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# Two in One: the Union of Jung's Anima and Animus in Beauty and the Beast

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**TWO IN ONE: THE UNION OF JUNG'S ANIMA AND ANIMUS IN *BEAUTY  
AND THE BEAST***

**A thesis submitted to  
Regis College  
The Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Graduation with Honors**

**by**

Kathryn Sullivan

**May 2013**

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Disney's animated *Beauty and the Beast* debuted the year I was born. I grew up watching the film, and the story holds a special place in my heart. I identified with Belle—bookish, dreaming of adventure and faraway places—and though I don't know if I really understood her, the tale she and the Beast inhabit whetted my appetite for fairy tales in general. My copy of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* shows years of love and attention: it has yellowed over time, acquired dog-eared corners, and bears a faded strip of masking tape with my name written in Sharpie across it, the letters formed with childish clumsiness. My love of fantasy extended to my reading habits, and to this day, fiction remains my favorite (broad) genre of literature.

I came back to the story with a critical eye after reading a copy of the tale online, which the website's editor claimed came from Andrew Lang's *Blue Fairy Book*, which was first published in 1889. However, the site also gave a little background on this particular version of the story, with notes that Lang's tale came from an amalgamation of two earlier versions of it. My interest piqued, I started digging and was turned toward Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, a compilation of rewritten fairy tales in a feminist light, by my thesis advisor, Dr. Lara Narcisi. *The Bloody Chamber* has two back-to-back versions of the fairy tale, and they contrast two seemingly incongruous images of Beauty and her Beast. I wanted to learn more, and as I researched the history of fairy tales alongside Carl Jung's theories of psychological gender archetypes—another suggestion

by my wonderful advisor—I started to think of the story as having deeper psychological meaning than I had given it credit for.

This thesis, then, comes out of that work in a way I didn't initially expect. At first set on profiling the two title characters, I found that they didn't function well on their own. Their deepest meaning emerged when brought together as complementary, harmonious reflections of each other, much like Angela Carter's two stories. This understanding came out at the beginning and the end of the process; I stumbled on it as I was trying to get the thesis work approved, but lost myself for a while in exploring each of the individual chapters as disparate pieces. Each could probably fuel a full-blown thesis on its own, but the message would change. In my case, I wanted to get at those archetypes, which for me unify the different incarnations of the story through all their permutations. Beauty and Beast each represent a side, a part of the self, but only in their marriage do they represent the whole. They cannot get by on their own.

I could not have gotten by on my own, either. I would like to give my heartfelt thanks first and foremost to my awesome and amazing thesis advisor, Dr. Lara Narcisi, for all that she did for me and for this thesis during its whirlwind process. Thank you for putting up with my late start, last-minute updates, wandering focus, brief foray into passive voice, and weeks of panic. Thank you for pointing me in the right direction more than once, for putting the texts I needed into my path, for asking the critical questions that got me to the thesis itself. Thank you for your advice, your support, your cheerful compliments and concerns. Seriously, I couldn't have asked for a better advisor on this project.

Thank you to Dr. Scott Dimovitz, my reader. Your attention to detail drove me to polish this thesis and clean up what needed cleaning, as well as pointing out the holes in my arguments that needed fixing and reminding me that I needed to pay attention to unity throughout the entire work. Most of all, thank you for signing onto this crazy ride in the first place.

A big thanks to Dr. Thomas Bowie, the director of the Honors Program at Regis. Your support over the years has meant everything, and made my time in the honors program so meaningful. Thank you for your forgiveness and your gentle guidance; thank you for helping me to navigate my borderline-crazy plans to complete a double major degree in four years, with a year spent abroad, and still manage to work an honors thesis in... somehow. Thank you for your willingness to entertain unannounced drop-ins and answer unexpected questions, even during the busiest weeks of the year.

My thanks to the Honors and English communities at Regis, which have given me a group of friends and a place to intellectually flourish.

And, finally, a grand thanks to my family, and most especially my mother, for being a shoulder to cry on and a solid backbone for the last four years. Mom, your enthusiasm and your love carried me when I couldn't go on alone, helping me through some of the worst moments and reminding me why I started this venture in the first place. Thank you for all the late-night conversations, the curiosity, the excitement. Most especially, thank you for getting me through the dark times, even if you didn't know how deep they went. Thank you for your unconditional support, and thank you for your love.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Something draws readers—and in this modern age of media, viewers as well—again and again to the *Beauty and the Beast* tale, particularly among the various versions of the ‘beast bridegroom’ tale type. Disney animated *this* version of the story and not one of the many others available at the time, even with its revisionist approach; something about the story captures the minds of young and adult alike. What? This question drives and compels the force of this thesis, with a particular focus on the title characters, the protagonists. The story itself fits neatly into the fairy tale canon despite its somewhat unique literary origins. Neither a Perrault nor a Grimm story, *Beauty and the Beast* stands apart from these in context and its children-oriented nature from its inception as a literary fairy tale predates a similar trend in other popular stories. Nevertheless, none of its themes or motifs deviates substantially from those of other fairy tales, so something else must make it as popular and individual as contemporary culture has made it. I argue that its archetypal characters draw readers in by allowing them to wrestle with fears and anxieties in a safe environment, but has its own unique place in the canon because it deals with two focal protagonists rather than one—and that by doing so, and combining them in the end with the happily-ever-after marriage of the fairy tale, the story allows them to achieve full personhood. I draw upon Jungian anima/animus theory to develop the complementary nature of Beauty and the Beast, but also consider the implications that modern versions of the tale have for the psychological constructions of the tale.



As a genre, fairy tales have certainly come back—or perhaps they never really left? Walt Disney made them popular in the last several decades, beginning in 1937 with his iconic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but though he appropriated and all but rewrote the tales which became Disney movies, the stories did not originate with Disney himself. Familiar names like Grimm and Perrault come to mind, but even these contributions have only been a stepping stone in the tradition of fairy tales as we understand them.

In fact, the fairy tales found in Disney's films and in hundreds of illustrated children's books throughout the English-speaking world provide no hard-and-fast date upon which to pin their origins. Some stories may have emerged with certain authors in the form we understand them; Jack Zipes discusses the evolution of the *Rumpelstiltskin* tale in *Fairy Tales as Myth*, citing various other (earlier) tales which likely contributed to the one found in later editions of the Grimm brothers' *Children's and Household Tales*. Others date further back, or can be assigned to one or many of the hundreds of tale types identified among oral folk tales which date even further back. The trouble, however, in absolutely classifying the origins of literary fairy tales as oral folk tales lies in the fact that folk tales and literary fairy tales have developed alongside each other for centuries, sometimes crossing back and forth across genres and contributing one to the other (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 14). The writing down of oral tales did not necessarily cause those oral tales to stop, nor did literary tales remain purely in the world of literature.

So, for example, the story of *Beauty and the Beast* first recognizably emerged in 1740 as a novella some two hundred pages long, penned by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de

Villeneuve. She wrote the tale following the work of Madame d’Aulnoy (*Fairy Tale As Myth* 49), and although the story contains thematic elements found in others which preceded it—notably the “Cupid and Psyche” myth—it was the first to bring those elements into the unique composition now commonly known as the “Beauty and the Beast” tale. The abridged and revised version of this work which Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont published in 1756, however, stands as the more popular prototype for the tale’s later incarnations. Both versions fall within the bounds of the tale type, but contain heavy markers of their social climate, as does the Grimm ‘version’ of the tale, and truly any other literary folk tale written—and frozen—in time (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 7). Beaumont’s tale in particular carries a strong moral message flavored by her own life experiences, particularly the warning to take care when choosing a husband after her own “failed marriage to a man whom she characterized as a monster,” (Pauly 85).

Fairy tales did not originally target children as an audience, and as they developed from a literary culture of adults to one designed for children, the process of their change reflected a shift in attitudes toward what constituted appropriate literature for children and, down the line, how we approach fairy tales today. They evolved and became children’s tales—the Grimm brothers, among others, had a historically large hand in this—and may or may not have been told to children as part of the oral tradition before they entered the literary scene, but the ‘first’ written fairy tales developed primarily to titillate and amuse adult readers, in many cases as a way to comment upon current times. Historians such as Jack Zipes have traced collections of written fairy tales to two initial Italian writers, Giovanni Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile (*Why Fairy Tales*

*Stick* 59-67), and Zipes considers Straparola as the figurative father of literary fairy tales in Europe. Both Straparola and Basile have been credited with publishing some of the oldest-known variants of certain tales which later reappeared in more popular forms, including *Puss-in-Boots*, from Straparola's "Constantino Fortunato," and versions of *Rapunzel* and *Cinderella* found in Basile's collection. These probably set the precedent for the rise of the popularity of fairy tales in the French salons; in fact, Straparola framed the tales of his collection with the overarching story about a group of friends telling each other tales to pass the time during a party lasting multiple nights (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 59-60).

As fairy tales grew to popularity in the French salons, they emerged as a vehicle of amusement in adult gatherings; the skill of the storyteller stemmed from how he or she wove various story elements into new shapes, or stitched in bawdy or social commentary. The tales also served as a way for eighteenth-century French women to consider how their lives could improve (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 23). In many fairy tales, for example, women improve their lot by various domestic means and notably marry *up* in the social ladder as a reward for their good behavior, with less desirable actions leading to severe punishment. These themes may come in part from the later sanitization of fairy tales for child consumption, but in many ways also reflect the period in which fairy tales served as entertainment in the salons, passing back and forth in oral tradition and literary form. From this tradition come Perrault's contributions to the genre, including a number of familiar tales such as *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood* in forms still popular today. Though Perrault's tales include moralizing snippets appended to their ends (Cashdan 9),

they are not ultimately intended for children. Authors of later decades readdressed and revised the fairy tales for younger audiences (*Fairy Tales as Myth* 23).

However, fairy tales have changed and shifted specifically toward children as a primary audience. Adult readings certainly exist, from current television shows to underlying themes in many novels, but by and large the market of fairy tales gears toward children. The change occurred following the crystallization of the tales told in the salons. As the structures of the tales changed and attention shifted toward new modes of social commentary and entertainment, the codified stories became vehicles by which some hoped to educate the next generation. Enter Madame de Villanueve and Madame de Beaumont, although Beaumont's version of *Beauty and the Beast* in particular reads as a tale meant to caution and teach young ladies in proper comportment and ways to advance themselves, notably in Beauty's character (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 77). Furthermore, Beaumont's use of Beauty's character to deliver her moral and behavioral lessons offers a distinct glimpse into how a fairy tale character can be used to reflect certain anxieties of the inner self, and how these anxieties can then be directed into a productive use by the end of the story. As fairy tales became more widely popular—and as the printing and dissemination of 'chapbooks' sent them across Europe, thus divesting them of their elite status—the idea grew that these tales might suit for children (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 31).

Curious readers can trace this change in the seven successive editions of *Children's and Household Tales* released during the Grimms' lifetimes and, by doing so, identify specific changes in attitudes about what ought be taught to young children, therefore reflecting dominant attitudes of the day (Haase 28-29). Maria Tatar, Jack Zipes,

Sheldon Cashdan, and others recount the change in tone evident in the brothers' work, from the largely scholarly first edition to the clean, polished, and obviously children-oriented seventh edition, which contains significantly more moralizing than the first two editions. Several note these changes in the editions, including revisions, edits, amalgamations, and even outright omissions which become increasingly more evident as time goes on. In many ways, these changes reflect and crystallize the attitudes of the time which the Grimm brothers, particularly Wilhelm, found particularly important. The interesting details lie in the differences between tales as much as in single tales alone. The same truth extends to *Beauty and the Beast*.

