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A Glass Slipper at Midnight:
An Analysis of the Recurrence and Evolution of the Cinderella Story in American Films and Popular Culture

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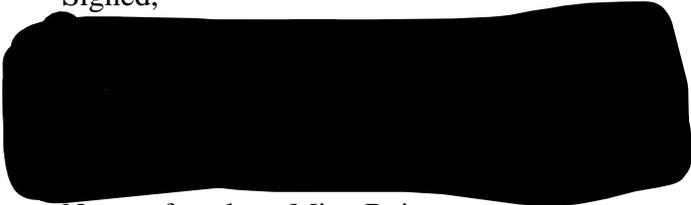
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Abstract

This Master's thesis project aims to answer the following research question: What is it about the fairytale, *Cinderella* that has historically inspired and continues to inspire a multitude of adaptations of the story within American visual media? The Cinderella story is discussed in terms of its elements as an oral and literary tale, as well as its place within adaptation studies; specifically, film adaptations. The first chapter explains adaptation theory and adaptation studies as an academic field, citing several scholars whose knowledge of adaptation theory help to create a relevant argument for the Cinderella story. The second chapter discusses the history of the story's three European origins as a literary tale as written by Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm. Chapter three compares the fairy tale elements of Disney's two Cinderella films (1950 and 2015) in relation to how they are informed by social standards of their respective time periods. The fourth chapter examines the success and marketing of the Disney Company and its princess brand, particularly as it pertains to gendered marketing that targets young girls and women. Finally, chapter five offers an analysis of two non-Disney Cinderella film adaptations and their role in the formation of the Cinderella story's relevance within modern popular culture in the United States.

Keywords: Fairy tales, Cinderella, adaptation studies, Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, Brothers Grimm, Disney, Ella Enchanted, Ever After, American popular culture

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Introduction

<u>Cinderella: The Story</u>

Cinderella. The story of the unfortunate young girl forced to work for her unforgiving stepfamily, whiling away the laborious days with dreams of a better life and finding her true love. Inevitably, a grand event occurs - usually a ball or a party - which Cinderella is prevented from attending by the cruel ministrations of her step-relatives. The special night arrives, and the family leaves the house, also leaving behind a defeated and discouraged Cinderella, desperately yearning for just one night free from her daily struggles. However, no sooner has she ruminated on her gloomy situation, than some form of magical aid appears. Nowadays, we are familiar with that magical intervention as being a fairy godmother; typically depicted as a motherly figure with magical powers, who transforms Cinderella's rags into a stunning gown, pumpkins into a grand coach, and finishes the display by creating dainty, glass slippers for Cinderella's feet. However, the fairy godmother warns, "On the stroke of twelve, the spell will be broken, and everything will be as it was before" (*Cinderella* 1950, 47:41- 47:46).

Cinderella attends the ball and her magical transformation serves as enough of a disguise so that she goes unrecognized by her stepfamily. At the ball she meets the prince or love interest, and they dance together until the clock chimes midnight. Cinderella rushes home just in time, before the spell is broken, but accidentally leaves behind one of her glass slippers. The prince, meanwhile, has become completely besotted by her during their one night at the ball. However, having no other clue to her identity save for the glass slipper, he embarks on a quest to find the mysterious girl he fell in love with at the ball. Ultimately, he reaches Cinderella's home and asks that each lady in the house tries on the slipper in question. When he realizes that Cinderella is the girl to whom it belongs, they get married and live 'happily ever after.'

Some versions of the story include a quasi-epilogue scene where the stepfamily is punished in some way; sometimes it is only the stepsisters who are punished and sometimes the punishment scene includes the stepmother. Alternatively, one stepsister and the stepmother are punished, while the other stepsister, who has been significantly kinder towards Cinderella, goes unpunished and is sometimes even rewarded. Other versions of the story omit the mystery in finding the owner of the shoe entirely, although the search to find Cinderella herself remains relevant. These variations and other differences in the Cinderella story will be further explored in the following chapters of this thesis.

Modern day scholars estimate that there are "thousands of variants" of the Cinderella story "known throughout the world" (Dundes 1988). The oldest known versions are *Rhodopis* from ancient Greece (ca. 7 B.C. - 23 A.D.) and *Ye Xian* from ancient China (ca. 860 A.D). However, for the purposes of this thesis project the focus will lie on Cinderella's more modern beginnings in Western culture. Therefore, the analysis will start with the *Pentamerone* (1634) - a fairy tale collection by Italian poet and courtier, Giambattista Basile. This collection includes the first literary version of the Cinderella story, called *La Cenerentola*, *ossia La bontà in trionfo*, meaning 'Cinderella, or Goodness Triumphant.'

In the seventeenth century, a French author named Charles Perrault rewrote Basile's *La Cenerentola* and adapted it into the version we are more familiar with today. Perrault added the elements of the fairy godmother, the glass slipper, and the other magical artifacts to the story. The nineteenth century then saw the revival of the Cinderella story in *Aschenputtel* by the Brothers Grimm and another century later, Disney's animated feature film *Cinderella* (1950) came to cinema screens, drawing inspiration from both Perrault's and the Grimms' versions. The Cinderella story has been shared globally throughout history and various cultures, which indicates that there is a collective, unconscious attraction towards the story, which in turn, implies that it has unique qualities as compared to other fairy tales. The abundance of Cinderella media adaptations in the United States alone, show are strong indicators of this hypothesis. Cinderella's aforementioned literary beginnings, history, and the authors behind it, will be further explored in chapter II of this thesis.

Adapting Cinderella

"Storytelling is always the art of repeating stories." (Benjamin 90).

After establishing the story of Cinderella in the context of early Western literature, we turn our attention to one of the most popular methods of story adaptation: film. This thesis will specifically focus on four film adaptations of the Cinderella story, each encompassing unique additions and/or omissions, as well as different settings and portrayals of the Cinderella character herself. These films will act as relevant case studies in order to place the original fairytale into a more contemporary context. The subset of films that will be discussed are: Disney's two adaptations - one animated and one live action, both titled *Cinderella* - from 1950 and 2015, *Ever After* (1998) and *Ella Enchanted* (2004), from 20th Century Fox and Miramax Films respectively. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the nuances in each of these Cinderella films, each chapter pertaining to these films will include a brief plot summary. Doing so ensures that the reader will not be confused when the discussion talks about specific characters and plot points. Each film features the necessary Cinderella character, but she is portrayed differently in each version. This, therefore, will be the second element of the analysis, because before we can fully understand the world around her, we must first engage with Cinderella herself. The analysis will also touch upon the casting of each film and the subsequent differences in acting styles of each actress who portrays Cinderella and how her style relates (or does not relate) to the specific narrative style of the film.

Another important element to consider is how the setting shapes the genre of each production. The films will be discussed in pairs, falling under two categories related to setting: The two Disney adaptations will be discussed first. Due to Disney's large scope as a company both in the United States and globally, it is also necessary to critically analyze the company's reputation and its significant influence in the marketing world, particularly in terms of gendered marketing of the Disney Princess brand targeted at young girls and women. These psychological elements will be explored in greater detail in chapter IV. Disney's theme parks are also an important part of the Disney Company's influence on American and global culture. Fairy tales, such as Cinderella, are manifested in some of the structural elements of various Disney parks. For example, the castle that stands at the center of Magic Kingdom in Disney World in Orlando, Florida is designed to look almost exactly like the castle from Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) (Himmelberg 2011).

Disneyland in Anaheim, California features a castle that is a real life replica of the castle in Disney's third princess film, *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), which in turn, is inspired from the design of the Neuschwanstein castle in Bavaria, Germany. This makes it an adaptation in and of itself. Neuschwanstein Castle was commissioned by King Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1869 as both a secluded place of luxury for himself and as a way of honoring his favorite German composer, Wilhelm Richard Wagner. (McIntosh, 2012). The king paid for the castle's construction out of his personal wealth plus loans, rather than using the public funds of Bavaria. King Ludwig II took a personal interest in the design and interior decoration of Neuschwanstein, his ultimate wish being that it should resemble the castle of a medieval knight (Blunt 110). "Throughout [the castle], the design pays homage to the German legend of the Lohengrin, the Swan Knight. This theme was often included in the operas of Richard Wagner. Many rooms in Neuschwanstein have a border depicting the various operas written by Wagner…" (Desing 1992). In general, Neuschwanstein castle is "elaborately decorated with romantic images from the Middle Ages, along with religious depictions" ("The Real Story Behind Disney's Fairy Tale Castle").

Before the construction of Disneyland Walt Disney and his wife, Lillian, took a trip to Bavaria's Neuschwanstein castle. Walt Disney loved the design so much that he drew direct inspiration from it when he designed the Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella castles, the latter of which is depicted in the company's official logo. "Neuschwanstein … boasts several cylindrical towers that are also featured on Cinderella's Castle. The exterior is peppered with windows, turrets, and decorative chimneys … Decorations like these … provided inspiration for a fantasy castle like Cinderella's which was more suited for a 'happily ever after…'" (Upton). King Ludwig II died before the completion of Neuschwanstein, but the fairy tale ending lives on in both the Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty castles in Disney World and Disneyland respectively.

In terms of Disney's two Cinderella film adaptations, this thesis serves to analyze not only the specific elements in each version, but also examines how Disney has revised their telling of Cinderella to fit today's societal standards. Marketing strategies and Disney's target audience are also relevant to the two adaptations in general, and these elements allow us to consider the place of Cinderella within the princess universe; both in the context of Disney and the broader princess universe within American cinema. There are numerous adaptations of Cinderella in American visual media, manifested as children's television specials, direct-to-video sequels of Disney's original adaptation, as well as more varied, live action versions, focused on historical accuracy,

such as *Ever After* (1998). The four films chosen as case studies for this thesis are by no means representative of all the different elements found in the Cinderella story. Nevertheless, they still represent a balanced mixture of variation and similarity, both in regard to each other and to the original fairytale. Furthermore, the analysis of these films will emphasize the ways in which the literary versions of Basile, Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm laid the groundwork for shaping Cinderella into the story that is so beloved and well-known in Western culture today.

Theory of Adaptation

While the bulk of this thesis project is dedicated to analyzing some of the specific elements of the Cinderella story by using a sample of corresponding film adaptations in American popular culture, it is also necessary to discuss the theoretical concepts of adaptation. Specifically, this refers to literary and oral tales being adapted into film. Therefore, chapter I is a theoretical chapter, which draws upon the scholarly work of Linda Hutcheon and Jørgen Bruhn to provide a foundational framework for the theory of adaptation and adaptation studies. Additional books and academic articles will also be relevant through the course of this analysis, including *Film and Fairy Tales* (2013) by Kristian Moen and *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006) by Jack Zipes.

In her book, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013) Hutcheon explains that while "adaptations are obviously not new to our time… the move from the literary to the filmic or televisual has even been called a move to 'a willfully inferior form of cognition'" (Hutcheon 2-3). The assumption that the adapted version of a cultural text is automatically inferior to the original text is something that Hutcheon explores at length in the first chapter of her book. Therefore, chapter I of this thesis explores this assumption in relation to Hutcheon's book and how it affects audience expectations of film adaptations within American society. Additionally, the book, *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (2013) edited by Jorgen Bruhn et. al. suggests "a redirection of adaptation studies, from the one-way conveyance from novel to film to a two-way dialogic process" (Bruhn, et al. 13). In terms of film adaptations, he notes that "adaptation… results in both a new filmic version and a change in the original text" (13). It is therefore necessary to create an understanding of how adaptation generally comes into existence in today's popular culture landscape. A further theoretical framework for this discussion derives from specific scholarly articles about the role of fairy tales and film adaptations in Western culture. Additionally, chapter I will include supplementary information about the adaptation of fairy tales and folk tales specifically.

<u>Aims of This Project</u>

The story of Cinderella has been present in Western culture since the seventeenth century. It has remained a popular tale for adaptation in various media forms since then, which indicates that there are particular elements that make this story unique compared to other fairy tales. The 'rags to riches' theme is appealing for many Americans, because it mirrors the American Dream; keep your head down, work hard, and one day all your dreams will come true. The early versions of Cinderella portrayed her as a beautiful, obedient young woman with all the qualities of a princess. She must simply "have courage and be kind" (*Cinderella* 2015, 00:05:22-00:05:27) and eventually her wishes will be fulfilled.

This thesis project offers an examination of the Cinderella story within the context of American popular culture. What is it about the fairytale, *Cinderella* that has historically inspired and continues to inspire a multitude of adaptations of the story within American visual media? Cinderella can be interpreted in different ways depending on the portrayal of the core story. The magical elements such as the glass slipper and the fairy godmother offer escapism and nostalgia, particularly in the style of Disney. Cinderella's perseverance through cruelty and abuse can be seen as inspiring or as a consequence of patriarchal structures in society, depending on the time period in question. Indeed, *Cinderella* (1950) was a huge success when it was first released, because it conformed to the patriarchal standards that were deemed appropriate and acceptable in post-World War II American society. The film, *Cinderella* (2015) was created from the same story but incorporated pro-feminist elements that made it more acceptable to a modern-day audience. *Ever After* (1998) and *Ella Enchanted* (2004) also offer strong heroines playing the Cinderella character in different settings while retaining the story's original features. Ultimately, the goal of this thesis project is to build a theoretical framework and analysis, so as to accurately place the Cinderella story and its key elements into American popular culture today.

Chapter I

Laying the Foundation: Adaptation Studies and Fairy Tales

<u>Introduction</u>

Linda Hutcheon begins her book, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013) by stating that, "Adaptations are everywhere today: on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the Internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and video arcade" (Hutcheon 2). Indeed, adaptations have become increasingly popular during the recent decades, and continue to be both an attractive and economically 'safe bet' for movie companies. For example, Disney has capitalized on this concept by remaking their earlier animated films into live action features, since the 1996 live action version of *101 Dalmatians*.

Adaptation is not a new concept, but has, in fact, been done since at least the Victorian era. Hutcheon explains that "Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything … poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and tableaux vivants were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again" (xii). The advent of new technologies over the last century means that nowadays there are even more cultural artifacts to use in the process of adaptation. This allows for a further diversification of the field of adaptation studies. The following chapter will analyze adaptation studies using the works of Linda Hutcheon and Simone Murray as the theoretical framework, along with other scholars in the field, such as Jørgen Bruhn, Kristian Moen, Anne Gjelsvik, and others. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will lie on film adaptation; specifically, that of fairy tales being adapted into films, constituting the typical text-to-film adaptation process. Jack Zipes' book, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006) will also be highly relevant in understanding why certain fairy tales are seemingly more popular for adaptation in Western culture than others. Zipes analyzes fairy tales through the lens of memetics and social evolution theory, which he then applies to the evolution of certain fairy tales in Western culture. One of these fairy tales is Cinderella, film adaptations of which will be further discussed in later chapters. However, it is first necessary to place Cinderella in the context of the theory of adaptation as well as adaptation studies, film studies, and literature studies before analyzing specific examples of the story within American popular culture.

1.1 - The Evolution of Adaptation Studies

At its core, the word "adapt" simply means to "make something suitable for a new use or purpose; modify" ("Adapt"). This is what any good adapter strives to achieve, regardless of the medium. The ultimate goal is to take a narrative found in one medium and make it suitable and workable in another medium. The most common example is a novel being adapted into a film or television series. In earlier times before film and television, novels were usually adapted into plays, and symphonies into operas or ballets (Hutcheon 3).

