

THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN DISNEY'S CINDERELLA AND BEAUTY & THE BEAST

A Comparative Analysis of Animation and Live-Action Disney Film



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Essay Cover Sheet

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Abstract

This work aims to explore the developments of the representation of gender in popular cultural productions over time. It will focus its research on a recent development within the popular Disney franchise: Live-action remakes of animated classics. In comparing and analyzing four case studies, two animated films and their live-action counterparts, this study seeks to form an idea of gender representation and its progression over time. Using gender theory by Judith Butler and a variety of theory on gender in media and culture specifically, an analysis focused on the representation of gender will be carried out for the chosen case studies of *Cinderella* (1950), *Cinderella* (2015), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). The findings of this work conclude that the live-action case studies clearly reflect ongoing gender discourse and societal change, despite simultaneously still inhabiting some traditional stereotypes and ideas. The changes that come forward show the possibility of change and provides an optimistic and hopeful view towards upcoming popular cultural productions.

Keywords

Gender, femininity, masculinity, cultural representation, Disney, performativity, stereotypes, ideologies, hegemony, animation, live-action.

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Table of Contents

Essay Cover Sheet	2
Abstract	3
Keywords	3
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	6
1. Theory and Methodology	9
1.1 Judith Butler and Defining Gender	9
1.1.1 Doing Gender: Performativity and Citationality	11
1.1.2 Agency and Resistance	12
1.2 Gender in Media and Culture	13
1.2.1 Stereotypes, Ideologies and Hegemony	13
1.2.2 Classical Hollywood Narrative Form, Woman's Film, and The Male Gaze	14
1.2.3 Social Resistance and Change	16
1.3 Gender and Film Analysis	17
2. Cinderella	20
2.1 The Animated Film	20
2.2 The Live-Action Film	24
2.3 Comparison and Discussion	27
2.3.1 Close Reading	28
3. Beauty & the Beast	33
3.1 The Animated Film	33
3.2 The Live-Action Film	37
3.3 Comparison and Discussion	39
3.3.1 Close Reading	40
Conclusion	45
Bibliography	47

Introduction

As a young girl, I watched countless Disney movies and I still do to this day. That young girl admired the princesses that feature in many of these movies. I was and still am not alone in this admiration towards the Disney princess franchise, as some form of Disney entertainment permeates many American homes (Henke et al. 229). This fascination with the Disney princess is interesting as gender representation in Disney film can be deemed problematic. Many people, especially parents and feminists, have voiced their concerns about the impact of Disney's gender representations as they view the princesses featured in princess movies as possibly harmful role models to young viewers (Weston). Children are very impressionable and the movies that they watch have the power to establish harmful stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, which are present in many Disney movies, as a reality in their minds (Hoerrner 213). As Jill Nelmes describes in her book *An Introduction to Film Studies*, it is important to study gender and film because these cultural representations influence our ideas about gender identity and they reflect as well as influence “what our culture portrays as being representative of masculinity and femininity” and “our understanding of gender, sexuality and society” (242). The immense popularity of Disney and the Disney princess and prince thus inspires critical thinking about these films as their gender representations might negatively influence their, largely young, audience.

Gender and the representation of gender has been an ongoing point of debate in society. As Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez argue, “audiences make meaning out of media imagery or texts – meaning that helps shape our personal, social, and political worlds” (xiii). Ideology and stereotypes, which will be discussed in more detail later in this work, are quite prevalent in society as well as in cultural productions that reinforce those ideas, and that “may encourage particular expectations” as Nelmes puts it (248), to the extent that “people feel pressure to conform to certain stereotypes without really understanding what they are and even without being aware of their influence on our perception” (Maity 29). Such stereotypes are therefore often problematic and limit and oppress people that do not identify with these structures. This thesis aims to analyze the way in which gender, and the idea of masculinity and femininity, is portrayed in popular cultural productions and if and how that portrayal has improved or remained the same over time. In order to do this, I will look at two films that have been produced during the 20th century, and compare them to their re-released 21st century counterparts, to see if the contemporary versions have undergone any significant changes in terms of gender representation.

In doing so, this work additionally seeks to explore the notion of gender and its position in culture and society and what that means for the development of one's gender identity.

My thesis will add to existing research by focusing on a new type of film. Live-action remakes of animated classics are a recent development within the Disney franchise. Disney has announced that they plan on releasing around twenty live-action films in the upcoming years. Only a few have yet been released and two of those are princess movies. This thesis will focus on these two princess movies as they are relevant productions when it comes to critical discussions about the representation of gender. For this research, I will thus look at two popular animated Disney princess movies as well as their more recent live-action counterparts, namely *Cinderella* (1950 and 2015) and *Beauty & the Beast* (1991 and 2017). The fact that the two original animated films stem from different eras but their live-action counterparts were released only 2 years apart makes them even more interesting to look at for this thesis. Furthermore, as little to no research has been done on this genre, it serves as an interesting topic of research. Comparing these new films to their previously released counterparts will provide insight into the treatment of gender in contemporary popular film. Live-action films are more dimensional than animated movies are and they create the opportunity for more depth and complexity in representing certain themes and characters. It will be interesting to see what changes the producers decided to make (or not to make) and if the new live-action movies treat gender in different or similar ways. Given that popular culture has previously reflected societal changes and gender tendencies, it is expected that such changes and developments will also come forward in comparing the aforementioned case studies.

The following section will briefly clarify the structure of this thesis. The first chapter will be a theoretical chapter on the notion of gender and will include a literature review. It will introduce and discuss the most important and relevant scholarly sources that will be useful in understanding the concept of gender as well as its representation in film, which will be the focus of the following chapters. I will start by discussing Judith Butler's ideas on gender that come from her works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993). Judith Butler is a philosopher and gender theorist as well as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. In the works mentioned above, Butler introduces new, controversial ideas on gender that move away from traditional notions of gender and introduces her performativity theory. Her ideas and her performativity

theory will be discussed in detail and will serve as the theoretical framework for the rest of this thesis. The second chapter will focus on analyzing both the animated and live-action version of *Cinderella* and the third chapter will do the same regarding the animated and live-action version of *Beauty and the Beast*. After analyzing the movies, a brief comparison and discussion will conclude each chapter. This comparison and discussion will include a close reading of relevant scenes of both the animated and live-action movies discussed in these two chapters. To carry out these film analyses I will use the guidelines introduced by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in their book *Film Art: An Introduction* (2010) as well as *An Introduction to Film Studies* (2003), edited by Jill Nelmes, which will be discussed in the final part of chapter one. The elements that will be focused on are narrative and character analysis, mise-en-scène, music, cinematography and editing and drawing comparisons and contrasts from those findings. The conclusion after the three chapters will then attempt to summarize the results and answer the research question: How do Disney's recent live-action versions of *Cinderella* (1950) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) differ from and/or compare to their animated counterparts in terms of the representation of gender?

1. Theory and Methodology

In order to analyze the notion of gender as presented in the case studies, while also taking into account previous research and context on gender in media and culture, one first needs to define a working definition of the term ‘gender’. Defining gender is not an easy task as there are many academics and theorists that have written about the topic. Moreover, ideas about gender have evolved, changed, and differed greatly over the years and they still do. As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this work, one of the most well-known and influential gender theorists is Judith Butler. Butler’s works on gender were, and perhaps still are, quite controversial and progressive in their thinking about gender. The aim of this thesis is finding out if the treatment of gender in popular culture productions has evolved and become more progressive. Using Butler’s work in doing so seems like the right choice due to their progressive and critical nature as well as their wish for a different treatment of gender. Her work will thus be used as a theoretical framework for this thesis. This first part will, thus, aim to define a working definition of ‘gender’ by analyzing the main ideas of Judith Butler’s most important works and by discussing relevant ideas on gender by other academics that may add to or somewhat contrast with Butler’s works.

1.1 Judith Butler and Defining Gender

The Longman Advanced American Dictionary defines ‘gender’ as “the fact of being male or female” as well as “males or females, considered as a group” (“gender” def. 1 and 3). As the following part will show, this definition of the notion of gender is extremely simplified and, moreover, proves too limited and unsatisfactory when considering some contemporary ideas and views on gender. In the preface of *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler talks about how traditional notions of gender are based on a binary notion of masculinity and femininity, confirmed by the dictionary definition given above, which is limiting and oppressive. Her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, therefore explores the possibilities of gender and how that traditional definition of gender can be redefined (viii). A central point in her discussion is that gender is a social construct, rather than a natural given and that sex, gender, and sexuality do not necessarily stand in relation to one another, contrary to what is generally assumed (xi). At the beginning of *Gender Trouble*, Butler discusses the idea of the sex/gender distinction. The binary gender system that is in place matches the binary sexing system that is used in society and suggests that “gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes” (9). Butler disagrees

with this binary assumption of both sex and gender and the distinction between the two. The idea that she introduces here, and confirms later in her work, is that sex is as much a social construct as gender and that there appears to be no distinction between the two at all. The constrained idea about gender and sex that prevails comes from a “hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structure that appears as the language of universal rationality” (9-12). In other words, a dominant social structure has been established in which a certain set of norms and ideas has come to be regarded as the normative and universal definition of notions such as gender. This includes, for instance, ideas about what it means to be masculine or feminine in the ‘right’ way (xxiv). According to Butler, “it is not possible to oppose the “normative” forms of gender without at the same time subscribing to a certain normative view of how the gendered world ought to be” (xxii). That is to say, every person is always already influenced by the system in place from the moment they are born, and rather than being outside of those structures those structures function as their sort of reference point, even in an attempt to oppose those normative ideals. Butler discusses this supposed reality in an interesting and thought-provoking way. She discusses how, when the established categories of man and woman become unstable, for instance through drag, the reality of gender also becomes unstable as the established categories can no longer be easily recognized “and this is the occasion in which we come to understand that what we take to be “real,” what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality” (xxiv). We will later come back to how Butler argues that revision of the norm might be possible.