Though most readers should be familiar with the gist of the tale thanks to Disney's rendition, in short it goes something like this: a man infuriates a Beast, who demands his life or his daughter, and the daughter takes her father's place as the Beast's prisoner. The daughter, Beauty, then spends some amount of time with the Beast and discovers in him something worth loving--despite his rough exterior—but somehow doesn't realize her affection until the Beast reaches some crisis. Only Beauty's agreement to marriage can save the Beast from this crisis, which usually involves a brush with death. Some sort of magic transformation then usually occurs, and the two live happily ever after. As aforementioned, the first literary versions of *Beauty and the Beast* to incorporate this specific plot line appeared in 1740 and 1756. Villanueva followed in the tradition of salon literature; her version of the tale heavily references other literature and includes lectures on noble birth and rights to marriage (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 30). Perhaps for this reason it fell into relative obscurity in comparison to Beaumont's more popular

and recognizable 1756 version of the tale, which in many ways reprises key points in Villanueve's telling. It does differ in some important ways, specifically in being slightly ahead of its time in its direction toward children as its primary audience, particularly young ladies. However, neither tale stands alone as *the* type of the story, nor are they without historical precedent, and the tale-type has endured into the new millennium with equal, and perhaps renewed, strength.

The first recorded tale to include the “beauty and beast” theme—although not recognizable as the popular story known today—appeared in the mid-second century A.D. in the form of Apuleis' written myth, “Cupid and Psyche,” upon which Villanueve based certain elements of her tale. In particular it leads the beast bridegroom tale type, of which there are several which do not necessarily fit the frame of *Beauty and the Beast* besides the common theme of the enchanted groom (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 24-25). The Grimm brothers have a few tales which involve the beast-bridegroom theme, particularly “The Singing, Springing Lark,” which drives closest to *Beauty and the Beast* among their other tales. A few common elements continually reappear in most of the stories, especially the beast bridegroom himself, but the stories tend to include a prohibitive admonition, the failure to follow this admonition, and the female protagonist's attempt or journey to right the wrongs set in motion by her failure to comply. “Cupid and Psyche” includes similar details, but Villanueve's Beauty actually manages to evade breaking her promise (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 30). In subsequent versions, Beauty fails the test. Of course, in “Cupid and Psyche” the groom is not *actually* a beast; as the myth goes, Cupid cannot allow Psyche to see him or they must forever part, so when Psyche returns to visit her

sisters and family, they persuade her that her unseen husband must be a monster. This ultimately convinces Psyche to act against the admonition never to look upon her husband with a light, which sets forth the chain of trial events for the rest of the myth. The change from rumor to reality in subsequent tales reflects a significant difference in attitude, perhaps by bringing an underlying assumption about man's bestial nature to the foreground. A normal man cannot measure up to a god, so Cupid's actual transformation into a beast would highlight man's baser nature and offer a critical look at how man struggles against that primitive part of himself.

Perhaps because of its shorter length and lack of heavy references to other literary works, Madame de Beaumont's version of Villanueve's *Beauty and the Beast* went on to form the foundation of the story's further evolutions in literature, film, and drama. As early as 1785, a dramatic adaptation of the story had appeared, followed in 1788 by a libretto for opera (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 29). Length and accessibility alone did not determine the story's popularity; underlying thematic elements cemented the tale's place in the fairy tale canon. Despite its "concern with the self-realization of a young woman" (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 27), the story conformed neatly to the era's norms of patriarchal control and crystallized, becoming frozen in time. Unfortunately much of what makes *Beauty and the Beast* popular still today traces back to the fact that even in Disney's version there lies a not-so-subtle message of compliance and docility.

However, not all versions of the tale faithfully reproduce this conformity to male ideals. Many actively work to subvert the submissive undertone and bring Beauty into a more active role by critically engaging with the inherent themes of the story and

wrestling with what makes the story recognizable as a *Beauty and the Beast* story, while at the same time giving Beauty herself agency. Through the 1970s and -90s, a flurry of literature appeared which does just this, including Angela Carter's "The Courting of Mr. Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride," included in her collection of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber*. The former rings closer to the tale's accepted formula, while the second then turns the same story on its head and draws forth some of the more uncomfortable questions lying under the surface of the tale. These challenge the story's stereotypes continually reproduced in printings of children's books, including yet another almost iconic version of the story printed in Andrew Lang's 1889 *Blue Fairy Book*, which curiously blends elements from both Villanueve's and Beaumont's versions.

The stereotypes also continue on film and television; Jack Zipes makes note of Jean Cocteau's 1946 *La Belle et La Bête*, among a number of other films which either closely follow its example or reproduce it outright. In 1987 a television series entitled *Beauty and the Beast* attempted to update the story to a modern setting and liberate Beauty. Unfortunately, it manages only to give Beauty a grittier set of experiences, a more fiery attitude, and ultimately to bring her to happy submission to the Beast's world and experience in spite—or because of—these changes (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 45). The series ran for two seasons and gave up in 1990, although a recent remake aired its pilot on October 11, 2012. None of these gained the popularity and pure recognizable force of Disney's 1992 animated film by the same name, the best-known version of the story in film or print to date. Though Disney mocks the masculine stereotypes seeking to force the female into submission by way of its antagonist, Disney's Belle ultimately gives up



her dreams of adventure and exploration to marry the Beast. The film therefore falls into the same pattern as a good number of the tales over the years.

In fact, Disney's version of the story has gained such dominance over the tale itself in popular culture that when setting it against its historic background and the subversive versions of the same story, it produces interesting tensions, particularly in the changes made among the different stories and what themes these then highlight for readers familiar with a particular version of the story. A return to Beaumont's telling of the tale with a pre-existing familiarity with Disney's version, for example, sharply highlights the specific changes Disney made to the story, forcing these differences into critical conversation on a number of topics, most prominently the role of young women in the world. These, read against Angela Carter's two variants of the tale in *The Bloody Chamber*, swing the critical lens around again, especially considering the fact that Carter directly contrasts the apparently traditional form of the tale in a much more modern setting against a far more subversive version, providing a stark contrast between the two stories in order to "destabilize the artificially restrictive categories... disrupting the binary Beauty/Beast" (Brooke 69). Carter remains among the relative few to question the dominant themes in the story, rather than slavishly respecting its generic form. However, despite its problematic nature the fairy tale reigns one of the most popular in the Western canon, with new versions—and new changes—repeatedly cropping up.

Yet what maintains this grand popularity? Why do authors and poets and filmmakers continually revisit and retell the story? According to Villanueva, Beaumont, Andrew Lang, and the rest of Beaumont's successors, the story merely concerns a girl

who must submit to the will of the males bracketing her life: in and of itself not a particularly unique theme in the realm of classic fairy tales. Yet the story returns and returns, either in the same guise or rewritten with the intent of changing its ending, or its beginning, or some piece in between to send a different message inside the same story. Does it simply prey upon some pathological female wish to “tame” and reform the beast of man, gentling him and bettering him? However, men also reproduce the story, sometimes even glorifying that same beast, and some women who tell the tale make the Beast out as never very beastly at all, merely misunderstood. With no outstanding detail in particular, perhaps the answer lies in the characters themselves. As they change through the tale’s variations, the characters’ relationship stays much the same, and the roles the characters occupy provides a common thread through the story’s history.

Yet only Beauty’s namesake defines her personality: she’s pretty. Other than that, Beauty proves to be fairly unremarkable among the pantheon of generic female protagonists in her docility, purity, generosity, and nurturing nature. Disney’s Belle, despite adding intelligence and a thirst for adventure to the list, fails to stand out from the other Beauties except that she has shape and form without having an actual person’s face, making her both individual and universal. Just like the other Beauties preceding her, Belle is primarily characterized by her physical attractiveness, even going so far as to have it come up in the opening song of the film as the villagers describe Belle as “a beauty but a funny girl” and describing what a shame it is that Belle is so pretty and yet so strange (*Beauty and the Beast*). What, then, makes her interesting enough to appear

routinely in spin-off films, shorts, games, and television shows alongside a handful of other popular princesses?

The Beast, if anything, usually receives even less overt characterization. Disney gives him distinctly more development, but by and large the Beast makes up an alternately frightening or sad figure in most of the tales. Most stories represent the Beast as little more than a victim for the heroine to set free via her fidelity and ability to look past outward appearance to inner worth—despite her own characterization as the very example of physical perfection. In many cases the Beast goes from inspiring fright to inspiring sympathy for his plight, subject to Beauty’s whims and wishes as he is, not only reliant upon her to alleviate his curse but put into mortal peril by her forgetfulness. He remains otherwise a fairly shadowy figure, ferocious and pitiful as a beast and particularly handsome as a human, characterized more by others’ reactions to him than by any inherent qualities of his own. He therefore also represents a personality blank, a stereotype or an archetype depending on his context.

However, Disney has appropriated these characters and extended their storylines, arguably robbing the characters of their archetypal nature and removing the very thing which makes them so relatable. These characters have faces, voices, and lives of their own, rather than blank figures who can assume any shape the reader likes. By assigning concrete personality traits to them—and keeping the Beast as a Beast, as is usually the case in the derivative works including these characters—Disney fundamentally dissolves an important feature of the story: these characters *have no face* (Narcisi). Although I will later tackle the Disney film in greater depth in an attempt to delve into its implications for

the story as it is understood today, I find this particular aspect of the Disney version especially troubling in light of the functions the title characters serve as archetypal figures.

The story has one minor flaw fitting into its archetypal construction: it usually has no concrete villain to play its protagonists against. Where does that leave Beauty and her Beast? Though Disney compensates by adding Gaston as a foil to the Beast, it has no corresponding witch to exorcise Belle's own negative traits (Cashdan 28), and the literary versions of the story don't even give that much. At best, Beauty plays the opposite to her viperous sisters often included in the tale, but neither she nor the Beast have enough substance of their own to register as fully-realized human beings. Yet, despite their personality blanks, does something about Beauty bespeak this sense of courage and perception? Does Beast draw out an innate understanding of overcoming the self? Beyond such implied traits, the very blankness of the characters' respective natures affords them anonymity, rather like dolls upon which we can draw whatever faces we like, but they are especially defined by their *contexts*.

Therefore, some of the compulsion to return to the story must come from this contextual basis of the characters, as that very setting creates a fairly natural sense of anxiety. Beauty clearly has family problems, and Beast, under his curse, must seek to reconcile two disparate poles of human nature. One way or another, both characters learn to overcome their individual obstacles and aid the other. This act, or chain of actions, moves them from individual, disparate, and problematic status to a unified whole, a single balanced human nature made concrete in the marriage metaphor. In all versions of

the tale here included for analysis, the two complement each other with fairy-tale symmetry, two made one.

Psychological theory and historical context provide some support for such an assertion; the complementary nature of masculine versus feminine nature has appeared in numerous theological and philosophical systems, such as the yin-yang balance characteristic to Taoist philosophy, for example, and plays a significant part in early psychological theories which still hold power today. This thesis deals primarily with Carl Jung's anima/animus constructs, which support the view of fairy tales as promoting a harmonic union between masculine and female elements. Jung discusses at length the purpose of the feminine construct within the male mind and vice versa, which must necessarily be addressed and integrated to achieve internal equilibrium. In much the same way, Beauty and her Beast must face the basic social constructs of masculinity and femininity alongside their own anxieties, accepting these to reach a whole, single unit.

