

Enchanted Reflections:
Transforming Through *Beauty and the Beast's* Looking Glass

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the reflective relationships that inspire transformation in the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast*. Critics tend to reify the fairy tale, its characters, and its evolution, maintaining that the fairy tale is formulaic and its characters archetypal. These arguments suggest that the fairy tale only imitates what has come before and deny the fairy tale the possibility of dynamic meaning.

I argue instead that *Beauty and the Beast* is a magic mirror that reflects its reader's psyche, resulting both in the tale's changing meaning and a transformed reader. The reflective relationship between Beauty and Beast, which enables physical transformation and emotional growth, emblemizes this reader-tale bond. My analysis of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, the French tales of Mmes de Beaumont and de Villeneuve, the Brothers Grimm folklore, and Disney's animated film describes how and why these variants change. New variants are products of the past tales, contemporary problems, and the reader's perception. The reflective relationship between Beauty and Beast extends to the symbiotic exchange between the reader and the tale, the author and his creation, and the society and its critique. By understanding these relationships, we embrace this tale's meaning as dynamic instead of dated.

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Once Upon A Time...

Before the Disney Corporation's monopoly on fairy tales, the public did not associate fairy tales with animated images of dancing cutlery and, instead, appreciated earlier versions that featured gruesome deaths and now politically incorrect stereotypes. While contemporary society, indoctrinated by the Disney versions, categorizes the fairy tale as Children's Literature, these tales, Disney's version included, treat adult issues, including justice, religion, and human relationships. Editor of the *Annotated Brothers Grimm*, Maria Tatar cites Ernst Bloch's description of a fairy tale as a "more colorful or easier somewhere else" (ix). A.S. Byatt, in this same collection, defines the fairy tale as "an abstract world, full of discrete interchangeable people, objects, and incidents, all of which are isolated and are nevertheless interconnected, in a kind of web or network of two-dimensional meaning" (xix). If 'fairy tale land' is a more colorful version of our reality, can it also be "two-dimensional" and populated with "interchangeable" people? Byatt and Tatar offer conflicting definitions: one that understands fairyland as a happier version of our reality and one that sees it as a formulaic network with flat meaning.

With such conflicting notions of 'fairy tale land's' function in relation to our world, can we reduce it to a child's space? Elizabeth Cook argues that the fairy tale fluctuates "between the fully-grown poetic imagination and the imagination of children" (41). At the same time, Jacques Barchilon notes that fairy tales are a "symbolic expression of man's wisdom— and madness—in the form of 'childish' entertainment" (19). Are fairy tales intended for children or are they devices through which adults explore philosophical concepts? Cook maintains that this genre is intended for both adults and children while Barchilon's use of quotations around "childish" indicates his irony, implying that fairy tales are not so childish. The rise of intellectual dialogue concerning the fairy tale genre validates the assertions of Cook and Barchilon; the fairy tale is a

space where psychological and philosophical debates can take place. This space may be stylistically available to children, but adults can access this wealth of thought to learn more about the societies in which they live, the beliefs that they maintain, and how those beliefs are inculcated in the next generation. This thesis reclaims the fairy tale from Children's Literature, exploring how the process of reading and creating a fairy tale is complex and multifaceted.

Certain critics, such as Byatt, access the adult levels of fairy tale by focusing on the conventions that recur in different tales and in different variations of the same tale. As we will see, a number of fairy tale plots, characters, and endings seem formulaic. Ironically, in the *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, the fairy tale-related section is entitled "Archetypes." This section explains the phenomenon of archetypes with the example of Eve, who "lies behind every woman" and consequently, every woman is a "*femme fatale*" (Brunel 110). Pierre Brunel is correct to link fairy tales with archetypes since fairy tales are riddled with them. The example of Eve shows how many female characters in fairy tales are beautiful and seemingly perfect, yet they contain a flaw. An error caused by the flaw serves as a catalyst for the plot. Just as Eve plucked an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, Sleeping Beauty's curiosity for knowledge and maturity leads her to prick her thumb on a spindle, despite previous, pointed warnings. The repetition of certain archetypes indicates that many fairy tale characters play the same role in multiple tales. Often, types such as the Hero, the Witch, the Fairy, or the Prince repeatedly appear in different fairy tales with little noticeable difference. For example, *Beauty and the Beast*'s main characters rarely receive proper names. Instead, each character's epithet serves as a description of his/her most important character trait. Beauty, Beast, the Merchant, and the Fairy are only a few examples. The portrayal of the Fairy or the Merchant in individual

versions, however, reveals characters that are often more fleshed out than simply types; yet critics remain fixated on repeating symbols.

The tale of *Beauty and the Beast*, my focus, has not escaped the human need to categorize. In 1910, Antti Aarne developed a classification system for a wide range of folktales by deciding which motifs were the most important and sorting tales based on the appearance of those motifs. Later, Stith Thompson translated this categorization system and added the AT-Number System. This system places each folktale into a numbered and lettered category and sub-category. The Aarne-Thompson classification system labels *Beauty and the Beast* as Type 425C: the Search for a Lost Husband. This tale type falls under the larger umbrella of the general Type 425, or Animal Bridegroom. Aarne and Thompson, by placing *Beauty and the Beast* into a category, reduce it to a structural formula. In this formula, the woman marries an animal and commits an error because of a flaw—often breaking the look taboo—as a result of which the bridegroom disappears. The woman must go through a trial in order for him to return (Aarne-Thompson 376). Type 425C contains many tales beyond the familiar *Beauty and the Beast*. Thousands of variants exist, ranging from the roots of the story in the myth of *Cupid and Psyche*, to an Italian version *The Pig King* to the Norwegian story *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. Despite the many fundamental differences among these tales, Aarne and Thompson claim that they belong in the same structural category.

Categorization contravenes against the elusive nature of a fairy tale. While critics, as we have just seen, attempt to place fairy tale motifs into specific definable categories, the very nature of fairy tales resists classification. Though variants seem riddled with archetypes and formulas, certain objects weaken this structure by refusing to function in a constant, definable way. One such element is the mirror. Outside of ‘fairy tale land,’ a mirror is a passive object that

presents the viewer with a relatively exact physical image of his/herself. In comparison, the fairy tale mirror does not passively imitate because within the fairy tale space, a mirror has magical properties. It has the capacity to be a crystal ball, showing the onlooker something that is happening somewhere else, or to be a revelatory mirror, illuminating the onlooker's psyche. The magic mirror's function is evasive because one can never predict a magic mirror's reflection. In his book *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim argues that each fairy tale is itself a "magic mirror" that reveals psychological processes and aspects of the soul (309). His claim leads to two conclusions. First, the fairy tale has reflective properties. It can reflect the reader, the author, other stories, and the contemporary society. Secondly, the fairy tale is a device that evades definition. The magic mirror rejects passivity and reflects in a way wholly opposed to the imitation of a standard mirror. Fairy tales contain a rich synthesis of history, philosophy, and the wisdom and madness of man. If one appreciates the process of writing these tales, and the transformation of a tale through time, how can one simply place fairy tales into neat, little categories and live happily ever after?

My dissatisfaction with staid compartmentalization led me to the theories of Gilles Deleuze, who believes language to be filled with movement and transformation rather than dogmatic categories. Deleuze, in his work *A Thousand Plateaus: Schizophrenia and Capitalism*, states that all humans are in a state of becoming, which is basically a process of constant transformation. Instead of rigid limitations and stagnant identities, he posits an existence of constant change and the transgression of boundaries (238). Essentially, he argues that the process of dynamic change is more important than static solutions to identities and categories. The moment that one can define oneself, that definition becomes stagnant and must change. The problem, in which constant change occurs, is a much richer process than a solution that is only

reached for moment before it stagnates. Relating this theory to fairy tales, I think that critics should look beyond the categories and archetypes that they see in fairy tales and appreciate the process of creation taking place. As I concentrate on the transformative properties of the fairy tale's magic mirror, I do not perform a strictly Deleuzian reading. Instead, to better articulate my own ideas, I use his concepts. Fairy tales continue to change and transform even after they are written. The transforming perspective of the reader makes old fairy tales new with each reading.

By treating the fairy tale as Bettelheim's magic mirror, I must consider how and what *Beauty and the Beast* reflects. The 'fairy tale as magic mirror,' at the center of the opposition between dynamic change and static identity, introduces the theme of reflection. Many critics, who I discuss in a moment, perceive fairy tales as establishing mimetic relationships through mirroring. According to Deleuze, mimesis is "[i]mitation with nothing left to imitate because it itself is the model everything else imitates" (235). Imitation does not enable change or transformation, but acting as a simulacrum, hides the absence of an authentic reality. For example, the Aarne-Thompson categories operate with this form of reflection in mind. They assume that tales may have changed slightly but they all stem from the same formula, so they place them in categories, implying that no story is worth studying in its own right, but only in relation to that which it imitates.

In comparison, the magic mirror within fairy tales refuses to play the role of imitator. Why then, would the 'fairy tale as magic mirror' reflect our world mimetically? Instead, the magic mirror reflects with the purpose to change. Just as the reflective relationships within the fairy tale change the character, the fairy tale and the reader have a reflective relationship. This connection changes the reader, whose perception changes the tale. As a result of this

transformational reflection, I contend that the ‘fairy tale as magic mirror’ reflects in a way that enables transformation and resistance to categories.

This type of reflection is certainly not the imitation of which Deleuze is wary. Instead, Sabine Melchoir-Bonnet, who examines the changing significance of the mirror through time, explains that during the Renaissance, the mirror “reveals the relativity of perspectives and thus restores a complexity and mobility to mind play, a mirror-prism in which concepts and images fit into one another, and graft meanings on top of each other in a network of metaphors and references” (129). Reflection is a dynamic process that reveals new life and movement in classic concept through “mobility” and “grafting.” *Beauty and the Beast*’s process of transformation resembles the ideals of the Renaissance, a time known for the revival of traditional models. As I continue, I focus on this form of reflection since the ‘fairy tale as magic mirror’ has long been categorized, but its transformational processes have rarely been acknowledged.

Many critics’ arguments focus on the structuralized categories and mimetic function of fairy tales because they center on archetypes rather than change. Bettelheim, despite his understanding of the ‘fairy tale as magic mirror,’ reduces the Beast’s meaning to a child’s fear of sexuality, labeling Beauty as the superego and Beast as the id, reducing their relationship to a self-Other binary (279). Bettelheim supports that *Beauty and the Beast* plays out psychological processes. While one should not ignore this function, one should also not reduce Beast to a symbol of instinctual drives. By labeling him, Bettelheim ignores Beast’s humanity. Similarly, Betsy Hearne studies the change of *Beauty and the Beast* through time, neglecting the dynamic elements of form, flow and style in favor of static, fixed constructs (1). In her desire to derive a powerful, lasting story, Hearne subscribes to the Aarne-Thompson types and believes that the tale’s repeating symbols have more metaphoric weight than the dynamic elements that change

with each variant. This assumption places the tale in a formulaic category in which each version merely imitates its predecessors. Meanwhile, Jack Zipes claims that the Disney version's entertainment value denies the tale a critical or utopian function and usurps the audience of its imagination ("American" 141). He believes that Disney creates what the public wants to see for monetary, rather than ideological reward. He does not see the Disney film as critiquing society, but as mimetically imitating it. Despite presenting us with credible arguments, these critics do not recognize that transformational reflection occurs within the tale, among the variants of the tale, and between the tale and society.

By placing *Beauty and the Beast* into rigid categories, these critics are unable to embrace its process of creation because they are focused on the static "solutions" of archetypes and formulas. They forget the joy of magic and instead focus on the adult need to categorize and define. The transformational reflective relationship between Beauty and Beast extends to the fluid exchange of meaning between the reader and his text, the author and his creation, and the society and its critique. This mirror transforms the reader/author/society from a passive receptor into a critical interpreter and creates a dynamic 'reality.'

My research has covered many variants of the *Beauty and the Beast*. This tale pervades myth, legend, folktale, salon and Victorian literature, poetry, picture books, novellas, novels, short stories, TV shows, films, animated movies, and science fiction fantasies. The list does not stop here, but serves to explain the many forms of this tale type. While the Aarne-Thompson model does not do the tales justice by categorizing them so restrictively, it serves my need to study the process of change occurring within and among variants of the same tale type. I admit that the tales grouped into tale type 425C have similarities. Unlike other critics, however, I do

not wish to focus on those similarities but on the transformational reflection that pervades mimetic variants.

While all of the variants deserve study, five particular variants will be the focus of my examination. These milestones help me understand the process of the story's transformation and the implications of that process. These milestones are *Cupid and Psyche* by Lucius Apuleius, *The Story of Beauty and the Beast* by Madame de Villeneuve, *Beauty and the Beast* by Madame de Beaumont, *The Singing, Springing Lark* by the Brothers Grimm, and the Disney Corporation's animated film *Beauty and the Beast*.

Obviously, to understand the tale itself, one must examine its roots. Apuleius's *Cupid and Psyche*, a myth recorded in the second century, is the first identifiable root to the tale. In this myth, Venus becomes enraged when Psyche's beauty draws away Venus's admirers. Venus sends her son, Cupid, to prick Psyche with an arrow of misfortune, but Cupid falls in love with Psyche instead. To escape his mother's wrath, Cupid hides Psyche away and tells her that she cannot look upon him, instilling the look-taboo. However, Psyche's curiosity leads her to break the look-taboo. Cupid, betrayed, flees and Psyche must pass a set of tests that Venus administers before she can regain her loving husband.

The French novella, written by Madame de Villeneuve in 1740, is perhaps the most detailed variant, painstakingly recounting the lineage of Beauty, Beast, and the fairy. This tale is not incredibly well-known because only seventeen years later, Madame de Beaumont wrote a shorter, more concise version more clearly aimed at children. Many aspects of the story remain the same, since Beaumont used the plot and characters from Villeneuve's novella. In both versions Beauty is a humble girl who asks for a rose when her father departs on a journey. Her father tries to pluck a rose from Beast's enchanted garden, only to find an enraged Beast

demanding one of his daughters in place of the rose. Beauty goes, and eventually makes friends with the Beast. The climax arises when Beauty returns to and stays at her father's house longer than she should have, returning to the castle to save and marry the Beast.

While these stories contain those similarities, Villeneuve's version contains a wealth of information pertaining to the motivations behind various actions and fleshes out the characters of Beauty and Beast, instead of settling on conventions. It is not as popular as Beaumont's variant, however, because Villeneuve's is quite complicated. She explores the lineage of the fairies involved, as well as Beauty and Beast. These familial relationships become interconnected and the story can become quite confusing. I have attached a family tree and a character list at the end of Chapter 1 to aid the reader's comprehension of Villeneuve's variant.

The Grimm Brothers' "Singing Springing Lark," published in the early nineteenth century in Germany, harkens back to the folktale tradition. A young girl (never named) asks her father for a lark. When the father tries to capture a lark for her, a lion demands his daughter and the daughter willingly goes. They have a happy marriage, under the condition that no daylight hits him. One day, light comes through a crack and the lion changes to a dove. The girl must go through a series of tasks to restore him to human form.

The last, most recent, and most widely-known version of *Beauty and the Beast* is the Disney film. Accompanied by song and dance, Beauty escapes an engagement with Gaston, her undesirable male suitor, to save her father. The Beast locks her in his castle as her father's substitute and eventually woos her, disenchanting himself and all of his servants from their magical states. This animated version connects most closely with the French version, yet it also rejects many of the basic features of the story which I will focus on in Chapter 2.

These major variants allow me to appreciate the similarities and analyze the transformation. In Chapter One, I closely analyze Villeneuve's detailed variant to prove that Beauty and Beast's reflective relationship allows them to create a union whose stability relies on transience and movement, and denying self-Other categories. Their relationship reflects that of the reader with his text, symbiotically exchanging meaning and inspiring transformation. This chapter closely examines and dialogues with the arguments of Bettelheim and Marina Warner.

Chapter Two focuses on the process of change occurring among these major variants. This chapter critiques Hearne's focus on fixed symbols, rejecting dynamic elements. Instead, the process of creating a story focuses much more on the author's reflection and transformation of past stories, saying something new, than a mere repetition of meaning. This scrutiny concludes that the transformational reflection present among the variants creates variants with meaning that the reader's changing perception constantly informs.

Finally, Chapter Three focuses on how the relationship between the reader, author, and text change with Disney's animated motion picture. The "fairy tale as magic mirror" and as a film seems to, according to Zipes, threatens the viewer's imagination, obscures the voices of earlier literary variants, and promotes complacency instead of criticism. A study of the film's self-reflexion reveals that the film's medium thrusts a mirror onto the audience, threatening its imagination, in order to critique the audience's passive reception of 'reality.' The film, instead of championing complacency, urges the viewer to critically question his mirror's message.