The field of adaptation studies is adaptive in itself, just like its content. According to Simone Murray's book, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (2010), "adaptation scholars are given to producing proliferating surveys of the state of the discipline, rigorous questioning of underpinning theoretical models, and rehearsings of the discipline's historical trajectory" (Murray 1). She goes on to explain that adaptation studies scholars need to engage in this "habitual checking of [adaptation studies'] pulse" (1), because it straddles both literary studies and the newer field of film studies. The latter discipline is, according to Murray, "too closely associated with screen media ever to be entirely academically respectable" (1). Adaptation studies, meanwhile, represents a melding of the old or traditional and the new or contemporary by bringing together both fields. As a discipline, it is relatively new, especially when compared to its related field, literary studies. In the early days - generally agreed to be before 2002-2005 - scholars often favored literature over film, automatically declaring media adaptations as inferior to the original text (Leitch, 63). During this time, "courses in adaptation amounted to irritants: constantly reminding screen studies of its formerly handmaiden status to English departments and of literature academics' sneering at the alleged simple-mindedness and lowest-common-denominator pandering of screen media" (Murray 2). The theoretical framework within adaptation studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was also comparatively weak, resulting in "a seemingly endless stream of repetitious and theoretically timid comparative book/film case studies that served largely to confirm both disciplines' direst views of the field as an academic backwater" (2). Adaptation studies was struggling to find its place within the existing academic disciplines; a struggle that was exacerbated by intolerance from scholars in literary studies. Students and academics of film studies suffered similar complications in establishing their field, but adaptation studies became a scapegoat for daring to try and bring the two fields together, thus creating a type of inward collapse upon itself. The result was that adaptation studies became

"increasingly intellectually parochial, methodologically hidebound and institutionally risible" (2). In other words, it became a field which was laughed at for its limited scope and its inability to change due to the restrictions of scholarly tradition until that point.

However, by the year 2005, adaptation studies had successfully engaged in "shaking off inherited assumptions and re-examining all aspects of its self-conception" (Murray 2). The establishment of the Association of Literature and Screen Studies (ALSS) was a key component in this new era of adaptation studies. Soon after its founding, the organization was renamed the Association for Adaptation Studies (AAS), which allowed adaptation scholars to establish the discipline as a more "inclusivist conception of adaptation as a freewheeling cultural process" (2). The organization's journal, *Adaptation* is still being published today, "offering academic articles, film and book reviews … popular and 'classic' adaptations, theatre and novel screen adaptation, television, animation, soundtracks …" (Oxford Academic 2017). Anthologies and works by "leading international scholars" (Murray 3) have also greatly helped to legitimize adaptation studies within the academic world. This includes Linda Hutcheon's aforementioned book, as well as a number of other works by equally renowned scholars. Additionally, the AAS hosts several conferences, allowing academics to come together and "challenge assumptions concerning the boundaries of literature on screen" ("About the Association").

<u>1.2 - Jack Zipes: Why Fairy Tales Stick</u>

Today, the study of adaptations and the adaptation process is highly relevant to the economic growth of media industries. However, there exists a psychological importance to the field as well, because adaptations must appeal to an audience successfully. Otherwise, companies would stumble into economic pitfalls; a risk that exists with or without adaptations, but that is less likely to happen if media is made from pre-existing source material. Adaptations of familiar stories are usually a safer option in regard to successfully appealing to an audience than are brand new stories, because the recognition of a story - even in an adapted form - evokes a feeling of pleasure in the recognition itself. Furthermore, a familiar story tends to remind audience members of when they heard or read the story as a child. We turn our attention then, to a category of almost universally familiar stories, which create exactly this type of feeling; fairy tales.

In his book, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006), Jack Zipes explains that the reason why some fairy tales have survived centuries of cultural and societal evolution is because "they spoke to the conflicts that arose out of the attempts by social orders to curb and 'civilize' our instinctual drives" (Zipes 2006, xii). According to him, analyzing fairy tales as a literary genre - which then becomes relevant to adaptation studies - is best done by using "recent research on relevance theory, social Darwinism, evolutionary psychology, and linguistics" (xii). This is important in order to understand "how the literary fairy tale originated in an oral mode and was formed over thousands of years to stick in our brains in very peculiar ways" (xii).

Like most fictional stories, fairy tales offer an element of escapism if only for a brief period. However, fairy tales take this one step further by offering "the notion of magical transformation," which is "key to understanding most of the traditional fairy tales that have stuck in us and with us" (xii). As a species, humans have used fairy tales and other oral stories as coping mechanisms for the hardships and the "banality of everyday life" (xii). But what makes some fairy tales more likely to stick with us than others? How are fairy tales adapted and retold over time and how do they adapt to fit the constant change within society? These are the questions that need to be explored and analyzed in relation to adaptation theory. Zipes claims that "we use the classical fairy tales in mutated forms through new technologies to discuss and debate urgent issues that concern our social lives and the very survival of the human species" (xii-xiii). These classical fairy tales have stuck in our brains for centuries, creating a group of so-called 'canonical' fairy tales, which include well-known favorites such as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," "Hansel and Gretel,"

"Rapunzel," "Snow White," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Little Mermaid," "The Ugly Duckling," and "Cinderella" (1). The latter story will be further analyzed in chapters two through four of this thesis, allowing for a specialized interpretation of fairy tales within adaptation and literary studies.

1.3 - Memetics and Evolution Theory in Relation to Fairy Tales

Zipes poses the question, "Why do particular fairy tales stick with us" (Zipes xi) and in what ways do we continue to replicate these stories as culturally relevant artifacts? In order to answer this question fully, it is first necessary to examine the concept of a meme - "a cultural replicator that has led to the rise of memetics" (3-4). Memes fall under the broader discipline of memetics, which is "the study of information and culture based on an analogy with Darwinian evolution" (Kantorovich 363). Memetics analyzes how an idea or cultural artifact spreads and what makes certain cultural artifacts more likely to become memes than others. Some scholars argue that memetics is a pseudoscience and that it hurts the reputation of more legitimate branches of social science, such as psychiatry (Shermer 670). However, memetics still offers intriguing information regarding the patterns of cultural artifacts. Furthermore, Zipes cautions us not to dismiss it so quickly, because it can be useful in ascertaining the intricacies of the survival of certain fairy tales. Therefore, this subsection will focus on fairy tales in relation to memetics and evolution theory.

Nowadays the term, 'meme' is generally well-known, especially in online communities, but the term itself was coined decades before the widespread use of the internet. In his book, *The Selfish Gene* (1976) Richard Dawkins explains memes through the analogy of a gene. According to him, "the meme was conceived as a unit of culture (an idea, belief, pattern of behaviour, etc.) which is 'hosted' in the minds of one or more individuals, and which can reproduce itself in the sense of jumping from the mind of one person to the mind of another" (Burman 75). Dawkins' main argument establishes that although the process is different, replication nevertheless happens in culture as in genetics (Edmonds 2002). Accordingly, a meme functions as a unit of information, a term that has been debated amongst professionals in different fields and was ultimately defined differently depending on the researcher's respective field. This has led some scholars to criticize and discredit memetics as a legitimate field of study. However, other scholars argue that memetics is simply the study of a specific type of human cultural evolution, which means that potentially, it holds great significance in the understanding of society, culture, and adaptations.

According to Dawkins, "examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions" (Dawkins 192) which "propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense can be called imitation" (192). He argues that the process by which memes spread mimics the replication of genes in human evolution. In other words, we act as hosts to these new ideas and pieces of information. A meme can also be viewed

as a string of information, which, like DNA, can be copied from person to person, allowing for the spreading of a certain cultural idea or artifact. Using the work of Susan Blackmore in relation to evolution theory, Zipes explains that "A meme must be capable of being copied in a faithful way; it must be shaped or formed in such a way that many copies can be made; and it must be able to survive a long time so that many copies will be disseminated" (Zipes 5). If we accept the premise of memes behaving like genes, then we are able to apply that premise to the study of fairy tales and their adaptations. For Zipes, this means applying the Dawkinsian view of memes to the evolution of the fairy tale from oral stories to a literary genre and many other mediums. A tale like Cinderella is amongst those fairy tales that have been propagated within social culture for centuries. This indicates that it contains certain elements that were and continue to be culturally relevant. In studying the evolution of Cinderella (as well as fairy tales in general), the evolution of such cultural relevance will also become clear.

Furthermore, Zipes claims that the origin of the fairy tale as a meme comes from "the oral folk tale, in all its generic forms," (7) which "carries vital information for [our] adaptation to the environment" (5). Therefore, in order for a cultural artifact to become a successful meme, it "must pass successfully through four subsequent stages: 1) assimilation by an individual, who thereby becomes a host of the meme: 2) retention in that individual's memory; 3) expression by the individual in language, behavior or another form that can be perceived by others; 4) transmission of the thus created message or meme vehicle to one or more other individuals" (Heylighen).

However, Zipes notes that while a reasonable analogy can be made between gene replication and memetics, he stresses that "whatever the brain acquires through a stimulus is remembered, interpreted, adopted, and reproduced to contribute to the formation of a community and culture" (Zipes 11). A meme is not simply an exact copy of itself at its origin, but rather, goes through several adaptation processes in a myriad of different ways, depending on who encounters the meme, whether it is oral or written, and how the person "feels it is relevant in a certain sociocultural context" (11). A fairy tale that fits the social criteria at the time becomes ingrained in people's memories as a relevant concept. Moreover, as societal values and ideas change, so does the interpretation of the fairy tale in question. In conclusion, certain fairy tales have evolved in such a way that has allowed them to stick in our brains as relevant cultural data, resulting in replication over centuries. Fairy tales like Cinderella are one such example, because it has been highly relatable to society since its literary birth. Cinderella's literary origins will be further

examined in the following chapter of this thesis. Memetics can be applied significantly to the understanding of why particular fairy tales 'stick.'

1.4 - The Question of Fidelity

One of the larger and more controversial questions surrounding both the process of adaptation and adaptation studies is fidelity. With regard to film adaptation, fidelity refers to "the notion that purportedly measures the extent to which a work of literature has been accurately rendered (or not) as a movie" (McFarlane 2007). Literary scholars argue that faithfulness to the original source material (usually a book) is vital in order for any adaptation to be successful. However, there is also an argument to be made for intentionally altering the original text in favor of an effortless adaptation.

In his essay, "The Ethics of Infidelity," Thomas Leitch explains that until recently, both literary and adaptation scholars have held the view that "adapters are allowed to change features of their source texts only if they improve them" (Leitch 65). This inherently assumes that the original text is superior and that any adapted version of it will not be as good. Due to this foundational assumption it becomes clear that "either adaptations have a responsibility to stick as close as possible to their sources … or they have an equally strong responsibility to strike out on their own" (66). The consensus usually shows that both the scholars and the audience prefer fidelity over creativity. Even if creativity is not outright rejected, it is still more vulnerable to criticism with regard to its interpretation of the original text, because ultimately, fidelity is preferred. This makes it difficult for creative film adaptations to become successful, resulting in fewer attempts at telling a story in a different way than the original source material.

Disney's recent trend of remaking their own animated movies is a prominent example of the entertainment industry's tendency to stick with pre-existing source material, rather than creating something new. Since 1996 Disney has released numerous live action remakes of previously successful films, which has sparked a debate not only over the fidelity of these new films, but whether they are indeed even necessary. "The primary function of the remakes … is to reignite our passion for the originals" (Harris). However, these new versions are automatically faced with the challenge of appealing to an audience, which has grown up with the originals during the Disney renaissance - "the period from 1989-1999 during which Walt Disney Animation Studios returned to producing critically and commercially successful animated films that were mostly based

on well-known stories" (Pallant 89). Ultimately, the challenge of these Disney remakes is one of fidelity on two planes; fidelity to the original story upon which the original animated film itself was based, and fidelity to the original animated film, which is mainly what audiences will scrutinize in the remade films. Chapter three of this thesis will further analyze Disney's remade versions through the lens of the Cinderella story. Disney's original animated film, *Cinderella* (1950), will be juxtaposed with the remake of the same story, also entitled *Cinderella* from 2015.

Another dimension to the fidelity of adaptations is discussed in Anne Gjelsvik's essay, "What novels can tell that movies can't show" (2013). Drawing upon the work of Seymour Chatman, she explains that "many recent films based on novels have seemed to make certain type[s] of changes to their source material …" (Gjelsvik 245). According to Gjelsvik, these changes are usually in the form of "downplaying … taboos and provocative content in mainstream cinema, where challenging depictions of violence or sex are modified to suit the conventions of cinema" (246). This means that both mediums possess unique powers of depiction, one of which is deemed 'too much' for viewers to handle. Gjelsvik states that viewers experience a different emotional impact between the two mediums and that because of this, "adaptation theorists should take into consideration the phenomenological experience in relation to adaptations" (248).

Why do film adaptations of novels portray the story with more subtle attention to violent or sexual content? Why is an audience more likely to feel outraged by such content in a film versus in a book? Further along in her analysis, Gjelsvik explains that this is due to the "particular powers of cinema," (255) which places the viewer in the unique position of being a witness to what is depicted on the screen. She explains that even though "violence in fiction is rarely depicted the way it is … the emotional response to visual violence … is related to the fact that we see it with our own eyes" (255). Reading a novel is a vastly different sensory experience than watching a film and Gjelsvik's argument states that adaptation scholars must be aware of this dissonance. When reading about violence, for example, we are in control over how much of that violence we allow ourselves to visualize, and even then our imagination cannot compare to the experience of being confronted with the violent depictions on a large, visual scale, like a film. The experience of being drawn into a film's story and scenes, particularly graphic ones, can be referred to as becoming "intoxicated by the indexical illusion" (255). Despite the fact that "we know that the violence is not real," seeing violence through a visual medium makes it more difficult for us "to accept that this is only imaginary" (255). Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for adaptations to deviate from

the original text and stray away from complete fidelity, in order to maintain its accepted standing within mainstream cinema.

Linda Hutcheon defines adaptations and the adaptation process as "repetition with variation," which is, in essence, what all adaptation strives to achieve. The repetition in question can then be scrutinized through the lens of fidelity; is the repetition repetitive *enough* with regards to the original source material? However, scholars like Anne Gjelsvik then argue whether or not fidelity is strictly necessary in all adaptations; is complete faithfulness to the text sometimes rendered impossible through sociocultural expectations or values? A text-to-film adaptation includes both fidelity to the original text as well as its own unique elements, which creates a debate among scholars that is unique in its own way. Notably, Hutcheon asks, "If adaptations are … such inferior and secondary creations, why then are they so omnipresent in our culture…?" (Hutcheon 4) There is evidently some pleasure in watching adaptations of familiar stories, because statistics show that adaptations have been popular even during the period of skepticism surrounding adaptation studies as an academic field. Hutcheon maintains that this stems from the trend of adaptations to value "thematic and narrative persistence, combined with material variation" (Ropars-Wuilleumier 131).

Moreover, adaptations are "never simply reproductions," (Hutcheon 4) but they embody both the old and the new that, when successful, attracts and delights audiences. Fairy tales are an effective example of this, because they draw upon most people's pre-existing knowledge and familiarity with the story that is being adapted. Additionally, some fairy tales, such as Cinderella, have stuck in our minds more so than others, which creates a group of canonical fairy tales. These stories have maintained some form of cultural relevance throughout the centuries, allowing for their consistent reproduction in various adaptive forms. Cinderella, for example, expressed a different message in Disney's 1950 animated film than in the 2015 live action feature, due to changes in societal values. The process of fairy tale adaptation can be seen as a form of memetics, as explained earlier.

