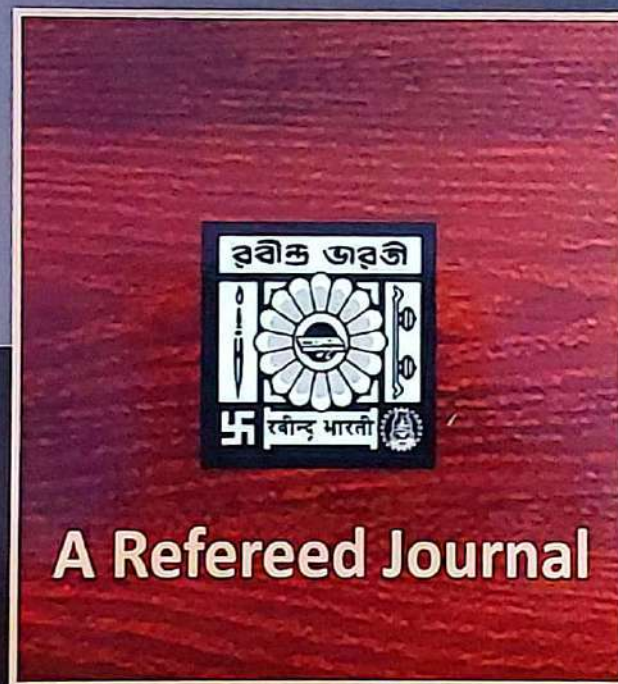


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Abstract

The dominant discourses often manifest in asymmetrical power relations between individuals in which one individual is dominated or oppressed by the other. Enid Blyton (1897-1968) was a successful woman writer in a society which carried the weight of the Victorian imperial ideology, and where, the prevailing body of beliefs promoted patriarchal heteronormative discourses. In England in the early twentieth century these systems of thought advocated that women should be passive creatures and that they should focus on domestic roles and activities such as raising children and managing the household unlike men who are active in the public sphere. Enid Blyton, appears to both endorse and reinforce the dominant discourses of the time. Her horizons of expectation, and thus her ways of thinking about gender roles in society, were shaped by the dominant values and interests of the society. Thereby portrayal of gender roles in the writings of Blyton encodes the prevailing gender ideology of the Western society.

Key Words: Patriarchal hegemony, dominant discourse, stereotypes, hegemonic man, heteronormative ideology etc.

In the first half of the twentieth century, social changes led to an increase in literacy and education among women. The century also brought greater awareness of women's social issues which contributed to the establishment of the Women's Social and Political Union on October 3rd 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst. The members of this union were later known as suffragettes. Women in Britain achieved voting equality on July 2nd 1928. During the First World War, women were called on to work and take on jobs outside the home in opposition to the dominant discourse that dictated against this, and in opposition to the notion that a woman earning an income and gaining financial independence and security was an overturning of the natural order of things (Klein 95-6). However, in spite of greater gender awareness and social changes in the first half of the twentieth century, a number of strict conservative discourses, about appropriate gender behavior and which encouraged subordinate female behavior continued to dominate the society in the years after the war.

Klein describes the period after the First World War in Britain as "a time of antifeminism" (97). Public opinion was hostile to women workers who were keeping men's jobs instead of keeping house. "They were seen as leeches and bloodsuckers for wanting decent wages and not being willing to go back to domestic work" (97). Thus the governing patriarchal ideology of the period encouraged women to conform to the traditional family roles of wife and mother, to find happiness in marriage and to bear children (Miles 102). Many of the popular and prominent writers of children's fiction of the time have assimilated these values and these values have shaped their horizons of expectation. The books published during this period provided a platform for the promotion of patriarchal hegemony and reinforced "definite male and female roles" (Norton 63).

Enid Blyton (1897-1968), who was popular among both boys and girls as her "adventure and family stories are about groups of children of both sexes," explores the social conventions and morals and normalizing concepts of home and heterosexual families and thereby upholds the status quo. (Druce 256).