Why must we place fairy tales into static categories? Why can we not accept the tales themselves as just as magical as their settings? Should an adult no longer delight in the fairy tale romance and 'happily ever after'? As children, we are encouraged to create, explore, and dream. As adults, we learn to focus on the final product. More often than not, we place more

importance on the grade that we got rather than what we learned in the process. Instead of concentrating on that final product, I suggest we always escape staid categories and appreciate the fairy tale's magic, both in the 'real world' and in 'fairy tale land.'

1

The Beast within Beauty: A Magic Mirror of Transformation

A fairy tale's lesson does not merely reside within the pages of the story, only to disappear once the book is closed. My introduction explores Bettelheim's thought that the fairy tale is a "magic mirror," concluding that a magic mirror, and consequently the fairy tale, does not merely imitate, but transforms. This magic mirror can reflect anything, from psychological processes, to other literary works, to the surrounding society. Bettelheim claims that the fairy tale reflects psychological processes in such a way that "we soon discover the inner turmoils of our soul" (309). His comparison of a fairy tale to a magic mirror that reflects inner struggles specifies that the fairy tale is a space of change. This space provides the reader with a medium onto which she can project personal conflicts in order to look at them objectively, and then learn from them. Thus, the fairy tale is a reflective genre that creates mirrors the reader. Lewis Seifert argues that "[t]he marvelous creates an alternate plane onto which the real can be transposed and re-imagined" which "foregrounds the body as a site of desires and fears" (131, 141). A "marvelous" story transposes the concept of reflection, which is one's thought process regarding personal struggles, onto physical bodies, re-imagining an internal conflict through external methods. The magical or "marvelous" properties of the 'fairy tale as magic mirror' create a space that externalizes the interior processes of maturity and self-realization onto the bodies of the characters. While a fairy tale reflects more than psychological processes, this chapter focuses primarily on the transformation of psychological processes onto the bodies of the characters.

While the fairy tale's marvelous function transposes identity confusion onto the physical body, the meshing of the physical and the psychological can be problematic. How does identity form and does it change through physical or emotional transformation? These questions lead to extreme identity confusion in the process of self-perception and self-realization. As we have

seen in the introduction, Tale Type 425C (*Beauty and the Beast*) explores this confusion between one's physical body and one's interior spirit as identity. The tale's happy ending indicates self-realization. To relate this question to the specific tale type: does the heroine's trial to save her animal-husband result in a happy ending or is the happy end the result of the physical transformation of the animal-husband into a human?

This chapter explores the tale's reflective properties and this identity question in Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve's 1740 French novella, which contains the most accurate and detailed account of the characters of Beauty and Beast, their lineages, and the conditions of their transformations. Since this account includes these details, the reader can examine how the "marvelous" functions in the reflection and identity leading up to Beast's transformation and subsequent union with Beauty. For clarification of the characters and their relationships, please refer to the family tree at the end of this chapter.

THE CATEGORIZATION OF BEAUTY AND BEAST AS A SELF-OTHER PAIRING

Many theorists treat *Beauty and the Beast* as an example of the Self-Other binary, in which they categorize Beauty as Self and Beast as Other. Tale Type 425C's catalyst is the promise of the "daughter to animal" (Aarne-Thompson 376). While the characters have other qualities, this model only recognizes their stark difference, supporting the premise of daughter-as-Self and the animal-as-Other. This tale concludes with the seeming-beautification of the Beast, revealing an assimilation of Other to Self. Critics have studied this binary within the context of the tale, attempting to explain what the Beast, as Other, actually represents and how his final transformation resolves this polarity. Marina Warner postulates that the Beast is "the

chief site of a hostile and repressed Other” onto which the young girl displaces her fear of the unfamiliar (279). Warner’s Beast is a representation of an immature girl’s fear of maturing. Similarly, Bruno Bettelheim’s Beast represents a child’s fear of sexuality (308). Like Warner, Bettelheim reduces the Beast to a projected fear within Beauty that she must overcome. As a representation of sexuality, Beast remains terrifying until the protagonist reaches a certain maturity level. Bettelheim concludes that “[t]he marriage of Beauty and the Beast is the humanization and socialization of the id by the superego” (309). Bettelheim assumes that Beauty is the superego, which, by Freud’s definition, internalizes of parental interdictions and is the moralizing area of the psyche. In comparison, the Beast as the id functions on completely instinctual needs and drives. Therefore, Bettelheim labels Beauty as Self, pre-sexual, and superego while Beast is the Other, a representation of sexuality, and the id.

By constraining Beauty and Beast in these rigid categories, these critics reduce the tale to static plot structures and characters. In their version of the tale, Self and Other meet. Then, conflict occurs between Self and Other. Finally, Other becomes like Self. Is the tale that rigid? The “fairy tale as magic mirror” does not support these claims. If Beauty and Beast are only rigid symbols, they should not possess any detail that exceeds the prescribed categories. However, they do. Although her name implies that she is completely pure, innocent, and righteous, like a superego, Beauty has flaws. The presence of flaws destabilizes her identity as superego.

Although Bettelheim sees Beauty as the superego who echoes parental interdictions, she vainly disobeys her mentors by refusing to marry Beast. Once Beauty is living with Beast, she fails to submit to the Good Fairy’s orders that Beauty not “judge with [her] eyes and above all, don’t abandon [Beast],” nor does she acquiesce to the Merchant’s desires that she marry Beast (Villeneuve 170). While Beauty appreciates the pleasures that Beast surrounds her with, she

cannot love him because of the evidence of her eyes, which regard his ugliness and clumsiness with disdain. Beauty's dislike of Beast is "in vain" (173). Beauty reveals her vanity when she refuses to look beyond Beast's ugliness and love him for his good qualities. Thus, she is not Bettelheim's superego, nor is she a perfect heroine. Moreover, this vanity destabilizes Beauty's sense of identity because her identity as a character does not connect with the abstract concept that her name suggests. When Beauty looks into the mirror, instead of perceiving herself, she sees the "most distinguished and beautiful of both sexes" (179). Vainly, Beauty does not recognize any flaws in her character. Therefore, she cannot see her real reflection, focusing instead on what is "beautiful." This flaw reveals the struggle between imperfect subjectivity and perfect abstraction taking place within Beauty that threatens her sense of meaning.

Just as Bettelheim mistakenly views Beauty as a flawless superego, Warner's vision of Beast as a "repressed Other" overlooks his gentleness. After Beauty overcomes her initial fear of Beast, she "discover[s] that the terrible timbre of his voice [is] due only to the nature of the organ, and that the Beast tend[s] to be more stupid than ferocious" (172). Beast's "organ," or his physical makeup, rather than his actual intent, creates that fearful voice. He is not "ferocious," but "stupid." This stupidity indicates that the Beast has difficulty communicating. The "terrible timbre" does not match his seeming "stupidity" and this calls Beast's character into question. If he expresses himself in a "terrible timbre" that indicates ferocity, yet he is not violent at all, how can Beauty, or the reader, understand Beast's buried spirit? Beast is a character who has lost his fluency with language. Instead of being the Other that rages against Beauty, confronting her with her worst fears, Beast has challenges of his own due to his inability to communicate.

Therefore, instead of reducing Beauty and Beast to the categories Self and Other, I argue they are part of a reflective relationship. In Deleuzian terms, I prefer to focus on the process of

becoming instead of the static identities. Neither character is complete since Beauty lacks grounded meaning and Beast lacks expression. Their relationship is a process of transformational reflection and constant change that leads to a dynamic union.

ANOTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS: REFLECTIONS THROUGH LANGUAGE

How exactly can the reader identify the reflection and transformation taking place in the story? While the Beast's physical transformation is obvious, the process that led to that transformation is not. For the purposes of my argument, I break down Beauty and Beast to literature's most basic component: language. Because their relationship takes place within the space of a fairy tale where the "marvelous" can project interior struggles onto the body, their union can physically represent abstract concepts. Instead of embodying the psychological struggle between Self and Other, Beauty and Beast function as elements of language. Ferdinand de Saussure claims that language "is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological" (961). Language, a psychological process, consists of sound-images, or signifiers, and meanings, or signifieds. Interestingly, as I identified earlier, Beauty has expression, but not a grounded meaning, while Beast has meaning, but no way to express it. Therefore, Beauty is the signifier while Beast is the signified, in the space of their "marvelous" relationship. The union of Beauty and Beast, as signifier and signified, creates a linguistic sign.

These observations are enhanced by Lacan's mirror-stage theory which relates components of language to psychological reflection and identity. He claims that when a child who does not yet have a strong sense of identity looks into the mirror, "[t]his form [of reflection]

situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone...whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality” (Lacan 1286).

Basically, Lacan states that reflection is essential to identity construction. A child who looks in the mirror projects importance and meaning on his reflection, while seeing his own body as the expression of that meaning. This is an imperfect process because the child sees what he wants to see in that reflection, instead of perceiving it clearly. The child creates meaning, fictional or not, out of his reflection instead of passively observing it. This potential distortion could lead to a Self-Other binary, since the meaning that the child creates for himself can be exactly the opposite of a more clear-sighted perception. Therefore, Lacan claims that that the child takes the role of a signifier while he creates meaning in his reflection, the signified. As I continue my exploration of the Beauty and Beast’s relationship, I will treat Beauty as Lacan’s child lacking identity who looks into the mirror and the Beast as her reflection. The theoretical language that I have used here is not as important as the concepts that link Beauty and Beast through language to this mirror stage. In comparison to the Self and Other labels that placed Beauty and Beast into categories, the signified and signifier of language are in states of constant change in relation to each other and to other signs. While I relate Beauty and Beast’s relationship to the psychological process of language, I am not reducing them, but rather exploring how reflection and transformation drive their relationship and actually stabilize it.

BEAUTY’S ATTEMPTS TO FIND MEANING THROUGH REFLECTION

As the reader recalls, Beauty struggles between the abstract concept of beauty of her name and an imperfect, albeit truthful, identity. Because she lacks this grounded identity, she, like the child in Lacan's mirror stage, continually looks in the mirror to define herself. In Villeneuve's version, Beauty often takes time for "reflections" as she thinks about her situation (169). In this context, a reflection is an internal or psychological thought process. While this thought process differs in definition from physically reflecting in a mirror, the "marvelous" space of a fairy tale externalizes one's psychology. As Beauty "reflect[s]," she is not only thinking, but also looking at a reflection of herself in her mind's mirror.

She may not like what she sees. When Beauty looks in the physical mirror, she is only able to see people who are "beautiful" because she cannot accept a flawed reflection. As a result, throughout the story, Beauty tries to find her reflection in people she admires, but denies that Beast is her true reflection. Beauty's perception leads her in a "fictional direction" as she seeks out her desired reflection, rather than identifying with an accurate portrayal of her personality or character. She first looks to her father as a reflection since she is strongly attached to him. As Bettelheim observes, Beauty will only be able to transfer this attachment to an age-appropriate male when the situation arises in which she can prove her love to her father by giving herself to that male (284). Indeed, Beauty does attempt to find meaning in her father and in her sacrifice for him. Once she hears that the Beast has demanded either the life of her father or of one of his daughters, she claims, "I'll go find the Beast, and I'll only be too happy to die to save the life of the person from whom I received mine" (163). In her father, Beauty sees the person who has given her life, which constitutes an identity. She is "happy" to sacrifice herself to save her father because without him, she believes that she will be empty, vacant, or dead. Therefore, she would rather die to preserve her father, her current reflection, rather than live a

life without meaning. By forming this reflective relationship with her father, Beauty displaces her love, and her meaning, onto her father.

After Beauty begins her life at Beast's castle, she does not transfer her reflection and meaning to Beast, but rather to a character named Unknown, a man who only appears in her dreams. Her first night at the castle, "[s]he lost herself in sad reflections," and just afterwards, she has a dream with "a young man, as handsome as any portrait of Cupid ever made" who claims that "[she] alone can bestow happiness on [him] by being happy [her]self" (169). Beauty's "reflections" again have a dual meaning: she is psychologically thinking as well as seeking to see her reflection. As in Lacan's mirror stage, Beauty is gazing into the mirror of her mind, searching for a reflection that provides her with meaning. The appearance of Unknown right after these reflections points to Beauty's need to find a grounded meaning. Beauty expected to die for her father, which she preferred to his abandoning her. While she has saved her father, she is now living without him and must find a reflection in someone else. According to Beauty, Unknown is an appropriate reflection since she describes him as "young," "handsome," and like "Cupid." I discuss this reference to *Cupid and Psyche* in Chapter Two. As her name suggests, Beauty is a suitable match for someone who looks like Cupid, and he seems to possess all of her good qualities. He also claims that his emotional wellbeing depends upon hers. A reflective relationship does function on cause-and-effect, since Beauty's perception creates the reflection and her prescribed meaning. Her happiness will dictate the happiness of her reflection.

Beauty fixates upon Unknown as her reflection because he is beautiful and because he supports the cause-and-effect process of a reflective relationship. After having met Unknown only once in her dreams, Beauty enters "a large cabinet of mirrors in which she saw herself

reflected on all sides” yet she only sees a “portrait of the handsome cavalier she had seen in her sleep” whose “features were already deeply impressed upon her mind and perhaps in her heart” (170-1). As she sees herself reflected from “all sides,” indicating that both her physical body and psychological struggles are reflecting, she only sees Unknown. Intriguingly, she experiences a split between her mind and her heart when she examines the impression that he has made upon her. Her mind, which is Beauty’s rationality, regards Unknown as a perfect reflection since he seems to be Beauty’s accurate, or at least desired, reflection. However, her heart is only “perhaps” impressed by Unknown, questioning the idea that he is the perfect essence of Beauty. The heart, which is the center of emotion and love, may be drawn to this “Cupid,” but may see that Unknown cannot be the perfect match that Beauty rationally desires. One’s perception of one’s reflection and that actual reflection can remain vastly different. For the time, however, Beauty comforts herself with this man of her dreams.

FALSE REFLECTIONS: IDENTIFYING THE OTHER AS SELF AND THE SELF AS OTHER

Unfortunately, Beauty’s desired reflections cloud her judgment and she continues to reject the Beast as her reflection. The relationship between Beauty’s father and the Beast is the characteristic self-Other binary. Because Beauty identifies with her father as her Self, Beauty also believes that the Beast functions as an Other. Her father first describes him as a “horrible beast” (165). After she decides to sacrifice her life for her father, she ponders, “If I were going to seek this terrible Beast with the hope of being happy...that hope would most likely fail me upon seeing him. But since I’m anticipating a speedy death ... what does it matter whether my destroyer is charming or hideous?” (Ibid.). Before Beauty sees Beast, she labels him as

“terrible” and lethal. Beauty’s preconceived notion of the Beast indicates that she does not see any hope that he will replace her father and she believes that her death, which can represent a vacancy of meaning, will come quickly. She adopts the Self-Other binary because of her notion that her father is her reflection. If her father is her reflection, and the Beast is the Other to her reflection, Beast must be an Other to her as well.

After Beauty enters the castle and meets Unknown, she continues to regard her relationship with the Beast as Self-Other because once she identifies Unknown as Self, she likens her experience with the Beast to what she imagines Unknown’s to be. Beauty “envisioned a perpetual prison as her fate, and her only companion this frightful beast” (169). Once she finds a Self in the Unknown, she has “tender reflections” of him and “she believe[s] she understood the mystery: the Beast kept someone shut up in his palace” (172). Again, Beauty sees her “reflection” as the Unknown, which labels him as her signified. While she believes the palace to be a “prison” after her father leaves her meaningless, she continues with this theme when she wrongfully understands the “mystery:” that Unknown is also a prisoner of the Beast’s. Beauty associates her fate as a prisoner with the Unknown. Unknown’s “myster[ious]” condition is vague and not meant for Beauty to know, yet Beauty easily blames the Beast for Unknown’s condition without sufficient evidence because she feels that she is a prisoner of the Beast. Unknown, as Beauty’s perceived reflection, must also be the Beast’s prisoner. Therefore, like Beauty’s preconceived notion of the Beast as Other, she continues to believe this after meeting Beast because of her identification with Unknown.