The formation of gender identity is based on a social/discursive law that naturalizes its own assumptions: “the univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are considered throughout as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression” (Butler 1990, 46). Butler’s work revolves around questioning even the seemingly most basic established categories or terms such as ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Her aim is to overthrow or rather, renegotiate the current system according to which or from within which an identity, and even the subject of that identity itself, is formed. The following part will clarify the idea of constructed gender, identity, and even subject.

1.1.1 Doing Gender: Performativity and Citationality

A very significant idea that comes forward from Butler's works is that having or "being" a gender is not possible, but rather that someone is "doing" their gender. Butler develops this idea into what she calls the performativity theory. Before discussing the performativity theory, however, it should be noted that while "doing gender" there is no specific person or "doer" behind the doing. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler introduces Nietzsche's idea that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (34). Thus, gender is established by doing but not by one specific subject. It is here that the explanation of performativity clarifies this notion. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler explains that performativity is not the same as a performance, as the term performance suggests the presence of an actor, a doer, which as we have established before is not the case according to Butler (178). Rather, performativity should be seen as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (xii). As discussed in *Gender Trouble*, gender performativity then is the idea that gender is not an internal concept that one has or is, but is "manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gender stylization of the body" (Butler, xv) Butler expands on the concept of performativity by linking it to the idea of citationality. She introduces Jacques Lacan's idea that performativity is a kind of citing of the law by reiterating socially established norms (Butler 1993, xxii). What this means is that construction, either of gender, sex, or something else, is "neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both "subjects" and "acts" come to appear at all" (xviii). A concept that builds on this discussion is interpellation, a term introduced by Louis Althusser. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler explains how interpellation is performative in forming the subject and producing what it names. The example that she uses is the interpellation that takes place when a baby is born. The phrase "it's a girl!" turns that baby into a gendered being and "a certain "girling is compelled" as she is now "compelled to "cite" the norm" of femininity, which thus is not a choice but a citation (177). This shows how performativity, and thus citationality and interpellation, forcibly place the subject within the culturally established norms that it is expected to abide by and thereby form its social identity and even produce the subject itself in the first place. Simply put, the hegemonic system that is in place attributes certain expectations and qualities to being a 'man' or a 'woman, to being 'feminine' or 'masculine', and people are compelled to conform to these established sex and gender norms in order to fit in with the rest of

society.

1.1.2 Agency and Resistance

The binary definition of gender is based on an assumed opposition in that “one is one’s gender to the extent that one is not the other gender” and that being one gender, one should desire the other gender, again linking sex, gender, and sexuality/desire (Butler 1990, 30). To create a wider array of sexed and gendered possibilities, the previously discussed naturalized and seemingly fixed ideas, norms, and categories should not be binary or radically linked to each other, such as gender is to sex in contemporary hegemonic gender systems, or perhaps even better, they should cease to exist at all. Allowing for more sexed and gendered possibilities means that these categories as they are applied and used to signify subjects contemporarily, will lose much if not all of their relevance. Monique Wittig argues that they already only exist within the heterosexual matrix, thus, when that system is challenged, they might actually cease to exist (Butler 1990, 150). With such a development, there will come to be many individual identities and not only will a ‘male’ person, in the ‘biologically’ sexed meaning of the word, not necessarily display a ‘masculine’ gender, but these distinctions themselves might not even be of use any longer (152). As Sara Salih emphasizes, based on Butler’s work, “the idea that the subject is not a pre-existing, essential entity and that our identities are constructed, means that it is possible for identities to be *reconstructed* in ways that challenge and subvert existing power structures” (11). Salih discusses Nussbaum’s ‘quietism’ critique of Butler’s works. Nussbaum argues that “Butler’s theories either advocate or engender a passive acceptance of the status quo by asserting that existing discourses can only be reworked rather than evaded” (Salih 148). What Nussbaum seemingly does not take into consideration here, though, is that one cannot think or exist outside of the existing discourses and the only way that it seems they can be reworked is from within that discourse itself (Butler 1990, 202). The existing discourse provides a sort of framework against which “active interrogation” of these “existing norms and discursive structures” can take place. This can subsequently lead to exposing their constructed nature, and therefore their “contingency and instability” (Salih 150). This exposure can subsequently form the base for the process of denaturalizing that which has been naturalized (Butler 1990, 203).

1.2 Gender in Media and Culture

In the previous part an attempt has been made to form a more refined and complex understanding of the notion of gender. It should be noted, however, that this discussion does by no means claim to provide a complete and full-rounded definition of gender. First, the scope of this work would be too small to take into account every significant idea surrounding the notion of gender. Moreover, it proves impossible to give a complete, ‘finished’ as it were, definition of gender as the discussion around the concept is still very much taking place and as gender is never fixed. Now that we have established a more refined and complex meaning of gender, however, we can work with that in developing the rest of this research. After considering gender in a more general sense, it is important to also look at gender in the context of film. Mass media is said to be a major contributor to reinforcing ideas about gender and, thus, one should look at how gender has been treated by the media, in this work the medium of film in particular, and what implications this has for how we view gender nowadays.

1.2.1 Stereotypes, Ideologies and Hegemony

The book *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (2009) aims to explore the ways in which different people are represented in film. It discusses how the idea of equality is strived for in society but has not yet been achieved, and how this shows in cultural productions. The collection *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader* (2003) develops a similar discussion starting from the notion that women are “not born but made”, which we have already discussed previously, and which signifies how cultural productions present the idea of what a woman is supposed to be, and through ideology and stereotypes reinforce that idea, which then helps ‘make’ women (4-5). Throughout the reader, authors continue to emphasize the significant role of media in the formation of identity in various ways: “Radio, television, film, and the other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to male or female” ... “Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil” (Kellner 9).

The first problematic element in movies that is discussed is the use of stereotypes. Stereotypes are used to group certain people together on the basis of general assumptions, that can eventually be taken as a reality about that group as an entirety. In terms of gender one might

think of the stereotype that women are more emotional than rational which contributes to the idea that women are subordinate to men. Stereotypes can thus prove to be harmful and limiting the development of certain social groups (Benshoff and Griffin 7). In line with that idea, Jill Nelmes argues that it is important to study gender in film as it can influence viewer's ideas of masculinity and femininity. Films can be said to reinforce a limited set of representations of women such as the "woman as carer, as passive object, as an object of desire, that they always based in the home, that they are inferior to men, that they like men who are violent" as well as the idea that "men tend to take on strong, active roles, while women are shown as passive and relying on their attractiveness" (Nelmes 242-243, 248). Such assumptions are held up through the notion of hegemony.

Hegemony is "the means by which a dominant social group maintains control of a subordinate group, a form of unconscious control, in which we take on certain beliefs, practices and attitudes as being natural or normal" (Benshoff and Griffin 256). Besides stereotypes, there are (dominant) ideologies in place that can seem like facts but are naturalized assumptions that are accepted by many through their constant reinforcement such as the idea that white heterosexual males are stronger, more intelligent, and generally superior to other social groups. Such a construct can either consciously or unconsciously affect us positively, when being a white heterosexual male, or negatively, when not being one or not conforming to that standard (8, 12). Such stereotypes and ideologies can appear clearly, but often also appear very subtly in the form of "ideological state apparatuses" such as "schools, the family, the church, and the media institutions that shape and represent our culture in certain ways." Benshoff and Griffin argue that mass media, and specifically American cinema, work to "exemplify and reinforce (and more rare challenge) the hegemonic domination of white patriarchal capitalism" (11-13). James Lull confirms these ideas about hegemony and ideology and summarizes that the "inter-articulating, mutually reinforcing process of ideological influence is the essence of hegemony" (62)

1.2.2 Classical Hollywood Narrative Form, Woman's Film, and The Male Gaze

America on Film discusses the classical Hollywood narrative form, many elements of which Disney princess film tends to take on as well, such as the linear story line and the idea of climax, closure and happy ending. What is different about Disney princess film is that they never have a white heterosexual male protagonist/hero but a female, yet often still white and

heterosexual, protagonist/heroine (Benshoff and Griffin 25). The different elements of film form, such as *mise-en-scène*, contribute to how men and women are portrayed and implement ideas of “how women and men are supposed to be” (213). Here, another set of typically ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ traits is given: “femininity (as defined by patriarchy) is usually associated with being small, quiet, passive, emotional, nurturing, non-aggressive, dependent, and weak. Masculinity is usually associated with being large, loud, and active, with non-emotional aggression and strong leadership abilities” (214). Another aspect that shows how women are considered inferior to men is how it’s an improvement, or even considered threatening, for women to take on ‘masculine’ qualities, while it is presented as negative, weird, or even funny when men take on ‘feminine’ qualities (215).