As Hutcheon argues, adaptations are economically driven. For companies like Disney, adaptations are economically driven, as is evident by musical stage show adaptations of films. "The movies of *The Lion King* or *The Producers* offer ready-made name recognition for audiences, thereby relieving some of the anxiety for Broadway producers of expensive musicals" (5). Disney remakes are another example of 'safe bets' for the film industry, because "the comfort of ritual

combined with the piquancy of surprise" (4) is what makes adaptations so appealing. This is especially true in the case of Disney, because the remakes are adaptations of pre-existing Disney films. Therefore, Disney does not need to re-establish itself as a reliable media company, but can instead focus on the nuances of adapting its own material.

Conclusion

Adaptations can be studied from a number of different perspectives, all of which, allow for the connection between older disciplines (like literature studies) and newer disciplines (like film studies). Hutcheon explores many types of adaptations, including plays, video and computer games, operas, ballets, and films, while also highlighting the importance of who, what, why, when, where, and how adaptations come into being. Other scholars like Jack Zipes, focus on one particular form of literature (fairy tales) and interpret its significance in the context of adaptation theory. As previously stated, this thesis will discuss adaptation through the lens of fairy tale film adaptations, using Cinderella as a specific case study. This fairy tale will be contextualized within adaptation studies as well as film and literary studies by using the framework of all the aforementioned scholars in this chapter. Notably, "return need not be regression" (Hutcheon 175).^

Chapter II

Cinderella's Literary Beginnings

<u>Introduction</u>

Jack Zipes explains that although "we cannot say with historical precision when the literary fairy tale began its evolution … we can trace motifs and elements of the literary fairy tale to numerous types of storytelling … that contributed to the formation of a particular branch of telling and writing tales" (Zipes 3). The history of this evolution looks different depending on where in the world we focus, but "in the Western European tradition this … occurred some time in the early medieval period (perhaps even earlier) and led to the social institution of a special literary genre (conte de fée) in the seventeenth century that today we call the literary fairy tale" (3). Later, the advent of the printing press essentially decided which fairy tales would be remembered and which ones would become myth or even forgotten. The stories listed in chapter I as well as a few others, remain as the group of classic or canonical fairy tales to this day. This is due to the fact that "the most telling or catchy tales were reprinted and reproduced in multiple forms," (1) allowing for the immortalization of certain stories, namely, the canonical ones.

This chapter will trace Cinderella's literary origins in the Western world, beginning with Giambattista Basile's "La Cenerentola" through Charles Perrault's version, "Cendrillon ou la Petite Pantoufle de verre," ("Cinderella; or the Little Glass Slipper") and ending with a psychological examination of the Brothers Grimm's Cinderella story, "Aschenputtel," as well as their wider collection of *Kinder - und Hausmärchen* (1812) or *Children's and Household Tales*. Here, the work of twentieth century psychologist and scholar, Bruno Bettelheim, will be used in order to offer an additional interpretation of the Cinderella story long after its conception, as it relates to children's emotional development. The adaptation of classic fairy tales is constantly evolving, which results in a vast number of Cinderella stories each with their own relevance to the culture and society in which it was written. Lastly, the analysis of these three European versions of Cinderella will provide background and foundational structure to understanding the story's place in modern day popular culture.

<u>2.1 Basile and "La Cenerentola"</u>

Giambattista Basile (1566-1632) was an Italian scholar known for his work as a courtier, poet, and fairy tale collector (Jones 38) and is credited with publishing the earliest known European version

of the Cinderella story amongst other fairy tales. His work as a courtier led him to pass a lot of time in Neapolitan noble courts, from which he drew inspiration for the settings of his fairy tales. Basile loved Naples and began serious study of things Neapolitan. He started to collect fairy tales and folktales with the setting being mostly in Naples ("Giambattista Basile").

Notably, during Basile's lifetime, Naples was part of the Kingdom of Naples; officially known as the Kingdom of Sicily. During this time Naples was one of "the most important political and cultural centers of Southern Italy and among the most influential capitals in Europe," (Bottigheimer 175). This included the Port of Naples, which was extremely important for economic purposes. This was part of the reason why Basile's stories were almost always set "in the woods and castles of the Basilicata, in particular the city of Acerenza" (Jones 1995); areas in southern Italy within the Kingdom of Naples/Sicily. Basile's most famous work was *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille,* which means "the tale of tales, or entertainment for little ones," written in the Neapolitan dialect. Later, it became known as *Pentamerone* and was "published posthumously in two volumes by his sister…" (Croce 888) in 1634 and 1636. *Pentamerone* was forgotten for a while until the Brothers Grimm "praised it highly as the first national collection of fairy tales" (889) during their own pursuit of fairy tale collecting and retelling. Included in this collection was the story of "La Cenerentola" or "Cinderella."

"La Cenerentola" follows Zezolla whose father - a prince in this version - marries her beloved governess. After the wedding Zezolla's new stepmother dotes on her "for five or six days…giving her the choicest morsels to eat, and clothing her in the richest apparel" (Basile 64). Soon, however, the stepmother presents "six daughters of her own, whom she had until then kept concealed" (65). Zezolla's father turns all of his attention upon his new wife and stepdaughters who mistreat Zezolla (now called Cenerentola or Cinderella) and send her to work in the kitchen. Soon afterwards, her father goes to the island of Sardinia, where he obtains gifts for all his daughters. Cinderella is given a magical tree from a fairy. The king hosts a ball and the fairy living in Cinderella's tree acts as an early version of the fairy godmother. The ball is held over three consecutive nights. On the third night, as she is rushing home, Cinderella loses one of her slippers. The king asks that all the women in the land try on the shoe. Eventually, he finds Cinderella and they get married (71-73). Notably, Basile does not specify the material of Cinderella's slipper, merely that she is wearing slippers. The detail of Cinderella's *glass* slipper would appear in another version of the story a few decades later.

2.2 Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre"

A few decades after Basile's *Pentamerone* was published, a French author by the name of Charles Perrault revisited the Cinderella story and made it into the fairy tale that is most commonly recognized today. Scholars generally agree that "the popularity of his tale was due to his additions to the story, including the pumpkin, the fairy-godmother and the introduction of 'glass' slippers" (Zipes 2006, 46). The tale of "Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre" ("Cinderella or the little glass slipper") was published in Perrault's fairy tale collection, called *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, in 1697. This collection was comprised of eight fairy tales: "Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper," "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," "Little Thumb," "The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots," "Riquet of the Tuft," "Blue Beard," "The Fairy," and "Little Red Riding Hood" (Carpenter 129).

Charles Perrault did not begin writing and collecting fairy tales until very late in his life, at the age of sixty-seven. Before that he studied law at prestigious schools in Paris and was highly involved in "the creation of the Academy of Sciences as well as the restoration of the Academy of Painting" (Sideman 837). In 1663 he was hired as the secretary to King Louis XIV's finance minister. He continued working in this office until, at the age of fifty-six, he was forced to retire (Morgan). After his retirement from public office, Charles Perrault began writing Christian poetry and stories. "As a long time public servant under Louis XIV he wrote prolifically of the King and his achievements" ("Charles Perrault Biography"). This included "everything from mottoes on commemorative medals to panegyrics on military victories" ("Charles Perrault Biography") Ultimately, "Perrault was a loyal servant of the crown" and because of this, "his writings reflected a concerted effort to promote the prestige of the King" ("Charles Perrault Biography").

In 1695, at the age of sixty-seven, Perrault decided to channel his efforts instead into writing stories for his children. Two years later, he published *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé avec des moralités* or "Tales and Stories of the past with morals." Notably, this collection had the subtitle "Tales of Mother Goose," although Mother Goose herself was not a real person. Scholars believe that Mother Goose is likely a reference to "rural storytelling traditions in proverbial phrases of the time" (Coignard). At the time, fairy tales were extremely popular in aristocratic social circles, including court, therefore, the publication of this collection turned Perrault into a popular author throughout France. Today, "he is often credited as the founder of the modern fairy tale genre" (Flood) as it exists in the European tradition.

Perrault's Cinderella story is indicative of the French storytelling and folklore tradition that was highly popular at the time. According to Dorothy R. Thelander, French authors "wrote (or rewrote) fairy tales for sophisticated adult audiences" (Thelander 468). However, she is quick to note that "contemporary translations into English of the tales of Charles Perrault… seem to have been aimed at children and young adolescents" (468). She explains that fairy tale roots "lay in stories that peasant nursemaids and servants told children left in their charge" (469), but that this only accounts for half of the cultural influences upon French fairy tales. While the tradition of oral storytelling had its roots in peasant culture at the time, "in their written form [these stories] were shaped by highly sophisticated writers for an adult and relatively sophisticated audience" (469). Thelander categorizes these stories as "Salon Tales" (469) and notes that the fairy tales that emerged from French society during this time period held a mixture of folk or peasant origins as well as elite French literary elements.

The influence of folk tales in the Salon Tales can be seen in the stories' simple characters and the use of formulas such as "once upon a time" and "they lived happily ever after" (469-470). However, the complexity of some of these tales, as well as the detailed descriptions of characters' appearances and dismissal of certain magical elements makes it clear that Salon Tales were also influenced by elite French society. Charles Perrault's stories tended towards the peasant/folk origins, due to their "relatively unified plots" (470) and the fact that "they seldom elaborate unnecessarily and at times include rhymes and incantations" (470). Thelander asserts that even highly literary French stories were created from bits and pieces of folk tales.

Given that Perrault and his fellow elite French authors were writing during King Louis XIV's reign, it was important that any work presented at court held sophisticated meaning; in the case of fairy tales, this meaning was to be found in the proverbial 'moral of the story.' At the time of their publication, Perrault's fairy tales were not meant to be children's literature, but rather, cautionary or moral tales that often "addressed tabooed subjects in a symbolic manner" (Ashliman 1997). Andrew Lang explains that Perrault's Cinderella story included two morals: 1. "Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value" (Lang 71) and 2. "Without doubt it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding, and common sense … However, even these may fail to bring you success, without the blessing of a godfather or godmother" (71). Additionally, "the purpose of these tales was to teach those who govern, the sublime lessons of truth and virtue" (Thelander 472). However,

Salon Tales did not focus on governmental structures aside from establishing that there was a kingdom or a king and queen or a prince. This "lack of alternatives suggests a real consensus - in the late seventeenth century, the normative government for the French was of course, a monarchy" (472). Perrault's own world view was evident in his fairy tales, cautioning young women to maintain goodness and purity (as in "Cendrillon"), or to be wary of wolves wishing to prey upon innocence (as in "Little Red Riding Hood").

The more important focus of Salon Tales was the family, usually a nuclear family unit. Notably, "all parent-child conflicts are pushed off onto the mother and she is then distanced from the child by being turned into a stepmother" (Thelander 478). Usually, the mother dies or has already died when the story begins and the only maternal interaction that Cinderella has is with her (often cruel) stepmother. The stepmother is the quintessential character "whose very title suggests fairyland" (478). She is placed in contrast to Cinderella, who is - according to Perrault's story - "of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world" (Perrault). Cinderella is the forgotten child who, simply by nature of her natural goodness, especially when seen in contrast to her cruel step-family, is rewarded with a magical transformation by a fairy godmother and ultimately, the rise to aristocracy when she marries the prince (Thelander 482). Furthermore, the fairy godmother "appears unbidden to reward a protagonist who does not pass any test, but who already appears worthy of elevation to nobility and/or riches" (488). This type of magical intervention is depicted only as a reward for Cinderella. The fairy godmother "does not judge the sisters, nor does she punish them" (488), although in some versions of the story, the stepfamily does face some form of retribution for their cruelty towards Cinderella. Perrault's Cinderella embodies the traditional and expected characteristics of protagonists in stories of the seventeenth century. She is "a gentle, forgiving heroine" who even goes so far as to forgive her stepsisters and provides them with "lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the court" (Perrault). From the very beginning of Perrault's story, readers are immediately encouraged to empathize with Cinderella as the "heroic victim" and "idealised female," (Stott 18).

As mentioned earlier, Perrault is credited with implementing the famous details of Cinderella's glass slipper and pumpkin coach. However, while "magic gifts and talismans are retained in the Salon tale… the focus is not on their magic" but rather on "the craftsmanship required to produce" (Thelander 490) these objects. For example, "in Perrault's account, the slipper

is no more wonderful than Cinderella's ball gowns" (490) even though it is one of the most recognizable elements of the story to this day. In the nineteenth century scholars regarded the glass slipper "as so prosaic that it was turned into an ordinary fur slipper" (490). This indicates that the societal expectation of a 'good' fairy tale changes with cultural trends; a glass slipper seemed mysterious, unusual, or even magical in Perrault's time, but downright ridiculous and impractical to nineteenth century minds. There is, therefore, a psychological element to fairy tales and their place in society, which will be further explored in the following section.

2.3 The Brothers Grimm: *Kinder - und Hausmärchen* and "Aschenputtel"

In the nineteenth century the Cinderella story was revived again by the Brothers Grimm who "were among the first and best-known collectors of German and European folk tales, and popularized traditional oral tale types" (Zipes & Deszö 2015). Their now famous collection, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* or "children's and household tales," was published in two volumes in 1812 and 1815. Stories in the collection include "Cinderella," "Snow White," "The Frog Prince," "Hansel and Gretel," "Rapunzel," "Beauty and the Beast," "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Three Little Pigs," as well as numerous other types of stories, which, although they are well-known, cannot be categorized as 'fairy tales' specifically. The legacy of Grimm's tales is still prevalent in current popular culture, particularly on the part of the Disney company. Disney has adapted multiple Grimm tales into animated feature films, which are still enjoyed by a large audience today. Examples of these films are: *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *Snow White* (1937), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), and *Tangled* (2010) which follows the character of Rapunzel. However, Disney's inspiration for these adaptations stemmed from both Perrault's and the Grimms' works.

While Disney's version of the Cinderella story is family-friendly, the Brothers Grimm wrote a much darker version for their collection. In their story, Cinderella (called "Aschenputtel" or "little ash girl" in German), loses her shoe at the ball because the prince deviously "covers the steps in pitch to make her stick to them" (Triska), suggesting some darker ulterior motives. Additionally, Cinderella's stepsisters are so desperate to marry the prince that they cut off parts of their toes and/or feet in order to fit into the shoe when the prince comes calling. Later, at the wedding between Cinderella and the prince, the stepsisters get their eyes pecked out by birds as punishment for their cruelty towards Cinderella. This is significantly different from Perrault's story in which Cinderella forgives her stepsisters and marries them off to lords of the court. The fate of Cinderella's stepfamily varies greatly across versions of this tale, which speaks to the cultural and societal expectations in each given time period. Perrault was a member of the elite class in seventeenth century France. While he believed in deriving morals from stories, members of his elite social circle would not have allowed for much description of gruesome acts of punishment. The Brothers Grimm, on the other hand, adapted Cinderella almost two full centuries after Perrault and additionally came from a more modest background. Furthermore, the Grimm brothers were

interested in the grittier peasant folklore and mythology, creating altogether darker and more serious versions of many beloved fairy tales.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm began collecting stories in 1806. "Their interest turned specifically toward the national poetry of the folk" (Dégh 84) during this post-Enlightenment period in German-speaking regions, emphasizing their goal to reconstruct German peasant mythology "for the education of the people" (85). They wanted to create "a history of German poetry" (85) and literature in order to help "make the Germans conscious of their national values" (85). The Grimm brothers assembled a story-collecting team to aid them, which included fellow collectors and folksong publishers, as well as members of families who told these types of stories (notably, the Haxthausen family and the Droste-Hülshoff sisters were especially helpful in this vein). This project helped to establish a new discipline in academia: the science of folklore, in which "cooperative scholarly study" (87) of the Märchen or fairy tale, became widespread in Europe.