However, since Beauty’s belief that the Beast functions as her Other is based upon her recognition of her father and Unknown as Self, this binary dissipates if her father and Unknown prove to be inaccurate, or unrealistic, reflections. While Beauty’s relationship with her father is

trusting and loving, this bond only results in unrealistic expectations and discord within her family. As Bettelheim suggests, a child's love for her father cannot remain healthy and the child must transfer her love to a more age-appropriate and available partner (279). Likewise, Beauty's love for her father cannot provide her with the meaning that she seeks. The Good Fairy in her dreams scolds Beauty when she points out that "[t]he trouble [she is] creating in [her] father's house and the hatred of [her] sisters ought to increase [her] desire to return to the Beast's palace, where everything is arranged to delight" (Villeneuve 187). Beauty's insistence on viewing her father as her reflection only creates strife with other members of her family. Later, Beauty understands that her attachment to her father is not only unhealthy, but also unrealistic. The Good Fairy informs Beauty that her father is a King and that the man she considered her father was not her real father. Beauty receives this news "with respect" while Beast, now transformed into the Prince, is "enraptured" (197). Beauty may be pleased with this news, but it obviously contravenes against her struggle for meaning. She reacts with "respect," indicating her social obligation to be pleased, but she is far from "enraptured." In her father, Beauty found a sense of identity and meaning, only to find out that this man is only "the person who had brought her up" (198). Not only is Beauty's search for meaning in her father unhealthy, but it is also based on her false impressions of her father's identity. Therefore, Beauty is never able to establish a meaningful identity with her "father" as her reflection.

Similarly, Beauty's identification with Unknown as her meaning will also fail because he remains a product of her dreams. Unknown is a confusing character. He is identical to Beast's human form. The Good Fairy creates Unknown to convince Beauty, in her dreams, that he and Beast are the same person. The Good Fairy makes Beast's natural form "speak to [Beauty] in [her] dreams as [he] would have spoken to [her] [him]self" (Villeneuve 208). Unlike Beast,

Unknown is not real because in the space of the real world outside of Beauty's dreams, she can only see Beast. Unknown is not the prince whom the Beast transforms into, but instead, the fairy's perception of the prince placed into Beauty's dream space. Therefore, Beauty's reflective relationship with Unknown cannot succeed because she will, in turn, be unsubstantial and abstract. Beauty "would have purchased [the release of Unknown] at the price of her own freedom and all the pleasures that surrounded her. Once convinced that the charming youth existed only in her imagination, though, she began to regard this palace as a prison that one day would be her tomb" (179). Again, Beauty exhibits her need to find a meaning at the cost of all of her worldly happiness. However, once she understands that Unknown only inhabits her "imagination," she must comprehend that she needs to find a reflection that exists apart from her, yet remains an essence of her Self. She fears that her perception of Unknown as her reflection "was but an idle illusion conceived from the vapors of the brain and destroyed by the light of day" (189). Beauty learns that "the vapors of the brain" could create an image or an "illusion" that is based upon what she would like to see, but not what "the light of day," or concrete reality, actually reveals. Here, Beauty identifies the difference between her perception of her reflection and her actual reflection. While she is able to perceive Unknown, and create in him a desirable reflection and meaning, he cannot be her reflection.

After failing to find meaning in her relationships with her "father" and the Unknown of her dreams, Beauty's only choice for a reflection is the Beast. Although Beauty may desire to perceive her reflection as that of her "father" or of the beautiful Unknown, the reality of her reflection lies in the Beast. Based on the reader's knowledge of the Beast as Other, how can this be? The accuracy of Beauty's vision has an enormous impact on her and the reader's perception of the Beast. Because she began her relationship with him already biased, Beauty is unable to

see in him anything other than the despicable Other who threatened to annihilate her Self. Her first sight of the Beast reveals “[a] frightful noise caused by his enormous bulk, the terrible clank of his scales, and an awful roaring” (166). Later she tells the Beast, “My life is in your hands, and I shall submit myself blindly to the fate that you’ve determined for me” (167). Her description of the Beast as he appears only takes into account the “noise,” the “clank,” and the “roar:” all elements of sound. As Beauty claims just after, she comes to the Beast “blindly,” unwilling to see him as he is, but preferring to regard him simply as the Other who will kill her. She is unable to describe the Beast with her eyes because she is blind, and therefore, she is unable to see her reflection in the Lacanian mirror. As a result, Beauty’s descriptions of the Beast, like her perception of herself, are biased and inaccurate.

Beauty’s bias against the Beast accounts for the grotesque exaggeration of his character, but her vanity creates the Beast’s seeming ugliness and stupidity. The process of reflecting with another is a cause-and-effect, transformational relationship. As we saw earlier, Beauty’s major flaw, which prevents her from being Bettelheim’s superego, is vanity. Meanwhile, the Beast, who exhibits many good qualities, is physically ugly. As a result, Beauty’s psychological vanity is projected onto her true, undesired reflection as ugliness. As Beauty vainly seeks out a beautiful reflection, she denies her flaws and cannot attain a meaningful identity. Beast even exclaims to Beauty, “You’re inhuman. Aren’t you aware that your departure means my death?” (181). Beauty, in her vain refusal to see the Beast as anything but an Other, becomes beastly herself. The Beast, by calling her “inhuman,” forces Beauty to recognize that she is not the completely self-sacrificing heroine that she thinks she is. Vanity is the excessive belief in one’s own abilities or attractiveness to others. Unable to admit to this flaw and her own

beastliness, Beauty has difficulty regarding the Beast with unbiased eyes, and continually retreats to desired, beautiful projections.

VANITY: THE BLESSING OR THE CURSE?

Beauty must learn to see the Beast as her match, however, because they are destined for each other as a result of dual curses that spring from the vanity of the Evil Fairy. Beauty, whose curse occurred first, must “become the bride of a monster in order to make up for the folly of [her fairy mother] who allowed herself to be captivated by the frail, contemptible beauty of a mortal” (215). The Evil Fairy is bitter because she is “decrepit and horribly ugly” and is unable to feel pity towards the beautiful fairy who finds love with a mortal who also has “beauty” (202). The Evil Fairy is terribly ugly, yet her self-love conceals this ugliness from herself; instead, she sees herself as beautiful and the truly beautiful as ugly. Thus, she sees Beauty as a suitable match for a monster and herself, the Evil Fairy, as a suitable match for the King. The King, however, rejects her. As a result of the evil fairy’s vanity, she seeks to destroy not only the fairy-mother, but the child of the union, Beauty.

The Evil Fairy’s vanity strikes a second time when she curses the Prince (pre-transformed Beast) for vainly rejecting her. Just as Beauty’s vanity creates her reflection in a Beast, the Prince’s vanity transforms him into a Beast that is unable to express his intelligence and goodness. Without this aspect of the Prince’s character, he and Beauty would not be subject to the dual curses that destined them to be together. In Villeneuve’s version, the Evil Fairy, who is the Prince’s protector when his mother is at war, vainly transgresses this protector-child relationship and desires marriage. The Evil Fairy has already been rejected by Beauty’s father

and now the Prince rejects her in favor of his mother, claiming, “I have no right to dispose of my hand without my mother’s consent and certainly not during her absence” (200). He is unwilling to speak his true thoughts on the subject, and relies on his mother as his means of expression by announcing that he will act as his mother sees fit. He desires his mother to speak for him, proving that even before his curse and transformation into the Beast, the Prince is powerless to express himself. When his mother decries the absurdity of the match, the fairy reveals her own vanity, saying “You should be congratulating yourself on having a son so charming that his qualities have induced me to choose him over the most powerful genii of all the elements” (202). The Evil Fairy vainly believes that she and the Prince could have a reflective relationship. The Prince refuses this old and ugly Evil Fairy, revealing his vanity. Upon his transformation into Beast, “an object of horror to [him]self and to behold,” he embodies the traits that he had scorned (203). Furthermore, his mother, whom he had used as his means of expression, is silenced because “if [she] tell[s] anyone that this monster is [her] son, he’ll never recover his natural state” (Ibid.). The vanity of the prince, his mother, and the Evil Fairy externalizes itself to create a hideous Beast and destroy the reflective pairing of the Prince and his mother.

These curses manifested because of everyone’s vanity. Only by learning to overcome vanity can the curses be neutralized. Until Beast, without revealing his intelligence, convinces a beautiful maiden to marry him, he must remain “as stupid as [he is] hideous” (Ibid.). Beauty was cursed to unite with a savage monster. These curses, horrible separately, combine to disenchant both victims and create the perfect union of a handsome and intelligent prince and an equally beautiful and enlightened princess. Just as the Evil Fairy unknowingly preordains the union of Beauty and Beast, the Good Fairy “deemed [them] worthy of each other, and [she] felt convinced

that when [they] became acquainted, [their] hearts would do each other justice” (225). The good fairy found these two people to be “worthy” of and equal to each other. Since each was unjustifiably cursed, their pairing leads to the curses’ end. Therefore, these two cursed entities, whose curses sprung from purely ugly intent, form a union of spiritual beauty.

BEAUTY AND BEAST’S RECOGNITION OF THEIR REFLECTIVE RELATIONSHIP

At this point, recall the relationship between a signifier and a signified. Both elements of expression and meaning, they must unite to form a linguistic sign. In relation to Lacan’s mirror-stage, the child-as-signifier must accurately perceive and fully accept its reflection-as-signified in order to establish a meaningful identity. Beauty, as the signifier searching for her reflection, and Beast, the signified lacking expression, must accept each other and unite to create the sign of aesthetic beauty. In order to this, they must stop vainly seeking their counterpart in a parent or desired object. Just as the Beast desires “to fling [him]self into the adjacent moat” when he sees his “cruel, swift transformation,” Beauty struggles as she seeks to conquer vanity and accept ugliness as her reflection (203-4). The Beast does not want to continue living when he sees himself in his true, “marvelous” form, which externally reveals the vanity that the Evil Fairy both possesses and inspires in him. The Evil Fairy’s wickedness actually teaches Beast, who, in turn, enlightens Beauty. The Evil Fairy teaches Beast to find beauty in those around him. Beast then teaches Beauty to look beyond his exterior and appreciate his good qualities.

Over time, Beauty is able to accept the Beast. Once she allows herself to “become familiar” with the Beast, she realizes that he has admirable traits and that their relationship is beneficial to her sense of identity (178). She detects a “gentleness in his nature” and “wanted

their conversations to last longer” (Ibid.). Despite her overwhelming bias against the Beast as her reflection, Beauty becomes less vain and, as a result, Beast becomes less beastly. A beast is neither “gentle” nor civilized enough to hold a conversation with a cultured young woman. Beauty’s gentle and enlightened traits are also reflected in the Beast, providing him with some evidence that he is not Bettelheim’s primal and instinctual id. Furthermore, as Beauty becomes more accepting and the Beast turns gentle, Beauty subsequently learns to feel kinder towards him. After Unknown proposes that they abandon the Beast, an outraged Beauty exclaims, “I want you to know that I’d give my life to save his, and that this monster is only one in form. His heart is humane, and I won’t have him punished for a deformity made less hideous by his actions. I refuse to repay his kindness with such loathsome ingratitude” (182). In this speech, which parallels the Beast’s accusation that Beauty is “inhuman,” Beauty reveals that, in her eyes, the Beast is “humane” and that a distinction exists between his “deformity” and his “actions.” Although Beauty has not yet learned to love him, she feels gratitude and empathy. Unlike the Prince, whom the Evil Fairy calls “ungrateful and imprudent,” Beauty is grateful to the Beast, which inspires within her a loyalty that will not allow her to leave him. Although she may not realize it, she is regarding the Beast as her reflection, since she would give her “life to save his.” While she does not claim, as she did with her father and Unknown, that the Beast’s absence would be fatal to her, she asserts her need to save him. Just as she was prepared to sacrifice herself to save her father, Beauty again feels that she could not endure the death of Beast, her reflection.

Beauty’s relationship with the Beast not only humanizes the Beast, but also stabilizes Beauty’s identity. If Beauty and Beast acted on a Self-Other binary, Beauty would only learn to “accept” the Beast as he becomes more human; instead, Beauty learns from him. When she

visits home after her time at the Beast's palace, "[a]ll the care and attention of her monster had combined to make her even more beautiful and charming than she had been when her father had parted from her"(184-5). Because Beauty has learned to appreciate the personality behind the "deformity," she has enriched herself and allowed the Beast to civilize her. The Beast's "care and attention" is the foil that Beauty needs to appear "more beautiful and charming" than before this adventure. Beast's presence strengthens Beauty's identity. In this instance, the superego is not humanizing the id, but the Beast is refining Beauty. As such, the Beast-as-reflection enriches Beauty's character and grounds her identity.

While Beauty reluctantly, or even subconsciously, begins to regard Beast as her reflection, Beast, who is aware of the implications of his curse, readily recognizes Beauty as his counterpart. The good fairy forewarns Beast of Beauty's father's arrival, claiming that "he has a charming daughter" who will "release you from the spell" (205). Beast knows that Beauty is his one hope. Because of this, the Beast readily recognizes Beauty as an expression of his identity. He has not been able to love himself because he believes that he has a "miserable existence," but when he sees Beauty and recognizes her as his signifier, he starts to love himself again (207). Despite Beauty's "terror" at their first meeting, the Beast explains, "'When you arrived, charming princess, the first sight of you produced exactly the opposite effect on me that my monstrous appearance must have had on you. For me, to see you was to love you'" and he experienced "an impulse of self-love" (166, 207). The Beast recognizes Beauty as his savior and because of that understanding, he loves her. His acknowledgment of her as his reflective counterpart also leads him to feel "self-love" when he loves her, since he identifies her as an essence of his Self. By loving himself, in spite of his ugliness, and believing that he might be able to win Beauty's love, the Beast learns to conquer his own vanity. His hatred of his ugliness

only reinforces his vanity while his “self-love” indicates that he can learn to see beauty in himself through Beauty as his reflective counterpart.

Beauty’s struggle against accepting Beast as her reflection and Beast’s struggle to gain Beauty’s acceptance reach a climax when Beauty remains at home for too long and returns to find the Beast dying from despair. Upon her return, the dying Beast says to her, “I love you better than my life. I thought you’d never return; and the grief has nearly killed me” (190). Beast depends upon Beauty because he loves their union “better” than himself alone. Without her, he becomes “cold and motionless” and her “mournful shrieks” are the only means to revive him (Ibid.). At this pivotal moment, Beauty and the Beast become counterparts. Beauty is able to “shriek,” showing that she is able to vocalize, yet a shriek cannot carry any meaning without context. The Beast, “motionless,” is unable to express himself in any way. Therefore, they need each other to function.

At this climax, Beauty recognizes Beast as her reflection. She exclaims, “I didn’t know how much I loved you, but the fear of losing you has proved to me that I’ve been attached to you by stronger ties than gratitude. I swear to you that I had resolved in my mind to kill myself if I had failed in reviving you” (Ibid.). Beauty has come to regard Beast as her reflection, as she had tried to with her father and Unknown, but this time she is honest with herself. She recognizes that she was wrong about Beast and that she had been denying her true feelings, the feelings of her “heart,” for him. Beauty is “attached” to the Beast by more than “gratitude.” While she may feel thankful to him for the courtesy and generosity that he has provided her with at his castle, Beauty finally understands that he is not her Other, but her Self. As a Self, she is not be able to live without the Beast as her reflection once she recognizes his significance. Beauty has finally found subjectivity. Instead of regarding the castle as “her tomb,” which

would slowly kill her, or the Beast as her “destroyer,” as she had thought when she was using her father and Unknown as reflections, she takes an active, subjective stance, claiming she would rather “kill [her]self” than survive him. Beauty establishes herself as a subject and the Beast as the necessary essence that grounds her subjectivity.

TRANSFORMATION LEADS TO A DYNAMIC UNION

As a result of this dual recognition, Beauty and the Beast undergo transformations. In each case, the transformation results in a transfer. Their relationship as signifier and signified dictates that Beast as the essence cannot become beautiful until Beauty, as the expression of that essence, is able to look past Beast’s exterior, or her projected interior. Beast “would have had to remain in the horrible shape in which he had been transformed if he hadn’t found the one and only in the world whose virtue and courage matched her beauty” (193). Here, Villeneuve shows how “virtue,” and “courage,” which are inner traits of Beauty, must prevail over her vanity in order to show a beautiful reflection instead of the “horrible shape” that she sees. The transformation of Beast is the result of the growth of beauty within Beauty and that transfer onto the body of Beast.

