything feminine. Fine uses these examples to clearly display some of the traditional societal norms. She also argues that she could "understand this hostility toward fashion and beauty if you assume women dress only to impress men and if you assume that women are incapable of simultaneously maintaining their appearance, holding down a career, and discussing world politics."²² By phrasing it the way she did, Fine uses a bit of sarcasm to show how believing that women are incapable of being beautiful and successful is seen as silly and almost funny because of how wrong it is. Fine clarifies

²⁰ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 143.

²¹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 143.

²² Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 144.

the previous statement of sarcasm by saying, “the fact that something appeals to the male gaze does not mean that it exists for the male gaze.”²³ She does this to make sure that the point was not missed, that reader understand that women do not dress solely to impress men.

The Color Pink

Another visual component that Fine spends a lot of time criticizing is how extensively the color pink is attacked. Fine even admits that she knows “far too many intelligent women who roll their eyes in disgust when the color is even mentioned.”²⁴ Notice how Fine includes the word intelligent while describing the type of women who disapprove of the color pink. She does this to draw attention to the fact that it is only an issue when trying to correlate intelligence with pink and girly, as these qualities are not meant to coexist. Fine also explains that “the real issue is that in our culture today, pink means “girly” and girly means feminine.”²⁵ Fine makes this connection to show that the problem really isn’t the color pink, but it’s actually what the color represents: femininity.

Fine continues to show how women avoid pink because they “think letting pink anywhere near them implies that they’re against female empowerment, bad feminists or, at best, weak or silly.”²⁶ Drawing attention to these connections are essential because people or women may not be aware of what they are doing by intentionally

²³ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 147.

²⁴ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 88.

²⁵ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 88.

²⁶ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 88.

avoiding the color pink. By informing everyone of these connections, they can not be dismissed. Fine then provides her opinion by clarifying that “girly” is not the opposite of empowerment. Femininity is not incompatible with ambition. And pink is just a color, not a dirty word.”²⁷ Fine needed to say this because society has given very negative connotations to the color pink. Here is where Fine changes the meaning of pink, girly, or feminine. As she attempts to disassociate these terms with concepts like weak.

Fine not only points out how the color pink holds the same negative connotations as the concepts of femininity, but she also observes how society has changed to become more supportive of boys being associated with the color pink or things that are feminine. Fine explains,

There are a lot of mixed messages when it comes to things pink and girly. On one hand, we have Peggy Orenstein telling us her view on why princess culture is detrimental. On the other hand, we have popular blogs like *My Princess Boy* where a mother supports her son’s right to love pink, princessy things. Many are furious when spa parties are marketed to little girls yet are thrilled when a J. Crew ad features a little boy wearing bright pink toenail polish.²⁸

But these mixed messages seem to have a bottom line. “Boys can be boys, girls can be boys, or boys can be girls -- but girls can’t be girls.”²⁹ Fine finds this irritating as she questions how this happened. “It seems that, in our endless quest to resist gender stereotypes, we still ended up with different standards for different sexes.”³⁰ We notice

²⁷ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 88.

²⁸ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 93.

²⁹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 93.

³⁰ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 93.

that even while our society has tried to become more accepting, girls have still been left behind. We find that yet again there is an inconsistency and that men or boys are favored over girls. Fine furthers this notion by providing a real life example:

Alice Dreger, a professor of clinical medical humanities and bioethics, best known for her work on sexual development, has strong opinions on the matter: “It makes me crazy that some of my feminists friends try so hard to stop their kids from being gender typical. I have one such friend who has a fairy princess daughter, and she keeps trying to keep her daughter butch, as if she owes this to Susan B. Anthony. I asked my friend, “If your son wanted to wear a pretty pink dress, would you let him?” She turned red and said, “Yes.” I answered, “Then why isn’t it gender based oppression to deny your daughter a pretty pink dress?”

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Fine includes this example to show another case of how girls are being denied the right to be themselves in real life. However, this example also draws attention to the inconsistency in the views of feminists themselves.