The *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* "soon became the standard work for international tale study, [a] basic for comparative analysis" and was "originally intended for the scholarly reader" (88) much like Perrault's works. Many of the stories in this collection "do not end happily at all and do not satisfy the expectation of the Märchen reader" (90). As mentioned earlier, fairy tales made up only a small portion of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Other types of stories in the collection included origin legends, ghost stories, fables, humorous stories about tricksters and fools, romantic/adventure stories (novellas), legends about evil spirits/witches/malevolent dead, chain and catch tales, and stories with morals (91). These tales were widespread within traditional peasant communities and depending on the content, were "enjoyed by different age, sex, and occupational groups" (91). Notably, only ten percent of the stories in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* were deemed appropriate for children. These included tales like "Hansel and Gretel" and "Red Riding Hood," which were perceived to be useful and educational 'scare and warning' tales.

Like Perrault's stories, the tales of the Brothers Grimm were not originally intended for a young audience. In the case of Perrault this was because the French elite believed that such stories were too complex for children's minds and preferred to categorize them as sophisticated entertainment for the upper class. This was reinforced by the fact that Perrault worked within the king's court as the secretary to the royal financial advisor and subsequently, his work became well-known and enjoyed by members of the court. Although Perrault started writing fairy tales with his

own children in mind, it was a few years before they became acceptable material for children in the eyes of the French elite. The Brothers Grimm, on the other hand, wrote stories that included such vivid descriptions of violence and emotional trauma, that they themselves did not want children reading them. However, one of their friends "among others, suggested that a subtitle should warn parents to exercise sound judgement in selecting stories for retelling. (In today's wording, we might say that he gave a "P.G." rating to the book.) The brothers took the advice to heart, but instead of adding a subtitle, included in the Introduction their suggestion of 'parental guidance'" (92).

<u>2.4 Bruno Bettelheim and Why Children Need Fairy Tales</u>

At the time, society was somewhat divided about whether fairy tales were beneficial or harmful to children, given the often gruesome depictions of adult themes. Before the Grimms' versions, these types of oral tales "were regarded by the urban upper-class intellectuals as silly lies, spreading superstitions and sheer irrationality" (Dégh 92). The main concern for the Brothers Grimm was "the protection of children from vulgarities, rough language, and blasphemous expressions' (93). However, this was somewhat undermined by the fact that "fright was regarded as the most effective disciplinary measure" during this time period, because it was deemed necessary "to keep children well-behaved, quiet, at home, and out of trouble" (93).

Although "the pedagogical principles of the Grimms and their contemporaries… were rather limited" (93), it was something that the twentieth century psychologist and scholar, Bruno Bettelheim focused on in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976). Bettelheim's work focused on the education of emotionally disturbed children and drew inspiration from Freudian psychology. He believed that children with emotional and behavioral disorders were not born that way and could be helped through psychoanalytic therapy (Fountain). Even though "much of his work was discredited after his death due to fraudulent academic credentials and accusations of plagiarism" (Fountain), *The Uses of Enchantment* still offers an intriguing theory on the role of fairy tales in children's emotional development. Despite the aforementioned stains on his academic career, Bettelheim strived for excellence in his research. He was also a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps and drew upon these experiences to write his book.

Bettelheim's fundamental theory claimed that the dark elements in fairy tales (including the Grimm brothers' tales) gave children the opportunity to face their fears in symbolic terms, which would foster a healthy and productive emotional maturing process. It is also important to note that Bettelheim's reading of the Cinderella story is of an Oedipal tale involving a young woman's struggle with sexual desire for her father and his attention. It is also a story about sibling rivalry in order to get to complete sexuality. These are the fundamental issues that dictate Cinderella's behaviors, according to Bettelheim.

In his review of *The Uses of Enchantment* Joseph Nagy explains that "exposure to this type of fantasy narrative" (Nagy 1642) exposes the child to relatable problems within their own frame of thinking. This begs the question: How can fairy tales be used as a channel of communication

(1642) not only between parents and children, but also between the child and the real world? Here, we turn to the analysis offered by Heike vom Orde in her article, "Children need fairy tales" (2013). She notes that *The Uses of Enchantment* was published "at a time in which fairy tales were regarded with suspicion, as instruments of bourgeois oppression used to transmit false ideas and attitudes to young people" (vom Orde 17). Bettelheim's advocacy for children reading dark tales was an attitude that went directly against social theory at the time. Most people argued that "fairy tales legitimized violence by modelling aggressive modes of conflict resolution" (17). This viewpoint extended to the Grimm's stories due to their explicit descriptions and scenes of violence and abuse. However, this can be likened to modern day critics claiming that violent video games cause young people to display more aggression; the correlation between violent media aggressive behavior is too ambiguous to be proven definitively.

Vom Orde divides Bettelheim's views into four main arguments: 1. "Fairy tales help children to project, thus fostering their development," 2. "Fairy tales offer knowledge of life from the inside," 3. "Fairy tales help to dispel fears," and 4. "Fairy tales correspond to the child's thinking and experience" (17-18). She explains that according to Bettelheim, fairy tale characters symbolize the Freudian aspects of personality; the ego, id, and super-ego (17). Therefore, children's fears are projected via this fantasy medium in which they can then "understand inner conflicts which they experience in the phases of their spiritual and intellectual development" (17). For Bettelheim, "these 'cruel' stories helped children to cope with life… and emphasized the hope of a better future and a happy outcome" (17). He also theorized that "children intuitively understand that these stories represent the essential developmental steps towards independent existence." (17) This is due to the "unreal but not untrue" (Bettelheim 73) way in which they deal with "oedipal conflicts, with violent and phallic fantasies ... fear of sexuality or castration… humiliation, self-destruction and separation anxiety" (73). Fairy tales provide children with tangible and relatable characters through which they are able to process complex developmental processes.

Vom Orde goes on to explain that fairy tales help children dispel fears, because the young audience has a "desire for the fantastic and … fear of the horrible" (18). Therefore, children's fears become easier to manage, because they appear as relatable characters in manageable situations. Bettelheim gives the following example in regard to this matter: "If our fear of being devoured takes the tangible shape of a witch, it can be gotten rid of by burning her in the oven" (Bettelheim 120). These "elements of menace and cruelty" (vom Orde 18), Bettelheim claims, help children

cope with aggression and fear, but do not pose any danger of actually creating aggression in the child. Most importantly, is the notion that fairy tales correspond to children's thinking and experience, which acknowledges their fears, problems, and emotions. Fairy tales offer solutions "which the child can understand, because they correspond to childish, animalistic thinking and express, on a symbolic/visual level, the things that motivate the child" (18). However, most fairy tales convey to the child that "an inner development has to take place" (18) before a resolution can be reached. Cinderella includes a number of themes that can be useful for a psychological reading of the story, as was introduced by Bruno Bettelheim. There exists a tendency in American society, to interpret stories in terms of psychoanalysis. For example, Edwards argues that Cinderella's glass slipper(s) represents her pureness, her virginity, while others claim that the slipper is a test of character; "Glass slippers would be… incredibly difficult to walk in without shattering the brittle substance, so only a true princess like Cinderella could walk and dance every so lightly on her feet" (Edwards).

The story of Cinderella has also been the subject of both praise and criticism from a feminist perspective. The changing societal notions of what makes a princess continues to evolve and shift. Some scholars claim that Cinderella "embodies feminism through kindness and strength" (Figueroa), while others believe that the success of Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) was indicative of a "shift in mainstream cultural thinking after World War II, towards the desire for women to return to family matters and allow men to embody the ideals of hard work and ambition" (Stover 3). The feminist perspective regarding Cinderella and other notable fairy tales will be further analyzed in the following chapter, as it pertains to the two Disney film versions of Cinderella.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Cinderella is part of a larger group of stories that all have similar themes, character ideals, and morals. Yet, it is the Cinderella story specifically that is one of the most popular stories for media adaptations to this day, particularly in American culture. This indicates a social attraction towards the story's greater themes, which have been maintained throughout its different versions. These themes are: the cruel step-family, the cinders or ashes, the fairy godmother, the transformation of the animals into human helpers and pumpkins into a coach, leaving the ball at midnight, the glass slipper and the resulting search for its owner. In addition, Cinderella can be an inspirational message for immigrants due to its 'rags to riches' theme. There is also the element of goodness and purity as laid out in Basile's "La Cenerentola;" something that the Disney company capitalized on in their wholesome, family-friendly animated film adaptations of fairy tales, including Cinderella. While this theme may not be as relevant in the modern day due to progress in gender equality, it certainly adhered to social expectations about gender up until the mid-twentieth century.

The multitudes of Cinderella adaptations currently in existence all draw upon the themes and ideas from the literary versions of the tale. In Western culture the Cinderella story began with Giambattista Basile's "La Cenerentola," which introduced Cinderella as the pure, pious and inherently good young woman, who was then rewarded by a type of divine intervention merely for possessing these qualities. Charles Perrault's version did not change Cinderella's character, but added the recognizable elements of the fairy godmother (rather than a magical tree inhabited by fairies) and the subsequent transformation of a pumpkin into a coach and animals into drivers. Cinderella always wore elegant shoes to the grand event as part of her magically-created attire, but it was Perrault who specified that it was a *glass* slipper. Some scholars say that Cinderella walking on glass symbolizes her purity and inherent goodness, reinforcing the notion that women should remain demure and pure. This ushers in feminist critiques and brings to light the complexity surrounding the qualities of a 'real princess.' This will be further explored in the following chapter of this thesis.

Basile and Perrault wrote of nothing worse than envy and neglect in their Cinderella stories. The Brothers Grimm, however, told a darker tale filled with details of verbal and physical abuse as well as neglect perpetrated towards Cinderella. In the end, her stepsisters are punished in an extremely gruesome way, which is vastly different from Perrault's "Cendrillon," in which they are forgiven and receive a comfortable place within the kingdom. It is also important to note that the

Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* contains a variety of different types of stories and that traditional fairy tales only comprise a small part of the collection. The Grimm brothers were interested in the folklore of the common people rather than stories told in elite, royal circles as was the case for Basile and Perrault. However, it is also important to note that the Grimms' "Aschenputtel" (Cinderella) was written almost two centuries after "La Cenerentola" and "Cendrillon," which means that societal expectations of both literature and behavior had changed significantly. "Aschenputtel" gives detailed descriptions of the cruelties perpetrated by Cinderella's stepfamily, such as putting "peas and lentils into the ashes, so that she was forced to sit and pick them out again" (Grimm 1884). The stepsisters having their eyes pecked out by birds is one of the most starkly contrasting differences between the seventeenth century and nineteenth century Cinderella stories.

Through their project of collecting and writing down stories of the German-speaking lower class, the Brothers Grimm made the study of fairy tales into its own academic field, worthy of scholarly analysis. This led to a number of different interpretations of their stories, including the psychological work of Bruno Bettelheim, who posited that fairy tales are vital to children's emotional development. He argued that despite their darker, harrowing themes, the Grimm fairy tales offered children a safe medium in which to face their fears before confronting the harsh reality of the 'real world.' Bettelheim argued that because these stories dealt with "oral and oedipal conflicts, with violent and phallic fantasies, with fear of sexuality or castration, with humiliation, self-destruction and separation anxiety" (vom Orde 17), children could face these issues through the relative safety and comfort of relatable story characters. Therefore, children need fairy tales in order to become emotionally stable adults.

Now that the origin and literary history of the Cinderella story has been established, the following three chapters will comprise the analysis of four Cinderella films: *Cinderella* (1950), *Cinderella* (2015) - both made by Disney - *Ever After* (1998) and *Ella Enchanted* (2004). Due to its vast influence and arguable monopoly over American cinema, chapter four will discuss how the Disney Company influences the expectations of a 'true princess,' as well as Disney's highly relevant place in American culture and society. The two non-Disney films can be seen as purposeful deviations that offer additional interpretations of the Cinderella story. The literary origins of this famous tale as laid out by Basile, Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm established the fundamental themes that characterize all Cinderella adaptations as the recognizable tale of the little cinder girl.

It can be concluded, therefore, that any legitimate adaptation of this story must include the elements of an inherently good and pure woman, magical intervention, the glass slipper, and the happily ever after; whether that is in the form of a prince and marriage or simply in the satisfaction of Cinderella finally finding agency and freedom.

Chapter III
Disney's Two Glass Slippers

3.1 *Cinderella* (1950)

"Have faith in your dreams and someday your rainbow will come smiling through.
No matter how your heart is grieving, if you keep on believing,
The dream that you wish will come true."

(*Cinderella* 1950)

These lyrics are part of Cinderella's introductory song that she sings to her animal friends upon waking up. The song ends with the chiming of a distant clock, breaking the spell of the song and forcing Cinderella - and by extension the viewer - back into a less idyllic reality. Despite the unpleasantness of the summons, she obediently gets ready for the day and starts attending to her duties. From the very beginning Cinderella embodies the belief that if she remains dutiful, gentle, and submissive, someday her dream will come true (Wood 27). In 1950 this was the generally accepted belief in American society. Women were expected to be "submissive to a patriarchal order" (27). This is evidenced by the fact that Cinderella is rewarded with true love and marriage at the end of the film.

During this time Walt Disney had also established a method of "reworking European märchen to suit the demands of his medium and audience" (Wood 29). It was important for the content of this version of Cinderella to be relatable to American audiences. Thus, Disney replaced the "stereotypes of the European märchens with American ones" (30) and added comedic subplots alongside the romantic plotline. This was also a way of lengthening the story, given that "a typical märchen was too short for a full-length feature" (29). Another motive for this diversity in plotlines was Disney's desire to appeal to both children and adults. The romantic aspect was more likely to appeal to "the adults who accompan[ied] their children to the movies" (30), while the smattering of comedic moments "involving the antics of cute animals" (30) appealed to the children.

In *Cinderella* (1950) magic is more tangible than in European fairy tales, where magic is something mysterious that derives from the self. (Stone 43). For example, Cinderella's fairy godmother relies on her magic wand and the incantation "bibbidi bobbidi boo" (*Cinderella*

00:44:12-00:44:52) in order to conjure magic (Wood 30). This shows that magic is something that can be created through technology, which serves to demystify it. In "Cendrillon" Perrault also gives the fairy godmother a magic wand. Since Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) film is based on Perrault's version of the story, it is fitting that Disney's fairy godmother also uses a wand. Downplaying magic and turning it into something more technological rather than an abstract concept was an effective method of Americanizing European fairy tales (Stone 43) and making them more appealing to American audiences.

The characters themselves are also products of Americanization in the film. This is particularly evident in their accents, which, as Wood explains, "exploit middle-American prejudices" about who is 'cultured' and who is not (Wood 32). The stepmother is considered cultured, but she is simultaneously cruel and cold-hearted, which translates into "an upper-class, New England accent" (32). On the other hand, the stepsisters "have screechy, twangy New York accents, versions of some of the least euphonious forms of American speech" (32). This type of accent also suggests that the stepsisters, and by implication their mother, are nouveau riche. An example of this is highlighted in a scene during the stepsisters' music lesson when their singing is unpleasantly high-pitched and screechy. The scene transitions from their discordant voices to Cinderella singing the same song while scrubbing the floors outside the room; her voice is melodious and perfectly in tune, which is indicative of her inherently good nature in contrast to her stepsisters. The fact that Cinderella has a beautiful singing voice can be seen as a subtle way of foreshadowing her future role as a princess.