While this dual recognition results in transformation, Beauty and the Beast’s relationship remains unstable. Due to the “nature of the [good fairy’s] spell,” the transformed prince is not awoken by Beauty’s voice, as one might assume, but by “[t]he arrival of his mother and the fairy ... and the sound of their voices” (194). This reveals that while the Prince, as a Beast, willingly viewed Beauty as his signifier, he has not yet recognized this in his restored form. Just as he depended on his mother for expression in his pre-Beast state, his awakening reveals that his

mother's voice remains more powerful to him instead Beauty's. His mother, the Queen, believes that she continues to be the Prince's counterpart when she forbids a marriage between the Prince and Beauty. However, unlike in his pre-Beast state, the Prince does not agree with his mother and seeks to form a reflective relationship with Beauty, an appropriate partner. When his mother threatens to call off their marriage, he "[flings] himself at the feet of the fairy and his mother," and implores, "She pledged her word to the Beast, and I prefer that happiness to my restored self if I must purchase it so dearly!" (196). With this statement, the Prince casts away all vanity. During his Beast-state, his love for Beauty inspired self-love within him. Now that he is beautiful again, his love for Beauty prevails over his love of his own beauty, since he would prefer to be a Beast and to marry Beauty rather than be beautiful and alone. Although he might have awoken to the sound of his mother's voice, he takes a stand against his mother's opinion and renews his regard for Beauty as his reflective counterpart.

Despite Beauty's joy at seeing Beast transform into her Unknown, she understands that their union is not stable. Because Beauty has recognized Beast as her reflection, she understands that her essence contains flaws and ugliness. This understanding has, in turn, made her more beautiful. While she is no longer vain, she must be willing to sacrifice herself in a way that she has not had to do before: she must gracefully withdraw from the Prince's love rather than vainly fight for him as she thought to do for her father or for Unknown. She alleges, "I'm well satisfied just to know your true identity," and that she cannot support a marriage that could lead to the Prince's resentment (Ibid.). Beauty is pleased to have found her reflection and appreciates the personal growth and beauty that Beast has inspired in her. Instead of looking into a mirror and seeing an abstraction, Beauty can now see the Beast in his true form and accepts this reflection. Just as the Prince offers to sacrifice his beauty in order to have Beauty, Beauty

sacrifices her love for the Prince in order to preserve their reflective relationship. Even after they recognize the other as Self, they continue in a state of transference.

Once the Queen accepts their marriage, Beauty and Beast join to create a union whose stability relies upon reflection, constant transformation and change. To relate this to language, Saussure asserts that “[s]igns function, then, not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position” (971). Beauty as signifier and Beast as signified finally unite to form an identity that neither of them could have formed alone. Their union grew out of ugly and spiteful curses of the Evil Fairy. In effect, the malice that created these curses eventually forms its counterpart: beauty of spirit. Without malice one cannot truly understand what spiritual beauty is, making the union of Beauty and Beast one of transformation and relativity rather than one of stagnant stability. While only moments before, transferences of power were highlighting the uncertainty of their marriage, the union of Beauty and Beast “filled both lovers with equal delight....Their conversation was confused and unconnected, and they mutually pledged their troth a hundred times” (Villeneuve 198). They are now “equal” and incredibly happy in their union, but they remain “confused and unconnected,” indicating that more change and transformation is yet to occur. Their language will continue to change, as does their union, and their identities. Beauty and Beast have united to create the equally powerful abstract concept of spiritual beauty. This union forms as a result of ugliness, which is a foil to its own creation.

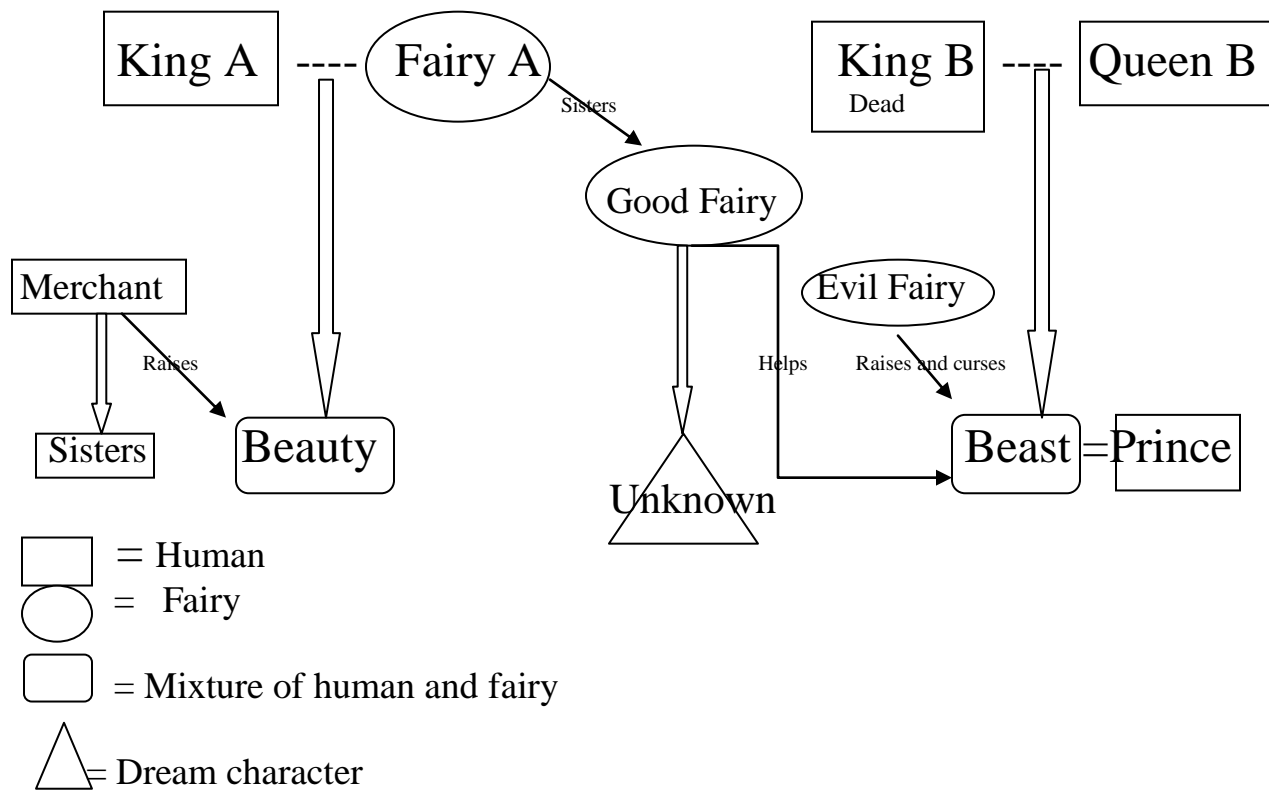
In conclusion, Beauty and Beast do not emblemize the Self-Other binary, but instead form a reflective relationship based on the psychological process of language and identity. This relationship allows both characters to find meaning and expression that are only achieved by accurate self-perception and spiritual maturity. This self-perception does not lead to a static identity, but to a dynamic one. Likewise, Beauty’s and the Prince/Beast’s union does is not

stagnant. Instead, that union must continue shifting in order to remain stable. For example, only by Beauty's identity shift to princess could she unite with the prince. In the course of the story, Beauty's meaning changes from merchant's daughter, to princess, to half-fairy, to ruler of a nation and wife. While her name and features remain the same, her station is constantly changing. As a transient union, they "lost no time in travelling" and filled their lives with "wonderful adventures" (229). The marriage of Beauty and the Prince encompasses a joy of change rather than a stagnant approach to language. They, like language and the sign that they create together, experience freedom of movement and expression with the relativity of the dynamic signs surrounding them.

Just as I have seen a reflective relationship within the tale, the tale is a reflection of the reader. Each reading of a fairy tale is a mirror on the reader's psyche, making each reading unique. For example, Bettelheim and I have read this tale and reached two very different conclusions. He looks for structural psychoanalysis in this tale while I seek transformation and reflection. Bettelheim is not wrong in his interpretation; his psyche is merely different than mine. Therefore, the same tale can become multiple magic mirrors. By understanding the tale as a magic mirror, we can better understand the relationship between the reader and the tale through my analysis of Beauty and Beast's relationship. Just as Beauty looks to the Beast as her mirror, the reader looks to the tale as a mirror. The relationship between the reader and the text, therefore, is symbiotic, reflective, and full of exchanging meanings.

As I continue into the next chapter, I will continue to examine the reader's reflective relationship with the tale in its capacity to create new tales in response to older variants and new meanings for older tales in response to newer variants. While I have just focused on Villeneuve's 1740 version of the tale, the next chapter will broaden the scope of transformational reflection

that I have found here. From the root of the tale in *Cupid and Psyche* to Disney's cartoon film version, the tale changes in a reflective way. Each variant's author reflects upon previous variants and contemporary society to create new variants and fluid meanings. As each tale springs from these influences, the tales mirror each other as Beauty and the Beast, or the reader and text, mirror each other. They look to each other for meaning to use that perceived meaning to transform dynamically. Although some critics may understand the stability of the story to reside in the recurrence of its symbols, the tale's dynamic growth lies in its ability to embrace new styles, time periods and media. I will explore this mirroring of the stories through time in the next chapter.

FAMILY TREE IN VILLENEUVE'S *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

CHARACTER LIST:

Beauty= Raised by the Merchant as his own, yet daughter of the King and a fairy, cursed to marry a monster, marries Beast

Beast= Son of Queen B, raised by the evil fairy when Queen is at war, cursed to remain a beast until a woman falls in love with him, helped by the good fairy, marries Beauty, transforms into the Prince

Merchant=His dying infant daughter replaced with Beauty by Good Fairy, believes that Beauty is his daughter, causes Beauty to leave home to protect her “father”

Sisters= Jealous girls who detain Beauty at home

Queen B=Beast’s mother, leaves home to fight a war, disapproves of Beauty until her lineage is revealed

King A= Beauty’s actual father, believes that Beauty and his wife (Fairy A) are dead

Fairy A= Beauty’s actual mother, a fairy in disguise, is imprisoned in the fairy realm

Good Fairy= Fairy A’s sister, orchestrates the disenchantment of Beauty and Beast, creates Unknown

Evil Fairy= Places Fairy A in prison in the fairy world, curses Beauty after her father(King A) rejects her amorous attempts, curses Beast after he rejects her love

Unknown= Created by Good Fairy, appears in Beauty’s dreams, physically identical to Beast’s human form

2

Beauty and the Beast's Reflective Evolution

A tale's meaning relies heavily upon the intentions of the author and the perception of the reader because, as I concluded in Chapter One, a fairy tale is a mirror of the reader's psyche. Each author is at once a reader and a creator. In her collection, *Mother and Daughter Tales*, Josephine Evetts-Secker supports this notion, claiming that "[t]hese stories live by 'endless mutation.' A Native American tale claims that the source of the story is the 'story-telling stone,' which first says to its first listeners, 'Some of you will remember every word I say, some will remember a part of the words, and surely some will forget them all. Hereafter, you must tell these stories to each other'" (qtd. in "Magic" 446). One telling of a story will yield a variety of interpretations because each reader perceives the words and their meanings with diverse biases. While these listeners/readers go on to tell these stories, they will inevitably add, remove and transform details and information, creating completely different variations. For example, in Chapter One, Bruno Bettelheim and I read the tale of Beauty and the Beast and reach different conclusions; he argues that the Beauty and Beast are symbols for Freud's superego and id in which case the superego (Beauty) humanizes the id (Beast), while I understand them to be elements of language in a reflective relationship in which they both transform. This relationship is like the relationship between a reader and text, during which the reader (Belle) looks into the mirror of the text (Beast) for meaning. In this exchange, both the reader and text transform. My reading focuses on the dynamic elements of Beauty and Beast's relationship instead of the static categories that Bettelheim perceives. In this way, the reader's response to the story determines its meaning and the story changes the reader's perception.

In this chapter, I focus on how the reader's perception of a variant affects the creation of new variants as well as current interpretations of dated variants. Each variant is a mirror of the

reader's perception and the author's biases. Since each variant's meaning is constantly changing with each reading, I believe that the reflective relationships occurring between the reader and the variant lead to the creation of transformed variants as well as fluid meaning in already-written variants. I examine, in this chapter, five canonized variants of *Beauty and the Beast*—the myth of *Cupid and Psyche* transcribed by Lucius Apuleius, two French Salon novellas by Mme. de Villeneuve and Mme de Beaumont, the folktale *The Singing, Soaring Lark* by the Brothers Grimm, and Walt Disney's animated movie—to reveal that the transformation within the tale is present on a larger scale in the creation of new meanings and variants. Instead of focusing on the similarities among the variants to find fixed meaning, I focus on the reflection and dynamism among the tale's variants to find fluid implications.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A STORY

From Evetts-Secker's narrative of how a tale repeats endlessly to change with each telling, we see that the formation of a fairy tale is complex. The “story-telling stone” that she refers to is most likely the concept of a myth, which rises from oral narrative and a people's collective knowledge. Like any story that is repeated through word of mouth, this first story will “mutat[e]” based on the perception of the listeners. Moreover, this “story-telling stone” understood that this first story would not be re-told exactly as it told its first listeners. The stone, or myth-source, acknowledged that each listener would react to the story differently and shape their telling of the story based on those perceptions. By considering this process, we understand that neither the author nor the reader exists in a vacuum. Another reader/author Naomi Lewis explains that “[i]n the landscape of the mind, whatever is planted early lasts and grows through

time. Reality may be a featureless-suburban street; but the mind of the fairy-tale reader holds mountains, oceans, distances, a forest that is haven, shelter, and mystery, some day to be explored” (qtd in “Magic” 440). The mind is not a passive sponge that merely soaks in the lessons learned in school, but a tool which questions and examines those lessons. The “featureless-suburban street” may be the reader’s reality, but the reader can use her imagination to create something more from that reality in order to question it.

This type of reading, perception, and creation introduces transformational reflection as an integral part of the intertextual process. Each reader reacts differently to his surroundings, and since each variant of a tale provides the reader with new insights, each author—who is inevitably a reader—will approach a rewriting of the tale with different “mountains, oceans, [and] distances” in mind. Just as I used the concept of reflection in Chapter One, I continue to define reflection as a complex psychological and physical action. In the introduction, I look to Melchoir-Bonnet’s definition of a Renaissance mirror. This type of reflection is not a standard physical reflection, but rather one during which a “mirror prism” reflects the onlooker in a transformational way and “graft[s] meanings on top of each other” (129). I have already proven that the fairy tale is a mirror of each reader’s psyche. In Chapter One, the reflective relationship of Beauty and Beast within the tale is symbiotic; they exchange meaning and expression to create a full identity. This relationship mirrors the relationship that the reader has with the text. The reader perceives the text in a certain way and the text informs the reader and changes his perception. In this way, they reflect and transform each other. Now, I use this reflective relationship to show how the progression of *Beauty and the Beast*’s variants is directly linked to this exchange of reader perception and change. The different variants reflect each other like the Melchoir-Bonnet’s “mirror prism” because of the transformation of the reader/author that we

saw in Chapter One. Each reader changes because of the text, then becomes an author, creates a fairy tale variant that mirrors his intentions (which the earlier variant has affected), and this new variant then interacts with new readers. The variants, therefore, inform each other through the prism of the reader/author, allowing new meanings to graft on top of and transform each variant.

BETSY HEARNE'S STATIC APPROACH TO INTERTEXTUALITY

Many critics, however, subscribe to the Aarne-Thompson method of categorizing folk tales and prefer to focus on the similarities amongst the variants instead of how and why they change. In fact, aside from regarding *Beauty and the Beast* as evolutionary, the critics do not offer any insights about the value of an intertextual examination. While I understand that the tale is evolutionary in the sense that it has changed through time and that the author of each variant has been affected by the previous variants, I do not support the critics' emphasis upon the variants' similarities. As I will show in a moment, focusing only on the gradual evolution of the fairy tale through time simplifies its process of change. The search for a powerful, lasting story obscures the variants' dynamic elements that instigate sudden change and the reflection and mutation that takes place in the reader and author.

One evolution-focused critic is Betsy Hearne who, in her work *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale*, painstakingly examines the transformation of *Beauty and the Beast* from its roots through hundreds of variants. She asserts that “[t]he core of motifs, images, characters, and conflicts remains constant” despite “changes in form, detail and tone [that] show the tale’s elasticity” (1). She separates storytelling into two key groups- the “constant” elements, such as the “motifs” and “images,” and the “chang[ing]” style, such as

“form” and “tone.” Hearne further distinguishes the tale’s static and dynamic structures by claiming that the changing motifs caused by creativity and the individualizing voice of the narrator are less important than the “metaphoric weight” acquired through the repetition of its “core elements” (32). In fact, she claims that the “individualizing voice” is not as important to the “powerful, lasting version of the story” (129). Hearne’s insistence on searching for that lasting version of the story rejects the variants’ dynamic structures. By treating the tale in this way, she focuses on only those mimetic elements. Mimesis, again, is a mere imitation of something else. She grants repeating symbols, or imitations, “metaphoric weight,” or meaning, supports a mimetic analysis of the tale. In Deleuzian terms, she seeks the stagnant solution rather than focusing on the problem of becoming.