In the following chapters, I will delve in depth into the title characters themselves and use certain points in Jung's anima/animus theory in order to draw out or sketch certain aspects of their archetypal functions. Following this, I will turn from the characters themselves to a critical consideration of Disney's telling of and influence on the tale today, including some significant questions and concerns as to whether or not it enables the functional aspects of the title characters as discussed in the preceding chapters, and how it distorts or even cripples new and critical readings of the tale itself. The subsequent chapter will then take into count these very readings and retellings, concerning specifically Angela Carter's two versions of the tale published in *The Bloody*

*Chamber* in 1979. I intend to address the fate of the story in contemporary literature, drawing from the discussed archetypal nature of the characters to critically engage their function today in a world saturated by fairy tale and myth.

In tracing the characters' recurring traits in their various incarnations, however, readers should begin to understand that both Beauty and the Beast outgrow the basic framework which Jung's anima and animus provide. Reducing them to the lesser components of the anima or animus takes away from their psychological integrity as characters, for the title protagonists of the story exceed the sum of their parts. They provide so much more for the reader than manifestations of a theoretical psychological construct, especially because they evade finite definition as a single person or set of traits. True, Beauty or the Beast often follow along similar lines across numerous different stories, but because they can take different shapes within the same story and change it entirely, they allow the reader to revisit them again and again as a way of seeing the world—of testing its boundaries and its magic—to plumb its dark and twisted paths to find something new, beautiful, and worthwhile.

## CHAPTER TWO: BEAUTY & THE ANIMA

True to fairy tale trends, Beauty has no specially distinguishing traits as a character and a heroine (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 33). Though she requires less chastising than the standard repertoire of fairy-tale girls to make her a suitable bride, even this characteristic fails to differentiate her from the crowd of faceless, inert princesses typical to fairy tales. Dutifulness, obedience, and compassion (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 30) take precedence among the common traits of the tale's various heroines, a predictable grouping for a story about looking past appearances to secure a decent marriage: the primary purpose for Madame de Beaumont's version of the tale, given her own "brief and unhappy marriage" to a beastly man (Pauly 84). In fact Beauty has very little individuality at all; remarkable among her variable sisters only due to her physical attractiveness, Beauty repeatedly sublimates her own supposedly nonexistent desires to serve others as the very picture of docility and domesticity. In Beaumont's tale, this perfect domesticity sets Beauty apart from her sisters, but she has very little agency or voice of her own.

As Maria Tatar pointed out in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, many of the magical tales in Grimm's fairy tales combine a 'mundane' family drama with a brush with the supernatural—and the same is true of *Beauty and the Beast*. Although some versions truncate or elongate the initial storyline more than others, the traditionally familial setting plays a crucial part of formulating Beauty's character. Her actions in the family drama—the loss of the family fortune, the fall from society, the adjustment to

having to shift for themselves—identify Beauty as an ‘ideal daughter’ who must endure even the spite of her own sisters. The comparative actions of Beauty’s sisters in the face of adversity foreground Beauty’s own good, stereotypically feminine traits: her domesticity, obedience, humility, and concern for others chief among them. In Villanueva and Beaumont’s versions of the story, Beauty manages, with the help of her brothers, to keep the family afloat despite the machinations of her lazy, jealous sisters; the contrast of the brothers to the sisters highlights the relatively strange antipathy Beauty’s sisters feel toward their domestic sibling and foregrounds the comparison between Beauty and her sisters. Beauty’s brothers, especially in Villanueva and Beaumont’s tales, help in any way they can to provide for the family and run the house, so that Beauty’s actions as the mother-figure (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 37) in the family reciprocate the brothers’ efforts, but only the comparative laziness of the sisters really cements Beauty’s place as the ‘good girl’. In other retellings of the story, notably Angela Carter’s versions, Beauty manages the family affairs alone, giving her an element of resourcefulness absent in a story which includes brothers to help her. She even comes to the rescue of her father by keeping debtors at bay and, later, by taking his place in the Beast’s domain, although this constellation of behavior is not unique to Carter’s interpretation. Disney also places ‘Beauty’ in the position of maintaining her family and protecting her father from those who would do him violence, verbal or otherwise.

This critical change in lifestyle sets up Beauty’s readiness to move from the mundane world to the supernatural world (Tatar 71). Magic and the supernatural have no place in the city—from which Beauty’s family usually travels upon their loss of



fortune—and the Beast could not live there without fear of discovery. Furthermore, Beauty's social obligations in the city would interfere with her time in the Beast's domain, as she could not simply disappear from view without notice or remark. Curiosity and gossip would likely drive an investigation of some kind, and Gaston-like, the people would rise up and so subvert the intended course of the magic period. Beyond that, the move out of the city and into the woods—into poverty—pushes Beauty and her family into a liminal space, where magic can reach in. On a psychological level, people can relate to a fall in fortune, and it signals a period of transition and change where anything is possible (Tatar 72). Furthermore, the pursuant adverse conditions in which Beauty finds herself facilitate the clarification of her character, which also serves to refine and bring out the concerns and anxieties which will make the central focus of the story.

Of course, these conditions only set the scene for the shift yet to come, as the story still requires a catalyst. To this end, the family drama moves again, placing the central figure in Beauty's life—her father—in a danger which only Beauty can resolve. Although this part of the story—in which Beauty takes her father's place in the Beast's domain—initially imitated marriage and betrothal, it also functionally facilitates a move beyond the self, a kind of growing-up wherein Beauty leaves her family to enter a place of personal growth and discovery. The absence of a struggle with a witch-character during this period, which would reflect the anti-Beauty and create an open ground to exorcise internal demons (Cashdan 15), complicates the tale in this respect, but it opens up an opportunity for Beauty to actually face these issues within *herself*. This adds a layer of complexity to the tale absent in other, similar coming-of-age fairy tales with female

protagonists. Various versions of the story do this in different ways; in some, especially those which adhere more closely to Villanueve's particular version, Beauty dreams of a handsome prince with whom she has sophisticated philosophical conversations, while in others she spends her days discovering the aristocratic delights of the Beast's demesne. In Robin McKinley's novel *Rose Daughter*, Beauty spends her time rescuing the Beast's rose garden. Many of these pursuits serve to elucidate Beauty's character, but the most important piece enters the story at the point at which Beauty visits her family, usually with a promise to return to the Beast within a set limit of time.

On the surface this part emphasizes keeping promises and the consequences of breaking them; Villanueve and Beaumont certainly speak at length on these themes. In a more important way it also pushes Beauty toward a choice she must make, with an opportunity to face her own defining anxieties and overcome them. The story stands out in the canon because it lacks the adventurous motifs and arduous tasks of other tales (Tatar 28-30), yet retains its growing-up theme. A brief look at other beast-bridegroom tales reveals their usual tendency to require some sacrifice of the heroine to prove her worth and fidelity via humiliation and humility. "The Singing, Springing Lark" (Tatar 116-117), for example, requires its heroine not only to make the usual decisions of the story, but to follow her husband for seven years and then win him back from another princess. In facing the choice to either remain with her family—essentially returning to a pre-married state, with no reason to have responsibility for herself—or return to the Beast, with the prospect of marriage and a move into a new stage of life, Beauty must come to terms with herself and what it means to leave her family, to recognize and

acknowledge the pain of her family at letting her go without letting it rule her, as well as the uncertain and frightening possibilities the autonomy of marriage will afford to her. Beauty's return to her family represents a test of her attachment to her family versus her burgeoning relationship with her suitor and her duties in a new family unit; breaking her promise to return, as Tatar notes, indicates the heroine has an inappropriately strong attachment to her family, hindering her ability to become a full adult. During Villanueva and Beaumont's time, after all, marriage afforded the most opportunities a well-bred young woman could generally aspire to (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 23) and certainly indicated a rite of passage from childhood and adolescence to adulthood. Modern culture has somewhat mediated the significance of this transition by giving young women hundreds of new and different opportunities to advance in the world without having to marry up in the world, but marriage still often marks a milestone in a person's life course to leave the birth family and create a marriage family.

However, the era of the story's literary origin and its themes give it some recurring anxieties. Throughout the story, the males Beauty interacts with and answers to circumscribe and define Beauty's life: in the beginning her father and sometimes her brothers fulfill this role, while in the second part of the story the Beast takes on the defining male role (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 37). The conflict arises when Beauty must choose which unit she will ultimately ally herself with. These figures carry attendant concerns about control and responsibility. In the first place, Beauty generally displays common sense in comparison to her sisters, but as her choices ultimately cause tragedy to befall their father, Beauty faces the implied option that she allow her father to pay for her

mistake or take his place in facing (apparently) certain death. Though her father has made his own choices—namely deciding to steal from an invisible benefactor—the options available to Beauty outline her responsibilities not just as a daughter but as a heroine; she may lose no face in allowing her father to accept his fate, or she can step into the heroine’s role and humbly sacrifice herself for her father’s benefit—and by extension, the benefit of her family. In choosing to accept her responsibility and take her father’s place as the Beast’s prisoner, Beauty opts to enter the unknown toward what she assumes is certain death. Although in this case it means she allows magic to intervene in her life, the resulting anxieties of such a position make perfect sense. She faces uncertainty and has no definition for her purpose in the Beast’s domain, save his usually recurring marriage proposals. With servants, usually invisible or ensorcelled, to do the cooking, cleaning, and even dressing for her—in short all of the duties she performed at home—Beauty cannot define herself in terms of her domesticity, stripping away another layer of identity which would otherwise obscure Beauty’s potential gentility.

For Madame de Beaumont this affords Beauty the chance to revisit her refined tastes, especially reading ‘good books’ and playing various instruments: the pursuits of a lady of uncommon quality, as befitting a well-to-do young woman rather than the common plebeian. This period prepares Beauty for marriage into nobility (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 34), but on a deeper level it creates an environment for personal exploration. Beauty has no heroic tasks to complete or undertake, even insofar as the usual fairy-tale princess goes, and this leaves her open to suggestion during her stay in the Beast’s domain. She has already displayed her domesticity and humility, especially in the stories which

explicitly compare Beauty's actions within the family environment to those of her sisters, so now Beauty has the opportunity to refine her tastes and become the kind of wife a nobly-born man would expect. Several *Beauty and the Beast* stories, especially those following the traditional format Villanueva and Beaumont created in the eighteenth century, give Beauty ample opportunity during her stay with the Beast to improve her mind and opinions, either by philosophical debate or reading. Her passive, feminine pursuits prepare her for life as a lady or a queen rather than that of a hero-king, as would befit a male protagonist completing feats of strength, cunning, and valor. Disney's Belle stands out in this case, as her bookishness and education set her apart; these make her an ideal wife for Disney's Beast by complementing his functional lack of proper education—Disney even added a scene, in later releases of the film, where Belle must teach the Beast to read again, assuming a nurturing mother's role—but also empower Belle just enough to speak and stand up for herself, another trait she does not share with her literary predecessors.

However, though Beauty's situation at first has a uniquely female appearance in its male-defined constrictions and the sublimation of the personal in the face of another's needs (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 37), it requires little imagination to strip away the gendered interpretation and look at Beauty's situation as one which any person could fall into. Trapped by responsibility and duty, she must choose between two difficult positions; in so doing she finds herself in an unfamiliar but not altogether unpleasant place. The unfamiliar space gives Beauty unique opportunities her mundane life would otherwise deny her, and allows her a certain amount of introspection. This subsequently rears fresh

anxieties about the definition of the self and one's relations to others until new responsibilities, duties, and conflicts arise to help deflect or define this comparison. In the end one must choose between the known and the familiar, the 'comfort zone' and the undefined or unfamiliar possibilities of an uncertain future. Questions concerning the validity of one's own desires and decisions weave their way throughout the narrative, and each individual can project their own unique spin onto the details of Beauty's time in the Beast's company, most of which she spends primarily on her own. Given Beauty's autonomy during her stay with the Beast, she has time to define herself outside the boundaries of her responsibilities—a tentative look toward what humanist psychologists would call self-actualization (Maslow).