Both Cinderella and the prince speak in tones of "well-modulated middle-American accents, fit for newscasters" (32), which tends to be the default accent for most of Disney's protagonists. Cinderella's animal friends - the mice in particular - have an entirely different form of speech. They speak in high-pitched tones with "childlike diction" (32). Their speech indicates their place "as colonized subjects of Cinderella's benevolent reign" (32) as well as their "role as surrogate children to Cinderella" (32).

Cinderella (1950) was not only one of the earliest Disney Princess films, but it was also the first fairy tale adaptation film that Disney released after the Second World War. Stover explains that at this time "Disney was eager to cash in on the 'new' woman of the 1950s, providing an escape from Cold War fears" (Stover 3). Part of this eagerness to domesticate stemmed from a desire for stability and prosperity after the war. During the war men were deployed in combat

zones, which "brought women… into the public arena" (May) filling in the gaps in the workforce in the absence of men. However, there were other notions about the benefits of women in the domestic sphere. "Most powerful of all were the child-rearing experts, social scientists and psychologists who claimed that if women did their jobs well in the home, they would raise the citizens and scientists who would guarantee America's future security" (May). Rather than claiming agency for themselves, women were expected to serve others within society's patriarchal constructs.

Notably there was a deeply rooted fear of women who were sexually and/or economically free. The best way to combat this fear was by making women into subservient housewives. Companies used marketing techniques to "professionalize homemaking" (May), the government started developing highways for faster transportation in order to "help spread the population into family-centered suburbs" (May), and also vastly increased inexpensive housing (May). Generally, women did not widely accept these ideas internally, but they understood that there were "very few viable alternatives… to achieve economic independence and professional achievement" (May). If they wanted financial stability not to mention good social standing, the wisest course of action was "marriage to a successful breadwinner" (May).

Disney's *Cinderella* supports these "values and assumptions of middle-America" (Wood 33). The moral of the film is "to show the audience that luck… cleanliness, and a good heart always combine to make wishes come true" (33). The subtle, underlying message is that these wishes are feminine and therefore, it is women who should behave as Cinderella does in order to obtain the ultimate reward of true love, marriage, and becoming a princess. Cinderella does nothing to change her unfortunate situation, but rather waits patiently until she meets her prince. Even then she accepts that her one night at the ball was a once-in-a-lifetime event: "Oh well, it's over now and… thank you so much for everything" (*Cinderella* 00:56:28-00:56:47). The fact that one of her glass slippers remains after the magic spell is broken does little to convince her that she may be able to control her own destiny. She simply accepts the slipper as a physical reminder of the wonderful night and thanks her fairy godmother while clutching the glass slipper to her chest.

How does Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) promote the image of an ideal housewife? Firstly, the film establishes itself in decidedly feminine stylistic choices. As Wood points out, the film opens with a chorus of female voices singing:

Cinderella, if you give your heart a chance

It will lead you to the kingdom of romance

There you'll see your dreams unfold

Cinderella, Cinderella

In the sweetest story ever told. (*Cinderella* 00:00:43-00:01:07).

These lyrics and the female voices that sing them immediately tell the viewer that "these dreams are feminine dreams… in contrast to the masculine heroics… in which the hero saves humankind from itself, this, 'the sweetest story ever told' will offer romantic dreams as fulfillment" (Wood 34-35). Most importantly, this is a story of "being true to the wish" (35). Unlike stories with male protagonists, Cinderella's quest does not take her outside of the home, because "the heart, not the head, is the best guide" (35).

Secondly, *Cinderella* (1950) promotes the image of the quintessential housewife in the character of Cinderella herself. From her introduction it is clear that she is a natural caregiver, because of how she treats the mice and the birds. When a new mouse joins the group, she pulls out clothes for him and gives him a name, thereby affirming her status as the "chief domesticator" (37). Physically, Cinderella is the perfect "Miss America" (36) in that she is beautiful, but in a soft, "innocently sexy way" (36) and she is modest enough about her appearance in general that any instances when she enjoys looking at herself in the mirror are easily forgiven due to her pureness and kind-heartedness (36). In addition to her virtuous beauty Cinderella is highly skilled in her domestic tasks. Wood highlights the scene when we see Cinderella "climbing stairs with breakfast trays in both hands and one balanced on her head" (36). Furthermore, she prioritizes dreaming despite her demanding tasks and is even able to sing of the kingdom she longs to join while gazing in the direction of the castle in the distance.

Lastly, Cinderella possesses an extraordinary amount of self-control even in situations when a lack of self-control would be forgiven or even appropriate, like when her stepsisters tear apart her dress right before the ball. While she does show some lack of restraint in this moment by running to the garden in tears, her fairy godmother soon appears and tells her, "If you'd lost all your faith I couldn't be here. And here I am!" (*Cinderella* 00:43:09-00:43:13) Even in times of acute distress, Cinderella does not lose faith in her dream and is rewarded accordingly. She is also adept at self-discipline. For example, she obeys her fairy godmother's midnight curfew despite

"obviously preferring to stay" (36) at the ball. However, this is also motivated by her fear of discovery when, as her fairy godmother warns, "On the stroke of twelve the spell will be broken and everything will be as it was before" (*Cinderella* 00:47:39-00:47:45).

Ultimately, Disney's first Cinderella film tells the story of the perfect American girl; a domestic beauty who has enduring faith in her dreams. Moreover, her dreams do not take her out of the domestic sphere, but rather fulfill the patriarchal ideas about what kinds of dreams women should have. This includes romance and true love, marriage, and becoming a princess, which places her in another household where she caters to her new family's needs. Although *Cinderella* (1950) is based on Charles Perrault's literary version of the story, Walt Disney Americanized certain elements in order to make it more marketable to an American audience. Female domesticity is the dominant idea in the film, but it also draws upon existing stereotypes within American society in the mid-twentieth century, such as certain accents being indicators of cultured versus non-cultured people. The magic and the fairy godmother are as present in Disney's film as they are in Perrault's story, but with an even greater emphasis on the importance of keeping faith in one's dreams. *Cinderella* (1950) was Disney's first fairy tale-based animated feature after World War II and reflected many aspects of Americans' post-war feelings. There have been two sequels to this original film, *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* (2002) and *Cinderella III: A Twist in Time* (2007). Both of these sequels were released directly to home video several decades after the original *Cinderella* and continue the story of the original characters. It was not until 2015 that Disney revived the tale in their live action version, also called *Cinderella*.

3.2 *Cinderella* (2015)

In the 1990s Disney re-released "its animated features to theaters on a seven-year rotation as a marketing strategy to attract a following in each new generation" (Henke et al.) Sometimes, sequels to these films were released directly to home video, extending each film's sphere of influence and life span. In addition to re-releasing previously successful films, Disney also began a trend of remaking their animated films into live action versions, featuring real actors and photorealistic computer graphics.

The 1990s saw only three such versions, likely because many of Disney's hit films were still relatively new and did not warrant a remake of any kind at the time. *The Jungle Book* (1994) was the first live action Disney remake. It was based on the animated film of the same name from

1967, but notably, the animals did not speak in the live action version. Two years later *101 Dalmatians* (1996) appeared in cinemas, starring Glenn Close as the movie's infamous villain, Cruella de Vil. The film did well at the box office and was nominated for a BAFTA award. Close was also nominated for a Golden Globe Award in the 'best actress' category (Bates). Disney released a sequel called *102 Dalmatians* in 2000 with Close reprising her role as Cruella de Vil. American critics gave the film mostly negative reviews, but it was still considered a box office success ("102 Dalmatians"). Notably, this would be Disney's last attempt at a live action remake until 2010.

Alice in Wonderland (2010) was Disney's first live action remake since 2000 and it marked a new era of live action films that is still ongoing. The second live action film was *Maleficent* (2014), which was unique in that it told the story of Sleeping Beauty from the perspective of the villain rather than a simple retelling of the animated feature from 1959. The live action remakes have become steadily more successful with each film. A new one has been released by Disney every year since 2014 and 2016 saw the release of two such films, *The Jungle Book* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. Disney's live action films have ushered in audience members of a new generation and allows the company to profit from the same stories once again.

Cinderella was one of Disney's earliest and most successful princesses in the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, it is unsurprising that she features in the growing list of live action remakes. *Cinderella* was released in 2015 and features a star-studded cast, which is, arguably, a key element in its appeal and success. Lily James portrays Cinderella herself, with Cate Blanchett as the wicked stepmother and Helena Bonham Carter as the odd, but lovable fairy godmother. Supporting actors include Richard Madden, Derek Jacobi and Stellan Skarsgård in the roles of the prince, the king, and the grand duke, respectively. This remake of the classic tale became the ninth-highest grossing film of 2015 in North America ("Domestic Box Office For 2015"). Overall, *Cinderella* (2015) retains much of the same plot devices as the original version. It is also still recognizable as Perrault's "Cendrillon" with its cruel stepfamily, fairy godmother, glass slipper, and midnight curfew, although Cinderella goes by the name 'Ella,' which indicates a more subtle nod to the story on which it is based. The mice are also featured, but unlike the mice from the animated version, they do not speak, despite acting with near-human intelligence in some scenes. Ella speaks to them continuously, which indicates an attempt to evoke nostalgia for the original animated film where the mice play an active role in helping Cinderella. However, the new version's computer-

generated, slightly more realistic-looking mice are not characters in their own right and do not contribute greatly to the plotline of the live action film.

Unlike the animated feature, this new film opens with scenes from Ella's childhood when both her parents are alive and well. It is only after numerous scenes of them together that the mother falls ill and dies. However, her death is shown as gradual and Ella is able to say goodbye to her mother. A few years later her father marries Lady Tremaine who becomes cruel after the untimely death of Ella's father. Throughout the film there is significant emphasis on the stepmother's envy. For example, she always wears some shade of green, a color that is generally associated with envy and jealousy. Within the final hour of the film Ella confronts her stepmother as she is about to be locked in the attic and prevented from trying on the glass slipper:

> Why are you so cruel? I don't understand it. I've tried to be kind to you.
> You? Kind to me?
> Yes. And though no one deserves to be treated as you have treated me. Why do you do it?
> Why? Because you are young, and innocent, and good. And I… (*Cinderella* 01:23:50-01:24:21)

This scene portrays Ella as a stronger, more independent character, compared to her 1950 counterpart. This new Cinderella reaches a breaking point wherein she tries to reclaim her dignity and demand better treatment. Although Lady Tremaine acts in the same way as her character does in the animated version by breaking the glass slipper, she is forced to confront her jealousy towards Ella; something that is left unspoken in the original *Cinderella*.

Another notable difference is that in this version, Ella meets the prince before the ball. The prince, who goes by the name Kit, sees Ella riding through the woods on her horse that is galloping too fast for her to control. He immediately springs into action like the typical Disney hero, and helps her to slow down the horse. This is unusual when compared to the original iterations of this tale, because we see Cinderella outside of the house and enjoying supposed free time. Given the constraints of the character's original plotline, this gives Ella a streak of independence that is indicative of societal norms of the last couple of decades. Ella flies through the woods on horseback, which shows us that "she remains free despite the home-front misery" (Dargis). The 1950 Cinderella is only ever depicted inside the home, aside from her one night at the ball, which

complies with the patriarchal expectations of women; running a household and meeting the man she will marry. Additionally, in *Cinderella* (1950) she and the prince first meet at the ball and fall in love at first sight, despite barely exchanging two words with each other. This was considered innocent and romantic at the time, but for this new version it was necessary to create a more realistic meeting between the protagonist and the love interest, in order to align with current feminist standards.

Having Ella and Prince Kit meet by chance before the ball takes place, adds a realistic dimension to both their characters. Now, the prince has a stronger motive for hosting the ball and Ella has an even stronger desire to attend. In the original *Cinderella* (1950) the king insists on hosting a ball so that his son can find a princess to marry. In this new film, however, it is the prince himself who requests a ball and insists on expanding "the roster of invited guests beyond mere royalty to include all the young ladies of the land" (Debruge) in order to see Ella again. The following conversation takes place between Kit and his father (the king) when Kit tells of the girl he met in the woods:

> You sound as if you're the first fellow ever to meet a pretty girl.
> She wasn't a 'pretty girl!' Well, she was a pretty girl, but there was so much more to her.
> How much more? You've only met her once. How could you know anything about her? (*Cinderella* 00:31:24-00:31:35).

The king pokes fun at his son and the concept of falling in love with someone he has only met once, because by modern day standards it is indeed a questionable concept, even for royalty. The original *Cinderella* (1950) embraced this idea of love at first sight and the audience did not criticize it. This new version both acknowledges and discredits the outdated ideas in the original version, which indicates a significant evolution in ideas about gender roles in society.

The film is narrated by a woman who is revealed to be Ella's fairy godmother later in the story. This is a significant storytelling device in two ways. Firstly, it serves to foreshadow the fact that Ella is good and kind and pure enough to deserve a fairy godmother. The very fact that the fairy godmother is involved in telling Ella's story hints at a fairy tale ending where the good are rewarded and the evil are punished. The fairy godmother speaks about Ella's princess-like

characteristics, confirming for the audience that this is a young woman who deserves to become a princess. In the opening narrative she says that Ella:

> saw the world not always as it was, but as perhaps it could be with just a little bit of magic. To her mother and father, she was a princess. True, she had no title, nor crown, nor castle, but she was the ruler of her own little kingdom, whose borders were the house and meadow on the forest's edge where her people had lived for generations.
> (*Cinderella* 00:00:58-00:01:28).

This description establishes Ella as a sweet, kind girl who believes in magic, which means that she will experience a magical transformation. Like in the animated film, Ella cares for the animals around her, believing that they can talk:

> Do you still believe that they understand you?

> Don't they, mother?

> Oh, yes. I believe that animals listen and speak to us if we only have the ear for it. That's how we learn to look after them.

> Who looks after us?

> Fairy godmothers, of course (*Cinderella* 00:01:55-00:02:12).

In this adaptation it is Ella's mother who instills Ella with a belief in magic. She explains that humans take care of animals and fairy godmothers take care of humans, thus providing a plausible explanation for the fairy godmother's appearance later in the story. However, the animated film does not offer any explanation for the fairy godmother's sudden appearance. Rather, it assumes that the audience understands that Cinderella is worthy of having a fairy godmother come to her aid, due to her obvious characteristics embodying the ideal (subservient) woman.

In *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television* (2019) Hermansson and Zepernick note that in this live action film it is not just Cinderella who is transformed: "In the previous scene, the Fairy Godmother, who arrives dressed in a dirty… cloak and whose face is wrinkled and haggard, informs Ella that she is her Fairy Godmother and says, 'Let me slip into something more comfortable,' before she works her magic" (Hermansson and Zepernick 113). The Fairy Godmother is soon revealed in her new outfit; "a tight-fitting sparkling white dress, white-blonde hair, full makeup, and high-heeled silver shoes … we see Cinderella's own radical makeover prefigured in the transformation of the Fairy Godmother" (113). This double transformation displays the power of magic both within the story and in Disney's cinematic storytelling.