While Hearne may have acquired a deep understanding of the tale, her neglect of the changing elements does not allow her to appreciate fully the author’s process of mirroring and creation. A symbol that Hearne continues to categorize as static and fixed is the rose, which, for the purpose of narrowing my argument, will be my focus. In a moment, I not only prove that the rose, despite repeating in many of the variants, has a dynamic meaning, but also that it changes as a result of the individualizing voice of the author and the unique perception of the reader. Regarding the rose as an identical mimetic reflection in each story renders that construct stagnant and its meaning dated. The tale is in a state of evolution, but each variant as a stepping stone of fixed meaning on the way to a lasting story. Instead, we should examine how and why these elements actually transform in their reflection of each other because then we can replace our end goal; instead of searching for a static story with an inherent meaning, we can study the dynamic relationship between the author, reader, and story that creates meaning. As I examine the rose’s

meaning in my chosen variants, I focus on how it changes as a result of the author/reader relationship instead of what “metaphoric weight” I can grant it since it repeats.

THE ROLE OF THE AUTHOR AND READER IN THE ROSE’S CONSTANT CHANGE

At the tale’s roots, we imagine the first story told by the ““story-telling stone,”” which we cannot know because the first transcribed version of this tale is already altered by the author’s perception. The author of *Cupid and Psyche*, the recognized root of *Beauty and the Beast*, Lucius Apuleius may have been one of those first listeners. While that first story remains inaccessible, we consider Apuleius’s version the variant most closely linked to the tale’s root. In his version, the conflict begins when men desert Venus’s altars because they “strewed [Psyche’s] way with chapelets and flowers” instead: thereby incurring Venus’s jealous rage (Apuleius 1). Venus sends Cupid to punish Psyche, which leads to their meeting in which Cupid inadvertently falls in love with Psyche. To hide their love from his angry mother, Cupid takes Psyche to the “flowery dale” of his retreat (2). Venus then “breath[es] odors and [is] crowned with roses” when she discovers this tryst and seeks to punish Psyche (4). To complicate the narration of the tale, Apuleius does not recount the tale from a masculine perspective. Instead, he presents it as an ““old wives’ tale’ told by an old woman to comfort a young woman who has been abducted by a band of robbers and is being held for ransom” (Bulfinch 6).

Apuleius’ version of the “first story” creates a symbolic rose with complex meanings because the variant is a myth, like its predecessor, and, since the myth is part of the frame story, also a narrative. A more careful look at the genre of myth reveals a variety of views, most closely centering on Edmund R. Leach’s description, in which “myth is fluid, rather than being

fixed for all time...If myth, once constructed, were immutable, it would soon lose its value for people since it would not be able to accommodate changes in culture or the society's knowledge base" (Green 579-80). Based on Leach's assessment, the myth is something that adapts according to "culture" and "knowledge base." Similarly, Carl Jung relates the myth to a "collective unconscious" to which everyone has access (580). While this concept is hotly debated in psychological circles, literary circles merely appreciate the notion in which subconscious ideas, such as language, religion, etc., link humans. To judge the genre, one must understand that in general, a myth changes according to the needs of the society and the "collective."

Apuleius's transcription of the myth shifts the genre from an oral collectivity to a written and pointed narrative, showing that even at its origin the tale is fluid. Of course, it still maintains certain characteristics of a myth, indicating that Apuleius "remember[ed] a part of the words." In myth, the rose is a symbol of divine love and beauty. In fact, the rose was "for the ancient Romans, a symbol of beauty and the flower of Venus" ("Flowers"). Apuleius, certainly aware of these implications, links Venus, Cupid and Psyche with the theme of flowers. The rose is the flower of Venus as well as a symbol of beauty. The story progresses through a power struggle of whether the rose is more symbolic of Venus, who is a Goddess, or Psyche, who is beautiful. At the core of this debate, the rose does not receive much descriptive detail. Instead, Apuleius shapes the rose's importance around the value that the characters place on it. Venus would not have been angry at Psyche if Venus's admirers were still delivering flowers to Venus. This lack of flowers not only injures Venus's pride, but also seems to threaten her divinity. After all, Psyche, who begins this myth as a human, becomes Cupid's wife and an immortal because of the flowers bestowed upon her. Venus adorns herself with flowers before she fights Psyche as a way

to assert her divinity, power, and beauty. In rejecting flowers, Psyche rejects her beauty while Venus, hoarding flowers, starves for beauty and power. Because of the genre of this tale, the simple construct of the rose takes on important meaning and causes complex power struggles.

At the same time, Apuleius's narrative veers from the myth genre, implying that he has reacted to that "first story" and has chosen to include new meanings. By taking this myth and transcribing it from his unique point of view as well as the narrative voice that he assumes, he removes the myth from the "collective unconscious" and reveals a rose that goes beyond divine love and beauty. Immediately, this rose's meaning transcends myth. The rose, a "collective" mythic symbol of divine love and beauty, becomes, for this despairing woman something else altogether. This male author, telling the story from an old woman's narrative perspective, to a younger, imprisoned female interlocutor, uses the story to promote a hope for salvation through the strength of the woman against the fury of Venus.

Flowers can be harbingers of great strife, since they were the reason that Venus becomes infuriated with Psyche in the first place. Venus desires that Psyche's "mortification [be] as great as her present exultation and triumph" (Apuleius 1). Venus believes that Psyche is "triumph[ant]" because she is receiving flowers instead of Venus and Venus tries to punish her with "mortification" and unhappiness. Nevertheless, without that fury, love between Cupid and Psyche would not have occurred. By enduring Venus' hateful trials, Psyche was able to better her situation in life by finding a loving husband and by eventually becoming an Immortal alongside him. Without those difficulties, Psyche could have perpetually remained an unloved, beautiful, lonely girl. By choosing his narrative voice and his intended audience, Apuleius changes the importance of the rose. It is not only a symbol of divine beauty, but also a symbol of

hope and perseverance despite difficulty. The rose fluctuates between its significance within a myth and its meaning to the young female interlocutor.

Apuleius reacts to the myth genre by pointing out that the tale's audience changes its meaning. Based on his use of a frame story, a myth does not retain an inherent meaning, but one that is created by the author's awareness of his audience and the audience's perception of the story. His transcription, instead of celebrating a myth that forms from the collective unconscious, points out the biases and diversity of the audience and questions a myth's intrinsic value. In the context of his larger audience, Apuleius uses this frame story to place more importance on the author and the reader, transforming the myth to a myth within a story. In this way, Apuleius's perception of the "first story," his transcription of this new story, and the reader's perception has created a prism which draws from the "first story" but grafts new meaning onto it as well. Thus, the rose's meaning is already fluid at the tale's roots.

While many years and variants separate Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche* and "The Story of Beauty and the Beast," Villeneuve obviously reflected her reaction to the Apuleius' variant in her 1740 French novella. She wrote this variant at the later end of the French literary Renaissance during which literature paid homage to classic Greco-Roman models. As a result, Villeneuve's variant bears traces of the myth. For example, as we observed in Chapter One, Villeneuve describes Beauty's handsome dream man as "Cupid," linking her modern beast with the myth's Cupid. Similarly, just as the Cupid in the myth would rather be loved as a human than adored as a God, Villeneuve's Beast would rather marry Belle as a Beast than live without her as a prince. Other similarities appear, including Cupid's/Beast's mother as an obstacle to the lover's marriage. From this comparison, we see that while the variants are certainly different and purvey unique messages, Villeneuve's version strongly relates to the myth.

The rose's presence in this version is much more apparent than Apuleius' rose. When Beauty's father departs for a trip, Beauty asks her father for a rose since they do not grow nearby. Unlike the jewels and gowns that her sisters desire, Beauty does not wish to trouble her father with much expense and desires something beautiful and natural. At this point in the variant, the rose's qualities echo Beauty's: she is as striking and pure as the rose that she requests. The link between Beauty and her rose continues when, after her father plucks a rose from Beast's castle, Beast threatens her father and demands one of his daughters in return for the rose. Later in the variant, the reader learns that Beast, aware that a man with a beautiful daughter was going to pluck a rose from his garden, threatens the man for the sole purpose of luring the daughter to his castle. Beast has no interest in the roses aside from how he can use them to gain Beauty. Thus, the reader understands that Beast cares for Beauty more than his roses.

The rose connects to its mythic meanings in Apuleius' version and creates new meanings contemporary to Villeneuve. Like the mythic rose, this rose still symbolizes beauty and acts as a catalyst for the lover's meeting. The rose, however, takes on new meanings that do not relate to divine power and Immortals. These meanings are more mundane, or common. Villeneuve "liked to write about vicissitudes of young lovers and add moral reflections about their destinies" rather than focus on power struggles of Immortals or the collective unconscious (Zipes 152). She continues to take her audience into account, as Apuleius urges, but she focuses on more routine struggles and sentimental emotions. Her rose is a symbol of love and devotion. In Villeneuve, Beast only pretends to care about his roses in order to inspire Beauty with the courage to come to his castle. Beast does not care about his roses, but uses them to lure Beauty to him, indicating that he is using the rose to gain his true love. Like in Psyche's situation, the politics of flowers determine Beauty's fate, but differently. Beauty unknowingly determines her

fate by desiring the rose, in effect desiring love, while Psyche does not desire the superficial attentions that her rose represents. Villeneuve reflects Apuleius's rose in the sense that the rose still results in the fateful meeting. That mythic rose, however, is much transformed.

Villeneuve's and Beaumont's tales are undeniably linked. Written only seventeen years later, Beaumont does not change any details of Villeneuve's tale, save by exclusion of vast amounts of intricate back-story. Among the details that Beaumont omits is the reason behind Beast's wrath when the Merchant takes one of his roses. Beauty continues to identify with the rose as natural and beautiful, her own qualities. Her father, like in Villeneuve, plucks the rose to please her. The main difference occurs in the reader's perception of the Beast's intent. In Villeneuve, the Beast uses his rose with the intent to lure Beauty to the castle. Beaumont's Beast, however, claims that he loves his roses "more than anything else in the world" and demands one of the merchant's daughters in return (Beaumont 236). Beast links Beauty and the rose with this trade. Since Beast loves the rose more than anything else in the world, he will transfer that love to Beauty, who resembles it. A Beaumont reader, unaware of Villeneuve's Beast's intent, believes that the rose is the Beast's prized possession, in exchange for which he will only accept one of the Merchant's daughters. In this way, the rose and Beauty become commodities, since Beast is easily able to remove his love from the rose and transfer it to Beauty. Beaumont's rose can only be exchanged for a daughter, supporting a relationship of homosocial exchange. The treatment of the rose alters Beauty's role, which quickly changes from Villeneuve's beloved destiny of the Beast to a virtuous girl who is exchanged, much like in the dowry system of the time.

Although the rose seems to fulfill the same function, since the Beast's anger at the Merchant's transgression brings Beauty to Beast's castle, the dynamic elements that surround it

change how the reader reacts. This change is a result of Beaumont's intent in her work. She has clearly read and appreciated Villeneuve's work, but she approaches the tale with a different goal; instead of examining the sentiments and effects of young love, Beaumont writes didacticism for the proper young lady. This aim leads her to shorten considerably her variant, concentrate on the heroine's perspective, and praise social constructs. Beaumont "endorses obedience, self-denial, and a form of love based on gratitude rather than passion for women" as an instruction in "good manners, good breeding, and good behavior" (Tatar 59-60). Beaumont's rose is part of a barter system in which the Merchant pays Beast for the rose with a daughter. This transaction implies an arranged marriage in which Beauty and the rose are commodities. In this tale, Beaumont enforces social institutions, such as arranged marriage, while making that lesson palatable. By asking for the rose, Beauty rejects the outright material commodities of jewels and clothing, indicating humility, "self-denial" and "obedience." Through this simple request for a rose, Beauty becomes Beaumont's example of the proper young lady. Beaumont's rose may resemble, or reflect, Villeneuve's, but it has certainly changed according to Beaumont's reaction to Villeneuve and what she perceives as the needs of her society.

A "multidetermined symbol," the rose fulfills a different purpose in Beaumont's variant than in *Cupid and Psyche* or Villeneuve (Mintz 616). While flowers are catalysts in each variant, leading to the meeting of the two destined lovers, each meeting is unique. The French Beast takes on a more active role than Cupid. Beast uses the merchant's transgression to demand payment in the form of one of the merchant's daughters, either demanding an arranged marriage (as in Beaumont) or love (as in Villeneuve). In comparison, Cupid passively follows his mother's orders. The French Beauty actually asks for the rose while Psyche's beauty inspires admirers to shower her with flowers. Apuleius' rose is a passive accompaniment to Immortals.

The rose serves a symbol of the heroine's traits in each variant. Psyche does not ask for that rose because her beauty has made her a person that people would rather look at than love. In comparison, Villeneuve's Beauty regards the rose as representing her traits which will inspire love. She seeks that symbol as an affirmation of her humility and beauty while Beast desires a woman as sincere and natural as the rose. Beaumont's Beauty also sees the rose as a representation of her traits, but that rose becomes a bartering chip. It becomes part of a struggle between Beauty and Beast, during which the Beast trades his rose for Beauty. This transition from the rose as a passive, or even unwanted, accessory to a contested tool marks a changing significance of the rose.

As we progress to the Grimm variant, written in 1812 Germany, their "rose" is visibly a transformed reflection of the French rose. The Grimm Brothers replace the rose in their tale with a lark. In their folktale version, entitled *The Singing, Soaring Lark*, the youngest daughter asks for a "singing, soaring lark" from her father (302). The German lark that takes the place of the French rose fulfills a similar function as in Beaumont, acting as a bartering chip with which the lion (Beast) purchases the youngest daughter. The lark, therefore, does take the place of the French rose. I examine the lark as a transformed reflection of the rose in previous variants.

The reader first understands that the lark has transformed from its predecessors by its appearance in the title. Most variants of Tale Type 425C have titles that either links the two lovers (*Beauty and the Beast*), focus on the Beast character (*The Pig King*), or concentrate on the trial that the Beauty character must endure (*East of the Sun and West of the Moon*). This German variant, however, focuses on the symbol that connects the two lovers, giving it heightened emphasis. In this way, the Grimm Brothers create a symbol that has the same function as

Beaumont's rose, yet is considerably different. Instead of focusing on the function of the lark as a commodity with which Beast barter for Beauty, this variant creates a lark that is a subject itself, since in the title, it is soaring and singing. The lark becomes a character as important, if not more essential, than the youngest daughter and her lion.

The lark's meaning within the variant affirms that it is not like Beaumont's rose in any way beyond its basic function as a catalyst for the lover's meeting. This lark represents values that conflict with Beaumont's rose. A lark is a living creature known for its sustained melodious song. Not only does the daughter specifically request a lark that sings, but also one that soars. This lark has agency because it has a voice with which it can express itself and an ability to move freely. This lark links to the qualities that the daughter would like to have. While Beaumont's Beauty links herself to a rose, which is beautiful, but also mute and inanimate, the German daughter seeks voice, agency, and subjectivity. This daughter, despite possessing an industriousness that Beaumont would praise, does not desire to be the "obedient," passive woman that the French rose represents. In effect, the French Beauty desires an identity that the society approves. She actively seeks this identity, but this identity is passive because she is following the society's mandates. The German daughter wants to fly free from these rules and create her own voice. Therefore, the catalyst for the meeting of the couple has been altered from a symbol of arranged marriage, visual beauty, or innate divinity to a vocal, active lark. Furthermore, the lark is a call back to nature and the freedom of music. Apuleius's rose is unwillingly thrust upon Psyche. Villeneuve's and Beaumont's Beauty focuses on what she is, labeling herself, while the Grimms' protagonist focuses on qualities she could attain, promoting growth and change. This shift of focus from passive to active, from present state to future

possibilities indicates a transforming symbol. This change also reveals that the Brothers Grimm certainly envision a very different heroine to Beaumont's. Why has this change occurred?