A genre that seems relevant to discuss is the woman’s film, which was an upcoming genre in the 1930s. Molly Haskell identifies four different narrative themes in these types of films which all relate to the idea of obtaining ultimate happiness: finding a man: sacrifice, affliction, having to make a choice, and competition between women. Considering all the ideas discussed above, it again shows that film plays a role in reinforcing the patriarchal notions of sex and gender and how sex influences the formation of gender in this social system (230). The extent of media influence, especially on young audiences that are the main audience of the case studies in this thesis, is expressed by a statement made by Margaret Mead: “our children are not brought up by parents, they are brought up by the mass media” (Kilbourne 258). This work re-emphasizes how the girl in relation to another boy or man is a key element often focused on in film. Besides that, the importance of being beautiful and to enhance that beauty through clothes, makeup, and so forth, and the idea that women should be silent and passive, combine into the notion that girls’ worth stems mostly from their beauty and their relationship to a man. (259-260).

The different feminist movements and other developments during the twentieth century influenced ideas about gender, from the working woman during the war, back to the housewife and mother after the war, which was challenged again through feminism because of women’s dissatisfaction with that role. Here, Betty Friedan’s concept of the “Feminine Mystique” which stands for “the cultural constructed image of passive, homebound, uneducated, eroticized, and cosmeticized femininity” is introduced, following which she encourages women to strive for more freedom and choices by becoming more educated and independent (Benshoff and Griffin 279). Despite certain improvements, however, it seems that men are still often presented as

“strong active heroes” and women as “peripheral princesses,” as women are often considered as incomplete until they find themselves a man (301).

A very influential theorist when it comes to film studies is Laura Mulvey, in particular because of her development of the male gaze theory. In a simplified explanation, the male gaze theory revolves around the idea that patriarchal society and hegemonic norms have influenced film in that the pleasure of looking is ascribed to males, and creates the idea of a male gaze. Here, the male is positioned as the active looker and the female as a passive ‘to be looked at’ object. These ways of seeing are formed through a male point-of-view, even for non-male viewers, and consciously and/or unconsciously upholds dominant ideologies (Mulvey 803-816). Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze will come back in the film analyses of later chapters.

1.2.3 Social Resistance and Change

As Benshoff and Griffin discuss, there have been some developments in film over time. The hero is not necessarily almost always a white heterosexual male anymore, but there are variations on the hero. They also argue that representations may have improved over the years, but they still see an asymmetry between men and women in that men are defined by their actions, job and principles, and the woman is defined mainly through her appearance” (25-26) Most critical work on gender focuses on women, and though this thesis does mainly focus on the representation of femininity and women, it is also important and perhaps inevitable to focus on the construction of masculinity as well. The patriarchal norms in place affect men as well, both positively or negatively, as it establishes their inferiority but at the same time suppresses certain ‘feminine’ qualities that they might want to express. This conforming to masculinity is needed to “constantly prove to themselves and to other that they are indeed “real men,” that is to say, not like women” (257-258). Like femininity, the definition of masculinity, thus, also involved some tensions and renegotiations.

In contemporary culture and society, the idea of ‘post-feminism’ has come up. The term suggests a society and culture that does not need feminism any longer, that is beyond feminism. As briefly summarized in *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, post-feminism emphasizes “educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work, domesticity, and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment” but it does not necessarily achieve these goals in the right way

or for the right reasons, especially according to some feminists (Tasker and Negra 1-2). Even though perceptions and representations of gender may have changed over the years, Jackson Katz argues that it is still based in inequality as the definitions stem from oppositions between the binary assumptions of masculine and feminine. That masculinity is defined as that which is not feminine, means that the two terms have to be reasserted constantly (351). In film, this regularly results in the opposition of men being strong, violent, muscular, and that “their dominance over women is biologically based” while women remain passive (351-354). Benshoff and Griffin, however, are hopeful that with societal evolution, improvements in film representation will follow. (301).

Social resistance, in the form of feminism for instance, could overthrow hegemony if its powerful enough, and inspire a renegotiation of that hegemony (Lull 65). Through social resistance, a conflicted hegemony is created as it criticizes the idea of one dominant hegemony and challenges its socially constructed norms. The contested views that originate within that social resistance form the base for debate on and renegotiation of the norm (Crane 315). An example of that could be that more people are starting to reject the idea of gender in its traditional sense, because of the efforts of feminism or queer studies, and that ideas of non-binary gender become represented more because of it. The fairly recent field of cultural studies emphasizes that films should not just be seen as simple entertainment, but that they carry meaning and implications that reflect upon society (Benshoff and Griffin 13-14). By recognizing and critiquing the ideological messages in a film, they can be resisted. This might lead to altered ideological assumptions as the original ones will, over time, no longer be accepted and films need to incorporate these societal changes (20). What this thesis aims to do is explore precisely this notion. In comparing two contemporary re-releases of two older movies, it can be analyzed whether certain ideologies have been altered to fit a changed social climate or whether the original film content and form have been maintained.

1.3 Gender and Film Analysis

We have now established a working definition of gender and have looked at gender in the context of film. To carry out the film analysis in the two following chapters, this part will provide key elements on how to do this in relation to gender. This section will introduce and summarize

the elements that will be taken into consideration while analyzing gender representation in the case studies.

An important element to focus on in film analysis that is discussed by Bordwell and Thompson is narrative form. As this work will show, narrative is one of the main elements of establishing gender relations and ideas. Bordwell and Thompson define narrative as “a chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in time and space.” Narrative is the story that makes up the logical structure of the film, and it seems that without a narrative there is no basis for a film. The book introduces three key elements in forming and understanding narrative: “causality, time, and space.” The patterns of the narrative are what make the story understandable to the audience in terms of “change and stability, cause and effect, time and space” (79). Important in conveying the narrative to the audience are the characters in a film. Their body and especially their character traits, such as “attitudes, skills, habits, tastes, psychological drives, and any other qualities that distinguish the character,” tell a lot about them as a character and how they respond to certain events. They play a big role in carrying out the narrative (80).

Another set of tools to convey meaning in film are “the basic techniques of cinema” categorized as “mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound” (Bordwell and Thompson xv). All of these elements, but mainly mise-en-scène and, especially in the case of *Cinderella*, sound contribute to the representation of gender. Mise-en-scène roughly translates into “putting into the scene” and is defined as what the filmmakers decide to show on the screen and entails the “setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures” in a film (Bordwell and Thompson 118). Nelmes thus describes it as “those visual aspects that appear within a single shot” (63). Setting introduces the context or location of the scene that is taking place and can emphasize the meaning of specific scenes. As Bordwell and Thompson emphasize, “the overall design of a setting can shape how we understand story action” (123). In both setting and costume, the use of color is very important and the combination of setting and costume can “function to reinforce narrative and thematic patterns” (128) A character’s costume can also provide information about that person just by looking at them and it can “signify changes of status, attitude, and even the passing of time” (Nelmes 67). Facial expressions are important in expressing emotions on screen and make-up can be used to enhance certain features. Lighting, and with that also shadowing, has the power to draw the audience’s attention to a specific part of the shot and to highlight or cover up certain parts in order to emphasize something (Bordwell and Thompson 128-131). The final

element of *mise-en-scène* is the movement and performance of the figures in the film. The way a character moves, acts, talks, and so on says a lot about their character and how they are to be perceived. All in all, the purpose of *mise-en-scène* is to guide the audience's attention to what is important, to enhance the meaning of the film, and to engage the audience to the film as a whole (141-147). The analyses in the following chapters will focus on most elements of *mise-en-scène* discussed above, such as costume and performance, as they contribute to the portrayal of gender significantly.

The cinematography of a film also contributes to conveying the film's meaning. It literally means "writing in movement" and can be described as "not only *what* is filmed but also *how* it is filmed" (Bordwell and Thompson 167). Cinematography thus has to do with the frame of the shot, the duration of the shot, the speed of motion, and the movement, angle, and distance of the camera (167-172). The following element, which is editing, can be described as "the coordination of one shot with the next" (223). There are various editing techniques that can be applied such as the fade-out, dissolve, wipe, and cut and editing can be used to create graphic, rhythmic, spatial and temporal relations (223, 234). In most films, editing is used to combine the different scenes into one flowing story, using continuity editing and aiming to "minimize the sense of disruption" (Nelmes 74). It can be used to emphasize facial expression, dialogue, or setting and change or influence the experience of the viewer (Bordwell and Thompson (265). Although, in the portrayal of gender, cinematography and editing seem to be less significant than narrative and *mise-en-scène* for the chosen case studies, they will be taken into account as they can still enhance ideas on gender. The final element to pay attention to in film is sound. Bordwell and Thompson describe three types of sound: speech, music, and noise. They emphasize how sound can be important in giving meaning to a scene, even though a viewer often does not consciously listen to the sounds that are present (269-270). A distinction is made between diegetic and non-diegetic sounds. The first one meaning sounds that logically occur within the context of the film, such as birds chirping during a scene that takes place in nature, and the latter meaning sounds that are not natural sounds coming from within the movie but from the outside, such as dramatic music to enhance the feeling of tension (Nelmes 76). In this sense, Nelmes argues, "music is used to inform the audience of appropriate emotional responses" as it is "reinforcing the mood of the scene or even directing how the audience should respond to and understand the story events taking place" (76-77).