Beauty occupies what could be called a uniquely feminine perspective, but only inasmuch as society depicts femininity, and one can again observe the neutrality of Beauty's role in exploring the underlying femininity latent in all humans, whatever gender ("The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" 59). Her concerns, as illustrated above, represent concerns any person could have, but Beauty herself also allows for projection of and conversation with the female aspect of the mind. Jungian theory in particular outlines psychological constructs which expressly define this phenomenon: the anima and animus, respectively the "feminine and chthonic part of the soul" ("The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" 59), particularly for men, and the "compensating figure...of a masculine character [in woman]" ("Anima and Animus" 94). Beauty both embodies and subverts the idea of the anima, creating an environment for a critical encounter with the construct itself. More importantly, Beauty allows for an encounter not

only with the anima construct of the individual mind but with the underlying archetype, an aspect of the “collective unconscious” (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 4) which makes the anima so enduring. Jung identifies the anima as the soul “which [men] distinguish more or less from [their] ego... on account of its feminine qualities” (“Anima and Animus” 80), the “life-giving daemon” (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 27) which drives a person to action and adventure, to experiencing life itself. In fact it sounds rather like Disney’s version of Beauty, a less staid woman than the story typically portrays. In Jung’s theory the anima further represents the “not-I” (27) of the masculine mind projected onto women, indicating that both witches and princesses are projections of the same anima, which manifests in society’s common symbols. Without the anima, no person could reach wholeness; personally addressing it begins a journey to selfhood (“Anima and Animus” 90).

In *Beauty and the Beast*, critical engagement with the anima occurs as Beauty sets out for the Beast’s domain, initiating the journey to selfhood and wholeness. At this point the reader still experiences the story primarily from Beauty’s point of view, facing her fears and concerns, but since Beauty archetypally represents only one half of a whole, full personhood eludes her grasp. Since the anima hides “within the dominating power of the mother” during childhood (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 29) and the mother overshadows children’s early experience with the world, the anima necessarily stands at the fore during this period. But what about the story’s continued popularity among adults in a time where fairy tales occupy a cultural space specifically designed for children? The broad sweep of rewritten fairy tales directed toward adults in more recent

times points to an enduring appeal which persists into adulthood itself, causing people to repeatedly return to the tales of their childhood. Jung helps to explain this phenomenon by allowing for the continued existence of the anima as a part of the unconscious, projecting itself out whenever necessary.

Though Jung limits the anima construct to the masculine psyche, the fairy tale figures—heroines especially—occupy universal roles as contents of humanity’s “collective unconscious” (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 4), fundamentally defining them as archetypes. In the masculine mind, the anima encompasses the “hidden emotional side incorrectly described as feminine” (“Anima and Animus” 78). A person cannot function in a single gender dimension by repressing traits associated with the opposite gender; attempting to do so, according to Jung, leads to deep psychological reprisals, in particular stemming from the correspondingly strong opposite-gender construct in the unconscious. This causes “contrasexual” demands—or demands which go against the public gender image—to accumulate in the subconscious (“Anima and Animus” 78) which express themselves in a “semi-conscious psychic complex” (“Anima and Animus” 79): namely, the anima, the female soul-image. In fact, under Jung’s theory the perceived strength of the man’s masculinity directly correlates to the power of the anima within, so that a ‘strong’ man by outward appearance would have a particularly powerful anima. Furthermore, the anima herself has a personality, making her easy to project onto a woman (“Anima and Animus” 86) or a fairy tale figure. If taken personally, the anima can foster a greater knowledge of the self.



Because the anima represents the “compensating feminine in the male psyche,” confronting the anima and accepting the repressed feminine can create a “union of opposites” through a sort of “middle path” which cuts between the social structures. For Jung, differentiation between masculine and feminine occurs only in the conscious mind; in the unconscious, no such othering can exist (“Anima and Animus” 94-95). However, because the anima represents the otherized traits of the opposite gender, it always reflects the opposite of the conscious experience (“Anima and Animus” 99), and therefore contains not only the repressed feminine traits but also their associated anxieties and social expectations. This would encompass not only Beauty’s docility and stereotypically “weak” femininity but also the constraints placed upon her by society, and most importantly the circumscription of her life by the men who control it. It includes the sense of a lack of control over one’s own life and the need to live up to others’ expectations.

Beauty exceeds the sum of her concerns and limitations, however. Her archetypal qualities stem not just from traits particular to the grown man’s anima, but also from specific maternal features. In the course of the mundane half of the story Beauty acquires many duties typical of her absent mother—a fact common to many fairy tales—which include cooking, cleaning, and household management. She usually does this without the aid of her sisters, taking on the work they all otherwise might share to ensure a functional home and some modicum of familial happiness. This in fact endears Beauty to the other members of the family: her father, in all cases, and in a few her brothers as well. At this point she has not yet taken on the other aspect of the anima, the “ideal” female (“Anima and Animus” 86). Though the anima often represents a highly personalized construct, she

has some general characteristics which translate to a generic stereotype. These characteristics center around the core stereotypes of femininity, such as submissiveness and docility, which we find clearly evident in Beauty's character through most versions of the story, and most especially in Madame de Beaumont's. Furthermore, whatever Beauty's individual personality from version to version of the story, she typically reflects the Beast's opposite or repressed traits and concerns. Having no concern for a strong "masculine" image, Beauty has no need to fear appearing weak, incapable, or feminine; she does not struggle with questions about her own inherent humanity. Instead, her concerns focus on obligation and the need to fulfill "feminine" duties, meaning her anxieties fall into categories of guilt and responsibility.

Specifically, the story pushes Beauty toward understanding and compassion. Especially in its early written versions, the story underscored a moral lesson which urged young ladies to look past appearances, to uncover the true nature of a suitor or arranged spouse. However, Maria Tatar points out the underlying hypocrisy in a story, essentially concerning how unreliably appearances determine underlying qualities, in which the heroine should epitomize physical attraction, so much so that her name reflects the fact. Beauty must look past appearances because she need not worry about them, with the underlying warning for her to avoid vanity in making her critical decision and reject the Beast simply because his outward appearance does not match hers in physical attraction. Furthermore, because the Beast stands in as her pseudo-husband or suitor, having taken her away from her family into his own home, Beauty must learn not to take him at face value. In some versions of the story, as in Beaumont's, this even extends to questioning

what the Beast says about himself, as the enchantment requires the Beast to belittle himself when speaking with his guest and potential salvation.

Beyond her guilt and responsibility, the story also highlights Beauty's personal growth. Like most fairy-tale heroines, Beauty has something to learn before she becomes a fully worthy bride for the Beast—such are the uneven expectations between the protagonists—and in Beauty's case, she must not only look past appearances to hidden qualities lying underneath, but also remember and keep the promises she makes. In the usual progression of the story, about the time Beauty and the Beast reach a comfortable status quo, Beauty contrives some reason to request a return home, often to soothe her father's grief; the Beast loves her so much he allows her to go, although it breaks his heart. Beauty leaves with the promise to return, typically within a set amount of time and often with some quick, magical way to return to the Beast's side. Almost invariably, however, she forgets the promise or hedges on it, extending her stay at home well beyond its allotted period, a mistake readers can recognize as both common and understandable, but in the context of the tale potentially catastrophic. Tatar theorizes the mistake indicates too close an alliance with the birth family, as well (175). Beauty must eventually return, for her own sake, to the Beast, as marriage comprises an important rite of passage and period of growth, but in order now to move on she must repair the damage done by her broken promise and seek redress for this transgression. This wraps neatly around to the original moral line of the story, i.e. the need to look past appearances.

At this point, some stories—especially Disney—require Beauty to display evidence of affection, even love to tie in a sort of fairy-tale romance, but it depends upon

a theme of salvation by emotions, historically considered a feminine weakness (Ó Gallchoir). Madame de Beaumont's version of the story, however, asks Beauty only to agree to marry the Beast. The modern reader assumes affection and love come along with this agreement as a given, but the story itself does not necessarily require these to lift the Beast's curse or to conclude the storyline as a whole. Modern readings make love necessary for the happily-ever-after ending which readers young and old have come to expect (Tatar 173-174), but this hasn't always been the case. Love and marriage have grown interconnected with the rise of feminine independence and the breakdown of rigid class structures, but in Villanueva and Beaumont's Paris marriages occurred for political, social, and economic reasons, usually not due personal attractions or affiliations. Young ladies of Beaumont's time could not necessarily expect love to precede marriage, and this reality underlies Beaumont's intention to teach these girls to look beneath the surface features of potential suitors in order to discern which ones would make a better match and a more pleasant husband. "Love," as Jack Zipes notes in *Relentless Progress*, "has very little to do with it" (97). As politically advantageous marriages declined in Western culture due to a swelling middle class, it became possible for young people to marry entirely for love, and so the element entered *Beauty and the Beast* as a necessary part of the story. Otherwise, why would Beauty ever marry the Beast?

The cultural changes which led to the addition of necessary love to the narrative also made it possible to interpret Beauty's specific concerns and anxieties in a more gender-neutral light. Under careful scrutiny, the rigid differentiation of certain gender-specific traits breaks down, especially when juxtaposing Beauty's characterizations and

concerns against those of the Beast, who undermines certain masculine expectations and norms. The comparison of opposing elements, in this case, brings to light what each lacks, as we shall see in the next chapter dealing with the Beast's profile.

### CHAPTER THREE: BEAST—Animal, Animus

The *Beauty and the Beast* story, like its title characters, has two very different sides. Only a few fairy tales deal with such differentiated protagonists, putting this one in a distinct minority. Most fairy tales focus on and emphasize only one or the other—the princess or the prince, so to speak, and almost always the seeker, or active character, alone (Tatar 62-63), but *Beauty and the Beast* not only focuses upon both a prince and ‘princess’, but also the “seeker” and the sought-after character. Both Beauty and Beast struggle against circumstances entirely outside of their control—Beauty in her family’s fall from fortune, and Beast in the enchantment which regulates him to a liminal space outside society, where he is feared and reviled. It therefore places both characters in a curiously helpless situation, making them reliant on each other for a certain amount of rescuing; however, the story makes it clear that of the two of them, Beauty has more power in the relationship. Where does that leave the Beast?

The Beast’s precarious position of power sets up the subconscious encounter with the anima which Beauty represents. However, the Beast also has a part to play in psychological archetypes, and it’s important to note that he serves in a similar capacity for Beauty precisely because he exists in the liminal, supernatural realm. Outside of society’s bounds, Beauty has the opportunity to confront her repressed “masculine” traits on a subconscious level as they project onto the Beast and the prison he shares with Beauty. These traits form an unconscious, masculine psychological construct for Beauty which the Beast represents, just as Beauty represents an underlying feminine

psychological archetype. Beauty does not consciously address this repressed masculinity, but by assuming some of the traits it has appropriated via her repression of them, she can achieve a fuller understanding of herself. Jung spends less time explaining the animus—the masculine analogue to the anima, which appears inside the feminine mind—in all likelihood due to his method of discovery; like Freud, Jung relied upon introspection to understand the workings of the human mind as well as his work with clients, and therefore he acquired a far more comprehensive understanding of the male mind and even admits, in “Anima and Animus,” that “the difficulties become almost insuperable when we set out to describe the psychology of the animus” (94). However, he describes the animus as a collective, rather than individual, construct: a group-vision of masculine authority figures (“Anima and Animus” 96). It develops along a similar pattern as the anima and ultimately acts as a spiritual guide, but only after extensive and deliberate engagement with it. In a way, the story creates the opportunity for this engagement with the animus by enabling the projection of it onto the male characters involved. While Beauty focuses the anima from the very beginning of the story, multiple male figures engage and interact with her throughout the tale, therefore allowing for the multiplicity of the animus image.