As mentioned earlier, Fine’s views match up with that of women from the third wave of feminism. Within the visual aspects of Fine’s book, we are able to see the tensions between the views of the second wave feminists and that of the third wave. Second wave feminists do not want to be associated with anything feminine as they believe it will make them be perceived as weak. These women want to be strong, independent women; therefore, like the mother above, will not allow their daughters to

³¹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 92.

be associated with anything that is “weak” either. Fine disagrees with this concept and explains how the “antipink lobby” bothers her, “as it often implies that if a little girl likes pink toys, then there is no way she can also be intellectual or self reliant... such stereotypical judgement about girls and women can make antipink campaigners seem just as divisive as the sexist marketing techniques they denounce.”³² Fine points out how the women who stifle femininity, like the color pink, are acting no better than the oppressive men who they wish to free themselves from. Fine continues by arguing that women shouldn’t have to change themselves and act more like men to survive in this society. “As a grown woman, why should we stop wearing things we might love (like dresses and high heels) in order to cater to what we think is everyone else’s sexism?”³³ Fine argues against the beliefs of second wave feminists and claims that we need to embrace the feminine characteristics of women and that these traits do not solely define women. As Fine explains, “allowing your daughter a pink bedroom doesn’t mean she will never become a member of the Supreme Court or win the Nobel Prize for physics. Nor does it mean she’s destined to live a life of wifely compliance. Give girls some credit.”³⁴ By arguing to “give girls credit,” Fine draws attention to the fact that this is something that girls do not get. Fine’s perspective on how girls or women should be seen is much different than that of second wave feminists or the society as a whole. She claims that women should be seen as women, not men, but that society’s preconceived ideas of women as being weak needs to change.

³² Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 91.

³³ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 147.

³⁴ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 91.

Aspirational

Within this category, I analyze how Fine criticizes the way that girl's and women's goals are judged. Fine then provides her thoughts on society's current view of women's aspirations.

Early in her book, Fine addresses the fact that princesses have been attacked for having a set of narrow-minded goals that consist of becoming a princess and doing nothing else. These views also align with that of second wave feminists. As second wave feminists have a prominent focus on careers, it is understandable how they would be so against princesses who supposedly do not have any career goals. However, Fine provides an alternative view of the skills of such princesses. Fine's response is, "so what if tidiness is one of Snow White's greatest skills? More power to her."³⁵ She also addresses that "society's obsession with office-based careers doesn't automatically appeal to everyone. "Having it all" is a myth because not all women want it all...if a modern woman prefers open domesticity, it hardly means she has failed."³⁶ Fine is attempting to lift the expectations that have been placed on women. These expectations have declared that women need to have successful careers and can not stay home like their great grandmothers. Fine argues that women should be able to choose their path based on their strengths and likes. And they shouldn't be at risk of being criticized if they do choose to stay home because it is not the lesser of the choices.

³⁵ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 35.

³⁶ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 36.

Fine includes multiple instances of showing how there is a great inconsistency in how girl's goals are judged compared to boy's goals. "Yael Kohem of *New York Magazine* said, "a boy dressing up like Iron Man, a narcissistic arms mogul turned superhero, is not seen to be nearly as silly or damaging as a girl wearing an Elsa costume... No one assumes boys who play with Nerf guns really believe they'll grow up to be space soldiers or cowboys. Why not grant girls the same sort of imaginative freedom?"³⁷ As we see here, a little girl dressing up as a princess is again seen as silly or damaging. Yet boys are allowed the freedom that girls are not to express themselves and dress up like their role models, even if the girl's role model could arguably be more positive. Fine questions "why are boys allowed to dream about becoming professional athletes rather than careers that "use their brains"?"³⁸ Considering that girls are constantly criticized for needing to find careers that "use their brains," Fine makes the audience think about why it would be so different for boys. She continues by writing, "and growing up to be a pirate or a wizard isn't particularly realistic, so should children never pretend to be those things?"³⁹ Fine draws attention to how the similar characters of a pirate and wizard, which are typically male-based, are widely accepted; yet wanting to be a princess is still seen as unhealthy. Fine also includes the statement of "Allison Benedikt of *Slate Magazine* [as she] concurred: "Why is it any likelier that your daughter is going to end up thinking that a prince will save her than it is that my son will think he should kill bad guys? Why is one of those fantasies considered damaging and the other

³⁷ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 71.

³⁸ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 71.

³⁹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 71.

harmless?”⁴⁰ Fine again provides another real life example of how boys continue to receive freedoms that girls are constantly refused.

Fine argues that society needs to allow girls the same level of freedom of expression that we allow boys. She claims that if we do this, we will see these girls truly flourish. “It’s the little girls with dreams who grow up to become women with vision.”⁴¹ It should be understood that Fine is not against girls dreaming of successful careers. She is against the restriction second wave feminists put on girls to have that be the only correct dream. Fine believes that girls should have the opportunity to choose, just like boys, and have that choice be accepted by society.