2. Cinderella

Cinderella (1950) is one of Disney's first princess movies and it has remained popular over the years. The story revolves around Cinderella, who has lost her parents, and is now living with her stepmother and two stepsisters. She is being treated as a servant rather than as a family member. One day, an invitation from the king invites every woman within the kingdom to attend a ball at the castle. The ball's purpose is to find a suitable bride for the prince. Although, her stepmother and stepsisters form obstacles throughout the entire film, Cinderella makes it to the ball with help from her fairy godmother and dances with Prince Charming. After having to leave and losing one of her glass slippers, the prince sets out to find her again by having all the women in the kingdom try on the glass slipper. The slipper, of course, fits Cinderella and in the final scene of the movie the prince and Cinderella get married and they 'live happily ever after'. The plot of *Cinderella* (2015) is based on the original film and has a very similar storyline. As this following chapter will show, however, there are some notable differences in the movie's form and content in the representation of gender.

2.1 The Animated Film

Cinderella is a representation of the perfect traditional feminine woman. She is confined to a domestic sphere, spends her time doing household chores in a cheerful manner, and despite the abusive treatment of her stepmother and stepsisters she does not show much resistance but is rather passive, a quality traditionally attributed to 'good women'. Women are often shown "doing 'women's work' such as sewing and cooking" and often feature as "victims or prizes" rather than having an active role in the narrative. Another trope that is considered by Benshoff and Griffin is that women are often associated with small animals to suggest their cuteness and defenselessness (218). The heroine in this film conforms to these ideas of what constitutes a good woman. Cute animals like birds and mice are her friends. Moreover, other female characters re-confirm gender roles as, for example, the female mice send away the male mice before helping Cinderella wash, clean, and sew indicating that the male mice are not a part of that. All that Cinderella really has is her kindness and beauty while she is positioned as a suffering, helpless victim throughout the movie. In contrast, the idea of "evil as the personification of the independent woman" is reflected in Cinderella's stepmother who is independent, but "vain, greedy, and selfish" (Murphy 128-29).

The female heroine is then often placed in a situation, in which they participate but which does not come to exist through their own doing, that provides their rescue. In their passivity, their circumstances happen to be altered but their characters remain the same (Murphy 134). The same goes for Cinderella, as the ball in the film is organized by men and it is only through magic that she is able to attend, which eventually leads to her rescue by the prince. Furthermore, the idea that women are passive and rely on their beauty, as discussed by Nelmes, is further emphasized in the film when Cinderella's beauty is all that is needed to make the Prince fall in love with her and thus providing her rescue (242-248). The superficiality of their relationship shows how women's beauty is considered their most valuable trait, as the prince knows nothing about Cinderella apart from what she looks like. Thus, Cinderella's femininity is what eventually helps her find 'happiness' as her traditionally feminine qualities of beauty, helplessness, and passivity are rewarded with marriage (Belle 112). Here, the film links Cinderella's dreams of happiness to marriage, thereby confirming the idea that marriage brings happiness and is the ultimate goal in women's lives. Thereby, the film also establishes the prince as the hero/rescuer and the female as domestic and passive as is traditionally done (Murphy 125). Like classical Hollywood film, *Cinderella* follows a plotline in which the aim is establishing a heterosexual relationship. In doing so, the film assumes the categories of 'female' and 'male', which Butler considers to be social constructs, and thus exposes the "ideological nature of plot structure" that reflects dominant, heteronormative, patriarchal structures (Byars 108).

Cinderella's stepsisters are important in conveying gender structures as well, but at the same time it can be argued that they attract attention to the constructed nature of the concept of gender. The stark contrast between Cinderella's elegant movements and beauty and her sister's supposedly unfeminine movements and ugliness highlights Cinderella's successful gender performativity and citationality of the established laws of gender. Elizabeth Belle argues the stepsisters can be read as drag, or possibly as failing in doing gender, as they convey an over the top femininity that appears fake with "their flat chests, huge bustles, and awkward curtsies" (112). They are continuously advised and reminded by their stepmother of how to behave 'feminine' while they continue to display rude, aggressive, typically 'masculine' behavior. One scene that emphasizes this notion of gender as a construct is when the sisters have lost their hope of marrying the prince because of the mystery girl that he is in love with. During this scene, the stepsisters are showing 'unfeminine' behavior as they are yawning, positioned with their legs

spread, their hair and make-up not done. As soon as their mother revives the hope of marrying the prince, the girls start running around to prepare themselves and become 'feminine' again. Here, gender is almost represented as a style that can be put on by choice, an idea that Judith Butler refutes. Butler defines gender norms as oppressive and limiting while the film, thus, seems to represent it as something good and voluntary (Jeffords 183).

Although the prince is not a very present character in the film, and thus masculinity is not necessarily presented very directly aside from, for instance, a 'masculine' portrait of the prince on a wall, male dominance is ensured and expressed in more subtle ways. More than once, a character voices how the prince will choose a bride or that a woman shall be his bride, implying that the will of the prince dominates over women's choice, even if it was not the case that all women in the film are willing to marry him. A woman's beauty and femininity is also judged predominantly by men, as there are several instances where the prince, the duke, or the king roll their eyes at the sight of Anastasia and Drizella, Cinderella's 'unfeminine', 'ugly' and evil stepsisters. Furthermore, Laura Mulvey's idea of the male gaze that has been discussed previously, is clearly present in *Cinderella* (1950). The ball organized by the king is almost like a beauty contest. All of the women are in dresses, trying to impress the prince with their beauty. The king, the duke and the prince all look at them as objects of beauty and desire and have to seek out the most desirable one. The traditional role of a woman is emphasized again by the king when he talks about looking for a suitable mother and suitable wife, as if that is all a woman can be (00.49.15 – 00.49.30).

Another means of reinforcing gender norms, and especially masculinity, as discussed by both *America on Film* and *An Introduction to Film Studies*, is the use of cross-dressing. As Rowe and Wells argue, "costume can also be used to signify mismatches" and thereby reinforce gender expectations. When cross-dressing is referenced or applied it is usually (the idea of) a male dressed as a female and presented as something humorous (67). Benson and Griffin confirm that this device reinforces "traditional gender roles by asking audiences to laugh at the idea of men 'acting' like women" (283). The laughing is encouraged as the character does not perform its expected gender. In *Cinderella* (1950), a perfect example of this reinforcement of gender expectations can be found. In one scene, two mice come up to Cinderella to tell her that there is a new visitor/mouse. When she responds by seeking out a dress, as she provides clothes for the mice, they respond by laughing and yelling "no" several times while gesturing to their own

‘male’ clothes and explaining that “It’s not a she, it’s a he”. Cinderella ‘accordingly’ responds with “Oh, that does make a difference” (00.07.40 – 00.08.00). This scene implies that men should not wear clothes considered feminine and emphasizes a gender (and sex) distinction.

As indicated in the analysis above so far, Cinderella’s life is set in a domestic sphere, enhancing the traditional idea of confining women to domesticity. Her status as a victim is also emphasized through representing her trapped-ness in certain visual choices. This will be further discussed in detail later. Pat Kirkham and Alex Weller describe the idea of using color to enhance the idea of gender. Their analysis focuses on advertisements but can be applied to film as well. They discuss how neutral colors are used to establish a “rational” and “objective” tone when focusing on masculinity. In contrast, femininity is represented through pastel colors that signal “softness, purity, gentleness, and innocence ... which suggest the more delicate, passive, and soft sensibility associated with the more traditional representations of femininity” (269). Cinderella is often presented wearing pastel colors or surrounded by pastel colors, as opposed to mismatched bright colors in dress or dark surroundings for her stepsisters. All women in the film wear dresses, even the mice, thus reinforcing the idea of a masculine and feminine way of dressing. Other aspects that further enhance gender are Cinderella’s elegant movements as well as close-ups of her delicate fingers and tiny waist which stands in stark contrast with the awkward movements of her stepsisters. More physical distinctions between them include bright blue eyes, small feet, red lips, and blonde hair for Cinderella and strangely shaped noses, hair intended to look funny, and body’s that are considered out of proportion according to ideologies of thin women. The stereotypical images of women and their focus on beauty are also enhanced through the props placed within the frame, such as make up tables and hairbrushes. In this animated version of the film, sound is a big contributor to the reinforcement of gender ideas. First, in that Cinderella sings of wishes and dreams of happiness, and the final song expresses that your dreams and wishes can come true, indicating that marriage was her ultimate dream and wish. The song that plays during their dance at the ball is also crucial as it talks about love as “a miracle” and glorifies it as the sole purpose of life and reason for happiness, hereby not only implying the importance of marriage but also highlighting the superficial nature of the love as Cinderella and the prince had just met (00.53.00).

2.2 The Live-Action Film

As the previous part has shown, the animated version of *Cinderella* is not very progressive but upholds traditional gender systems and stereotypes of what classifies as masculine or feminine behavior. The following part will focus on analyzing the contemporary live action version of the story in a similar way to see if there are any notable differences in the representation of gender and if the passing of time results in representing updated societal ideas.

The film generally seems to mimic the original narrative structure of *Cinderella* (1950) almost identically. However, some significant changes in meaning and representation have been made by altering or adding scenes and by adding more character complexity. As the female heroine/protagonist, Cinderella still inhabits the traditional idea of beauty and feminine grace and elegance. Yet upon close analysis, it can be concluded that her character is given much more complexity throughout the story in comparison to its animated counterpart. At the beginning of the film, Cinderella is told by her mother to “have courage and be kind” (00.05.25) and she carries this motto with her throughout the entire film. Where the original Cinderella is kind and beautiful, and not much more, the ‘revised’ Cinderella of the 2015 film is presented with an interest in reading and an eagerness to learn. This tendency is already shown when she is a child in that her dad teaches her a French word that she picks up very easily and it continues to develop as she gets older, which shows in the fact that she has later become fluent in French.