However, the Beast struggles against the narrower definition of the animus, as he also contains entrenched anxieties concerning masculinity and what it means to be human. Though not necessarily a more complex figure than Beauty—he has less background, for example, to compensate for more internal complexity—he does give the story a secondary point of view as Beauty’s complementary opposite. His most obvious

struggle occurs between his inner human-ness and outward beastliness (Tatar 177), a clear metaphor for perceptions of men in general and in particular when considering marriage. In many permutations of the story, the Beast-character not only grapples with his outward appearance in contrast to his inner qualities, but also his inherent tendencies toward violence. Take, for example, his first face-to-face encounter with Beauty's father; the very instant the man unwittingly transgresses against his host's generous hospitality, the Beast appears and frightens him near to death. In fact the Beast even *threatens* his former guest with execution (Tatar 173), and the man saves himself only with the promise to return with one of his daughters to take his place. Some stories elaborate upon this more than others, such as Disney's version—in which Beast clearly has issues with his temper—or Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride," wherein the "Beast" has at best only a tenuous claim to humanity. In the story's original context the Beast metaphorically represented potential suitors to eligible young ladies, particularly as a lesson to look beyond appearances in order to find true character, rather than the other way around. Villanueva included dream sequences in her story for this precise reason, in which the Beast repeatedly urges Beauty to judge by character, rather than looks. On a deeper level it reflects humanity's repeated difficulties in grappling with the less "civilized" side of its internal nature. Each version of the story therefore has its own spin on the Beast; in some, he has few to no inherent beast-like traits beyond his initial violence with Beauty's father, making him only a man wearing a beast's shape and face (Tatar 156). In others, he drifts closer to the wild animal than the man, again exemplified by the Beast of "The Tiger's Bride."



Psychoanalytic gender theory would therefore assert that the Beast struggles primarily with masculine concerns, i.e. the necessity of sublimating a more aggressive, bestial nature in order to achieve a higher order of human thought. Both Villanueve and Beaumont apparently suggest as much in their versions of the tale, a fact made particularly clear when contrasting their Beauties with their Beasts. However, because the Beast takes part in the animus archetypal structure, he allows all readers—masculine or feminine—to assume this struggle against inner tendencies toward primary drives because he represents a “dramatic representation of [a] basic psychological process” (Mitchell 267). Disney especially portrays the Beast as uncultured and rough when its Beauty arrives on the scene, such that she must either teach or remind the Beast of social niceties. The Beauty of “The Tiger’s Bride,” on the other hand, chooses to shed the illusory trappings of society in order to free herself from its smothering restrictions. Other versions of the tale describe a polite and cultured Beast, highlighting the need to look beyond outward appearances to inner qualities, and those tales which adhere most closely to the “originals” which Villanueve and Beaumont penned often portray a Beast of this type. These two wildly disparate portraits of the same character—one a powerfully testosterone-laden force, the other obviously an educated and cultured prince in an enchanted disguise—create extraordinarily different men whom the rarely-different Beauty must choose to accept, and propose different psychological constructs for Beauty to unconsciously confront. Yet despite the bipolarity of the Beast’s personality across tale variants, the story always includes a struggle against wildness, either as envisioned by the castle and grounds of the Beast or by a third, supernatural element to the story.

The Beast thus pairs with Beauty in a story about struggling against one's confining circumstances, against powers over which one has no control. Where Beauty lives bounded by men who dictate her life (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 37), the Beast struggles against bonds formed by magic far beyond his control and lacking in any discernible origin. Most versions of the story provide no agent of the enchantment upon the Beast, such that expansions upon the tale—like novel forms, or Disney's animated film—must do so. Disney creates a sorceress to fill this role, which has the interesting effect of circumscribing the *Beast's* life with bonds created by the opposite gender. This parallels Belle's situation, although in Disney's tale, Belle has far more apparent freedom than many of her Beauty-sisters in literature (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 46). However, in even this instance the agent behind the enchantment makes only a brief explanatory appearance in the story, leaving the Beast with circumstances against which he cannot free himself. He must rely in every case upon a woman to rescue him.

This reliance upon female intervention, therefore, creates a particularly delicate situation for the Beast, as it threatens to emasculate him in true Oedipal fashion (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 40) and brings up serious castration anxiety. In a strongly patriarchal culture, which emphasizes the agency of the male and his ability to stand on his own, the Beast's necessary reliance upon a female to release him clearly indicates a troubling affront to his own masculinity. The men of this story ostensibly have all the social power, with Beauty only trading one master for another (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 37), but the Beast cannot actually free himself or act in the interest of his own destiny beyond securing easily-broken promises. Worse, he has an enchantment placed upon him, which

metaphorically speaking represents another feminine bond (Birkett) even without Disney's addition of an actual sorceress to the story. The enchantment enslaves the Beast to the wild, the uncontrolled, the emotional. Like the bonds of emotion, he cannot fight or struggle against the spell on his own, even to help Beauty in her task of freeing him. Worse, the Beast exists at Beauty's whim, even within the confines of the enchantment. The Beast waits upon Beauty at supper each evening—in many versions not eating anything himself—and usually makes an appearance only to amuse her; Beauty even has the entire house and grounds at her complete disposal. Older versions include various amusements which appear within the house to enrich Beauty's cultural education, with very little attention paid to how the Beast spends his days. He exists only in relation to Beauty herself.

With the male figure of the story so much caught up in the confines of things he cannot control or understand, it stands to reason that these uncontrollable forces of nature, magic, or enchantment could figure as the female, or man's encounter with that which is Other: namely, the feminine ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 27). Beauty, though the most obvious analogue in this interpretation, stands as only one piece of the whole. To the masculine mind, the feminine represents the ultimate Other, or the anima would have no purpose, and the Beast's interactions not only with Beauty but with the world in which he exists form the basis and construction of his own anima. This Otherness also extends to the archetypal anima herself ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 31). The Beast's total inability to exert control over his own situation summons a set of fears which deal with the need to grasp the reins of one's own life and

destiny—at least as understood in modern culture—and in a more basic sense to simply deal with the natural unpredictability of life itself. Mythologically speaking, humans have coded these uncontrollable forces into stories through which we attempt to understand the world, and these in turn have given rise to the eldritch: magic, enchantment, sorcery, and the like (Birkett). Therefore, the Beast’s magical bonds lead right back to the struggle against the fickleness of life itself: against the nature of change, and the changeability of nature.

This wildness, which bounds the Beast’s realm—in most versions, his castle or manor lies within or at the heart of a wild forest—and binds him to his bestial shape often affects his inner nature as well. Disney characterizes the Beast as somewhat unable to control his emotions, albeit the ‘masculine’ ones concerning rage and temper. In other stories the Beast cannot eat or dress like a civilized man, so that he joins Beauty for supper simply for the pleasure of having a conversation with her. Yet, at the same time, the two title characters always adhere to the trappings of civility (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 33). In most versions of the story the Beast walks, speaks, dresses, and acts—or attempts to act—like a man, plainly characterizing him as a man made into a Beast. The only exception, the Beast of “The Tiger’s Bride,” subverts the rule only inasmuch as he proves the opposite: the Beast of this story is, in fact, a beast made man-like. In the other cases, the human mind beneath the animal shape points toward the clear implications and morals the story attempts to convey—the dictum to look beyond appearances—but also takes up the struggle between humanity and beastliness. Bruno Bettelheim addresses this in “The Struggle For Meaning” in his argument that fairy tales allow readers, children in

particular, to address those darker parts of the self which society would prefer not to acknowledge (272). Though in most cases the Beast rarely shows Beauty his beastly side, the story's audience has already witnessed it, as Beauty only comes into the Beast's demesne to mediate the threat of her father's death at the Beast's claws. Upon initially entering the Beast's realm, Beauty usually expects to be eaten or treated badly, like a prisoner. The pleasant reality of her situation reveals the human empathy of her companion, setting up the obvious contradictions which so characterize the Beast.

Thus, the story makes the Beast the physical allegory of humanity's inherent struggle with the possibilities and the fears of the human race *for itself*. The implication that the Beast will eat Beauty initially characterizes him as fundamentally monstrous (Birkett), as the eating of human flesh represents an unforgiveable crime in any fairy tale (Cashdan 47). The audience's increasing awareness of the contradictory facts in the Beast's internal world, of his very human nature, brings these concerns into sharper contrast the Beast's typical gentleness toward Beauty—although Disney initially subverts the Beast's typical courteousness. The initially monstrous, man-eating terror becomes disconcertingly human in all but physical face. Following this, the human audience, both masculine and feminine, faces troubling facts about itself (Bettelheim 272), as well as the threat of the eldritch and unknown. The tale makes it clear as it progresses that the Beast is not in his natural state. He stands, in fact, at the height of the *unnatural*, as beasts don't walk and speak as humans, let alone courteously consider their guests' wants and needs... even guests who have arrived under a certain amount of duress. Though the Beast often lacks explicit physical description, fairy-tale writers generally caricature him as

large, strong, and terrifying, as well as in some cases uncomfortably quiet: a true predator, and quite capable of shredding any inconvenient humans in his path. Disney depicts him as such, and in modern Western society Disney's Beast wears the face for all Beasts of the same type in literature.

This monstrous image, then, prefaces all the characters' interactions with the Beast. Given his exterior, Beauty and her father expect the Beast to devour them—at the very least treat them poorly—and their preconceptions concerning the Beast obviously drive the morality of the tale. However, the reader or audience must learn the same lesson, as many other tales portray beasts as wild things to be feared—consider, for example, the wolf of “Little Red Riding Hood”—or as magical helpers. The story reminds readers to look beyond appearances and, more importantly, prejudice. After all, Villanueva and Beaumont both wrote the story as a moral tale for young women to keep in mind when considering possible suitors (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 34). However, the caution could go the other way, and so the Beast's internal strife mimics a greater underlying struggle common to humanity in general: the conflict between what society deems acceptable and our emerging, internal aggressive—or otherwise socially unacceptable—impulses (Cashdan 15). In part, the Beast represents the human anxiety that we appear to others more beastly and aggressive than we ought to, or that the beast inside will somehow win out. The Beast's final transformation into a man again, which occurs in many versions of the story, indicates a resolution to this conflict (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 100), a soothing voice to the anxiety, by suggesting that according to the natural order of things the human side will, after all, win out.

Therefore, the Beast forms an iconic symbol for the human race, but in particular for a traditionally masculine conflict, especially as the Beast metaphorically represented unmarried men of the eighteenth-century French court and nobility (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 32; Pauly 85). However, the Beast walks a delicate balance between the negative aspects of masculinity and the emasculating—typically feminine—passive position of a helpless victim of an enchantment. The Beast has no power to free himself, or in many cases even to represent himself adequately as more than he seems, and so cannot court Beauty properly, as the enchantment often restricts the Beast to the role of little more than a conversational companion while Beauty has the run of his home. Furthermore, he fails to control his often excessive emotions, which Western culture has traditionally—if problematically—considered the realm of the female (Ó Gallchoir). In his initial encounter with Beauty’s father, the Beast displays enough rage and anger to put the fear of death in the man—reflecting both the struggle with the feminine, but also the struggle with the beast whose form he wears—while in many versions of the story the Beast also has a pervasive air of sorrow or melancholy about him. Worse, the Beast’s excessive emotionality usually leads him to the brink of death—by heartbreak—after Beauty leaves and fails to return. Even Disney, which gives the Beast a more masculine image as a whole, reduces him to a sad shadow of himself after Belle’s departure, making it clear the Beast has somehow lost his “will to live” without his beloved, another commonly feminine reaction.