This scene involving magical transformation is further embellished by Bonham Carter's unique spin on the character. As mentioned previously, the fairy godmother first appears disguised as an old, beggar woman who asks Ella for "just a little crust of bread, or better, a cup of milk" (*Cinderella* 2015 00:44:02). When Ella obliges, it becomes clear that the fairy godmother was testing to see if she was worthy of receiving magical aid. Bonham Carter's fairy godmother character adds humor to the scene telling Ella, "I'm your hairy dogfather. I mean, fairy godmother! … Oh, fiddle-faddle, fiddle-faddle. Right. First things first. Let me slip into something more comfortable" (00:45:00-00:45:26). This humorous exchange is followed by Bonham Carter flinging her magic wand into the air, creating a shower of sparkles as it rotates and revealing her completely transformed into a woman with all the features one might expect of a fairy godmother. Bonham Carter's portrayal implies a fairy godmother who is both more independent and more successful than her animated counterpart. The result is a somewhat more impressive character who enhances the viewer's immersive experience in the story.

Disney's original Cinderella is a dreamer just like Ella, but this is established more abstractly. *Cinderella* (2015) tries to create more realistic explanations for why magic happens in the story. The film hints at magic, allowing it to appear through more organic sources.

> Instead of letting go of the essence of 'Cinderella,' Branagh boldly chose to embrace every familiar detail of this romantic fantasy: the hearth cinders that give Ella her nickname; the pumpkin that turns into a carriage; Cinderella's rodent best friends; and, of course, the glass slippers… (Wloszczyna).

In this review Wloszczyna highlights the fundamental elements of the story that remained unchanged in this live action version. Notably, these are also the elements that are in Perrault's Cinderella story, which indicates Disney's effort to remain faithful to the writer's original ideas.

Cinderella (2015) does not include any musical numbers, which limits its nostalgic effect. The original *Cinderella* (1950) is a standard Disney musical with familiar songs such as "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes," "So This is Love," and "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo." However, the new Cinderella film "relegates musical expression to the background… with a robust, fully orchestrated score… adding more to the project's sense of timelessness than any other artistic element" (Debruge). The result is a Cinderella story that offers deeper character development while maintaining the classic - and arguably essential - elements of any adaptation of the Cinderella story.

In her review called "In 'Cinderella,' Disney Polishes Its Glass Slippers," Manohla Dargis asks, "Why Cinderella, why now?" (Dargis) - the fundamental question surrounding the various Cinderella adaptations in American media. "If you're the Walt Disney Company the answer can only be: Why not? … The story may have been told innumerable times, but there's gold in those glass slippers no matter how many miles they have on them" (Dargis). The 'gold' she speaks of is a reference to Disney's economic success and desire to make more money with the same stories. The moral of Disney's new Cinderella, then, is that "you cannot keep a good woman down, even if it's fun trying" (Dargis). In the end, the Ella we see in 2015 embraces feminist ideals while retaining the inherent goodness that is vital to her character. It is a mark of how Disney has strived to adapt Cinderella to become acceptable to the modern-day audience.

Chapter IV:
The Princess and the Mouse

<u>Introduction</u>

In her book *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (2001), Janet Wasko states that "Disney provides an important source of pleasure and entertainment for children and adults," but that this magical entertainment is "deliberately manufactured… by one of the largest media and entertainment corporations in the world" (Wasko 1). Additionally, there exists a seemingly endless supply and variety of Disney-themed products available for interested consumers, as Wasko herself explains: "Today, Disney films, comics, books, toys, theme parks, and other products are sources of pleasure for many - if not most - young American children, who learn and have reinforced ideas and values that may last a lifetime" (2). This chapter will explore the Walt Disney Company through the lens of its prominence in popular culture as well as its influence on young girls and women. The latter will be done by analyzing the Disney Princess brand and its corresponding (gendered) products.

After exploring gender bias in Disney's marketing, a brief section will follow which explores the potential psychological consequences of such gendered marketing upon young girls, particularly during the so-called Classic Disney era of the 1950s and the 1960s. During this time Disney's values corresponded with the general expectation of American women as housewives, which played a significant role in the types of Disney products that were marketed to girls at the time. Here, the work of American psychologist Colette Dowling will be used to analyze a psychological disorder called the Cinderella Complex that was prominent in women of the late twentieth century. This chapter will ultimately provide insight into the Disney brand's cultural power through the lens of its princesses.

4.1 Disney's Marketing: Theme Parks

Wasko explains in her book that "Disney holds an almost sacred place in the lives of many Americans" (Wasko 2) and because of this, "when it is introduced as a topic for discussion, Disney is most often accepted with unqualified approval, and even reverence, by the American public" (3). However, it is exactly this type of reaction towards such a hugely influential enterprise that justifies a more critical review of its larger marketing techniques and products. Wasko does exactly this in her book, called *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (2001). She begins by pointing out that "taking a critical stance towards the company that has created the happiest places on earth may be considered… downright un-American" (3). Nevertheless, Disney occupies such an important place in American culture that it is necessary to analyze both its psychological influence on society as well as examining its tremendous output of products available around the world (3).

According to Wasko, the immediate success of Disney's first animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) marked the beginning of themed Disney products flooding the market. These initial products were themed around *Snow White,* which "helped to publicize the film and build the Disney reputation" (14). Although other Disney films followed *Snow White* within a few years (such as *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia,* both released in 1940, *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* in 1942), it was not until after the war that Disney released another animated fairy tale film. This new fairy tale film was *Cinderella* (1950). The two decades following World War II are often referred to as Disney's Silver Age, which ended with the death of Walt Disney himself, which marked the subsequent "Dark Age and Decline of Disney" from 1970 to 1988 (Jones 2016). Before that, however, the 1960s was the decade in which the Walt Disney brand was "firmly established in a wide range of film products… as well as television, theme parks, and merchandising" (Wasko 30). In July 1955 the very first Disney theme park, Disneyland, opened as part of the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California. Notably, Disneyland "is the only theme park designed and built to completion under the direct supervision of Walt Disney" (Himmelberg).

One of the most popular elements at Disney parks is the chance to interact with the characters in real life. Meeting the princesses is especially popular with young children, girls in particular. Megan Willett interviewed two former Disney princesses in order to shed some light on what it means to work as a so-called "face character" (Willett). The interviewees explain that there is "a specified height requirement" for all the princess characters as well as strict supervision after

you are hired (Willett). "After you're approved, you are expected to maintain your training and uphold character integrity during meet and greets" (Willett). Staying in character is a serious rule, meaning that the princesses are "not supposed to refer to things outside the Disney realm" (Willett). For example, "Snow White does not know Thomas the Tank Engine" (Willett), so even if children try to engage the princesses in conversation about things outside of the Disney realm, they must be able to react appropriately while staying in character.

Embodying the role of a real life Disney Princess means that the women involved "not only have to look the part, but they need to know quotes from their movies, stay in character at all times, and know how to sing and dance" (Willett). This is all part of "preserving the integrity of the show" (Wasko 92), which includes smiling, making eye contact with and actively seeking out guests, and displaying appropriate body language for the character being portrayed (92). In tandem with these strict requirements there is also a "long list of taboos" (92) such as: "never embarrass a guest, never be out of character, never improvise with scripts, [and] never wear costumes anywhere but in the assigned area" (92-93). Essentially, the goal of the Disney employees or "cast members" is to promote the magic of the Disney brand by bringing a sense of magical realism to the experience of visiting the parks. Indeed, one employee explains that "in a way, you're paid just with the Disney name" (95). By requiring such intense emotional labor from its employees, the Walt Disney company is able to successfully control their brand, particularly in their theme parks. The result is a diverse line of products that continue to influence American and global consumerism as well as popular culture, which, in turn, informs societal expectations of gender roles.

<u>4.2 What Do Disney Princesses Teach Girls?</u>

One of the consequences of Disney's extensive economic influence is a tendency towards gendered marketing. The Disney Company is a prime example of how "mass media articulates cultural values about gender" (Henke et al. 230) which are then reproduced by children and adults alike (230). Moreover, the Disney versions of fairy tales like Cinderella or Snow White do not reflect the values of the original writers (i.e.: Perrault). Rather, "they are the values of Disney's male writers" (233). This gender bias in Disney's writing room is one of the reasons for blatantly gendered merchandise. The main goal, however, is economic success, and that means marketing certain groups of products towards certain groups of people. In this example the products are princess-themed, and they are marketed towards young girls as well as older women seeking nostalgia through Disney merchandise.

The Disney Princess brand contains numerous products that target young girls and their sense of identity. This "line of licensed toys, collectibles, apparel, and household goods" (Wohlwend 57) are highly relevant to the issue of feminism (or its lack thereof) in Disney's merchandising. Wohlwend explains that repetitive images as seen in Disney, immerse children in "products that invite identification with familiar media characters" (57). The merchandise of Disney princess films extends this concept so extremely that the line "between play and reality" becomes blurred, "allowing children to *live* in-character" (58). For example, little girls "can be Cinderella all day long" (58) due to the multitude of Cinderella products available. This includes everything from "sleeping in pink princess sheets" to "eating from lavender Tupperware with Cinderella decals" (58) and even using cleaning products plastered with giant Cinderella stickers. School items such as backpacks and lunch boxes are also available "with smiling princess heads" (58), allowing school-aged girls to share their Disney experience with their peers; usually other girls, thereby spreading the cultural artifact of Disney princesses as a meme. These physical products allow for an even further extension of the immersive Disney experience and condition girls to adapt to the "anticipated identities" (59) surrounding these products.

In her children's book *What Is a Princess*, Jennifer Weinberg states that "a princess is a dreamer, is polite, loves to sing and dance" and most importantly, "a princess always lives happily ever after!" (qtd. in Bruce 9). These qualities align perfectly with the image of early Disney princesses such as Cinderella, who does not complain "about cleaning but rather sing[s] for [her]

wishes and dreams to come true" (Bruce 9). These dreams and wishes are usually in the form of true love and a prince. Furthermore, finding true love "is presented as a stronger motivation" in life than changing the situation (9) Cinderella is unable to actively free herself from her step-family's cruelty, but rather, hopes that it will happen - ideally in the form of Prince Charming.

In 2004 Alexander M. Bruce conducted a study entitled "Princesses Without a Prince: A Consideration of Girls' Reactions to Disney's 'Princess' Movies." The study involved interviewing girls between the ages of seven and nine about the various elements of Disney princesses. Bruce claims that many girls look up to the Disney princesses as role models and inspiration (Bruce 8). This behavior typically becomes evident during girls' formative childhood years when they are beginning to learn about societal expectations and the subsequent creation of their own identities (8). While this is not a cause for concern in and of itself, it is important to consider what kinds of messages young girls perceive from the Disney Princess brand. Bruce highlights the fact that in many Disney movies "the active women… are almost always evil" (8). This is especially true of the early princess films, such as *Cinderella* (1950) and *Snow White* (1937), where the outspoken women are cast as the wicked stepmother or the evil queen, reinforcing the idea that 'good' women should be obedient and passive. Initially, these gendered messages were a result of the rigid gender roles and expectations of women during the twentieth century; for example, the image of the post-World War II suburban housewife. While these beliefs have since evolved to align with modern feminist ideas, it is still necessary to critically examine what the Disney Princess brand teaches young girls about their own self-worth and place in society to this day.

"Princesses Without a Prince: A Consideration of Girls' Reactions to Disney's 'Princess' Movies" focuses on six Disney princesses: Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora (Sleeping Beauty), Ariel, Belle, and Jasmine (Bruce 7). The girls who were interviewed ranged from ages seven to nine. During the course of the study it became clear that "the girls equated 'beauty' with 'good' and 'ugly' with 'bad'" (14). They gave examples of defining features of the so-called ugly female characters in Disney princess films; notably, almost all these characters were villains. The interviews also showed that Disney's marketing techniques have been successful amongst young girls, because they "frequently associated material objects with princesses - their crowns… dresses… hair and jewelry" (14). Ultimately, Bruce concluded that "girls today may not be looking for their prince, but in some ways, they're still looking to be a princess" (15). Evidently, being a princess is still highly desirable amongst young girls, especially with the added joy that comes from

sparkling Disney Princess merchandise. However, the prince is no longer the central point in the princess dream for modern-day girls.

4.3 Colette Dowling and the Cinderella Complex

The inherent gender bias in Disney's marketing throughout the years has resulted in the possibility of certain psychological consequences for young girls as they grow into adolescence and adulthood. One way of describing such possible consequences is the Cinderella Complex, a term coined by psychotherapist and writer, Colette Dowling in her book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence* in 1981. The Cinderella Complex describes women's unconscious (or sometimes even semi-conscious) desire to be taken care of by others, which stems from an inherent fear of independence. According to Dowling this was especially prevalent in the 1980s and the preceding decades, due to the generally accepted societal belief that a woman's role was to be a homemaker. The name of this disorder derives from the ideals of femininity "as portrayed in [the] Cinderella fairy tale; where a woman is beautiful, graceful, polite, supportive, hardworking, independent, and maligned by the females of society" (Weaver). Moreover, the Cinderella woman, so to speak, "is not capable of changing her situation with her own actions and must be helped by an outside force, usually a male (is: The Prince)" (Dowling).

Dowling wrote her aforementioned book in the early 1980s, which means that the women she speaks of struggled with having grown up during the decades following World War II. This time period was marked by a return to belief in the nuclear family as a result of rigid gender roles and domesticity. With the beginning of the second-wave feminist movement in the early 1960s, the conditions of upper-middle class American women began to improve slowly. This new wave of feminism ushered in "a wider range of issues" (Burkett) particularly the topics of sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, and official legal inequalities" (Burkett). However, it is evident that the general population of women described in Dowling's book was heavily influenced - if not traumatized - by the societal demand for the perfect housewife during their youth.

By the 1970s women "wished for more… in the way of money, jobs, freedom from restrictive roles" (Dowling) and so on. However, Dowling is quick to note that while this seemed to indicate a general trend towards female autonomy in society, individually, many women "felt caught in an old adolescent conflict, pulled equally by the need to live freely… and the need to feel safe" (Dowling). If and when a woman in this time period left her husband (as Dowling explains

that many women did), she usually realized that she was not practically prepared nor emotionally ready to live independent of a husband-wife unit. Without a man to support her, "she discovers that the rules have changed and she will no longer be rewarded for her compliance" (Dowling) Dependency as seen in women plagued by the Cinderella Complex "has its roots in infancy" - a time in everyone's life when they are indeed truly helpless. Excessive dependency created a multitude of problems for both working and homebound women in the late twentieth century, including low self-confidence and envy of others' freedoms; the latter of which was usually projected on male members of the household such as brothers. Dowling explains that "girls who envy the unfettered freedom of older brothers… find it easier to focus on how 'lucky' men are" (Dowling) in comparison to how unlucky they are themselves.

Another facet of the Cinderella Complex is the conflicting definitions of femininity that arises for women seeking independence. At the time of Dowling's book there still existed a strong assumption that "masculinity implies strength, dominance, superiority, and success… Thus, to be successful [meant] to many women that they [were] unfeminine and unlovable" (Dowling) Given that even today there is a wage gap between men and women in the United States, women of the late twentieth century felt even less incentive to leave their sheltered home lives. Indeed, even if they did assume a job outside the home, many women had the "repressed expectation that work is temporary, a condition from which they will one day be rescued" (Dowling) - much like the title character of Disney's *Cinderella* (1950).