Finding Love

Fine also observes how women’s aspirations regarding love are criticized by society. Fine states that women “are not supposed to want to fall in love with a prince. No way. Not if we are intelligent women with any sense of self. And we’re definitely not supposed to believe in the old fashioned fairy tale of true love. Forget that. It’s much more acceptable for modern, educated women to pretend that our dreams of happily ever after don’t exist.”⁴² Much like before, Fine uses a tone of sarcasm when making this statement as she criticizes those who actually believe that an intelligent women finding her prince is impossible. But Fine argues that the fairytale dream and love should not be diminished, especially for young girls. Fine notices that there are common

⁴⁰ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 71.

⁴¹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 73.

⁴² Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 179.

conceptions of princesses finding their princes, such as, it is a princess' sole aspiration in life is to find her prince and marry him or into a wealthy family. However, Fine provides an alternative way of thinking about it:

When the princess dream is attacked, when fairytale narratives are attacked, there are several issues that seem to cause unease: Do we really want our daughters to think that a mythical prince can save them? Do we really want girls to focus on snaring wealthy husbands instead of their own careers? And do we really want girls to think that marriage is the ultimate goal in life? Of course the answer to all of the above is no. But these questions miss the point. The princess dream is not about rescue. Or social climbing. Or gold digging. It's about knowing that no matter what your circumstances, you are worthy of a prince.⁴³

Fine's perspective of little girls wanting to find their prince is clearly much different than the traditional views. Fine dismisses all of the demeaning associations linked to a girl wanting to find her prince. She takes it in the complete other direction by giving the act great meaning: knowing you are good enough. Fine's perspective teaches girls positivity, which is more than what society has done. Fine continues by saying that "when little girls set their sights on finding "a prince," they are actually making a very strong statement about their own self worth."⁴⁴ Little girls know that princes are important, powerful, and strong people or characters. Fine argues that when a little girl says she wants a prince, she in turn believes she too is important, powerful, and strong and that she therefore deserves the prince.

⁴³ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 180.

⁴⁴ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 181.

Second wave feminists have taken issue with women wanting to find their prince. They believe women should completely forget about men and solely focus on their careers. Fine addresses this issue as she does not agree:

I understand that instead of wanting “a prince,” society tells you you’re supposed to want to be an attorney or a genetics professor or a NASA scientist. But who says you can’t marry “a prince” and become a Supreme Court justice? Who says you can’t find true love and find the cure for cancer? And who says you can’t have a fairytale wedding and pilot the first mission to Mars? Not me.⁴⁵

As Fine clearly states, she does not believe that women should have to pick between their fairytale and being successful. Fine provides a new and different perspective where women have the opportunity to have both, to find love and have a career.

Marriage and Weddings

Fine not only addresses how women are regularly criticized for wanting to find true love, but she also observes how women are criticized for marrying someone who is wealthier or of higher social status than they are. Women are often judged when marrying a wealthier man and accused of “gold digging.” Even Kate Middleton was accused of being “clever” for tricking Prince William into marrying her and getting into the royal family.⁴⁶ Yet there’s “not a peep from the gender police” when men marry into a wealthy or royal family.⁴⁷ Though Fine states that she does not condone attaching

⁴⁵ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 187.

⁴⁶ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 185.

⁴⁷ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 186.

their livelihood to wealth or status, she argues that women should never be punished for marrying up. Regardless of who has the largest income of the household, each partner has important qualities they bring to the table that should not be undercut. Fine's view is different than second wave norms as she doesn't believe men and women should be treated differently in terms of who is allowed to marry well without judgement.

Another aspect of women's aspiration that is commonly judged is that of having a fairytale wedding. Second wave feminists are typically against the idea of marriage altogether, but if marriage is approved, they try to avoid many the traditions that are normally included. But Fine wonders if "wanting a fairytale marriage really such a terrible thing?"⁴⁸ She continues to argue that

We all know that modern women don't really need marriage. We can have sex without marriage, children without marriage, money and status without marriage. If we're honest with ourselves, we know that there are few logical reasons for any woman to rush to the altar, much less with the giant dress, the giant cake, all the stress, expense, and fairytale style pomp and circumstance of Cinderella or Kate Middleton. And yet we do.⁴⁹

Fine acknowledges that women truly do not need marriage as second wave feminist proclaim, but why do we still want them? Fine chose to let feminist author Naomi Wolf give the reasoning as to why women crave fairytale weddings:

Modern weddings, with all their silly trappings, allow women's "repressed regal nature to emerge... with the sparkling tiara, sweeping train, and attendants; with

⁴⁸ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 189.