Does the Beast ever overcome his struggle against the feminine as he does against the animal inside? Does he have to? The story almost presents this secondary conflict as a

non-issue by predicating its existence upon Beauty's mistakes and as a consequence of her inconstancy. The Beast's feminine qualities, most of which act largely as a detriment to his well-being, serve the purpose of romanticizing him as a sharp counterpoint to his outer appearance. The emasculating constraints also force the Beast to learn to rely on others around him; after all, he needs Beauty to save him, even to the extent of maintaining his own life after her departure. As the story's passive character, he cannot even pursue Beauty after she has left his domain to return to her family and forgets her promise to return. These circumstances place the Beast in a position where he must learn to rely on others to help him with problems he cannot overcome himself, almost a hidden, feminine moral—emphasizing interdependence and willingness to accept help when under duress—in a tale already designed to teach about overcoming prejudice.

In order to regain his lost humanity, the Beast ultimately must learn how to cooperate with and, as stated above, rely upon others to help him. Although at first glance a culturally feminine lesson to learn, particularly against the Americana background of fierce independence and personal achievement, the Beast cannot ignore the importance of accepting help; humans share a social nature, and society only truly functions when people peacefully coexist with one another. The wildness the Beast embodies rubs painfully against this natural human tendency for interdependence, which some stories, such as Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," choose to explore more than others. Furthermore, the lesson points toward a more "masculine" state of mind; it helps to push the Beast out of his crippling emotionality into a world of logic and reason (Ó Gallchoir). In fact, the supernatural element of the tale sometimes comes to the Beast's



aid in order to grant him a more masculine nature. The dream sequences included in Madame de Villanueve's version of the story allow Beauty to speak candidly with a handsome young man—the Beast in his true form, actually—on a number of pertinent topics to her station and situation (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 30), and dreams give the Beast his only outlet to actively help Beauty discover the truth of the enchantment by repeatedly reminding her not to let appearances deceive her. The Beast's transformation into this young man at the end of the story indicates that all along he was a creature of logic and reason, trapped firmly by the enchantment of unknown origin. Therefore, the story under Villanueve's pen becomes, on the Beast's part, less one of *learning* logic and reason than one of regaining the capability of *using* it.

This nuance continues into Andrew Lang's version of the story, published in 1889 in *The Blue Fairy Book*. The Beast of Lang's tale has both the pre-existing masculinity hidden by his terrible exterior and the overemotional qualities which persist in his characterization. For example, Lang's version has the Beast bursting into tears when Beauty asks leave to return to her family, an action by and large isolated to feminine expression alone. After the Beast's transformation, readers see very little more of him, and the precipitous conclusion of the story gives readers no opportunity to assess whether or not he loses his ostensibly feminine traits with the shedding of his Beast exterior to become the Prince. If the dreams recounted in Villanueve's and Lang's version of the tale correctly indicate the Beast's character as a prince, he ought to assume a fully masculine role.

Therefore, in regaining his masculinity, the Beast realizes his own humanity again. The transformation allows him to sublimate extreme excesses of his nature, both masculine and feminine, into shapes which society not only can accept but even expects of him; he retains masculine potency from the beast and emotional consideration—if not full feeling—from the feminine. The Prince can now assume his proper place in the story as an active male, while Beauty steps aside to allow her Prince into the light. Through most of the story, the Beast has played the fairly passive character—more victim than “seeker” (Tatar 61)—and part of his transformation includes regaining the upper hand in a world circumscribed by feminine power. Furthermore, his “journey,” if it deserves the name, takes him not only back to being a male power-figure, but also to being an acceptable human being again. Having achieved his place in the world, and having learned cooperation and reliance—while teaching logic and reason to his bride-to-be, in some versions—he can step out of the story as an appropriate hero, accompanied by his fair bride.

However, modern interpretations of the story cannot leave the feminine qualities of the Beast’s situation in the abstract. Disney in particular puts special emphasis upon the feminine aspect and origin of the Beast’s enchantment, and the film’s changes to the story for the purposes of the film heavily embellish the Beast’s position within the narrative. In doing so, it contrives even more absolutes between acceptable masculinity and femininity for the hero-king and brings to light the evolving psychology of our time.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONFRONTING DISNEY

For close to eighty years now, Disney has made a practice of reimagining how people approach fairy tales, beginning with the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* in 1937 (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 72). Since then, the company and animating studio has released approximately eight fairy-tale based titles, based on how you discriminate ‘fairy tale,’ ranging from “Cinderella” to “Rapunzel” and continuing with the release of a film based on Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Snow Queen” later this year (Breznican). The Disney canon of fairy-tale films includes a 1991 version of *Beauty and the Beast* purportedly based on Madame de Beaumont’s story, although of course Disney took certain liberties with the storyline, and the film dominates American understanding of the story today. For all that, the film breathed new life into the genre by giving the stories not only color but life and music, updated language, and personalities for the central characters (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 75). In doing so, Disney made the genre accessible in a new kind of way to younger children. In *Beauty and the Beast*, it embeds its morals in a romanticized storyline and gives the story a “proper” villain—in the form of a shallow and hyper-masculine would-be suitor to the heroine—rather than relying upon abstract concepts to oppose the title characters.

However, these methods problematize the common understanding of the story. Because Disney’s version of the story dominates its modern concept, divorcing the story from its moorings in Disney can sometimes prove difficult, and this includes the characterizations, morals, and messages of the story. Young enthusiasts approaching the

story from a Disney background will encounter the tale itself, minus Disney's embellishments, with some surprise. The pre-Disney characters lack depth and the story has no traditional villain, giving it an entirely different tone. Does the story lose its value somewhere in Disney's translation, becoming just another pretty tale which Bettelheim attacks in "The Struggle for Meaning," or does it retain its important functions despite Disney's embellishment?

Although Disney's interpretation of the story's focal characters gave them life and color, it also created a certain amount of character distortion. Previous chapters have mentioned the personalities given the two central figures which in some ways have either directly gone against the written characters or fleshed them out in ways that may hide or distort the intended purpose of the characters. Though the initial writing of the characters, in Villanueva and Beaumont's versions of the tale, gave very little by way of actual characterization, the Beast was still generally quite pleasant and unassuming, Beauty docile and quiet. By "updating" and changing these personalities to create a more sensational story narrative, Disney created whole new characters.

Furthermore, though the animation gave wonderful, vivid color to a tale penned in the eighteenth century, the very act of giving the characters faces could detract from their ability to transcend individual traits to become archetypal figures. As characters in a story, Beauty or the Beast have universal relatable qualities as characters on a mental stage ideal for childhood "psychodrama" (Cashdan 15), and the traits which remained with Beauty in particular over the years gave her an enduring feminine quality according to European literary culture, despite the problematic nature of this femininity. By the

same token, Disney's version of the Beast maintains a wildness not generally associated with him in many variants of the story. He has very little of the courtliness generally ascribed to him, which obscures the heavy-handed morality of the tale with another level of complexity, however thin. Belle has yet another, potentially more challenging appearance she must learn to look past in order to see the Beast's inner worth.

This last point illuminates the value of Disney's changes to the tale. Despite the possibility of detracting from the characters' archetypal characteristics by giving them concrete faces and voices which recur everywhere Disney reaches, the changes to their personalities bring them into a new light. After all, we no longer live in a world to which the rules of eighteenth-century Paris apply. Furthermore, the changes to Beauty's persona as she becomes Belle help to bring her into line with Jung's concept of the anima. Belle has more fire and spirit, as well as fewer mother-figure qualities, making her more the mercurial feminine opposite to the obvious strength and power of the Beast's personality ("Anima and Animus" 83). Disney's Beauty and Beast reflect each other neatly, as of course they must in a Disney romance, and help to bring out different qualities of the feminine not otherwise brought forward in many versions of the tale. The animus has more strength here as well; Belle has not one or two but several powerful—though not always positive—male characters in her life, beginning to form the "plurality" of the animus which differs from the "singular figure" of the anima ("Anima and Animus" 96). Various facets of perceived masculinity appear as characters, not only as both the hero and villain but also as supporting cast, while femininity remains largely isolated to Belle, an anthropomorphized mother teapot, and some chorus females who predictably fall all

over the attractive womanizer of a villain. Memorable male figures outnumber memorable female figures in the film, skewing the balance between masculine and feminine. This sort of staging brings to light the attitudes toward masculinity and femininity commonly held in American society current to the film's release.

The film does not present a particularly charitable view of women when taken as a whole. Despite Belle's slightly more independent personality than several of her Disney predecessors, and certainly more independent than the precedent her own story provides, she fails to outweigh or escape the various males controlling her life. Furthermore, she still fits the "damsel in distress" profile, which draws away from her very independent, dreamer nature (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 46). If the lens widens to include other females presented in the film, the fact that a sorceress—a mysterious woman who tricks an eleven-year-old prince and punishes him for his childish, pampered vanity—placed the Beast under the enchantment in the first place problematizes the film's portrayal of women still further. The film presents these actions as a form of heavy-handed morality, but the fact remains that the sorceress passed judgment upon a *child* while she wore the guise of an old and probably somewhat frightening hag, hiding her true nature, and punished the young prince far more severely than his actions—which amount to refusing to let in a terrifying stranger on a stormy night, all for the price of a feminine rose, without his parents' permission—reasonably warranted. Given that society had already shifted to a less welcoming and more suspicious nature by the time of the film's release, modern parents would even laud such behavior in their own children; most American children born after the seventies and eighties would have been told repeatedly not to even

speak with strangers, let alone giving them shelter in the house, and even in fairy tales, allowing a possibly wicked-looking old woman into the house usually has its consequences, such as the classic hag of *Snow White*. This casts a problematic reflection upon the nature of powerful women: the sorceress uses her power to trick a young boy into giving away his vices and then transforms him into a social pariah before he has had a chance to enter the social world at all. She takes a similar position to that of the witch in other stories, the “bad mother” (Cashdan 27) who punishes negative actions by assuming them; after all, she punishes the prince for vanity and self-centeredness after assuming her own beautiful and terrible shape from the hag’s disguise, in which she was rejected. The sorceress’s transformation foreshadows the Beast’s, but the enchantment relies upon another person succeeding where the prince has failed. Worse, he has no way to free himself in the enchantment’s decade-long duration, and should he fail to meet its requirements, he faces his entire life without ever interacting with human society as an adult.

However, the sorceress also represents Belle’s other side, making her not just a bad-mother psychological construct but also the vehicle of Belle’s more negative traits. Disney parallels the two women in several important ways—a beautiful woman places the enchantment upon the Beast, and only by the grace of a beautiful woman can the enchantment be undone; the sorceress enchants the Beast to teach him acceptance and humility, which Belle teaches the Beast more directly upon her arrival to the castle; Belle casts judgment upon the people around her, particularly the villagers, in much the same way the sorceress judges the prince, but lacks the magical ability to enchant them.

Furthermore, the Beast must again accept a stranger into his home for the price of a rose, but in this case the stranger represents his only hope for redemption, and the rose the cost of his failure. Belle reverses the power of the sorceress, not only within the confines of the enchantment but as a part of the anima-construct, making up its inspirational rather than mercurial aspects.