The genre which they use for this variant is folklore, which is particularly noteworthy because unlike Apuleius, Villeneuve, or Beaumont, who sought to convert the tale into their contemporary genres, the Brothers Grimm believed that "they were recovering a German mythology and a German attitude to life" (Byatt xxii). By choosing to use folklore as their genre instead of contemporary salon literature and novellas, the Brothers Grimm turn to historical ideas to make a statement about present world affairs. As they fleshed out the lark, they were no doubt reflecting upon the French tales as "[t]hey saw themselves as asserting what was German against the French occupying forces of the Napoleonic empire" (Byatt xxii). At the time that they were writing this variant (1812), the Grimms rejected the French empire and sought to maintain their German attitude against a 'frenchified' German culture. Here, the reader understands that the youngest daughter's role extends beyond an industrious girl waiting to be married to the role of Germany in a power struggle. The Germanic lark indicates voice and vital beauty while the French rose becomes, to the German authors, superficially beautiful and petty. With the lark, the Grimm Brothers reclaim this tale from French forces and asserting something that is particularly German. Germany will not be passive, waiting for the French Beast to conquer it. Instead, its people will soar and sing, asserting their German culture against the ideals of a Napoleonic society. The Grimm Brothers make clear that their stories are not French, nor do they borrow ideas from the French. They reflect upon the French rose and use their cultural biases to create a new reflection in the lark. As a result of these biases, the rose transforms. The Grimm Brothers reflect on the French variants of Apuleius' myth and create a symbol that is contradictory to the

French symbol. In effect, their variant reacts to the French variants in a negative way and, in a strange way, grows because of them.

Last, the Disney version of *Beauty and the Beast* reflects upon the French variants through the mirror-prism of the author to reveal not one, but four different roses. The first rose appears in the opening of the film when the narrator describes the Prince's curse. Visually, stained glass, a representation within a representation, depicts the curse, showing a still picture of an old hag who offers the Prince a rose in return for a night of shelter. The Prince refuses her and she reveals herself as an enchantress and curses him. The rose next appears in animation under a glass dome in Beast's West Wing. It stands upright and sparkles because the enchantress's rose was "truly an enchanted rose which would bloom until his twenty-first year." This narration occurs while film shows the viewer the stained glass stills, but this enchanted rose transforms from stained glass to an animates rose that is preserved, like an artifact, under glass. This rose heightens Beast's urgency because when the last petal of the rose fades and falls off, Beast, and all of his servants, will remain in their enchanted states forever, with no chance of redemption. It marks that his time is running out, identifying the Beast's despair. After the Beast's transformation, the magical rose disappears and the audience returns to stained glass. Now, the rose is a symbol of love, linking the stained glass stills of *Beauty and Beast*. Surrounding the stained glass are 'living' bushes covered in thriving roses.

The Beaumont and subsequently Villeneuve versions seem to have influenced the film most closely. The stained glass stills of the rose that frame the film seem to reflect back upon the earlier variants. These stills, which first depict the old hag/enchantress offering the Prince the rose and then the union the Prince and Belle, imply that the story has been told for many years and has acted as a way to bring people together. They act, in fact, as a representation of past

variants within this new variant. The stained glass rose at the beginning marks that this curse has already occurred and that, since it is in stained glass, it is essential to the story. This stained-glass rose links Belle and Beast at the end, recalling its function as a catalyst for the French Beauty and Beast's meeting and the permanence of their love. The film uses the stained glass to show that many stories have come before it and that the animated story is the story that is going on now. It moves beyond still illustration to active animation. Therefore, in the stained glass, it honors the rose's function in past stories, but indicates that this new story will treat it differently.

At the same time, the living roses that surround this stained glass depiction remove the animated story from the stained glass story. The living roses are realistic to the perception of the film's characters. They live in this animated world and the living roses that surround the stained glass contrast their version of reality with their version of fantasy. To the film's viewers, this animated world is not real, but to the characters, these roses represent reality, raising questions of whether the film's audience is merely another layer of fantasy, or reality. I discuss this relationship between the audience and the film in depth in Chapter Three.

The animated rose, meanwhile, indicates that this film is different from its literary forefathers. This rose, standing upright in a glass case, sparkling with magic, and losing petals to heighten the Beast's and the audience's despair, is like nothing that the audience has seen before. It is protected and frozen as an artifact of old stories, but it is also dying. The magic is keeping it alive, but it cannot keep it thriving forever if the Beast fails to find love. If this rose dies, the film implies that the story will not be able to continue. The enchanted rose heightens the despair for the audience, showing that the Beast is fighting against himself and time rather than a particular outside enemy.

Much of this change occurs as a result of the new medium of animation which enables the artists to transfer concepts to screen which would have previously been impossible. As Jack Zipes observes in his essay, “Breaking the Disney Spell”: “The animators sought to impress audiences with their abilities to use pictures in such a way that they would forget the earlier fairy tales and remember the images that they, the new artists, were creating for them” and that the images were meant to “smash the aura of heritage and to celebrate the ingenuity, inventiveness, and genius of the animator” (80). While I will discuss the Disney variant more in depth in the next chapter, as well as dialogue with Zipes about the actual impact of the variant, for now the reader must understand that visual Disney fairy tales have changed the way that we read the earlier versions. Through animation, Zipes contends that the artists disparage the heritage of the tale, focusing only on how they can impress the audiences and create a lasting impression.

Zipes’ analysis might be a bit hyperbolic, but he does touch on Disney’s goal to develop better animation technologies and create memorable images. Disney’s magical rose is a visible reminder of the transformative powers of love as well as a flashy example of animation. While the other roses in the variant do more closely reflect back to earlier French variants, the animated rose is Disney’s reflection of his society and his need for progress. He needed to create something completely new to make a statement about his medium and objective. The rose functions as a symbol of time and despair within the story and as a symbol of change and questionable reality for the animators who quite successfully have created a version of *Beauty and the Beast* whose visual effects are unforgettable to generations of children.

MAINTAINING DYNAMIC MEANINGS IN ALREADY-WRITTEN VARIANTS

Based on this in-depth examination of how and why the rose has changed in each variant, I conclude that it changes in a reflective way that transforms instead of imitates. These variants are evolving, changing as a result of the needs of the time periods, but that does not mean that we gain insight into how they evolve by only focusing on fixed symbols in search of a “powerful lasting story.” No such story exists because each author has been affected by previous variants as well as his own aims, making each version of the tale biased. After all, Beaumont was a reader before she was an author. She, like any other author, reads already-written tales, interprets them in her own unique way, changes as a result of them, and then writes a new variant that takes these reflections into account. To that effect, each variant is a temporary solution for the problems that the author saw in his/her time period and the tale has continued transforming to become a temporary solution for other authors in other time periods. Reaching back to Deleuze, while one can appreciate each variant as a solution to a particular problem of the time period in which it was written, one must also understand that the solution has become dated. One should read the variants from a perspective that appreciates the changing meaning of the story instead of focusing on an innate value that categorizes it. Only by understanding each variant as a temporary solution can we accept that the problem has since passed and attribute, or “graft,” new solutions onto it.

After one examines the cause-and-effect relations among authors, variants and readers, one understands that, like the constantly changing rose, which was previously assumed to be “fixed,” the variants, which appear to be “fixed” in their time periods, can also become more free-floating. By realizing that the variants in a process of constant transformation, one can comfortably perceive them as displaced from the meanings that they had during their time periods since those solutions were only pertinent for the moment when they were penned. Just

as I concluded in Chapter One, the relationship between Beauty and Beast does not stagnate because they have attained the stability of marriage. They continue to transform and exchange identities. Like this relationship, the exchange between the reader and the text does not have to stagnate once the text is written and the reader removed from the time period for which the text was written. While a text might stagnate once it is made permanent through writing, like Beauty and Beast's relationship made permanent through marriage, the reader can continue to reflect in the mirror to find new meanings. The variant and reader are products of their respective time periods, but that does not inhibit a reflective exchange.

In fact, just as older variants informed the writing of newer variants, more recent variants inform a reader's interpretation of older variants. Although the variant might be fixed through writing, the reader continues to change. That reader brings a fresh perspective that takes into account variants of the tale written after the one that she is reading, as well as new concerns that face her world. This re-evaluation displaces the variants since their meanings, or solutions, change based on the perspective of the reader. The transformation does not stop once the story is written because reader response will continue to bring fresh perspectives, theories, and biases to cause other temporary meanings (solutions). This causes timeless stories. As Zipes notes, Disney's "ideological proclivities were so consummate that his signature has obfuscated the names of Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Anderson, and Collodi" and that for some, "first and perhaps lasting impressions of these tales...have emanated from a Disney film, book or artifact" ("Spell" 72). Not only have the tales progressed forward, but new "ideologi[es]" look back on the variants written earlier, viewing them through the lens of Disney. Instead of wondering why the Disney rose is the symbol of magic and despair, as I wondered when looking at the stories in a chronological order, the contemporary American is not even

aware that another version of the rose exists. The Disney film's "lasting impression" indoctrinates children and adults, completely "obfuscating" the original functions of the rose.

New theories, including those of Freud, Lacan, and Gilbert and Gubar graft themselves onto the original variants, suggesting new meanings and temporary solutions. Just as I approached Villeneuve's version through the lens of Saussure and Lacan, I "graft[ed] meanings on top of each other in a network of metaphors and references." Similarly Jacques Barchillon regards the rose as symbolic of Freud's Oedipus complex, while Gilbert and Gubar's famous book, *The Madwoman in the Attic* looks at fairy tales, "Snow White" in particular, through a feminist lens. While the authors of the variants may not have intended these "meanings," current critics can re-examine these tales to graft their own solutions onto them. In this way, the tale is in a state of Deleuzian becoming that asserts a rich fluidity, overflows the categories of meaning, and attains transformational reflection through narrative voice. As I continue into the next chapter, I examine how the Disney film treats this fluidity of meaning and reflective transformation. While the reader has looked into the magic mirror of literary fairy tales to find meaning, the Disney variant thrusts a mirror upon its audience, urging the viewer to use his imagination to question his mirrors, which maintain a stable 'reality.'

3

**“There must be more than this provincial life”:
Disney’s Critique of a Passive, Beastly Society**

As I have established in Chapters One and Two, transformational reflection occurs within the story of *Beauty and the Beast* and among the variants of the tale. The fairy tale’s reflective properties lead to transformation, like in a magic mirror. A magic mirror does not merely imitate the physical features of an onlooker, as a standard mirror would, but rather provides an image that helps the onlooker learn something about himself. This image can make psychological processes visible, or show someone else entirely. Either way, the magic mirror drives the onlooker to think or do something as a result of the reflection, leading to inevitable transformation. In this way, the fairy tale acts as a magic mirror, transforming the reader, the variants, and the society.

Acting as this transformational reflector, *Beauty and the Beast* is a mirror to the reader who looks into it, to its variants that grow from it, and to the society that creates it. The reader, the variants, the society, and the fairy tale change as a result of their interaction. For example, in Chapter One, I demonstrate that Villeneuve’s *Beauty and Beast* have a reflective relationship in which both of them need the other to establish an identity. Just as *Beauty and Beast* interact within that variant, the reader and the tale interact in a reflective relationship. Moreover, as I explore in Chapter Two, each author is also a reader, and an author’s reaction to previous variants informs his creation of new variants. In this way, through reader response, each variant reflects previously-written tales and its meaning changes based on the reader’s perception. Mirroring is at work on several different levels: within the tale, in between the tale and the reader, and among the variants.

Another level of mirroring that I now explore is how an author, constructed (in part) by his surroundings, creates a variant that critically mirrors society. In effect, the variant is both a product and criticism of society. The fairy tale is a space that reflects its contemporary society and explores ways to change it. Jack Zipes, in his essay “The Contemporary American Fairy Tale,” maintains that the fairy tale’s “critical and utopian function [is] to hold a mirror to ossified reality and to suggest imaginative ways to alter our lives” (154). Society creates a fairy tale, but that fairy tale’s function is to critique that society and present ways that it can change for the better. Here, Zipes recognizes the reflective properties of the fairy tale and how those reflective properties inspire transformation. Essentially, each fairy tale reflects its critical or utopian version of ‘reality’ and each interpretation is different, creating multiple ‘realities.’ The society is “ossified,” meaning that it is fixed, hardened, or static. The fairy tale enters this society as a transformational force that attempts to create a new version of ‘reality.’ In Deleuzian terms, the ‘fairy tale as magic mirror’'s transformational function promotes a society that is in the process of becoming and dynamic transformation rather than one that stagnates in fixed categories of identity. Either way, the society can look back into the magic mirror of the fairy tale to see itself, recognize its faults, and change according to the tale’s critical vision. Therefore, a fairy tale that critiques its society is a judgmental mirror that urges transformation.

Many critics, however, including Zipes in particular, argue that the Disney films are mimetic. While Zipes thinks that many fairy tales possess a utopian function, he argues that the Disney animated films do the opposite, teaching the audience to accept society as it is. In fact, he claims that “[i]nstead of using technology to...bring about major changes in viewing stories to stir and animate viewers, [Disney] employed...technology to stop thinking about change...and to long nostalgically for neatly ordered patriarchal realms” (95). Disney, according to Zipes,

exchanges the critical mirror for the nostalgic one, encouraging his audiences to embrace the status quo. He claims that Disney uses his revolutionary technology to rob audiences of their imagination and drive for change because “[t]he pictures conceal the controls and machinery. They deprive the audience of viewing the production and manipulation, and in the end, audiences can no longer envision a fairy tale for themselves as they can when they read it” (84). Because the audience is not privy to the production of these tales and their new medium, they cannot experience the joy of imagination or critical thought. In fact, by placing reality into neatly, ordered slides, Disney has “infantilized” the literary fairy tale (83). To summarize, Zipes argues that Disney robs the audience of its imagination and thirst for societal change by animating fairy tales to promote childish complacency and a passive consumption of images.

Zipes’s argument creates an opposition between a fairy tale variant that is critical and a fairy tale that is colorful, visual, and available to children. As I explained earlier, the fairy tale functions as a mirror and reader response allows each reader to create a unique fairy tale. A fairy tale that is available to a child’s perception can also become more critical to an adult reader. How, then, can Zipes claim that the Disney tale’s entertainment value detracts from its critical argument? He defines the Disney fairy tale as mechanical, infantilized, and exploitative, robbing the audience of its imagination. In doing so, he denies Disney’s variant a critical function. Instead, he reduces the tale to an infantile imitation of earlier tales that only “seek[s] to rationalize life in a sterile or exploitative manner” (“American” 151). As such, he claims that the Disney fairy tale has a mimetic relationship with its society, not attempting to change it, but instead cashing in on it.

In part, Zipes is right: the Disney film’s mirror is distinct from the literary mirror to which we have grown accustomed. In fact, Disney’s mirror even threatens the audience’s

imagination, since it presents it with memorable, animated characters. The process of reading a book is completely different than the process of watching a movie. That difference, however, does not mean that the film's mirror cannot be critical. Instead of focusing on the fact that Disney's mirror is not conventional, we should look at how it is different and what it is trying to say. Although Zipes may try to separate Disney's entertainment value from its critical message, I believe that we should not separate them. The fashion with which the mirror reflects is intimately linked with what it is reflecting. Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, produced in 1991, is filled with music, dancing, and imaginative characters through which it conveys a critical message. I argue that Disney thrusts a critical mirror upon the audience. The viewer must actively manipulate and question this mirror—using his threatened imagination—in order to create his own 'reality' instead of passively imitating and consuming his reflection.

THE ROLE OF AUDIENCE RECEPTION: BECOMING ACTIVE READERS OF FILM

As I explored in Chapter Two, each author reflects his reaction to past variants and contemporary struggles in his works. While I do not intend to use Walt Disney's biography to deconstruct his films, I nevertheless believe that he strove to create films that were entertaining, innovative, and critical. Disney's life is a fairy tale. According to Zipes, he was born into a poor family, had a very harsh father, was not lucky in love, and then became successful because of his cunning and intellect ("Spell" 81). He was able to rise out of his difficult circumstances by combining his imagination and intellect with revolutionary technology. While I can only speculate upon what Disney intends in his films, I assume that his life experiences play a role in his fairy tale interpretations. He likely did not forget the unfavorable conditions of his childhood

or the struggles that he faced to become a success. As a result, his interpretations should not echo a complacency with society as it is, but suggest ways to struggle against it and think for oneself. Although he passed away in 1966, 25 years before the Disney Co.'s production of *Beauty and the Beast*, his experiences set the tone for his fairy tale remakes.

As a filmmaker during the early years of motion picture, Disney surely questioned the effect of a movie's message in comparison to that of a book. He broke into the movie industry by focusing on innovation, as seen in his animation, and critical thinking; but are films encouraging their audiences to uphold those same values? Walter Benjamin, in his book *Illuminations*, argues that films encourage passive audiences. He posits that the rise of mechanical art, such as film, has made "[r]eception... a state of distraction... [which] finds in the film its true means of exercise....The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner but an absent-minded one" (242-3). A film's audience is "distract[ed]," "absent-minded," and giving little or no attention to the film's "cult value," or message. The film's technology distracts the audience from the film's message. A reader is not distracted from a book's message by the presentation of words on a page, but a film's viewer can disregard the film's meaning in favor of its technology. This technology encourages passive audiences that fail to react critically to the film's interpretation of 'reality.' Zipes echoes Benjamin's concern that films strip the audience of its critical ability because it is distracted by technology. The film, therefore, encourages the audience to absent-mindedly consume the 'reality' that it reflects, instead of critically questioning and interacting with it.