Besides being more educated, Cinderella is also more independent. In the previous film, she is not seen outside of the domestic sphere apart from attending the ball. In this film, she has a life outside of the house. She goes horse riding in the woods and she does groceries at the market where she also socializes with another woman that used to work at their house. Cinderella is still performing the domestic chores in her household, but it is no longer all there is to her life. In this sense, Cinderella fits Friedan’s idea of resistance to the ‘Feminine Mystique’ as she is more educated and independent which leads to more freedom and choices (Benshoff and Griffin 279). Another element that was added to her character to enhance her independence and individuality is that she is quite outspoken, quirky, and she does not simply accept everything as it is. The expression of her individuality comes forward on several occasions, such as during her first meeting with the prince. Her quirkiness is refreshing in comparison with the simply kind and seemingly ‘perfect’ Cinderella of the first film. Not accepting everything as it is, translates to a certain sense of agency and resistance rather than complete passivity as in the first film. Through

her independence, Cinderella is also less victimized in this film. She expresses to the prince that her stepmother and stepsisters treat her as well as they are able to, which is not true through the eyes of the audience, but it shows that she is strong, optimistic and refuses to spend her life suffering (00.29.10). Moreover, during the ball, the prince is acting a little awkward and nervous while she is assertive in finishing his sentence and asking him to dance (00.59.05 – 00.59.50). In this film, she also eventually stands up to her stepmother while she never directly does so in the animated film. Ironically, a crucial moment where she lacks activity and is rather passive, however, is the moment that would lead to her ‘rescue’. While her stepsisters are trying on the glass slipper, Cinderella is not taking any action but passively staring out of her window while singing. Here, it is her lovely voice that attracts attention and subsequently leads to her rescue. This moment seems to reduce her to the passive heroine again while having the prince taking action in saving her.

The horse riding in the woods that was mentioned earlier is a significant addition to this movie. Not only does it signify Cinderella’s independence, but it also provides the setting in which she first meets the prince. Thus, this time she does not meet the prince for the first time at the ball. During this first meeting in the forest, Cinderella and Mr. Kit, as the prince refers to himself to hide his true identity, have an actual conversation. They talk and get to know each other. No matter how brief that moment may be, it adds a depth to their relationship as acquaintances that was fully missing in the original film, where they were already having feelings of love after meeting for the first time without talking. Although the prince briefly tries to force her into a traditional women’s role by saying that she should not go so far into the woods by herself, indicating that a woman is weak on her own, she does not care and it signifies again that she is an independent woman that can take care of herself. Through all of these new qualities, Cinderella refutes the traditional idea of ‘good’ women as quiet, passive, dependent and weak as she is outspoken, active, independent and strong. As mentioned before, her outspoken-ness comes forward during this meeting as well. The prince is on a hunt, but through her action of strongly stating that “just because it’s what’s done, doesn’t mean it’s what should be done” she influences his decisions and stops him from continuing the hunt. (00.26.37 – 00.31.15) A sense of equal status of man and woman in the relationship between Cinderella and the prince is re-emphasized towards the end of the movie, where Cinderella asks the prince to take her as she is,

to which he replies, “only if you will take me as I am” suggesting that both have their flaws (01.34.57 – 01.35.18).

Similar to Cinderella’s character development, the prince has undergone some changes in personality as well. In this film, the prince has more screen time and this is mainly used to also provide a more complex character for him. Male dominance does not seem as emphasized in this movie but rather it seems to promote a more equal relationship between men and women. As discussed before, Cinderella has the power to influence the prince’s decisions giving her, at times, a certain dominance over him. Even though the prince is expected and sometimes inclined to conform to certain masculine societal standards, the audience soon learns that he is somewhat different. After meeting Cinderella, he describes her to his father as much more than just a pretty girl, when his father suggested that she was just that, and thereby emphasizes the importance of personality to him (00.31.26 – 00.31.45). Another important scene is where the duke criticizes the prince for discontinuing his hunt as he is not supposed to act like that. As previously introduced ideas by Benshoff and Griffin showed, men are traditionally expected to be “active” and “aggressive” (214). Hunting is, therefore, traditionally considered a typically ‘masculine’ activity. This scene can then be read as a metaphor for traditionally ‘masculine’ men trying to ensure that other men keep conforming to the dominant system rather than deviating to an alternative ‘masculinity’ (00.32.35 – 00.32.48). This happens again shortly after, in a scene where the prince is somewhat mocked for wanting to marry someone he really likes rather than just any beautiful woman who provides some economic benefit or has status and is therefore a “suitable bride” (00.32.50 – 00.33.50).

One scene that is positive, as discussed before, but problematic at the same time is when Cinderella goes to the market. It is not the independent action of going to the market that is problematic, but the conversation that she has with a woman at the market. The woman asks her why she does not leave the house but stays to live with her stepsisters and stepmother. Cinderella replies that she promised her parents to love the place like they did, and that it is her home (00.34.45 – 00.35.13). This indicates that she has the choice and freedom to leave but that she consciously chooses not to. Later in the film, however, she does leave that place behind in order to be with the Prince. Here, the film implies that her personal freedom and increased happiness is not as important as marrying the prince, as she is willing to make the sacrifice for him but not for herself. This relates back to the idea of marriage as the ultimate goal for a woman.

Despite many changes, ‘bad women’ are still presented as uncaring and unkind and therefore undesirable and the stepsisters are described as lacking accomplishments in domestic skills, as if every woman should spend her time mastering them (00.18.44). Their superficiality is emphasized like in the first film. Cinderella is, however, surprised that they do not care about getting to know the prince before marrying him, whereas she was like that herself in the original film (00.39.29 – 00.39.59). The stepmother also shows that all she wants for her daughters is someone to marry. She arranges advantageous marriages for them without knowing who they will marry, showing that she does not care as long as they get married. Notably, the prince is the first man besides her father or servants that Cinderella has personally encountered in her life, and she ends up marrying him.

In this analysis so far, several elements of film form have also been taken into account, such as setting and character behavior. Another element that contributes to the representation of gender is the use of costumes and makeup. In this film, all of the women are still in dresses and none of the men are, thus still reinforcing traditional dress codes. Furthermore, color use seems to be gendered still too, as Cinderella is often portrayed in or surrounded by pastel (mainly pink) tones. Positive changes in representing gender compared to the animated film have been made as well through the use of cinematography and mise-en-scène. The scene in which Cinderella enters the ball is an example of that and will be discussed in detail with visual images in the comparison and discussion below. Additionally, Cinderella is portrayed as a strong and powerful woman on several occasions, through her attitude, stance, and facial expressions. A scene in which this is the case will also be discussed in detail below. There are no songs or sounds that particularly contribute to the representation of gender it seems.

2.3 Comparison and Discussion

In comparing *Cinderella* (1950) and *Cinderella* (2015), it can be concluded that the live-action version of the film has certainly made numerous progressive changes in breaking some stereotypical depictions of women. The female protagonist has been transformed into a more feminist-friendly character, as opposed to her damsel in distress counterpart in the animated film. In portraying men and women in a less stereotypical way, a more equal relationship is established between the two. It also reflects on how there does not have to be one right way of being ‘masculine’ or being ‘feminine’ but that people should be more like who they truly are.

Despite these changes however, it cannot be said that *Cinderella* (2015) has completely done away with hegemonic systems of representation. It still includes some oppressive ideas about women, and has male characters that subtly imply certain male dominance over females. Furthermore, it seems like a bridge too far to really challenge the dominant binary gender system in place as the categories of male and female are definitely not challenged and masculinity and femininity are still distinguished in terms of costume, looks, and other elements. However, these ideas seem much less emphasized as the newer version has done away with, for instance, the scenes that ridicule cross-dressing and portray the female mice as doing chores and ‘feminine’ work.

It is unfortunate that the film still had to end in marriage. If it had really wanted to be progressive it could have opted for postponing marriage, by not showing it in the movie, and rather have the two characters exploring their relationship together, in a more modern fashion. Instead they confirm what Benschhoff and Griffin already argued, that despite changes, the woman is often still presented as needing a man to complete her (301). Even though Cinderella still gets married to the prince, however, the idea that a woman’s value is in her beauty and her relationship to a man is not emphasized as it is in the first film (Kilbourne 259-260). She still commits herself to a man, but the basis of their relationship is not her beauty but their more equal status and genuine liking of each other.

2.3.1 Close Reading

The following part will highlight some differences between the films through a close reading of certain scenes/screenshots. The first scene that will be compared is the scene where Cinderella enters the prince’s ball. The difference in her entrance in the two films is very significant in the representation of gender as the different screenshots and analysis below will show. First, the animated version of the scene will be considered (00.50.28 – 00.50.49). In image 1, it can be seen that rather than making a grand entrance, Cinderella enters the ball in the background, with her stepsisters on the foreground. As Kilbourne describes, women “often appear off-balance, insecure, and weak,” and to enhance that women’s “body parts are bent, conveying unpreparedness, submissiveness, and appeasement” (265). In image 1, and while the scene continues as seen in image 2, Cinderella is represented along the idea discussed above. She has assumed a bent stance rather than standing straight-up, and she is carefully exploring her

surroundings while she appears quite lost. In image 2, the prince approaches and relieves her of that insecurity in later taking her hand and leading her into the center of the ball. As opposed to Cinderella, the prince takes on a very static and straight position which reflects his determinate and active attitude.



