

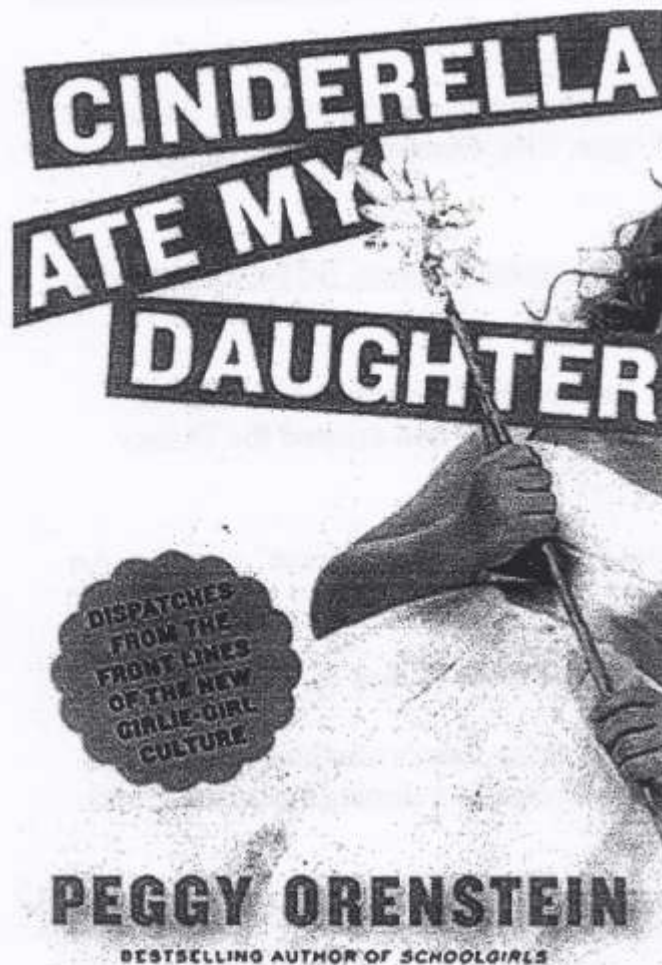
# New Book 'Cinderella Ate My Daughter' Looks at Effect of Girly-Girl Culture

by Tom Henderson ([Subscribe to Tom Henderson's posts](#))

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Peggy Orenstein's new book deals with the Disney Princess phenomenon. Credit: [Amazon](#)

Some day your prince will come.

Not content with being a prince, however, he wants to go back to school and become a dentist. The royal family disowns him because, really, a dentist?

That's OK. You love him. You work two jobs to put him through dentistry school. The week after he graduates, he dumps you for the Little Mermaid.

Welcome<sup>to</sup> the *real* world of the Disney princesses.

This is not the fairy tale world little girls imagine from all the dolls, clothes and other merchandise they're shown from an early age, where beasts are transformed into princes. Sorry, girls. It doesn't work that way. The beasts usually remain beasts.

Author Peggy Orenstein wants girls to realize they don't have<sup>to</sup> rely on heroes. They can be their own heroes, thank you very much. However, Orenstein worries about all the cultural messages girls are getting -- especially from the marketing mad men behind such things as Disney Princess merchandise.

She ponders this in her new book "Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture," debuting this week.

A contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine, Orenstein also has written for such publications as the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, Vogue, Elle, Discover, More, Mother Jones, Salon, O: The Oprah Magazine and The New Yorker.

She is also the author of the best-selling book "Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap."

As a mother, Orenstein says she became both intrigued and appalled by how marketeers at Disney collected all the princesses from their various animated films and created the Disney Princess line to attract pre-teen girls.

Orenstein recently spoke with ParentDish about her book and the whole "princess" concept. An edited version of the interview follows.

**ParentDish: When did you first become aware of Disney princesses and the influence they have on girls?**

**Peggy Orenstein:** I didn't want her (her daughter, Daisy) thinking there's anything we can't do because she is a girl. Then she came home from preschool, almost by osmosis, knowing all the names of the Disney princesses.

I didn't remember this from when I was a kid. I played princess as a kid, but not to this extent.

**PD: What's the difference between now and when you were a child?**

**PO:** The difference is having five channels like we did when I was a kid -- because I am that old -- to having all the channels we have now. It's overwhelming. The Disney princesses themselves is a \$5 billion industry. The difference is that children are now marketed to from the womb.

Five or 10 years ago, we would be talking about girls being sexualized too early, whether they are becoming too sexy too soon. Now it's the full range. Girls go from "who's the fairest in the land" to "who's the hottest in the land."

**PD: What about boys? Don't all the action figures and superheroes have the reverse effect**

**on them, encouraging a sort of hyper and unrealistic masculinity?**

**PO:** Boys absolutely have their own issues with all of this. I really hope someone will write a book about how all this affects boys. However, I chose to focus on girls.

**PD: How can an alert parent counteract the cultural influences of things like Disney princesses?**

**PO:** Parenting is always present tense. I wanted to give parents a toddler to tween arch, but these issues are ongoing. You're not going to be able to avoid these images. They're everywhere. You can't walk into a store without being bombarded by them.

And you can't constantly say "no" to your daughter.

That's one of the reasons I called my book "Cinderella Ate My Daughter," which is obviously very overblown and over-the-top. I believe in fighting fun with fun.

**PD: When do all these cultural messages really begin to sink in with girls?**

**PO:** It really starts to sink in when they are around 2 1/2, 3 years old. That's when they started realizing there is this thing called "girl" and this thing called "boy" and they want to be a girl. They start thinking about what makes a girl a girl and what makes a boy a boy.

*This brief interview of Peggy Orenstein on her famous book "Cinderella Ate My Daughter," has been down loaded for information of parents.*

*R.I.T.*