⁴⁹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 189.

the great 'aura' cast by the veil; the suitor offering gems on bended knee, and the great moment when the entire court turns to watch her make her awe-inspiring entrance... All this gives women back, for a day, the buried psychological dimension is which they know they are rulers by nature.⁵⁰

By using Wolf's explanation, one can assume it is in turn part of Fine's argument and to be analyzed in the same way. This type of perspective on fairytale weddings is unlike any other. Instead of assuming that fairytale weddings are girly and feminine, and, therefore, based on previous analysis, weak and silly, Fine gives weddings a sense of power. Claiming that women are rulers by nature and that weddings are the one day that gives this back to women implies that women would want a fairytale wedding so they could feel like the most important and powerful person on that day.

A World with Princesses

Based on gender analysis, we can determine many things about the way Jerramy Fine views gender roles. It was revealed that Fine, much like other third wave feminists, believes that society needs to accept that many girls and women may actually want to be stereotypically feminine, and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, it should be encouraged if that is what women want. Second wave feminists helped to redefine gender roles in the late twentieth century to make men and women more equal by taking the femininity out of women. Fine's book proposes a different perspective, to

⁵⁰ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 189.

go back to recognizing and accepting that the two genders are different. But Fine suggests a new twist. We not only need to accept these two genders for their differences, but we need to embrace both of their qualities and stop making the male characteristics and traits be the default, more desirable traits.

By embracing both masculine and feminine traits, we would see a huge change in how parents raise their children. Whether it be intentional or not, some parents are placing way more restrictions on what girls can play with or do than boys. Perhaps it is now more common in our culture to see “mothers across the country questioning themselves, wondering whether letting their daughters play with the likes of Cinderella and Snow White” is acceptable.⁵¹ These mothers do not want to associate their daughter with toys or anything that may seem feminine in fear of being perceived as weak. But this is actually more damaging than their preconceived fear.

Dr. Amy Tuteur of Harvard Medical School believes that, by rejecting all princesses, we are inadvertently “teaching girls to distrust their own desires, suppress their wishes, and worst of all, that femininity is a source of shame. But by allowing princess play? We can teach the opposite: That girls’ feelings matter. That their dreams have value. That being born female is a blessing, not a curse.”

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Instead of rejecting all princesses, parents need to use them to their advantage. They should teach their little girls all of the strong and good qualities of princesses; and then, when they are misbehaving, tell them that a princess would never do that.⁵³

⁵¹ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 27.

⁵² Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 61.

⁵³ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 63.

If the princess dream was encouraged when girls are young the effects could continue throughout their lives. From a young age, girls would know and understand that they are powerful, kind and strong. They will be more likely to speak up for themselves and simply be themselves. They will expect the best, because as Fine explains, “they are born understanding that they are worthy of nothing but the best and see no reason why they shouldn’t aim for the stars. It’s only when adults start telling them that princes only exist in fairy tales that they begin to accept that maybe they should settle for less than exceptional.”⁵⁴ With having support from their parents and society, these girls would see no reason to do otherwise. When these girls grow up, they will be expecting to find their prince someday. And if society embraces the fairytale dream, these now women will not settle until they have found their perfect man. Numerous unhealthy relationships will have been prevented. As this will force men to step up their game as these women will be expecting chivalry and proper treatment as a standard.⁵⁵

If society were to embrace feminine traits, we would also see improvements in the business world. Within her book, Fine includes a short quotation from Robert Johnson, the president of the Institute of New Economic Thinking. Johnson was asked during a conference to name one change he would make to improve the financial system and he answered, “only allow women to regulate finance”⁵⁶ because “research shows men choose risk even when logic dictates against it, while women choose

⁵⁴ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 182.

⁵⁵ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 182.

⁵⁶ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 209.

security even when the risks are low.”⁵⁷ Fine also provides examples of exactly how women can positively impact businesses by simply being present.

Credit Suisse examined almost 2,400 global corporations and found that companies with at least one woman on their board outperformed comparable companies with all male boards by 26 percent. Another study found that boards with high female representation experience a 53 percent higher return on equity, a 66 percent higher return on invested capital, and a 42 percent higher return on sales. And having just one female director on the board cuts the risk of bankruptcy by 20 percent.⁵⁸

If our society drastically changed to undergo the type redefinition of gender roles that Fine explains, we would see all women and men embracing their feminine qualities. The world would become much more kind, empathetic and responsive. Men and women would not be seen as identical, but they would be valued equally.

⁵⁷ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 209.

⁵⁸ Fine, *In Defense of the Princess*, 212.

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