Image 1: Cinderella (1950)



Image 2: Cinderella (1950)

The same scene in the live-action version of the film portrays an entirely different image of Cinderella and simultaneously of gender. Here, as can be seen below in image 3-6, Cinderella does make a grand entrance which places her at the center of attention right away. Image 3 shows how she enters the scene, not lost or insecure at all this time, but rather confident and determined. Her body is not bent but fiercely upright and she is smiling brightly, radiating enthusiasm and more confidence, in contrast with the confused and lost appearance of the animated Cinderella.



Image 3: Cinderella (2015)

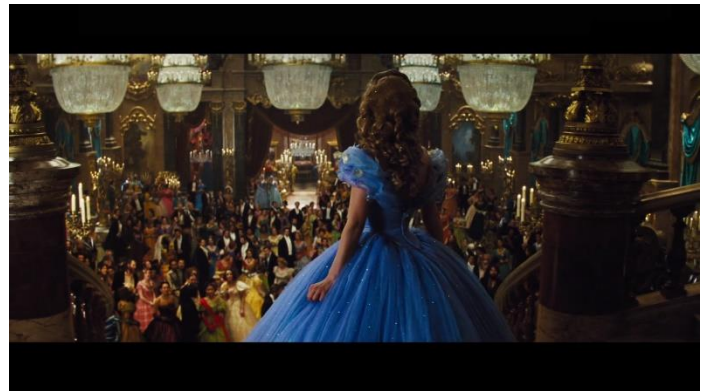


Image 4: Cinderella (2015)

As image 4 shows, the camera turns towards the people attending the ball and who simultaneously form Cinderella's audience. She is the object of attention in the scene, gathering the attention of every single person in the room. Her confidence and strength are emphasized by her elevated position in relation to the onlooking crowd. Her physical 'feminine' features are accentuated by her beautiful dress that seems to almost light up the frame and that really shows off her small waist. Despite these typically feminine features, however, she is not presented as inhabiting the inner qualities of a 'traditional woman' as she seems strong and powerful. In image 5 and 6, she can be seen further descending down the stairs while being very aware of the eyes pointed towards her. Not once does she show a sign of insecurity as she maintains her upright positions and continues to smile confidently.



Image 5: *Cinderella* (2015)



Image 6: *Cinderella* (2015)

Having looked at these different screenshots and comparing them to each other, it can be concluded that the presentation of the female heroine in the live-action version is positively influenced by mise-en-scène, camera placement and editing.

The following part will analyze and compare two more scenes taken from the case studies. This time, the comparison will not show two scenes that are the same. Rather, one scene that contributes to the victimization of Cinderella in *Cinderella* (1950) will be analyzed. Then, a scene that contributes to the independence and de-victimization of Cinderella in *Cinderella* (2015) will be analyzed and compared to the other scene. In image 7 and 8 taken from the animated film (00.22.08-00.23.30), Cinderella is seen within the domestic sphere which she does not leave throughout the entire film apart from when she goes to the ball. Her status as a helpless victim that contributes to the representation of women's weakness, discussed earlier in this

chapter, is emphasized here through various means. Her stance is bent and submissive rather than straight and confident. Her facial expressions are sad, and her eyes are facing down, again signaling submissiveness. The shadow of the windows, in image 7, that reflect on Cinderella as if they are prison bars convey the fact that she is trapped and in need of someone to rescue her. This again, reinforces the idea of subordinate and submissive qualities in women.



Image 7: Cinderella (1950)



Image 8: Cinderella (1950)



Image 9: Cinderella (1950)

In contrast with this domestic captivity, stands the Cinderella as presented in the live-action film. A scene that conveys this idea is the scene where she rides her horse into the woods (00.26.26 – 00.31.16). In image 9, the shot right before the horse riding scene is shown. Here, Cinderella is upset because she has just been verbally abused again by her stepsisters and stepmother. This shot of her crying seems to put her in a victim's position much like the animated version often did. However, as seen in pictures 10-12 below, the following scene allows for her de-victimization as she has composed herself and transforms into an independent, strong and happy woman. Image 10 shows how fast her movement is, as the shot is somewhat blurry and her

stance is very active. They convey a powerful image of Cinderella when watching the moving images. Image 11 and 12 show her confident pose while sitting on top of the horse. Picture 11 is the moment that she encounters a stag in the woods, and she is fascinated rather than scared. Picture 12 is a moment taken from her conversation with the prince. It shows how she is fierce and outspoken towards him rather than timid and quiet as would traditionally be expected of her. The far-reaching forest surroundings also convey a sense of freedom, with its bright colors and non-confining space. Cinderella seems happy and active as opposed to miserable and passive in the animated movie. Again, the live-action movie has made positive steps in representing the female heroine on screen. The analysis that has been conducted in this chapter, as well as the close readings of different scenes, is by no means complete but has tried to seek out the key elements that come forward in portraying gender. Here, a focus on differences or notable similarities between the movies were particularly paid attention to.



Image 10: Cinderella (2015)



Image 11: Cinderella (2015)



Image 12: Cinderella (2015)

3. Beauty & the Beast

Beauty and the Beast (1991) revolves around Belle, who lives in a small town with her father, but does not fit in with her community. Belle dreams of venturing out into the world and getting more out of life. One day, her father gets lost in the woods and is captured by a beast in a castle. Belle sets out to rescue him and ends up sacrificing herself for her father's freedom. Over the course of her imprisonment, Belle starts to develop feelings for the Beast. When she is allowed to return home to help her father, the villagers organize a hunt for the beast after hearing of him. Upon that, Belle returns to the castle to help protect the beast. She ends up expressing her love to him and a curse that was cast upon him is broken, turning him back into the human prince that he used to be and, again, they 'live happily ever after'. *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) has, like the live-action Cinderella movie, a storyline very similar to its animated counterpart. In analyzing *Cinderella* (1950) and *Cinderella* (2015), changes in the representation of gender, femininity, and masculinity were discovered. This chapter will now continue to develop a similar analysis of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Again, there are some significant differences in film form and film content which will be compared and discussed in this chapter.

3.1 The Animated Film

The first few scenes in the movie immediately establish a clear image of Belle. The first time she is shown to the audience is when she is leaving her house. Her appearance is presented as a traditional sense of beauty in that she is skinny with big eyes and long hair and, thus, conforming to traditional beauty standards. She is also wearing a dress while working in and around the house. Belle moves around with grace and elegance, and like Cinderella, she is shown as being in touch with nature. While the very first part of the film expresses the message that "beauty is found within" (00.01.57), the emphasis on outer beauty is paradoxically enhanced through the fact that Belle's name means beauty and the title of the film contrasts beauty with ugliness in referring to Belle as the beauty and Adam as the beast. Despite these traditional 'feminine' elements and female representations, the audience soon learns that Belle is different from the other women in town.

The first song in the movie introduces the town that Belle lives in and tells us much about Belle's personality as well as the rest of the community. She is introduced as an interesting female character who inhabits certain 'unfeminine' traits and is subsequently being marginalized

by the rest of her community as the strange ‘other’. They sing about her beauty and how it is undermined through her behavior, suggesting that a woman should primarily be beautiful and nothing more. Thereby, this song already exposes and represents a dominant societal structure and how people are encouraged to conform in order to fit in, an idea discussed in chapter one. In this first song, Belle sings about how everything is always the same in her provincial town and she expresses a longing for a life outside of that small community, a wish to explore the world. For the first time, a reference to her love of reading is made and how the townspeople describe Belle as an outsider, peculiar, dreamy, odd, and so forth, because of it (00.03.40 – 00.08.20). The traditional idea that women should not be educated or independent is confirmed in the behavior of the townspeople, but Belle refutes it.

Belle’s resistance to the social order is mainly represented through her love of reading as well as her ideas on love and marriage and how she contrasts with other girls in town. Her rebellion and curiosity “display an increasingly stronger sense of self, of choice, and of voice” (Henke, Umble, and Smith 234). She is admired for her beauty by the ‘masculine’ and handsome Gaston but ignores his advances as he is only attracted to her beauty. In several scenes in the movie, three stereotypical images of uneducated, blonde, emotional, ‘hyperfeminine’ female characters are added into the frame. The girls are swooning over Gaston, and they do not understand Belle’s disinterest towards him. They represent traditional femininity and superficial beauty with the ultimate goal of marriage. While reading is presented as some form of rebellion against the oppressive social order as “the whole town’s talking about it ... it’s not right for a woman to read ... soon she starts getting ideas and thinking,” that element of rebellion is undermined once it becomes clear what Belle reads about (00.08.35 – 00.08.52). She seems to fully reject the idea of marriage initially, until she talks about her favorite book which is about a woman finding her prince charming. This conforms to Janice Radway’s discussion of the genre of romance reading, which she describes as an escape from everyday life for women and as an “effort to construct a fantasy-world where she is attended, as the heroine is, by a man who reassures her of her special status and unique identity” (69-71). This applies to Belle’s type of reading as she seems to read not to educate herself but with the aim of escapism.