Often, women do not take ownership of their abilities or accomplishments and are "likely to attribute success to external forces" (Dowling) such as luck. This leads to a debilitating lack of self-confidence, which can eventually transform into envy. For example: a stepmother being fearful of "being bypassed by" (Dowling) her motivated stepdaughter, as is evident in the Cinderella story. Dowling explains that in order "to encourage independence… active, systematic intervention is required" from a young age. "The trouble," she explains, "is that while little boys are interrupted in their dependency patterns and weaned from them, little girls are not" (Dowling). Even today in 2020, despite huge strides forward in the implementation of feminist ideas, girls are still viewed as inherently more fragile than boys "in spite of their greater… developmental maturity" (Dowling).

The conclusion, therefore, is that women must actively try to dismantle the sexist beliefs that were instilled in them since childhood. This is especially relevant for "women affected by the social changes of the 1940's and 50's" (Dowling) who were exposed to rigid gender roles simply

by watching their parents' interactions, i.e.: "Mother was passive. Father was able to rely on himself; Mother was helpless and dependent" (Dowling). This helpless dependency, Dowling notes, is something that women display "only in relation to men," sending a conflicting message which states, "Leave me alone but take care of me" (Dowling). It is exactly this conflict in desires that creates a feeling of anxious indecision for women both in previous decades and in the modern day. As mentioned earlier, feminist thinking has come a long way since Dowling's acclaimed book, but these gender prejudices still exist for women both in and out of the workplace. Sexism is ingrained into most people's thinking, particularly those of older generations. Women are still vulnerable to the Cinderella Complex and must therefore, "relate seriously to their psychological selves" (Dowling) and create agency for themselves and for other women.

Conclusion

The Disney Company has been essential in the development of American popular culture. The majority of young girls go through an obsessive Disney Princess phase during their childhoods and most adults experience a sense of nostalgia for the Disney movies from their own younger days. The company's marketing strategies have proved extremely effective for many decades and have helped make Disney into one of the most recognizable brands across the globe. There is a highly diverse selection of themed products available to the public, which includes specialty items only to be found in Disney theme parks. The theme parks provide an additional dimension to this magical realm, creating an immersive, real life experience that guests can enjoy even after they have watched all the films. Children and adults alike have the opportunity to meet the princesses at the parks, which is simultaneously a successful marketing ploy and a bonus for Disney fans. The employees who take on these roles are put through intense training in order to preserve the magic. Furthermore, they must look the part of a princess and remain in character in order to create the unique, immersive experience that people have come to expect of Disney theme parks.

As with any significant brand, scholars have voiced their concerns over the consequences of Disney's marketing, particularly as it pertains to young girls. Studies such as the aforementioned one done by Bruce in 2004, suggest that girls make value judgements based on the Disney Princesses. The early princesses teach young girls that physical beauty and submissiveness are what they should try to attain and that the ultimate reward in life is finding your prince. When the films do include a strong, independent female character, she is often the villain of the story,

such as the stepmother in *Cinderella* (1950). Girls who internalize concepts like these can develop the Cinderella Complex which manifests itself in a fear of independence and a strong desire to be cared for, just as Cinderella wanted. A psychological conflict arises if and when the woman simultaneously craves both protection and independence. Disney holds such a prominent place in American society that it can spread potentially negative messages to young girls through its marketing. Even if girls of today are not interested in finding their prince, there is still an irresistible desire to be a princess.

Atypical Cinderellas: Ella and Danielle

5.1 *Ella Enchanted* (2004)

In 2004 Miramax Films added to the ever-growing list of Cinderella film adaptations with their feature *Ella Enchanted*; a film that displays American suburbs dressed up as a stereotyped and Americanized pseudo-medieval Europe. This Cinderella story is based on Gail Carson Levine's novel of the same name, although the film version bears little resemblance to the book. Therefore, only the film will be analyzed for the purposes and relevant scope of this thesis.

The story follows Ella from the town of Frell in the fictional kingdom of Lamia. At birth she is given the controversial gift of obedience from her quirky fairy godmother, Lucinda. The result is that Ella is forced, by nature of the magic spell, to obey any command, which becomes increasingly problematic as she gets older. Anne Hathaway portrays Ella as the young woman she eventually grows up to be when she is faced with the arrival of a heartless stepmother and two conniving stepsisters. After several incidents of humiliation and degradation perpetrated by her stepsisters and stepmother, Ella embarks on a quest to find Lucinda and beg her to reverse the spell. Along the way she meets Slannen the elf, a few ogres, and giants, all of whom are suffering under discrimination laws enforced by the kingdom's regent, Edgar.

In a scene similar to the one in Disney's 2015 *Cinderella,* Ella and the prince meet before the ball - twice in the case of *Ella Enchanted*. The first time Ella meets Prince Charmont, usually called Char, he is running away from a group of hysterical fan girls and accidentally knocks Ella to the ground. She is unimpressed by him, making him intrigued by her lack of interest: "I've never been comfortable with the whole adoring fan club thing. Perhaps that's why I find your obvious disdain for me so refreshing" (00:17:26-00:17:34). Their second meeting involves Char rescuing Ella from being eaten by ogres:

Tell me, do you get a kick out of near-death experiences?

No. I was fine, I had things well in hand.

Oh, yes, I could see that as you were dangling over the boiling cauldron. No doubt lulling the ogres into a false sense of security.

Who's to say it wouldn't have worked if you hadn't come barging in?

I see the score currently stands at chivalry: two, gratitude: zero (*Ella Enchanted* 00:39:25-00:39:45).

Ella's initial apathetic attitude towards Char is a departure from traditional Cinderellas such as Perrault's or Disney's versions, but it gives her character a feminist spark. Char is clearly surprised by her reaction, calling it refreshing. In *Ella Enchanted* Cinderella does not dream of the prince nor does she fall for him when she meets him. Instead, she voices her opinions and dismisses him, which causes him to become intrigued with her. However, since the film is a fairy tale at its core, Ella and the prince eventually fall in love and are married by the end of the story.

While *Ella Enchanted* can be categorized as a Cinderella adaptation, the filmmakers also borrow elements from other fairy tales and incorporate noticeable self-mockery. The film knowingly copies *Shrek* (2001) in its world-building style, incorporating things like a shopping mall (in which the staircases move up and down like modern-day escalators) and a community college within the supposed medieval fantasy realm. There is even a running joke amongst the various fairy tale characters about the "stinkin' Grimm Brothers" (00:35:02, 00:52:20) and their supposed perpetuation of stereotypes regarding magical creatures in their stories. Film critics have a difference in opinion over whether or not these *Shrek*-like similarities work in the film's favor. For example, in the Boston Globe, Burr asserts that *Ella Enchanted* is "an overcalculated fusion of 'Shrek' and 'The Princess Bride'" with a script that is "retrofitted….with as much jokey postmodern sass as the slender story can bear" (Burr). Other reviewers see the film in a more positive light: "'Ella' is artful enough to intrigue adults and far more original than other versions of Cinderella portrayed on screen with alarming regularity" (Stein).

The film's mixed reception by film critics signifies an inconsistency in its portrayal of the classic Cinderella elements, some of which are simply not present or are significantly altered in order to fit a story that is less Cinderella and more a generic mixture of fairy tale tropes. Stein notes that although "a glass slipper comes into play," it is introduced "not in its traditional guise as a way

to take the measure of the true Cinderella… but as an item for sale at a local bazaar" (Stein). This is a departure from the Cinderella story as told by Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and the Walt Disney Company. Each of these adaptations uses the glass slipper as the sole link between Cinderella's magical night and her much harsher reality, as well as the prince's only hope for finding her after the ball. However, *Ella Enchanted* does not concern itself with the glass slipper after Ella's stepsister commands her to steal it at the bazaar, because it is thereafter irrelevant to the story.

Another element that *Ella Enchanted* redefines is the magical transformation. In most versions of the story, Cinderella's fairy godmother appears seemingly out of nowhere and with a little bit of magic, transforms Cinderella's tattered dress into a glittering ball gown fit for a princess. The spectacle usually finishes with a beautiful pumpkin-turned coach and glass slippers to complete the look. However, this is where *Ella* deviates from other interpretations of the story. She finds her way to the castle accompanied by the prince, who has fallen in love with her. While there, she searches for Lucinda in the castle's hall of records but is abruptly cornered by Edgar, whom, she finds out, is plotting to kill Char in order to usurp the throne and reign supreme. Edgar knows about her involuntary obedience and commands her to kill the prince on the night of the ball at the stroke of midnight. In this sense the spell would still be broken at midnight, retaining the key plot point of the original story, but it would be done in a much darker way. In an attempt to prevent herself from fulfilling the command to kill the prince, Ella chains herself to a tree and waits for midnight to pass. As she is waiting, Lucinda suddenly appears, but is insulted when Ella asks her to reverse the spell. Assuming that Ella has been chained to the tree by force, Lucinda frees her despite Ella's objections. The chains break and Ella clings to the tree, desperately trying to stop the command from taking effect.

> Now look at you. A pretty girl like you should be at the ball.
> What?!
> Go get down with the prince.
> No, I can't go!
> Well, not dressed like that (*Ella Enchanted* 1:11:09-1:11:19).

Ella emerges from a cloud of sparkles, dressed in a white ball gown (where white once again symbolizes her goodness of heart and purity as well as foreshadowing her inevitable marriage to Prince Char), complete with a new hairstyle. The magical transformation and the fairy godmother are still present in the scene, but Ella does not want any of it. This is reinforced by her somewhat comedic remark, "Ok, that hurt" (01:11:29) and almost losing her balance after the transformation is complete. Notably, the magical transformation is brief and does not include any animals or pumpkins as aid. The scene ends with Ella being physically pushed towards the castle by the force of her obedience, screaming in protest and ripping off a tree branch as she is thrust closer to the castle, unable to stop herself. *Ella Enchanted* is an unusual interpretation of the Cinderella story, which utilizes other familiar images, themes, tropes, and characters from the larger world of fairy tales. The classical Cinderella elements exist in a mutated form and many details are excluded altogether. Rather, this film offers a fully Americanized and independent Cinderella, who has to fight for her happily ever after.

5.2 Ella's Feminism

American film critic Roger Ebert claims that "Ella is sort of a medieval civil rights crusader" (Ebert), because she boldly vocalizes her disagreement with the aforementioned laws, going so far as to participate "in protests on behalf of the rights of giants and elves" (Sibielski 594). Ella refuses to give in to those who seek to oppress her and take away her freedom (594), which shows that she is a much less complacent version of Disney's Cinderella from 1950. Therefore, *Ella Enchanted* implies a societal shift in opinion regarding feminism during the fifty-four years between the two films.

This Cinderella cannot simply wish for her situation to change but must actively seek ways in which to control her own destiny. Indeed, she does not receive much help along the way, given that her fairy godmother appears, but does not help her. She attends the ball, but under the wrong circumstances. She finds true love but is almost unable to live happily ever after. These setbacks force her to think of alternative methods in order to help herself to reach her goals. This empowered and capable Cinderella means that "on a meta-textual level," the film aligns itself "with leftist social causes frequently associated with feminism in popular discourse, thereby hinting that [Ella] might be, if not feminist-identified, then at least feminist aligned" (Sibielski 594). In aligning itself thusly, the makers of *Ella Enchanted* are essentially taking a stance in America's current culture

wars as discussed in chapter IV. Ultimately, feminism is necessary to liberate Ella from the people and societal structures that aim to take away her autonomy (594-595).

The aforementioned hysterical fan girls who chase after Prince Char are placed in juxtaposition to Ella's character in order to show the audience that Ella is not like other girls. While this can be viewed as anti-feminist, the focus lies on Ella's independence rather than the other girls' homogeneity. Prince Char falls for Ella because of her indifference towards him, as well as her political activism. He is attracted to her ability to voice her concerns in a society that is riddled with oppressive structures. Curiously, she never reveals to Char the magic behind her odd actions of obedience, due to her determination in keeping not only her pride and dignity, but also to avoid being taken advantage of any more than she has already experienced. After she establishes her disinterestedness in the prince during their first meeting, Ella realizes that she has left her bag behind, causing Char to tell her "Wait right there" and activating her involuntary obedience. The situation turns perilous when a carriage comes charging down the road towards her, because she is now stuck firmly in place at the mercy of Char's command. He saves her from being run over just in time, prompting an exchange in which Ella changes the subject in order to avoid telling him about her situation:

Are you crazy? Why didn't you move?!

I… I would've. Were it not for your apparent fascination with knocking me to the ground. That's the second time today, you realize?

Well, I'll try and be more considerate next time I'm saving you.

Next time? What makes you think we'll see each other again?

Won't we?

No.

Ella of Frell, you are not like other girls.

You have no idea. (00:18:25-00:18:58).

In this scene the prince himself marvels at how Ella does not fit the mold of most girls he comes into contact within his life.

In the climax of the film Prince Char takes Ella to a hall of mirrors and proposes marriage to her. However, when the clock strikes midnight we see Ella's reflection in the mirror holding a dagger, poised to stab him to death as she was commanded to do by Edgar. This moment is crucial for her development as a feminist character, because she is able to summon inner strength in order to tell her reflection, "You will no longer be obedient!" and drops the dagger, finally free of her curse. This is a powerful scene, because it solidifies her autonomy as a woman. In addition, it is proof of what Ella's mother told her before she died: "What's inside you is stronger than any spell."

While this moment gives Ella agency and freedom, it does not follow the typical Cinderella storyline. Edgar appears and Char sees Ella holding the dagger. She is arrested and it looks like the end of their romance. Traditional versions of Cinderella do not incorporate more than one obstacle for the character to overcome. Once she attends the ball she is soon after rewarded by being able to marry the prince. In *Ella Enchanted*, however, the ball is not a fantastical night of romance, but rather the night when tragedy strikes, posing yet another hurdle for both the prince and Cinderella before they can live happily ever after.

Ella Enchanted deviates from Perrault's, Grimms', and Disney's Cinderellas by altering and/or excluding typical elements that make the story recognizable today. The fairy godmother is part of the problem rather than the solution, Ella asserts herself and stands up for the rights of others, and she does not fall in love with the prince until they have spent a significant amount of time together. It is only after a number of deep conversations about socio-political issues with the prince that Ella begins to fall in love with him. This is indicative of her firm belief in autonomy for all, including herself: "Nobody should be forced to do things they don't want to do. Take it from somebody who knows" (00:42:28). It is evident from this line that Ella's passion for social justice stems from her personal experience of having been forced to obey commands for her entire life.

> *"And while Cinderella and her prince did live happily ever after,*
> *the point… is that they lived."* (*Ever After* 01:56:09-01:56:21).

Ever After (1998) is part of several revisionist versions of the Cinderella tale of the 1990s and 2000s. These revisionist adaptations "encompass Cinderella conquering threats beyond just those romantic perils posed by scheming stepmothers or jealous stepsisters" (Sibielski 595-596). Additionally, Hateley notes that the film offers:

> the necessary ingredients for a Cinderella story: a girl brought lower than her rightful position in life, a wicked stepmother, ambitious stepsisters, transformations, significant footwear and a reversal of fortunes resulting in a return to the 'correct' social order represented by marriage to a prince (Hateley 148).

While these elements are indeed present, *Ever After* also seeks to dilute the magic of the tale as expressed in Perrault's and the Grimms' versions, by replacing moments of inexplicable magic with events involving real historical figures in a real historical time period. Although the film takes artistic license in regard to some of these elements (i.e.: the real Leonardo da Vinci actually died decades earlier than the film suggests), there is nevertheless a conscious effort to create an alternate explanation for the Cinderella story that dismisses magical intervention. Hateley explains this, saying that "the 'once upon a time' of the fairytale is tempered by a set of historically and culturally specific values" (148). In the case of *Ever After* this is France in the late Renaissance era and "the political apathy of France's royal class" (Ostmeier 114).