The sorceress represents only one of a number of details which Disney dropped or changed in their revision of the tale. These range from the exposition of the Beast's situation versus Beauty's to the addition and deletion of different characters, changing the nature and tone of the story. As for the sorceress, she takes the place of the Beast's mother, who appears at the end of Villanueve's tale, and the Faerie, who accounts for Beauty's presence in the story in both Villanueve's and Lang's versions of the tale and is also, in Villanueve's tale, Beauty's own mother. Later stories have removed both mothers from the tale, probably because they skirt too close to the enchantress's position and that of the stepmother (Tatar 140). In Villanueve's story they take the "good mother" role (Cashdan 27) but have no corresponding bad mother, which shifts uncomfortable associations toward them as possible agents of the Beast's curse. Furthermore, though neither of these enchants the Beast, the tone of the story implies that the breaking of the curse supersedes the importance of its origin. Disney's revision puts pressure on the origin of the enchantment and removes most of the positive female figures, other than Beauty, from the Beast's life, which reverses the typical fairy-tale trend of focusing on *female* characters as mother analogues (Cashdan 28). In fact, Disney leaves in only the mother-figure teapot and some French-maid feather dusters as female influences for the



Beast, all of them servants, and the Beast's parents are entirely absent. He has absolutely no parental guidance or protection even as an eleven-year-old, no models upon which to figure his own behavior, and considering that the anima in childhood assumes the mother-role, the complete *absence* of a real mother in the story—and her replacement with the enchantress—put serious pressure on the formation of the Beast's anima, as femininity would likely have strongly negative associations in his subconscious mind. Furthermore, his servants obviously have no authority over him; throughout the film they give him well-meaning advice, but by and large the Beast shifts for himself and presumably has done so for most of his life. How else could a *prince* vanish from society without remark or comment, which his whole castle and staff with him?

Furthermore, in adding the character of the sorceress and acting to explain the Beast's enchantment, the Disney story entirely deletes the family drama which characterizes Beauty's situation from the tale. The "once upon a time" of the story goes to the enchanted prince, rather than the beleaguered merchant's daughter, at once drawing upon fairy tale tropes from other stories and pulling the tale away from the roots in personal improvement which characterize the family romance (Tatar 74) of the typical *Beauty and the Beast* tale. The opening sequence of the film focuses audience attention firmly on the Beast, switching only to the Beauty character as the secondary lead, and denies her the depth of background she normally receives in the tale. Instead, it weakly grounds Belle as the single daughter of an inventor with presumably comfortable means—Belle can not only read, but has enough time to daydream of "adventure in the great wide somewhere" (*Beauty and the Beast*). In doing so, the film makes Belle the

“funny girl” (*Beauty and the Beast*) of the village she lives in, without any real setup for the two-part format of a supernatural fairy tale designed to overcome one’s circumstances. The village accepts Belle due to her beauty, which although intended to indicate a certain amount of “provincial” small-mindedness also reflects back on Belle herself, making her at best a good-natured snob (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 46).

Disney further complicates the story with the hyper-masculine character Gaston, whose amorous advances upon the heroine serve to take the place of the family drama the original story depends on to illustrate Beauty’s character. Gaston, along with the disinterest Belle has in the “provincial life” of a small French village, provide the only motivation for change on Belle’s part, and she ultimately ‘escapes’ this fate because she finds a different suitor, and a prince to boot. The inclusion of a second male interest for the heroine forces Belle into a pseudo-choice between them (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 140)—which Disney makes incredibly clear in the dialogue and staging of the final battle scene—exemplifying not Belle’s personal growth but her decision to pursue an adventurous versus “provincial” life. By the time Belle has to make her choice, the film has already made it abundantly clear Belle could never willingly choose Gaston over just about anyone—including a Beast who imprisoned her, terrified her, and chased her away before completely changing his attitude altogether. The distinct, specific comparison between Gaston and the Beast highlights the undesirable features of masculinity (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 46), and Gaston provides the opposite reflection of the Beast: he’s handsome, shallow, self-obsessed, and cruel, while the Beast, though homely, protects Belle, reads with her, and allows her to make her own decisions. Belle makes the “right”

decision, cues the magical transformation, and the story ends with a waltz and a happily-ever-after (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 140-141). This follows the traditional line of several fairy tales, which compare limited suitors and possible spouses in a situation where marriage forms the *de facto* backdrop.

The Disney film teases out various thematic threads contained within the story by comparing the Beast's world to that of the village, such as commentary upon what Belle calls the "provincial life" (*Beauty and the Beast*), fear, masculinity... the list goes on. It even extends the story's basic moral theme—don't judge by appearances—to demonizing mob mentality or groupthink; the scene in which all the men of the village march on the Beast's castle to kill him based on his appearance alone makes this criticism abundantly clear. Though certainly not negative lessons to teach to younger generations, these themes fundamentally split the story's attention and focus between the two protagonists. Watching the torch- and pitchfork-toting crowd advance upon the Beast's castle dramatizes the terrifying consequences of fear-mongering and surface-level prejudice against an undeserving party—the Beast—but, interspersed with Belle's attempts to escape the cellar and ride to the Beast's rescue, also fastens on a wretchedly helpless situation. Both characters require outside intervention to wrest control of the situation away from their small-minded assailants, but the urgency of Belle's situation grows out of her fear for the Beast's welfare; for the Beast, he literally stands to lose his life. Worse, the consequences brought to bear upon the innocent Beast, and certainly his castle and servants, stem not from a broken promise on Belle's part but from her own foolish actions, as well as those of her father, which have resulted in a flood of fear and

ignorance on the part of the unenlightened people of the village. In this case, Belle's choices have direct and terrifying consequences, putting developmental lessons into sharp focus: all people, children and adults alike, have to learn the sometimes painful lesson that their actions can have widespread effect, and the film allows its audience to test the reality of this situation within the safety of a fantasy realm.

With the villagers' ignorance predicated almost entirely upon the Beast's appearance and associated assumptions, viewers—particularly young viewers—ought to find it difficult not to side with the Beast, especially since no inconsiderable part of the film has thus far been dedicated to proving the Beast is not all that he appears. However, the heavy-handed emphasis on the importance of looking past such appearances obscures serious character concerns, particularly on the Beast's part. While in the written stories the Beast generally acts as a complete gentleman toward Beauty at all times, Disney's Beast really does live up to his name when he first meets Belle, and the first impression does not improve much through Belle's first night in the castle. The film excuses the Beast's actions with the implied argument that he is both out of practice and without real experience in proper comportment—the source and result of his imprisonment in beast form—but in doing so minimizes the very real implications of the Beast's behavior, and in particular his temper and violence, which darkly mirror Gaston's. Early in the film, Gaston reacts to refusal in largely harmless ways, but his temper, possessiveness, and cruelty ultimately create the dangerous situation which forms the climax of the film; in reverse, the film at first makes the Beast into a terrifying and sinister figure, highlighting his potential for violence and his inability to keep his rage in check, and then slowly

diminishes him to lovable, human proportions. Essentially, Gaston mirrors the Beast in the same way that the sorceress mirrors Belle. However, Disney makes clear early on that the Beast's claws, fangs, and superhuman strength serve a real purpose, not just to mask a gentler nature inside. The Beast repeatedly uses his size and voice to intimidate others, Belle included, and in discovering the castle's forbidden wing Belle finds the place thoroughly trashed, presumably by none other than the Beast.

This last detail—the forbidden wing—gives the Beast an even more sinister characteristic: it adds a *Bluebeard* element to the tale and to the Beast himself. Although Belle finds no instruments of torture, lakes of blood, or corpses of previous unfortunate maidens in the Beast's private chambers, the inclusion of this forbidden secret nevertheless creates an entirely new, problematic layer in the story. The Beast needs no added masculine mystique (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 162); as a Beast, he is masculine mystique embodied! He even punishes his intrepid intruder, though not with beheading; instead he chases Belle out alone, in the middle of the night, into a snowy forest inhabited by vicious wolves. Disney forcibly contrives an opportunity for the Beast to redeem himself by saving Belle from the very wolves he's chased her toward, as though a more charming personality on the part of the Beast could not otherwise win Belle over. The effort reinforces the fragility often connoted with femininity (Ó Gallchoir) and dramatizes the internal balance between masculinity and femininity, as though they cannot reach a harmonious balance despite the paradox that the audience must ultimately reach this very same balance by witnessing and assimilating the marriage between Belle and the Beast. In adding the *Bluebeard* overtones to this part of the story, Disney makes

an interesting choice, because it substitutes for Bluebeard's gruesome secret a more problematic one.

Disney makes a deep, dark secret out of the Beast's very real—and very natural—vulnerability, which at once obscures his real problems and disparages weakness of any kind, but particularly weakness that smacks of the feminine, which goes a step beyond what Jack Zipes calls masculinity's deepest secret: that masculinity *has* no mysterious, defining secret (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 162). In short, the rose represents the Beast's repressed femininity—his emasculation by the enchantment, his vulnerability, his anxieties concerning his inability to save himself. The message communicates that such vulnerability—such femininity—ought to be hidden away and fiercely, even violently defended, despite having no clear reason for doing so. After all, the film provides no clear reason why the Beast or his servants cannot simply explain to Belle the circumstances of the enchantment. The written versions of the story usually do so—the enchantment comes with a *geas*, i.e. a compulsory charm which will not allow them to explicitly tell anyone about the enchantment (Birkett)—but the Disney film includes this level of secretiveness, and the Bluebeard overtones, without any obvious explanation as to why. Will explicitly informing Belle cause the rose to wilt? Will the enchantment become permanent? The film doesn't clearly answer these questions, and implies that telling Belle, or allowing her to witness the frailty implied by the wilting rose, would have some effect on *her*, rather than the inhabitants of the castle. It supports the masculine concern that, by being unable to differentiate the self from the feminine, men have no legitimate

right to rule over women (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 163)—or, in this case, to bully and control them.

These added details to the story reorient its central concerns, and arguably not always in a form true to the original spirit of the tale. Though from an objective standpoint these deletions and additions are not necessarily bad—or somehow worse than the initial complications of Villanueve’s and Beaumont’s stories—they detract from the fairy-tale nature of the story according to its traditional structures. Does the film’s departure from the traditional tale make it more modern? It certainly makes Belle more a girl of our own time than the sweet, industrious Beauty predecessors who would better have fit in with Disney’s Snow White or Cinderella, and the film updates the Beast to an exaggerated masculinity that can be traced to Walt Disney’s own self-characterization (*Fairy Tales As Myth* 91). However, the question remains whether the film preserves the truly “fairy tale” nature and feel of the story, or whether or not it makes of it just another little girl’s romance, which could be told without the use of the fairy tale. Contemporary culture doesn’t generally distinguish between the two, despite the cross-gender values fairy tales have, and in doing so diminishes what Bruno Bettelheim outlines as the powerful value fairy tales have as avenues by which a reader—or viewer—can confront the darker parts of the subconscious, rather than creating a world designed simply for wish-fulfillment. How should one approach this film and the story it tells, when it both dominates common understanding of the story and obscures or changes so much of its connections to the construction of the feminine and masculine unconscious?

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONTEMPORARY TALE

So how does contemporary literature treat the tale? Though the traditional themes, setting, and characterization in *Beauty and the Beast* have a sense of timelessness, they firmly root the story in its era of literary origin. Those stories which slavishly preserve the medieval fantasy and its details therefore perpetuate its problematic themes, but they also—perhaps unintentionally—reveal some of the troubling trends in current society, most particularly the continued subjugation of women in a patriarchal culture (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 47). In contrast, contemporary film and literature have also produced several modern fairy tales which, though some may touch on a dated setting or theme to give the story a magic feel, nevertheless bear more closely on contemporary themes than on antique ones. Jack Zipes calls Oz and its world the American fairy tale (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 122). Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*, Disney's *Brave*, and Dreamworks' *Shrek* saga all incorporate various fairy-tale themes. Meanwhile, the American Broadcasting Company's—commonly known as ABC—*Once Upon A Time* television series has gained in popularity since the beginning of its second season, The CW has recently reimagined the 1987 television series *Beauty and the Beast*, and NBC's *Grimm* has continued into its second season as well. The novelizations and films of *Beauty and the Beast* expand upon the original tale, but many don't explore beyond it; instead, they remain within the given world or invent a similar one in which to fit the original story. The list above, though far from exhaustive, displays the creative possibilities for fairy tales in our own time, both within the confines of existing stories



and beyond them. Most of them utilize fairy-tale elements purely for entertainment value, but a few actively seize fairy tales' "ability to use fantasy in the service of reality" (Gamble 25) to reflect problematic aspects of their contemporary culture, such as L. Frank Baum's evocative use of fantasy themes in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to directly reflect the serious and troubling environment of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 119).