Independence, bravery and an active attitude are highlighted in Belle on several occasions. She goes into the woods by herself to rescue her father and sacrifices her freedom for her father’s freedom. This sacrifice, however, can also be interpreted as typically ‘feminine’

behavior rather than bravery, again portraying some ambiguity in the progressive versus traditional nature of Belle's character. Furthermore, the film hints at Belle's intelligence, curiosity and courage by having her figure things out for herself rather than needing to be told or shown, as when she starts exploring the castle by herself despite being forbidden to do so. There is again a certain ambiguity in the representation of Belle, however, as she also adheres to some traditional notions of femininity that undermine her bravery in ways. An example is when she flees the castle after the beast has scared her. She is attacked by wolves and, while initially being quite inventive and trying to fight back, she ends up needing to be saved by the beast. Right after that, she has the option of leaving but her seemingly feminine instinct to care and nurture takes over as she helps the beast (45). Rather than positioning only the woman as a victim at times, however, the beast is victimized in this story as well. He is saved by Belle in small ways, such as through her teachings and her care after he is wounded, and in the outcome of the movie in that she is able to break the curse. Here, the man is presented as being as incomplete without and depending on the woman as in the other way around, if not more.

In her work "The Mask of Beauty: Masquerade Theory and Disney's Beauty and the Beast", Lara Sumera argues that Beauty and the Beast is as anti-feminist as the earlier fairy tales such as Cinderella by mentioning, for instance, that Belle is returned to a traditional role as a wife in domesticity (42-46). This work disagrees with the idea that Beauty and the Beast is solely anti-feminist, as both progressive and conservative elements have been discussed so far. Even though it is true that Belle ends up living 'happily ever after' with a man, her treatment of marriage makes that decision less reflective of marriage as the ultimate goal for women as in *Cinderella* (1950). Belle gives up her own freedom in exchange for her father's but when she is black-mailed by Gaston to marry him in exchange for her father's freedom she refuses. This time even her father's freedom is not enough to make that sacrifice. She challenges ideological conventions as she does not aim for marriage at any cost like the other women, but it has to mean something for her. Here, the concept of love at first sight and easy marriage is replaced by a more complex and in-depth relationship that the heroine works toward gradually (Henke, Umble, and Smith 234).

The representation of masculinity in this film can be discussed through the characters of Gaston, LeFou, and the Beast. Gaston is presented as a hyper-masculine traditional man. This comes forward in his dominant behavior towards Belle, his muscular appearance, and through a song about him that highlights his endless 'masculine' qualities described as manly, intimidating,

muscly, burly, not scraggly or scrawny, a fighter, and so forth. As opposed to traditional fairy tales, however, the heroine is not interested in this hyper-masculine figure that, rather, poses as the antagonist in this film (Jeffords 169-170). Belle chooses the beast over Gaston, but only once he develops from having an aggressive, loud, and dominant personality into a sensitive, kind, and caring one. This again emphasizes how Belle is interested in a man that does not fully cohere to the traditional idea of manhood. Moreover, unlike Gaston the beast does not fall in love with Belle because of her beauty, but rather, gradually because of her personality. Nelmes discusses the shifting images of the male hero, from a 1980s “spectacle of muscle, beauty, toughness and bravery” and “a body which could carry out extreme physical feats,” as present in Gaston, towards a 1990s hero that is “gentler, more questioning, allowed to show self-doubt, and existing in a world where love and family are important” (268). This distinction is clearly seen between Gaston and the beast. Lastly, Gaston’s best friend LeFou does not conform to ideal masculinity. As Benschoff and Griffin discuss, this could “represent a new negotiation in hegemonic masculinity” as long as this character is not presented as a man to be laughed at (300). As we see with LeFou, however, that is exactly what has been done as he is portrayed as a silly and goofy character, thereby reinforcing ideological ideas about being a true man.

As with *Cinderella* (1950), there are certain moments or subtle elements that reinforce the idea of social norms and that keep the binary gender system in place. One example is the distribution of roles and signification of gender among the living objects within the beast’s castle. There are practical objects such as a clock and a candleholder that are both portrayed as male characters. In opposition, the main female characters consist of a teapot, wardrobe, and a cleaning duster. This matching of gender with stereotyped gender roles is enhanced through their character traits. The teapot is caring and nurturing, the wardrobe dramatic and focused on beauty, and the duster is very sensual and an object of desire for Lumière, the candle holder. In chapter two, the idea of using cross-dressing as a device for establishing normative gender roles was discussed and analyzed. In this film, a similarly significant scene is included. When the castle is being attacked by the villagers, the wardrobe captures a man and releases him after clothing him in a dress, wig, and makeup. The man screams dramatically and runs away, not only portraying cross-dressing as a humorous event, but simultaneously representing it as a literal attack on manhood or masculinity (1.10.42 - 1.10.50).

3.2 The Live-Action Film

As the previous analysis has shown, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) shows some ambiguities in representing Belle in that she possesses both traditional and progressive ‘feminine’ traits. It can be argued, however, that the movie is already far less strict in its conservatism as *Cinderella* (1950) proved to be. Now, the live-action version of *Beauty and the Beast* will be analyzed to seek significant differences and similarities.

While the updated version of *Cinderella* has some significant changes in added scenes that provide a slightly altered narrative, this is not the case for *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), at least in terms of scenes that contribute to the representation of gender. The film follows the exact chronology and setting that was present in the animated film, thereby not presenting any noticeable enhancements or developments in that sense. The film does, however, adapt a few existing scenes to seemingly fit with a changed societal climate and to expose the patriarchal, dominant order that is in place even more. The animated film already attracts attention to the oppressive nature of the social order. Here, that idea is enhanced through, for example, a scene in which Belle is teaching a young girl how to read. The girl is smiling and clearly enjoying their activity but it is cut short by the angry townspeople who are threatened by Belle and her inventions and abilities (00.15.00 – 00.15.58). As Gaston confirms, “they’re never going to trust the kind of change you’re trying to bring” and that defying the social order is not appreciated (00.16.35). In portraying the townspeople that are against Belle as mainly evil, angry and aggressive in opposition to the kind, inspiring, enthusiastic heroine, it is suggested that overthrowing hegemony should in fact be seen as a good thing. Belle’s father confirms the idea of renegotiation of hegemony as a positive process as well. He calls the town small-minded and reminds Belle that she is ahead of her time, just like her mom. And like Belle, her mom initially used to be mocked for her behavior, but eventually people started to imitate her, showing that change can be good (00.12.40 – 00.13.20).

As Mary Rogers discusses, there are certain jobs that are gendered. Ballet and hairdressing for men, and the military and technical jobs for women are traditionally considered inappropriate for example (96). In the live-action version of the film, it seems that not just Belle’s father is an inventor but so is Belle herself. On several instances, she is quicker in figuring out what tool to use than her father, and she even thinks of an invention herself. Throughout the film, other female characters are often still placed in traditional roles, though with less stereotypical

depictions of those roles. Moreover, they also are shown as having more pro-active attitudes rather than passivity. Both of these ideas will be further analyzed in the close reading of scenes in the final part of this chapter. At the same time, like the animated version, this movie largely upholds and reinforces the static and binary definitions of sex and gender. A scene that contributes to that is when Belle enters the castle for the first time, and in both movies, Lumière immediately acknowledges the presence of a girl, while Cogsworth mockingly replies with “I can see that it’s a girl” (00.27.28 – 00.27.40). In this instance, physical characteristics are signified to a certain gender and that gender is linked to a certain sex. Their observation also immediately leads them to see her as a suitable partner for the beast, indicating heteronormativity. Despite this tendency, a scene that will be discussed in detail below shows that the film also dares to somewhat challenge these ideas.

Similar to the more complex prince in the live-action version of *Cinderella*, the beast has been given more screen-time and more backstory in the live-action version of *Beauty and the Beast* as well. Not only is he more educated and less foolish, the complexity of his character is explained through previous life experiences. Belle and the beast seem to be more equal too, in that she exhibits more traditionally ‘unfeminine’ traits and he gradually shows more traditionally ‘unmasculine’ traits. An example is when the beast reluctantly admits that he is reading a romance book, after mocking her for doing the same thing or when they both express their gratitude for being saved by the other. When the beast asks Belle if she is happy with him in the castle, in the animated version she replies that she is, but that she does miss her father. Here, she implies the traditional idea that love is enough to provide her happiness, despite her freedom and father being taken away from her. In contrast, her reply in the live-action movie is as follows: “Can anybody be happy if they aren’t free?” (01.28.15). Now, she signifies the importance of her individual freedom and personal choice in the pursuit of happiness, rather than simply needing love.

Lastly, but very significantly, what this live-action version achieves is the careful exploration of non-heteronormative options and the options of breaking with the binary nature of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. The previous three case studies are all based on hetero-sexist assumptions, and even though this film still is so too and it remains the dominant social construct, it is not considered the only option (Henke, Umble, and Smith 232). Live-action LeFou has been confirmed as Disney’s first gay character, which is represented in his love for Gaston, his

behavior, and in dancing with another man during the final scene. Kylo-Patrick Hart discusses four stages of media representation of social groups, as originally introduced by Clark (1969). The first step is non-representation where the group just does not appear, as is the case in all three case studies analyzed before. The second step, which is applicable to this version of the film, is ridicule. Here, the group is represented, but “stereotyped” and “frequently presented as being buffoons”. LeFou is presented through the stereotype of gay men as being rather feminine and as being a buffoon: dumb, not suited for love and not to be taken too seriously. Despite the stereotypical image, this second stage will, according to Clark, eventually lead to a fourth and final stage in which a social group is presented as they actually appear in real life (Hart 598). Surely, LeFou already progresses into a more serious and real character as the movie goes on. Additionally, the film returns to the phenomenon of cross-dressing. This time around, however, three men are captured by the wardrobe and transformed into ‘feminine’ attire. Two men reply in much the same way as the one man in the animated version, but the third man briefly looks at himself and smiles, dancing away happily with his new look while the wardrobe encourages him to “be free!”. Here, the idea that a body signified as male does not necessarily have to reflect that male-ness in its expression of gender, as discussed in chapter one, clearly comes forward (01.43.25 – 01.43.45).