Disney's animation, however, calls for an active, imaginative audience. Disney, as a critical thinker, changed the film industry through animation. This animation is a product of

Disney's focus on innovative, revolutionary technology in his fervor to escape the conditions of his childhood. Would Disney use this technology to instill passivity and compliance in his audiences? Animated characters may seem like infantile versions of human actors, but are in actuality more complex. They are artistic interpretations of humans, nature, and inanimate objects, which are then mechanically reproduced to move in ways that are sometimes not even physically possible. Unlike films with human actors who have physical limitations, an animated film is an unlimited mirror on the audience. Instead, they combine imagination and science to create characters that seem real, but are not. As Zipes maintains, this medium threatens the audience's imagination because animation presents the audience with incredibly memorable, marvelous images. These images pervade the viewer's imagination to displace any previously formed images with the animators' interpretations. No longer is a reader finding his imagination in a book's mirror, or simply deactivating his imagination in a film. Now the animated mirror's reflection threatens the viewer's imagination, displacing it if the viewer does not actively use it. The viewer must learn to question the film's version of his 'reality' in order to react critically to it and change it, rather than unthinkingly accepting it.

TALE'S SELF-REFLEXION: DISNEY'S VARIANT IS THE BEAST TO VILLENEUVE'S PRINCE CHARMING

As we move into Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, we see how this variant transforms the literary tale's utopian mirror into an animated, critical mirror. Disney's film boldly removes itself from previous fairy tales to create a completely new medium and genre. In Chapter Two, I observed that the Disney film borrows certain plot devices from Villeneuve's and Beaumont's literary versions and transforms those motifs with a unique style and medium. In doing so, the

Disney version certainly appeals to a modern audience and most children are uniquely exposed to these animated interpretations. The film does not “[rob] the literary tale of its voice” as Zipes claims, but reacts to them to create something new (“Spell” 83). Instead of destroying literary fairy tales, he creates versions that are more visually-stimulating and appealing to a modern audience.

The stained glass windows that appear, like bookends, at the beginning and end of the film mark this change from literature to animation. As I observed in Chapter Two, these stained glass stills represent the variants of the tale that have come before Disney. They are rigid, inanimate, and, like the stained glass figures in a church, canonized. The film does not try to discredit them, but it removes itself from that medium. To a character in the film, these stained glass windows represent a lower level of ‘reality’ than his own. Just as the literary fairy tale in our ‘reality’ creates worlds that are not on the same level of ‘reality,’ the stained glass windows tell stories, but those stories are not part of Belle’s ‘reality.’ In turn, Belle’s ‘reality’ is also removed from the audience’s ‘reality,’ but perhaps not as far as the stained glass windows. Thus, three levels of ‘reality’ exist: the level of literature and stained glass, Belle’s animated world, and the audience’s awareness. The film’s dramatic irony creates an animated world that is more ‘real’ than the world of books, or of stained glass, but for Belle, that animated world is her ‘reality.’ This irony piques the audience’s sense of stability because Belle believes that she is in the ‘real’ world when that world is a product of imagination on the audience’s level of ‘reality.’ Is the viewer’s sense of ‘reality’ truly stable then?

The film’s comments upon its genre and medium blur the lines of these levels of ‘reality.’ In the film, Belle loves to read fairy tales. Unlike in earlier variants, Disney’s fairy tale characters read fairy tales. As Belle describes one book that she has read, she sings, “Oh, isn’t

this amazing?/ It's my favorite part because...you'll see./ Here's where she meets Prince Charming,/ but she won't discover that it's him 'til chapter three." Here, Belle is obviously describing a fairy tale, possibly Villeneuve's earlier version. She places distance between herself and the fairy tale, allowing the audience to identify with her, yet, at the same time, she is describing her character in an earlier variant. At this moment, the film self-reflexively shows how the film's genre and that of the literary fairy tale are practically unrecognizable to each other. Belle is in a fairy tale singing about a fairy tale, yet she does not recognize her story as akin to the one in her book. She may be in the same role as the girl who "meets Prince Charming," but she is a very different character. She is amazed enough by the fairy tales to create a link between herself and the audience, asserting her reality, but she is also a part of her own story. Similarly, the film's viewer might try to assert his reality against Belle's "amazing" world, only to find that, like Belle, his 'reality' is also blurred.

Later in the film, this reflection of fairy tales returns, revealing that Disney is restructuring the fairy tale genre. Belle uses the same melody to sing about the fairy tale as she does when she sings about her affection for Beast, indicating that her life is connected to the fairy tale. She sings, "New and a bit alarming/Who'd have ever thought that this could be?/True that he's no Prince Charming/But there's something in him that I simply didn't see." The feelings that Belle has for the Beast are "new" and "alarming." At the same time, she can conquer this fear by acknowledging that even though he is not the Prince Charming that she desired, Beast has qualities that she "simply didn't see" before. Because the melodies are identical, this inspires the audience to connect these emotions with the film's reflection on the fairy tale genre. From Belle's description of her literary fairy tale, the audience understands its main element is the love between the heroine and her Prince Charming. Later, as Belle describes her own fairy

tale, she centers her description on Beast, acknowledging that he is “no Prince Charming” but that maybe she can love him too. Belle actively reads her literary fairy tale, analyzing its version of ‘reality’ and understanding that her ‘reality’ is different. Although her life might “alarm” her, she does not nostalgically wait for Prince Charming, but analyzes Beast to find goodness in him as well. Interestingly, her ‘reality’ melds with the literary ‘reality’ at the end of the film, when her Beast ends up as Prince Charming. This shows that Belle interacts with different realities to create her own interpretation of it, something that Benjamin’s passive viewers do not do.

This contrast links the literary variant with Prince Charming and the Disney variant with Beast. Belle may be amazed by the literary fairy tale, but her description of its main components—the “far off places, daring swordfights/magic spells, [and] and prince in disguise”—reveals that she only sees action and magic in the tale. This correlates to Prince Charming, who has a lovely physical exterior but no depth of character. Meanwhile, Belle’s story is much deeper than sword fights and magic spells. The songs and animation capture the characters’ emotional motivations, helping the viewer understand why the events play out as they do. Like Beast, the Disney tale is not what the audience may expect. Disney animation is “new” and, for critics, a “bit alarming.” Belle is no longer “amaz[ed]” by Prince Charming, but “alarm[ed]” by Beast. At the same time, she understands that, if she works with these emotions, and gives Beast a chance, he will reveal his complexities and his good qualities. Disney’s film is not Prince Charming. It is not a handsome and shallow medium that only promotes acceptance of a rigid power structure that institutionalizes categories of good and evil, beautiful and ugly, rich and poor. Instead, Disney’s film is the Beast. Like Belle’s Beast, the film reveals “something in [the fairy tale] that [the reader] simply didn’t see.” Disney restructures the fairy tale by distinguishing his own version from earlier versions and by identifying his film as the

Beast in comparison to the literary tale's Prince Charming. They are the same person—or genre—but in dramatically different states, or 'realities.'

The reflection that the Disney film shows to the audience, therefore, is the Beast while Villeneuve's variant reflects Prince Charming. As I observed in Chapter One, Villeneuve's Beauty and Beast are in a reflective relationship, much like the relationship between the reader and text or viewer and film. In the variant, Beauty's reflection as Beast indicates that Beauty must change before her reflection can become more beautiful. In comparison, once Beast transforms into Prince Charming, the two characters continue to shift relative to each other, but they do not undergo anymore physical transformations. Villeneuve's mirror to the reader, being Prince Charming, seems to embrace society's institutions. It is a utopian reflection, showing how things should be, and strengthening the social constructs that enable this utopia. For example, Villeneuve's Beauty finds love in an arranged marriage by coming to accept her husband as he is and finding love with him. Villeneuve does not suggest anything radical in her tale, but merely helps the bride learn how to find love in an advantageous marriage.

In comparison, placed in the context of that song, the Disney film has "something there that wasn't there before." This change reveals itself in the film's identification with the Beast rather than Prince Charming. As a reflection of the Beast, this film is critical of its society, showing the audience what is wrong with it and indicating that it must make changes. Disney's film contains a critical vision that was not present in the Villeneuve version to which it closely links. It holds a mirror up to contemporary society to reflect the audience and highlights a few individuals who are imaginative enough to escape a backward, mob-mentality way of thinking. In this way, it promotes an active viewer who questions 'reality' rather than consumes it. Disney's film has "something there" that Villeneuve's version did not have—a critique.

A FORCED REFLECTION

This critical reflection plays with the three levels of ‘reality’ that I distinguished earlier because the mirror that the film holds up to the audience parallels with a physical magic mirror within the film. This instance occurs when Belle thrusts a magic mirror up to the townspeople, revealing Beast as their reflection. The mirror that the film holds up to its audience reflects Beast. A reflection of Beast incites change. Interestingly, within the film, Belle also holds a mirror up to her audience. This mirror reflects Beast: thus, inciting change. At this moment, Belle takes the perspective of the film’s author and reflects a microcosm of the film’s audience’s world. In Chapter One, I link Belle to the reader who looks into the tale to find meaning. In Chapter Two, I show how each author was once that reader. In this way, Belle, who has read and reflected the literary fairy tale, is now creating her own tale which mirrors society, within a film that mirrors society. The mirror that she holds up is a symbolic representation of her tale—since fairy tales acts as mirrors—and her viewers are the townspeople. As I examine the critique that this film/Belle is making, remember that Belle’s mirror resonates on a larger scale with the audience outside of the film. Each mirror presents ‘reality’ the way that the author thinks it should be, after having analyzed the present ‘reality.’ Now, multiple mirrors exist: between the film and its audience and Belle and her Town. Both mirrors reflect Beast and therefore, I can analyze the difference in each group’s perception of and reaction to the mirror.

Just as the film’s animation threatens the viewer’s imagination by thrusting animated images that pervade the imagination onto the audience, Belle thrusts the magic mirror onto the townspeople. In an effort to save her father from the madhouse by proving that Beast is real, she looks into the magic mirror and exclaims, “Show me the Beast!” Belle is in a desperate situation

because she is trying to defend the imagination and creativity of her father by asserting his sanity to a group of morons and twits. By thrusting the mirror and its reflection onto the townspeople, she shifts the Lacanian dynamic that I examine in Chapter One. In Villeneuve's variant, Beauty must come to look upon the Beast as her mirror and find her reflection in him. This allows her to find meaning (signified) in him as her reflection and for him to find expression (signifier) in her. Now, Belle, and subsequently the film, thrusts this reflection onto the audience. The townspeople do not look for meaning, searching for it in a creative or transformative way, but the author/Belle presents this unasked for reflection onto them. Like Benjamin's observations of a film audience, the townspeople do not choose whether or not to accept this meaning, but passively embody the reflection. The film uses this microcosm's situation to question the audience's reaction to the 'reality' and identity that this mirror forces upon them.

Before I move on, however, what exactly is Belle reflecting in her mirror? Is the society actually beastly? When Belle thrusts the magic mirror on the townspeople, she points it directly at Gaston, the most popular man in town. As the town's most desired man, he is a prime example of what this town values. Ironically, he is romantically interested in Belle, but she rejects him and labels him as a pig. After Belle's rejection of Gaston, his sidekick Lefou tries to cheer him up with a song that focuses on why Gaston is the most desirable man in town. The qualities that Lefou and the rest of the men at the bar find desirable have absolutely nothing to do with intellect, imagination, or friendliness. Instead, they focus on his "incredibly thick" neck, the "swell cleft in his chin," and that "ev'ry last inch of [him]'s covered with hair." They do not focus on Gaston's emotional qualities, but value his physical manliness. He is bulky and hairy, which is, to this society, the paragon of a man. As they start to think about his actions, they focus on his fighting abilities, claiming that "nobody bites" or "spits like Gaston." If the viewer

judges Gaston's character on the traits expressed in this song, it would conclude that Gaston is no better than an animal. He certainly has an animal-like physique and his actions tend to echo animal instinct opposed to human intelligence. He is handsome—according to this society—and he is able to fight. If these traits are what make him the most desirable man in town, then this society is incredibly backward thinking and rejects imagination and creativity for physical prowess.

Likewise, Disney's film parallels this society with the wolves who live in the forest. Like Gaston and his cohorts, the wolves travel in packs and attack anyone who is different from them. This includes Belle, her father Maurice, Beast, and Maurice's horse. They attack Beast and the horse even though, technically they are not human. In their thirst for flesh, they are not satiated, and seek to destroy any man or beast that is not part of their pack. Ironically, as Gaston and the rest of the town march through the forest to get to Beast's castle, they do not experience any threat from the wolves. In fact, at one point, the audience sees the wolves running beside them. This indicates that Gaston's society resembles the wolves more than Beast or Maurice's horse. They, too, are bloodthirsty and aim to destroy difference. Neither the townspeople, nor the wolves, think for themselves, but hunt in packs under the leadership of the alpha male. Gaston, of course, is that society's alpha male. Therefore, Gaston's society is no better than a pack of merciless wolves that mindlessly attacks anyone who is different.

This distinction between imagination and independent thought, and physical prowess and mindless following creates an image of a society that does not accept autonomous, creative individuals. The film introduces the audience to this conflict during the first musical number entitled "Belle" in which Belle introduces herself and her passions and the town expresses its opinion of her. Belle, despite being "the most beautiful girl in town," also has an active mind,

setting her apart from the other “Bimbettes.” Belle repeats, “There must be more than this provincial life,” revealing that she is unhappy with the society that does not look beyond its daily routine. A provincial life does not stretch far beyond its basic needs. Belle’s thirst for books, fairy tales in particular, as we saw earlier, implies that she seeks adventure and intellectual stimulation, elements of life that she cannot find in this village. Later, after Gaston’s proposal, Belle exclaims, “I want so much more than they’ve got planned.” Belle cannot happily remain in this limited society. Belle’s life in the village would follow Gaston’s desire for her to be his “little wife” and as mother to many “strapping boys.” Belle would never be able to see the world beyond her family and her intellect would fade away. Her need for intellectual challenge distinguishes Belle from the rest of the village.

While Belle is expressing her discontent with provincial life, the townspeople pronounce their negative impression of her. The people do not understand her, claiming that, “behind that fair façade/I’m afraid she’s rather odd/Very different from the rest of us/is Belle.” Belle’s physical features should allow her to fit in perfectly in this society. However, because of her intellect, her desire to read in particular, she is “rather odd.” The townspeople view her “fair façade” as an indicator that she is one of them, but, at the same time, they qualify that with “but.” She may look like one of them, *but* she is quite “different from the rest of us.” Because of its rejection of her intellectual pursuits, the society establishes a Self-Other mentality. They treat their way of life as the standard by which they judge everyone else. Through the course of the song, they label Belle as “strange,” “dazed and distracted,” “funny,” “peculiar,” and a “puzzle.” They clearly point out that, despite her beauty, which they admire, she is not one of them nor do they attempt to understand her. She is a puzzle that they, with their disregard for intellectual pursuits, will never solve.

Despite Gaston's intended marriage to Belle, he, too, ostracizes her by focusing on her beauty instead of her mind. He believes himself to be the most handsome man in town, and therefore the perfect match for the most beautiful girl in town. Throughout his proposal, he makes no attempt to understand Belle's emotional or intellectual qualities. In fact, he insults her love of reading. His narrow-minded beliefs inform him that "[i]t's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts...thinking." He rigidly believes that the mixture of a woman and thinking cannot create anything good. He next displays his own stupidity by asking Belle, "How can you read this? There's no pictures!" to which Belle responds, "Some people use their imagination!" Belle points out that "some people," like her or other intellectual individuals, actually have access to an imagination, with which they can create their own images. This reaches back to the Belle/author correlation. The author uses his imagination to create images. Gaston, linking to the passive viewer of the film, does not use his imagination. He has never used his imagination and, therefore, cannot appreciate it in others, especially in a beautiful woman.

The mirror that Belle shoves upon the townspeople reveals the gruesome qualities of animal instinct, repression, and ignorance. They truly are beastly. The townspeople's reflection as a Beast indicates a need to change and transform to create a reflection that is more refined and open-minded. By thrusting this mirror onto the townspeople, however, Belle creates a different relationship between the townspeople and the mirror than the relationship between Villeneuve's Beauty and Beast. Instead of giving the townspeople the freedom to understand what their reflection looks like, Belle tries to force change upon them.