Ever After opens with a frame narrative provided by the Grand Dame. She receives the Grimm brothers as visitors in the opening scene and informs them that she is the great-great-granddaughter of the woman in da Vinci's painting, *La Scapigliata*, which is present in a corner of the room. She "criticizes the Brothers Grimm for creating fiction from history" (114), telling them that she felt "terribly disturbed when [she] read [their] version of the little cinder girl" (*Ever After* 00:01:45). The brothers admit that they are unsure about the origins of the tale and are even more mystified about Cinderella's slipper: "Some claim the shoe was made of fur. Others insist it was

glass. Well, I guess we'll never know" (00:02:01-00:02:08). The Grand Dame shows them the real slipper and asks if she can "set the record straight" (00:02:39). In her article entitled "Magical Realities Reconsidered: Ever After," Dorothee Ostmeier explains that this slipper represents a physical and visual connection between Basile's, Perrault's, and the Grimm brothers' versions of the Cinderella story (Ostmeier 115):

> The glass heels refer to the glass slipper of Perrault's "Cendrillon" and to the glass slippers used in Disney's film (Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) is based on Perrault's text. The upper material, the satin, refers to Basile's… and/or to the Grimms' "silk slippers embroidered with silver" (115).

5.4 Danielle's Empowerment

The film's Cinderella story follows a young woman named Danielle de Barbarac in sixteenth century France. She lives with her widowed father who marries a baroness named Rodmilla, bringing with her two daughters of her own, Marguerite and Jaqueline. When Danielle's father dies unexpectedly, she is forced into servitude by her stepmother. In this version Cinderella (Danielle) finds companionship in the two older housemaids who raised her. They provide her with maternal comfort and advice, acting as Danielle's surrogate mother figures.

Like *Ella Enchanted*'s protagonist, Danielle embodies a fierce sense of independence and passion for social justice. In this real-world, historical setting Danielle fights for the rights of her fellow servants, rather than magical creatures. She, too, meets the prince before the ball and scolds him for his apathy regarding his country's people, angrily explaining that "a country's character is defined by" (00:31:21) those in servitude. Given that Danielle is dressed as a courtier during this exchange, Prince Henry's reaction mimics that of Prince Char when he meets Ella in *Ella Enchanted* (2004). Here, *Ever After* reveals another similarity with *Ella Enchanted* in that "Danielle does not pursue the prince; he pursues her, and instead of being seduced, she liberates and educates the monarch from unreflective apathy" (Ostmeier 121).

According to Sibielski, it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of feminism and female empowerment. Therefore, Danielle is "an empowered Cinderella" rather than a feminist Cinderella (Sibielski 589). By depicting the Cinderella character in this way, the film automatically genders its "assumed audience" and its "assumed appeal" (Stone 16) as being women and girls. In this way, revisionist versions of the Cinderella tale "position self-determination as the key to women's individual empowerment" (Sibielski 593). Danielle is determined in everything she does: She throws an apple at the thief riding away on her family's horse, before realizing that the thief was the prince; She dresses "above her station" (00:21:46) in order to appear in the royal court and bring home one of her fellow servants whom Rodmilla had sold to pay her debts; She scolds the prince for his apathy, and even punches her stepsister in the face. These actions are indicative of Danielle's female empowerment and would certainly not have been acceptable qualities for a Disney princess of the mid-twentieth century. However, *Ever After* is a distinct deviation from the Disney Princess world, allowing for more adult and nuanced character development for Cinderella. Indeed, Danielle's capability even extends to rescuing herself from the evil Monsieur Le Pieu at the end of the film. She skillfully wields a sword causing him to release her just as Prince Henry

arrives to rescue her himself. However, Danielle does not need rescuing in any sense, because "her liberation lies in her intellectual wit" (122) and determination. The scene has comedic undertones due to the fact that the prince showed up to rescue the girl, only to find that she has not only rescued herself but was also not expecting to be rescued at all.

5.5 *Ever After* (1998) and Realism

The narrative of *Ever After* turns Cinderella into a historical character, "although her so-called historical reality remains structured along the lines of the Grimms' fairy-tale logic" (Ostmeier 119). Unlike *Ella Enchanted*, *Ever After* engages in very little self-criticism in that it takes itself seriously as a historical fiction tale. As mentioned earlier, the film tries to replace traditional fairytale magic with more logical reasoning. One example of this is that Leonardo da Vinci fills the role of the fairy godmother in this version and his intervention is thoroughly non-magical. While he does create a glittering pair of butterfly wings to enhance Danielle's outfit for the ball, they only "appear magical, [but] rely on human craft for their effects" (Gruner 150).

The absence of magic means that when Danielle appears at the ball, she "has no magic disguise to prevent her stepmother from recognizing her" (150). Subsequently, Rodmilla reveals Danielle's true identity in front of everyone. Historically, this would be a serious accusation due to laws that made it illegal for servants to impersonate members of the noble class (147). In this case the ball does not offer Cinderella (Danielle) the chance to find true love. She runs from the ball in tears, but trips outside the castle, causing her to lose one slipper. Distraught, she does not pick it up and simply runs home through the pouring rain. It is da Vinci who finds the slipper and gives it to Prince Henry, who eventually sees the error of his ways and makes amends with Danielle. Notably, Henry "does not need it to recognize the correct bride [and] in the end… the slipper functions only as a theatrical prop evoking love talk" (Ostmeier 116) when he apologies and proposes to Danielle.

The fundamental aim of *Ever After* is "to 'realize' Cinderella… to imagine…what might make such a story real" (142). The film achieves this realism by including a frame story. The Grand Dame acts as the taleteller who mocks the fictionalized version of the Cinderella story as presented to her by the Brothers Grimm. Whatever magical elements remain simply highlight the fact that "social justice is feminized, and magic itself is [embodied] in female wit and courage" (122) According to the Grand Dame's family history, "the little cinder girl" was real; she was Danielle,

a woman who "engineere[d] her own destiny with the significant help of… an artist, rather than a magician" (142). Moreover, *Ever After* prioritizes "the stor[ies] of women over the history of men" and the "memory and passion of women over the rationalist rulings of men" (146), making the film a story of empowerment as it pertains to the era of third-wave feminism in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Another way in which *Ever After* implements realism into the Cinderella story is by incorporating existing objects. Danielle's father gives her a copy of *Utopia,* a real book by Renaissance humanist and author, Thomas More. The book was published in the original Latin in 1516 and then translated and re-published in English in 1551. *Utopia* is a fictional narrative written in the style of socio-political satire. The book describes "a fictional island society and its religious, social, and political customs," many of which "are reminiscent of life in monasteries" (Davis 1983, 58). After her father's death, Danielle treasures the book even more, not only because it reminds her of the times her father spent reading it to her, but also because it "represents both intellectual and political freedom" in the sense that she "will not be bound by the superstitions of the past, nor by the oppression of the present" (Gruner 147). When she impersonates the role of a courtier in order to go to the royal court and free Maurice, her fellow servant, Prince Henry questions her motives. When she quotes Thomas More, he is impressed and commands the guard to let Maurice go free:

> A servant is not a thief, your highness, and those who are cannot help themselves.
>
> Really? Well, then by all means. Enlighten us.
>
> If you suffer your people to be ill-educated and their manners corrupted from infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded, sire, but that you first make thieves and then punish them?
>
> Well, there you have it. Release him. (00:28:57-00:29:36)

Utopia plays an important role in the development of Danielle and Henry's friendship and eventual romance. Having read and understood the messages in *Utopia*, Danielle stands out to

Henry, who is quick to recognize her intelligence and bravery. When they visit the library of a nearby monastery, Danielle tells him about her cherished childhood memories of her father reading *Utopia* to her before he died. The book, therefore, offers a plausible, realist explanation for this Cinderella's attractive, intellectual qualities.

Ever After also takes artistic license with Leonardo da Vinci's painting, *La Scapigliata* ("The Lady with Disheveled Hair"), making the assertion that it is a portrait of Danielle. In real life, this painting remained unfinished, but it is still widely admired for its beauty and flawless sfumato technique; "softening the transition between colors" creating a smoky, blended effect (Earls 263). Ostemeier explains that "da Vinci paints this portrait in the diegesis of the film and later presents it to Henry and Danielle as a wedding present" (Ostmeier 123). More importantly, he paints it "after his godmother-like intervention fails" (123), as a way of honoring Danielle's legacy when it seems that she is lost forever, having been "sold by her stepmother to her oppressor" (123). The painting symbolizes Danielle in the literal sense, but it is also a tribute to the character of Leonardo da Vinci as he is depicted in the film. He is the artist who "sees beyond all royal, class, and gender stereotypes and represents Danielle as an emancipated Cinderella" (125). The character is based on the real Leonardo da Vinci and his real painting is inserted into the historical fiction narrative of *Ever After* in order to add a believable sense of realism to the story.

5.6 Ella and Danielle: A Comparison

Ella Enchanted (2004) and *Ever After* (1998) both display a thematic departure from Disney's two Cinderella films. Ella and Danielle embody feminism and feminine empowerment in their actions and their treatment of others, particularly in relation to social justice. Ella fights for the rights of non-human magical creatures as well as for herself. Indeed, her determination to do what is right stems from her own unpleasant experiences. Although Danielle also experiences abuse and humiliation, she acts based on her personal morals, which her father instilled in her as a child, rather than a direct desire to improve her own circumstances. For example, she takes an enormous risk in going to the royal court and bringing Maurice home, proving that she is willing to help others even if it means more suffering for herself.

Neither heroine falls in love with the prince at first sight. Instead, they both display obvious dislike for him and use their knowledge of sociopolitical issues to make him understand the plight of the country's working class. In a further defiance of the 'love at first sight' trope, each pair

begins a courtship, meeting each other at least twice before the ball. In fact, far from being the site of happily ever after and magical enlightenment, the ball is where the plot of both films takes a more negative turn: Ella almost murders Char and is subsequently rejected by him and then arrested, while Danielle is humiliated by her stepmother, who reveals that she is a servant in front of everyone at the ball, including Prince Henry. He then publicly rejects her, resulting in mutual heartbreak for both himself and Danielle. Nevertheless, it is important to note that ultimately, both *Ella Enchanted* and *Ever After* are fairy tale stories, even with their various feminist-leaning elements. This means that the ending is happy; the prince comes to terms with his true feelings for Cinderella, they get married, and live - as expected - happily ever after.

Both Danielle and Disney's Ella from *Cinderella* (2015) confront their stepmother about the latter's cruelty. This indicates that both of these Cinderellas possess internal strength and an unwavering desire for justice, and good over evil. In *Ever After* the scene is depicted as a loud argument between Danielle and Rodmilla in the garden:

You are not my problem anymore.

Is that what I am? Your *problem*?? I have done everything you've ever asked me to do and still you've denied me the only thing I ever wanted!

And what was that?

What do you think? You are the only mother I have ever known. Was there a time, even in its smallest measurement, that you loved me at all?

How can anyone love a pebble in their shoe? (01:38:16-01:38:55)

Directly after this exchange Danielle is sold to Monsieur Le Pieu, solidifying her stepmother's cruelty and indifference towards her stepdaughter. In *Cinderella* (2015) Ella's confrontation results in her stepmother admitting to being jealous of Ella (see the section on *Cinderella* (2015 in chapter III).

These atypical Cinderellas embody third-wave feminist ideals in their actions and attitudes. Both Danielle and Ella have an innate optimism and confidence in themselves, despite their unfortunate circumstances. Although they are both oppressed by social injustices (and in Ella's case, a type of curse), they persevere and fight to ensure that good triumphs over evil. Disney's original Cinderella from 1950 was not given such a level of character development, because she was meant to be the epitome of the 'ideal woman' in the mid-twentieth century. Ella and Danielle can be seen as purposeful alternatives to the Cinderella who merely accepts her position and sings about her dreams while staring longingly at the castle.

Conclusion

The story of Cinderella embodies certain key elements that make it a popular choice for film adaptations in American popular culture. By the early 2000s adaptation theory had become a respected and legitimized field of study, combining elements from both literary and film studies. The study of adaptations enhances our understanding of media companies' economic successes and helps us to accurately analyze the trends in popular culture over the years. From a psychological perspective, adaptation can be seen as a feature of memetics, which is relevant in understanding the evolution and nuances of human cultural evolution.

The story of Cinderella is an example of one such memetic feature, within the larger example of fairy tales in general. The Western/European version of Cinderella began with Zezolla in Basile's "La Cenerentola" in the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the story was transformed by Charles Perrault, who added the recognizable elements of the fairy godmother, animals and pumpkins transformed into a glittering coach, and most importantly, Cinderella's glass slippers. The Grimm brothers added vengeance for the cruel stepmother and stepsisters, which fit well with the moral that, as the full title of Basile's story says, 'goodness is triumphant.'

Once the Disney Company had established itself within American media, Cinderella was one of the first fairy tales to be made into a Disney animated feature. The film was released in 1950 and depicted Cinderella as the ideal housewife and woman based on how society perceived women and expected women to behave at the time. Disney's first Cinderella shows little agency in deciding her own fate, but rather, obeys the rules of the patriarchal structure within which she is forced to live. She is skilled in her domestic duties, which was meant to tell suburban housewives (meaning white, middle-upper class American women) that the house and the domestic sphere was theirs to control. Films like *Cinderella* (1950) helped instill this message in the minds of female audiences. In general, the Disney Company has a history of gendered marketing. Activists of feminism have taken issue with this type of marketing in the years since Disney's original Cinderella, marking a significant shift in the public attitudes surrounding gender roles.

The Cinderella film that appeared on screen in 2015 offers a less helpless protagonist, although many of the story's original elements remain intact, if somewhat enhanced. In *Cinderella* (2015), Disney decided that the film should show more of Ella's backstory with her parents. This creates a character with whom the audience is more likely to empathize and understand. These two versions also depict the fairy godmother character in slightly different ways. The animated

Cinderella film brings an older, maternal figure with a soothing voice and mild humor with her song, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo." The live-action (and one could argue updated) version offers Helena Bonham Carter's effectively whimsical acting style in order to create a more confident, feminine, and entertaining fairy godmother.

Ella Enchanted (2004) and *Ever After* (1998) embody Cinderella within the American third-wave feminist movement. This movement started in the early 1990s and continued until the 2010s when fourth-wave feminism began. Ella and Danielle are ideal Cinderellas for this time period, because they have confidence in their autonomy and believe in good over evil. The plots of these two films take place in the midst of a fight for social justice; a fight in which both Ella and Danielle are strong leaders.

Cinderella is a story of triumph for the oppressed and in some cases, punishment for the oppressors. Dreams come true through magical transformation and/or the spirit of perseverance. In the end true love and justice prevail and the deserving woman becomes the princess that she was destined to become all along. The story has been interpreted in a myriad of genres, all emphasizing slightly different fundamental features of the tale. *Ever After* places Cinderella in the real world by specifying the setting as Renaissance-era France. This film also strips the story of magical elements as presented by its literary forefathers but adds key features of realism in order to tell a more grounded version of Cinderella. On the other hand, *Ella Enchanted* deliberately saturates the tale with generic fairy tale tropes, which makes it blatantly self-aware. The two Disney adaptations remain true to Perrault's version, with the 2015 film implementing barely noticeable changes to the characters and the plot. Ultimately, Cinderella is a popular story for adaptation because it upholds the classically fundamental American ideas of purity, honesty, hard work to make dreams come true, and goodness triumphant.

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