3.3 Comparison and Discussion

This analysis shows that the changes between the two *Beauty and the Beast* films are not as clear and numerous as between the *Cinderella* films. Since *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) can be considered as more progressive than *Cinderella* (1950) in the first place, however, the live-action version still shows some updates, despite only making minor changes and additions in representing gender and the idea of masculinity and femininity. What the first film starts to do, and which is continued and further enhanced in the live-action version is expose the constructed nature and oppressiveness of a dominant, hegemonic, social order. The first step in changing and resisting hegemony is, as seen in the discussion of Butler, acknowledging the constructed nature of the ideological systems that one is part of and placed within. *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) is also ahead of its animated counterpart in its inclusion of a gay character as well as in the exploration of cross-dressing and thereby subtly challenging sex and gender establishments. Disney has often been criticized for their conservatism and in this film, it seems that they have

really tried to make steps in leaving behind that reputation. Moreover, in light of the theme of domesticity and marriage that comes forward throughout all the case studies, it should be noted that the personal view developed as one of the conclusions from this work, is that women should have the opportunity of taking on a variety of roles. However, a woman should not necessarily be looked down upon if she chooses to opt for the traditional role as a mother or a wife, like Belle does. The essential idea here is that her position should be based on personal freedom and choice, rather than being motivated by ideological and oppressive social systems. What is notable in this context as well, is that the actress whom plays Belle, Emma Watson, is a very vocal and outspoken feminist. She has led public campaigns and has held speeches to highlight and discuss themes of equality and gender. Thus, even though the film could at times be read as holding onto traditional values, and the viewer's individual ideas and integrated ideologies could invoke a different interpretation than the one in this chapter, it seems that it is largely intended to be interpreted as a feminist film.

3.3.1 Close Reading

A scene from the animated film that was only slightly altered in the live-action version is when Gaston encourages the villagers' anger and fear towards the beast and invokes an uproar. The scene conveys an important change in a subtle way. Gaston's behavior leads to an angry mass that is headed towards the castle in order to kill the beast. In image 1, it is shown how there are only men present in this crowd of angry, determined, and aggressive fighters. The scene cuts to image 2 shortly after, depicting the women in the town as passive damsels in distress, waving their husbands goodbye (01.11.30 – 01.13.10). Image 3 (found on the next page) shows a much more inclusive group of determined fighters as the women of the town are now participating in the attack as well, showing that they can be active and strong too (01.35.45 – 1.38.15).



Image 1: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)



Image 2: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)



Image 3: Beauty and the Beast (2017)

“Girls conflate standards of beauty and standards of goodness by learning to pay attention to their “looks” and by listening to what others say about them” (Henke, Umble, and Smith 231). Belle shows how, despite it being difficult, one can go against those ideas and live a happy life despite being the ‘odd one out’. The society in which she lives is very problematic when it comes to gender equality and gender representation, in either version. Besides looking down upon Belle because of established gender norms, women are generally portrayed as subordinated to men. Below, images 4-8 taken from the animated film (00.04.00 – 00.06.00), are set against images 9-13 taken from the live-action film (00.05.23 – 00.08.02). In the shots of the animated film, there is a man yelling at his wife in image 4, while not listening to Belle as she talks, indicating that what women have to say is unimportant. A large-breasted woman is ogled by a married man in image 5, right after which the scene cuts to a dramatically overwhelmed mother carrying lots of babies and doing groceries as seen in image 6. Image 7 shows a woman washing clothes while critically observing Belle. This scene reinforces ideas of traditional women’s roles as either mothers and wives or objects of desire to be looked at. In contrast, image 8 shows Belle’s free-floating, happy character as a result of her choice to live life as she wants by rejecting the social order. The fact that Belle does not fit in with society is reflected in the bright color of her dress, which stands in stark contrast with the bland and reserved colors of her surroundings. When looking at the matching images of the live-action version, it can be seen that women are still portrayed in similar roles, as in image 11 and 12, however, these roles are not emphasized as much through stereotypical, dramatic depictions and enhanced features. Moreover, the two conversations between a man and a woman, as shown in image 9 and 10, take place on a more equal ground and out of true interest so it seems. Finally, image 13 contrasts with image 8 in that the latter depicts a girl that resists social order and finds happiness in that, while image 13 shows

young girls forced to participate in that same social order and they are encouraged to look at Belle in the same way as the adults do. As became clear through the earlier discussed moment of Belle teaching a young girl how to read, these children would most likely be open to change if they were not forced to participate in the dominant systems and were allowed to resist it.



Image 4 to 8 - top to bottom: *Beauty and the Beast* (1950)

Image 9 to 13 – top to bottom: *Beauty and the Beast* (2017)

The final scene that will be compared and contrasted in this chapter is similar to the one in the chapter on the Cinderella movies. There, the idea of victimization of women was discussed and while the animated film depicted that idea of victimization, the live-action film devictimized the heroine. The following analysis will do the same for Belle in a significant and very similar scene in the *Beauty and the Beast* movies. In image 14 and 15, the moment that Belle has just been captured and shown to her room is depicted. In the animated version, she is clearly taking on the role of the victim as she dramatically sits down on the ground, while crying with her head leaning down on her bed. (00.26.25 – 00.32.00) Instead of maintaining an active and firm stance, she comes across as passive, helpless and weak in her defeated position. The dark and depressing colors of the room contribute to the feeling of misery. Much like Cinderella's captivity, Belle's captivity is enhanced through the projection of the windowpane as prison bars over her body.



Image 14: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)



Image 15: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)

The matching live-action scene, like the one in *Cinderella* (2015), allows for the devictimization of the heroine. Mrs. Potts, the caring teapot, expresses her worries to the beast by saying that “the poor thing is probably in there scared to death” which voices a traditionally feminine expectation of Belle (00.42.20). The first part of the scene shows how Belle refutes that and chooses not to suffer and cry like she does in the animated film, but rather, she immediately starts actively looking for ways to escape (00.35.40 – 00.36.08). Image 16 and 17 show her assertiveness and determination through her firm, upright and confident stance, and in image 17 through her facial expression. The amount of light in the frame also implies a sense of hope and opportunity, rather than the uninspiring darkness as seen in the animated shots. As the scene continues later, Belle has thought of a way to escape and she is in the middle of carrying out that plan, as seen in image 18 (00.47.00 – 00.47.50). Even though she eventually does not carry out her plan, as the living objects start taking care of her, it does show a more progressive attitude in the heroine.



Image 16: Beauty and the Beast (2017)



Image 17: Beauty and the Beast (2017)



Image 18: Beauty and the Beast (2017)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analyses in these works show significant changes while also maintaining similarities between the animated and live-action versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* when it comes to the representation of gender. The research has made clear that gender, and gender discourse, are extremely complex notions that can never be seen as having a fully fixed definition or status. This study has shown that gender discourse has left its mark on popular cultural productions. Whereas traditionally gender and sex, and thereby the categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ and ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’, are based in opposition and a binary assumption, the live-action case studies explore less rigid and clear-cut representations of these categories. The live-action case studies portray more character complexity, as well as a wider array of possible character traits taken on by both male and female characters. *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) additionally explores the idea of non-heteronormativity and of expressing a ‘gender’ that does not match a person’s ‘sex’ in a positive way, at least somewhat acknowledging the constructed nature of the first category, as well as showing alternative opportunities to the established social order. These explorations and alterations can be seen as reflecting the changes in the ongoing social debate on gender and a changing social climate. Yet, it should be noted at the same time that, despite visible change and progress, traditional and restrictive notions of femininity and signs of a dominant ideological social structure are still in place, in both subtle and more obvious ways. More than once, for example, progressive elements are undermined by subtly integrating conservative and traditional depictions and elements. Despite that, I want to emphasize that change takes time, a notion familiar to many. The steps that have been taken so far in order to represent an updated or more critical idea of social order and the idea of gender, serve as hopeful indicators towards similar, and continuous, developments. As Butler explained in her work, defining gender requires constant renegotiation and revision of established norms and resistance to hegemony is not simple. Still, a small step has been made towards doing so in the case studies used for this work.

The scope of this work is far too limited to cover everything relevant that is to be said about gender and gender in film. Thus, this is by no means a complete study on gender or the development of gender in such popular cultural productions as Disney princess movies, both animated and live-action. Suggestions for further research include continuous and extensive discussion on the notion of gender as, like this thesis discussed, ideas about gender are not fixed

but ever changing and the academic discussion around it is by no means finished. Furthermore, it should be noted that this thesis mainly focuses on gender in relation to Disney princess movies. Its discussion on gender and gender in film and its film analyses can possibly serve as a contributor to future research and/or be used to expand this research to other types of films and case studies. Moreover, as Disney has only just started to release live-action versions of their popular animated films, and many more are still to be released, I would also suggest further research on the upcoming live-action films to see if the patterns that have come forward from this research will continue and progress in upcoming films and if similar and additional developments will take place in the representation of gender.

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