As a result of the townspeople's perception of this dominant mirror, they do not try to change and challenge this identity, but succumb to it. As Belle holds up her magic mirror to reveal Beast to the society, she and Gaston see two completely different reflections. Belle sees

her “friend” while Gaston sees a physical manifestation of his primitive nature. The reflection of Beast, despite Belle’s claims that he is gentle and kind, incites the townspeople to kill off those who are different, as would the wolves. Belle rightfully points out that Beast “is no monster, Gaston, you are,” again forcing a monstrous identity on him. As a result, Gaston becomes a monster. Gaston, the leader of the “Mob Song,” describes Beast as a monster who has “fangs/razor sharp ones/Massive paws/Killer claws for the feast/Hear him roar/See him foam/But we’re not coming home/‘Til he’s dead.” This mob sees a reflection that is antagonistic and primal. Despite the fact that Beast has lived in their midst for some time, he has never threatened or harmed them. Since they seek to kill Beast, however, they justify their actions with the possibility that he is hostile. The mob roars and foams, ready for the feast, yet they attribute those traits to Beast. This society claims: “We don’t like/What we don’t understand/In fact it scares us.” Although the Town has no knowledge of what Beast is actually like, they seek to assault him because they imagine that they are just like him. By becoming their reflection, they establish an aggressive stance against their reflection. In Lacanian terms, the signified has forced itself on the signifier and the signifier succumbs by embodying the signified. They have assumed an identity without understanding how it has formed, and have not undergone the process of self-realization.

FROM THE TOWNSPEOPLE TO THE AUDIENCE: A TRANSFORMING BEAST

The townspeople’s reaction to this forced reflection does not foretell the reaction of the film’s audience, but warns the audience of this passive adoption of identity. The perceptions of the townspeople and of the film’s audience are vastly different because unlike the audience, the townspeople do not understand the full implications of their reflection. The Town shuns books,

revealing that they are not aware of any ‘reality’ beyond that of their “provincial” lives and they do not have any desire to change it. The film’s viewer, however, is cognizant of the literary reality, the animated reality, and his own reality. By making the viewer aware of these levels, the film suggests that perhaps other levels of reality exist of which the reader is not aware. Through dramatic irony, the film’s viewer understands that Beast is in a process of transformation while the townspeople remain ignorant of it and only relate to Beast’s animalistic traits. Despite Belle’s claims that the Beast is gentle, kind, and her friend, the townspeople cannot understand Beast’s complex transformation because they focus only on physical exteriors.

Although Beast once upheld the same values of these townspeople, focusing on physical traits rather than on inner-beauty, he now looks different from them because he is a physical manifestation of his ugly nature. By living as an individual rather than as part of a pack (the way the townspeople live), Beast comes to learn that magic or power cannot stand alone and that he must change his behavior to be worthy of respect and love. As the film’s audience sees during the course of Belle and Beast’s relationship, he woos Belle through sincerity and imagination instead of Gaston’s alpha male approach. He, like Gaston, admires Belle’s beauty, but he also encourages her intellectual pursuits. Upon her exclamation upon his enormous library, he says to her, “It’s yours.” This gesture reveals Beast’s good-natured generosity as well as his support of her imagination and cleverness. He transforms from a Gaston-figure who disregards Belle’s love of reading to a gentle Beast who gives her a vast library of books.

Of course, the film’s viewer is aware of this transformation despite the townspeople’s ignorance. When the townspeople look into the mirror, they only see a beast that attacks and kills and they quickly assume that identity. They accept, rather than question, the identity that Belle thrusts on them. The film’s viewer, watching this raving pack from outside of the film,

sees the mistake that the townspeople have made. In effect, the mirror that Belle shows to the Town does not explain the implications of the reflection that other people, with a different sense of ‘reality,’ might understand. This discrepancy teaches an important lesson; do not take a mirror at face value, but question it. The film urges the viewer to critically examine its mirror and its implications instead of focusing only on the blatant physical ‘reality.’

By contrasting Belle’s discontentment and Beast’s transformation with and Gaston’s glorification and consumption of a society that rejects intellect for brawn, the film makes the audience aware of a struggle between a critical thinking and a passive following. The film’s viewer, who desires to identify with Belle or Beast, must become an active viewer who questions and changes ‘reality.’ Belle defends her imagination and asserts her own identity against these pervasive forces. In comparison, Gaston does not think and has an identity that his society has constructed for him. He becomes a raving, bloodthirsty animal. With which character would an audience member rather identify? This opposition encourages the audience members to become active viewers and interact with the film’s mirror.

The film shows the audience a better way to respond to this reflection through Belle’s treatment of the mirror. Belle, who creates the reflection by asking the mirror to show her the Beast, is also a recipient of this reflection. She acts as both an author and a reader as she handles the mirror, her text. Instead of cowering from the mirror as the rest of the townspeople do, she physically handles the mirror, studies the reflection, and calls Beast her friend. The transformational reflective relationship that exists between Villeneuve’s Beauty and Beast resonates in this action. Instead of passively embodying the reflection and charging the castle with the rest of the townspeople, Belle asserts her individuality and stands against them. In the mirror, she sees more than a beastly exterior; instead, she sees transformation, friendship, and

gentleness. These are qualities that one would not associate with a beast. By acknowledging Beast as her friend, Belle steps away from that aggressive relationship that the townspeople develop with the mirror and introduces a symbiotic relationship of exchange. She is aware of the implications of the mirror since she has interacted with and judged Beast. She is not in a power struggle with Beast, as the townspeople conceive themselves to be, nor does the reflection force its meaning onto her. She is discontent with her current 'reality' and seeks Beast's transformative powers. The Town is content with the status quo and accepts the mirror as a mimetic reflection of their society instead of the critique that Belle sees.

In film, unlike in literature, the audience receives a reflection without searching for it. Under the guise of entertainment, viewer looks at a reflection of himself and his surroundings. As Benjamin explored, the viewer can accept this reflection with passivity, understanding it to be a mimetic representation of 'reality.' The townspeople's reaction to their reflection, while not passive since they seek to fight Beast, is submissive and obedient to the mirror. They fight Beast, not because they feel endangered by his threat to their identity, but because they are beasts, and their perception of a beast is one that kills. This reaction shows how they passively embody their perception of this reflection instead of questioning it. The film's viewers have an advantage because they see that the townspeople are ignorant and do not understand Beast's condition. The film, opposed to Villeneuve's novella, reflects Beast as the viewer's mirror image in the hope that this viewer, unlike the Townspeople, will act as a "critic" that is not "absent-minded" or "distracted." Instead, the viewer should closely inspect the film to understand the full implications of his reflection, questioning the circumstances of reflection and transformation. The film alerts the viewer to this identity crisis by threatening the viewer's sense

of imagination. If the viewer fails to think for himself and question his reflection, the viewer will dwell in a stagnant 'reality' that does not change.

The film conveys that, like Belle, the audience should interact with the mirror instead of passively gazing at or cowering from it. Just as the mirror questions the viewer's life, the viewer should question the mirror, its goals, and its biases. After all, each book, film, or other medium of contemporary communication is written by an author reaction to his present state of 'reality.' No text has an innate meaning without the intentions of the author and the perception of the reader. Therefore, each text, which is a mirror of the reader's perception, will reflect the author's intentions as well. In order to learn from a reflection, one must understand how and why it came to be, just as Belle does. Belle appreciates the fantasy world of literary fairy tales, lives in her own animated world, and relates to the film's audience's knowledge, blurring the lines of a stable 'reality.' The Disney film shows the viewer the problems with obediently accepting a reflection without questioning it and urges the viewer to question his mirrors. In a Lacanian mirror relationship, the child looks into the mirror to find meaning, establishing a trust that the mirror will reflect truthfully. When texts are mirrors, however, that trust is imaginary. Authorial intentions are just as important as viewer's perception. As a result, the Disney film undermines even itself in its message; instead of trusting the reflections that books and movies present to the viewer and passively absorbing them, take a close look at each reflection and question it. Only by being judgmental of these mirrors can the viewer create a 'reality' for himself that suits his needs and desires instead of the mandates of the mirrors.

Just as I concluded in Chapter One that Beast's and Beauty's reflective relationship transforms them, the reflective relationship between the Disney film and its audience transforms the audience and, as a result, the film. This film's critical vision has created uproar among critics

and fairy tale authors alike. First, in response to Zipes' complaint that Disney does not have a critical vision, why would recent fairy tale authors have such obviously strong reactions to the film if it is not critical? Perhaps authors wish to reclaim the genre from Disney and once again define it as a critical mirror to society. Or, maybe, these authors understand the message. Villeneuve's reflection of Prince Charming falls flat compared to Disney's reflection of the mysterious enigma of Beast: a mixture of magic, humanity, beastliness, and imagination.

Secondly, the film accomplishes its goal by inspiring both critical and imaginative responses to the Disney film. Focusing on the process of transformation, change, and critique is much more interesting than the polished and handsome end result. Recent fairy tale variants center almost exclusively on Beast, inciting change and critical questions. For example, Donna Jo Napoli's novel *Beast*, written in 2000, reconstructs the tale from Beast's perspective. In 2001, Dreamworks Animation released the film *Shrek*, which focuses on how an ogre can win the heart of a princess. In the end, the princess transforms into an ogre instead of Shrek transforming into a prince. In the sequel, Prince Charming turns out to be an arrogant, egotistical idiot. He may be handsome, but, as the film makes clear, he does not have the goodness of spirit that truly matters. Similarly, *Happily N'Ever After*, a 2007 computer animated film, depicts a fairy tale world spinning wildly out of control with none of the conventional happy endings.

The acclaim that these recent works have received attests to the new trend in the fairy tale genre. The audience is no longer content with a formulaic 'once upon a time,' 'happily ever after,' and marriage-with-Prince-Charming as the end goal. Instead, the audience accepts an ogre as the Prince Charming, revealing that we can break down those boundaries to create tales that suit our time's needs and audiences, changing our 'reality.' The audience's imagination is rife with criticism by no longer accepting a merely utopian vision that supports societal

constructs and Prince Charmings. Each variant reflects the Beast, indicating a critical stance on norms and traditions. The reader and viewer have changed, as evidence by the revolution and critical scrutiny in the variants. Each author is a reader/viewer, just like Belle. As a result, the variants change the reader/viewer and his choice of analysis over passivity informs the creations of new variants and the interpretations of old. Thus, each viewer's interpretation of the message changes, making 'reality' dynamic, transformative, and reflective of a critical response to society's mirrors.

...Happily Ever After?

The fairy tale genre has transformed dramatically from the literary salons of France to contemporary post-modern variants. While certain critics decry this transformation, questioning the ownership and canonization of tales, other critics, including myself, play with the loosening of such tight formulas. In his 1997 book *Newfangled Fairy Tales*, Bruce Lansky states: “Nothing stays the same forever...a princess shouldn’t have to marry a knight she doesn’t love (even if that knight does defeat a dragon),... no one can weave straw into gold,... no prince in his right mind would marry a princess who complains about a pea under twenty mattresses, and... the brave little tailor was actually a vain braggart” (qtd in “Magic” 445). Indeed, why should the Princess marry Prince Charming when she really prefers a servant? Fairy tales are a magical space for the storytellers and the readers to experiment with ‘real’ situations. This new trend communicates that one should honor tradition, but also question it. Instead of blindly submitting to a dated behavior, one should critically examine the custom to determine if it makes sense.

This new approach to fairy tales focuses on the critical voice of the storyteller as well as the active response of the reader. This reader does not passively absorb the lessons as Beaumont’s reader did, but analyzes and questions the characters and their situations. The increasingly critical reader/viewer plays with the tale’s ‘reality’ and demands that, regardless of the magic present in the tale, the characters are fleshed out instead of formulaic. It is no coincidence that the critical study of Children’s Literature and Fairy Tales has surged in the past decade. This melding of real characters with magical situations represents the new trend of increasingly imaginative scenarios in the new variants and critical audience identification with the variant. For example, the characters in the movie *Shrek* are magical creatures plucked out of their respective fairy tales. However, besides accepting the magic of a talking gingerbread man

or donkey, the viewer's main experience with magic in the film is when Shrek and Fiona have "true love's first kiss." This love results in Fiona's transformation. We can see that the fairy tale has certainly transformed from its days of unquestioning loyalty to staid traditions, lending to more fluidity and intellectual curiosity. In 1757, of course the Princess would marry the Prince. Now readers look back to that Beaumont version to comment upon pedagogy, sexism, and repression, qualities that a reader of that time period would not have considered. However, at the dawn of a new millennium, audiences are no longer satisfied with tradition and seek to question it instead.

How has this change occurred? I have explored this question in each chapter, questioning how the transformation in *Beauty and the Beast* and its variants occur, instead of just accepting the change. I conclude the tales reflective function has contributed to this change. The fairy tale is Bettelheim's magic mirror that reflects, distorts, and transforms all who look into it. This results in several different types of transformational reflective relationships. The relationship between the reader and the tale transforms both of them. The reader reflects the tale by interpreting certain events and characters depending on the reader's personal biases and interests. With each reader, the tale acquires new meaning. In fact, one reader could read the same tale in completely different ways depending on his stage in life! As a result the reader transforms the tale. Inversely, the tale transforms the reader. The process of reading a fairy tale reveals a lot about the reader to the reader. As Lewis Seifert maintains, the fairy tale is a marvelous space which clarifies psychological processes. The tale reflects the reader, and helps the reader understand the psychological processes behind her actions. For example, the case of Villeneuve's *Beauty and the Beast*, I identified Beauty and Beast as reflections of each other. This analysis revealed to me that I look to the relationship between the reader and the text in the

same way. I had never identified my method of reading with such clarity. As a result of this tale, I understand how I interact with literature and film.

This dual reflection also happens between the tale and society. The storyteller is a product of the contemporary society, understanding the philosophies, rules, and dominant power systems of the time. At the same time, the storyteller also maintains subjectivity, reacting to that society. Perhaps certain rules and traditions exist that the storyteller does not agree with and aims to subvert. For example, as I discussed in Chapter Three, Walt Disney was a product of his society, but that does not mean that he accepted the harsh surroundings of his upbringing. This leads the storyteller to present, in the tale, a critique. This critique, in turn, goes toward changing the society. While I am by no means stating that a fairy tale can change the methodology of an entire society, it is certainly a tool. I do claim that Disney's animation and his tales, *Beauty and the Beast* in particular, have sparked a change in the fairy tale trend. Instead of promoting Prince Charming and Happily Ever After, fairy tale remakes are now championing ogres and Happily N'Ever After! In this sense, one understands the society has impacted the storyteller, who changes the current variant of the tale by critiquing the society, which then changes the society.

Finally, a reflective relationship exists among the variants of the tale. As they write their respective variants, the storytellers bounce ideas and theories off of earlier variants to create something new. The individualizing narrative voice distinguishes each variant from the predecessors. These variants identify with each other, but they change to suit the storyteller. Later, after the variant has been written, it continues to change. The society, which has changed partly as a result of this variant's critique, has since spawned a new variant to suit its contemporary needs. Members of that new, transformed society now read the older variant in a

completely different way. The variants reflect off of each other to transform the reader's response and the societal norms.

The fairy tale is a mirror. At least, *according to my response to fairy tales*, the fairy tale is a mirror. As I have stressed throughout this entire thesis, each reader brings something unique to each tale and each variant of each tale. No two readers can read a tale the same. I can only attempt to convince you, as my reader, of my interpretation. When I look into a fairy tale, I see a tangled web of reflections. In fact, so many reflections exist that I think it is impossible to trace how every element in a story has changed from its original creation. Instead of focusing on those final reflections as unchanging and trying to find some sense of stability in a "powerful, lasting story," I prefer to concentrate on the possibility that those reflective relationships are there and that they are constantly transforming the reader, past and future variants, the society, and the storyteller.

Perhaps some people still hold onto that hope of a 'happily ever after.' Personally, I do not. Not because I do not believe in happiness, but because I think that much more happens in the 'ever after.' The ending is unsatisfactory because it abruptly cuts off the rich characters and their lives, indicating that now that they have united, they will live in a stagnant state of wedded bliss and, as the French version of the ending '*ils eurent beaucoup d'enfants*' mandates, have many children. But what else? It always seemed rather boring. Instead of continuing their adventures and fighting the villains, the characters that had come so vividly to life are once again reduced to archetypes as flat as the pages upon which they are printed. Instead, my vision of constant transformational reflection allows the adventures and transformations to continue, the society to change, and each variant to maintain dynamic meanings, sparking creativity and a new generation of variants.

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