Even in modern literature, and especially in fairy tale reproductions, the stereotype of an unjustly-persecuted heroine persists. Generally powerless and often in need of protection, she perseveres less by her own action than by enduring the trials thrown at her by circumstance and villainy. In Madame de Villanueve's story, Beauty passively endures the spite of her sisters; she is both domestic and submissive, doing all the housework because her sisters will do none. Disney's version has the heroine escaping the unwanted advances of the male villain not by actively standing up to him but by evading his passes with excuses and smiles. In fact, Belle stands up to only one male in the entire film—the Beast—and only in the sort of petulant outbursts stereotypically expected of females. Though this characterization makes sense within the confines of Villanueve's and Beaumont's tales, given the historical, cultural, and social contexts of the era, that the stereotype persists in the 1991 animated film presents a troubling reflection of more modern attitudes toward women. Angela Carter reproduces this characterization in "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" on a surface level, but in so doing critically interrogates the tale within its traditional structures (Gamble 27).

These stereotypical traits form a significant part of the othering which create the female character, particularly in the *Beauty and the Beast* tale. Beauty assumes the anima role, either as a mother-figure in the older tales or as the fiery independent muse (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 31) which we find in Belle, but whatever her end of the spectrum, she takes up an entirely different place in the fairy tale than her male counterparts in similar stories. As Maria Tatar notes in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, the heroine’s trials generally revolve around how much she can endure, rather than what she can overcome, and how much she can excel in feats of domesticity (116). In many cases the heroine does not overcome these often humiliating and grueling trials independently. In Villanueva’s and Lang’s versions of *Beauty and the Beast*, though Beauty endures nothing worse than the spiteful attentions of her sisters, she requires assistance in discovering the Beast’s secret. She receives such aid namely her in dreams while staying in the Beast’s castle, and though various characters repeatedly tell Beauty not to judge merely by appearances, she rarely discovers the truth of the spell until it has been lifted. However, Beauty has some luck in her tale; since she directly causes only one person’s misfortune—her father’s—she avoids severe trials of humiliation or penance... beyond, of course, her initial trial of taking her father’s place as the Beast’s prisoner. Most of the story’s particular variants follow this theme, unless attention turns to the Grimms’ tale of similar plotline, in which case the Beauty of the story causes a secondary transformation in the hero due to her own failings. When the transformation occurs she must travel the world in search of her suitor, and discovers him

on the verge of marrying another woman; she takes up the domestic, humble role until the prince recognizes her for who she is and the story ends happily.

Since fairy tales allow their readers—and children in particular—to test emotions and scenarios without any real threat to their wellbeing by allowing the reader to identify with the story and its characters (Cashdan 15), they also provide frameworks in which to question the recurring themes of storytelling in a given culture. After all, as Tatar notes, the specific details don't really matter (57), whether there's an egg or a rose involved in the story, or whether the Beast is a lion or a wolf or a great, terrible creature with no other name than 'beast'. For example, Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride" remains recognizable as a form of *Beauty and the Beast*, but it ends very differently, as do various novelizations and re-imaginings of the story. By drastically shifting one or more details in the story while maintaining its recognizable framework, these modern revisions turn a critical lens on the story's traditional themes and their problematic persistence in contemporary society despite being woefully outdated.

Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" perform a similar function, made especially effective by their use of an easily-recognizable form, but have the added effect of questioning stereotypical constructions of literary women without setting femininity on a pedestal. The two stories appear back-to-back in Carter's collection of rewritten fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber*, and reflect very different pictures of the same story. Though both contain enough similarities to be recognizable as variants on the *Beauty and the Beast* story, they give the reader almost bipolar views of both Beauty and her Beast, and taken together allow the reader to reflect upon how we

conceive and create the characters in our fairy tales—what their differences and interpretations mean, and why, despite the possibilities Carter illustrates between the two, the story usually comes out sounding the same. The stories present ironic and troubling reflections of patriarchal control and the flaws in popular feminism (Gamble 27). Carter specifically uses *Beauty and the Beast*, a formative story in feminine childhood, to “[deconstruct] a form that has been appropriated by those who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo” (Gamble 27), and by doing so she puts uncomfortable pressure on the accepted norms the story perpetuates.

In the first of the two stories, “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon,” Carter gives us a fairly typical version of the tale, if in a more modern setting—the story’s details include phones and trains and cars—and the Beast lives in a “miniature, perfect Palladian house” (144), rather than a castle. However, the story opens by establishing Beauty’s dutiful place in her small family, waiting alone for her father to return from the city, and picks up right at the critical part of the family drama which precedes the magical change in the second part of the story. Carter supplies the details of the drama later in the story, but jumps right into the ‘action’ of this quieter version as the father approaches Mr. Lyon’s home. Here we witness some of the story’s more traditional elements, such as the Beast’s absent hospitality as the father takes shelter from the winter elements, the theft of the rose, and the confrontation with the great and terrifying host. However, at this point the story changes just enough to give the reader a sense of the kind of Beast that Carter has created in this story. Rather than demanding Beauty in place of her father’s life, Mr. Lyon simply asks the man to bring his daughter to dinner. This small, seemingly innocuous

change precipitates a critical shift in tone as Carter reverses the traditional (masculine) power and dominance which the Beast exemplifies. Mr. Lyon never once demands anything of Beauty or admonishes her; he only ever asks politely, obviously more afraid of her than she is of him (Brooke 73).

This shift also begins to illuminate another critical difference in this story which, in a way, helps to liberate Beauty and highlight the tale's feminist bent. Beauty at no point loses her ability to choose according to her own will; as her father's life never rides upon her acquiescence to the Beast's demands, she need never take her father's place as a prisoner. At worst, she feels compelled to stay with Mr. Lyon while her father goes to London to fight for his fortune, this time with the aid of Mr. Lyon's lawyers. Beauty believes she must stay with Mr. Lyon and keep him company as the price by which her father may earn redemption "on a magically reciprocal scale" (148), but even in this case she still has the choice to leave. She simply doesn't, out of "a sense of obligation to an unusual degree" (148) to her single parent, although the compulsion gives her stay with Mr. Lyon a fated sense. Carter draws upon excessive flights of language, which specifically promote Beauty's idea that fate has decreed she stay with Mr. Lyon, to parody the high style of the eighteenth century (Brooke 71), stretching the story's credibility to the point of the absurd to put critical pressure on the way Beauty sees *herself* as a sacrificial lamb (Brooke 73).

The subtle twist on motivation in the story also gives Beauty leave to be more human, allowing her to have flaws and undesirable traits. Carter depicts Beauty's fear of Mr. Lyon as perfectly normal, despite his gentle nature, simply because he *is* a beast: a

great lion, dressed genteelly as a man. The reader cannot blame Beauty for her hesitation in reaching out to the Beast, as Carter continually points out his strangeness and the sense of his being apart from the realm of human life. Her departure from Mr. Lyon's home follows the natural lines of decorum, especially when operating under the assumption that her stay with Mr. Lyon functioned as a safeguard for her father's fortune. At the same time, any reader familiar with the traditional story will recognize this part as the promise and trial of Beauty's resolve, at which point we get to see the kind of heroine she is. Will she break her promise, or will she—as happens in Villanueva's story—overcome her fallibility and enter the realm of 'perfect female'?

The reader should already know the answer. Given Beauty's established fallibility and flaws, it comes as no surprise that she forgets her promise, in the process of which allowing the rich life her father has regained to spoil her. She acquires "a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expensive cats" (Carter 151)—a rather apt description of the kind of effect a sudden and precipitous increase in fortune can have on a girl whose physical attractiveness earns her the name 'Beauty', as well as a critical comparison to a creature often portrayed as tricky and unreliable. Of course the story dictates that Beauty must have her chance to earn her own redemption, and Beauty does not disappoint; when prompted, she enters an eleventh-hour flight to the Beast's side to save him from the very brink of death. From here the story follows along its usual lines, in that Beauty causes Mr. Lyon's transformation to a man, Carter never uses the word 'love'—Beauty simply agrees to stay with the Beast as long as he wishes. This omission at first makes practical sense, since Beauty really has not had

time to fall in love in the first place, but considering the parody which Carter has been subtly implying all along, it casts aspersions on Beauty's motivations throughout the entire story. Starting with the story's very title, Carter pushes the reader to interpret Beauty's actions as pursuing Mr. Lyon—and more importantly, his wealth and influence—so that ultimately she captures, tames, and domesticates the beast (Brooke 76).

Carter paints Mr. Lyon himself as an interesting amalgam of man and animal. His rage, directed at Beauty's father for the theft of the rose, does not extend to a threat to slaughter or eat the man, but his claws dig in deep enough to prick the man's arms, and the Beast literally shakes his guest like a rag doll. However, Mr. Lyon only grows angry this once throughout the entire tale, and his rage abates immediately upon seeing a picture of Beauty which has fallen from her father's wallet. His animal side manifests itself more in a shyness of his human guests than any sort of ferocity. The Beast generously hosts Beauty and her father at dinner, provides successful lawyers to help reclaim his guests' fallen fortune, and holds long and educated conversations with Beauty while she stays in his home. Yet, at the end of these, he “[flings] himself at her feet and [buries] his head in her lap,” licks Beauty's fingers as a way of “kissing her hands” and springs away “on all fours,” and later “the hills on which the snow still settled echoed with the Beast's rumbling roar: has master gone a-hunting?” Beauty asks of the spaniel which serves as Mr. Lyon's only retainer (149): clear indications, throughout the story, of the deeper hold the beast-shape has on Mr. Lyon, which goes beyond his physical shape alone. Beauty cannot fully accept Mr. Lyon because “his strangeness made her shiver”

(150) because “a lion is a lion and a man is a man” (147); Beauty cannot fully accept the strange mixture of the two until the conclusion of the tale.

Other than these brief glimpses, the reader doesn't see much of Mr. Lyon. He clearly has a crippling sense of shyness; he is unassuming, gentle, and quiet, but also elegant, noble, and rich to the point of any eccentricity being not only acceptable but expected. Carter has almost completely emasculated him, turning him into a tame creature who easily shifts into just the sort of elegant country gentleman Beauty could happily settle down with (Brooke 76). Mr. Lyon rages only once, and subsides quickly, almost tenderly; he attempts to hide, as much as possible, the things which make him even more Beast-like, and the things he cannot hide have very little bearing on the story's original reflection on men's underlying nature. Instead, Mr. Lyon assimilates the truly animal characteristics of the shape he wears in its shy reaction to humans. Although Mr. Lyon exhibits some shame in being a beast, the story also contains small hints that he might have imposed the beast-shape on himself, with these hints reading largely in the scene of transformation. Beauty notes that the Beast “had always kept his fists clenched,” (Carter 153) and the transformation progresses so smoothly that it, too, seems almost natural.

Carter juxtaposes this story with “The Tiger's Bride”, a vastly different variant on the tale. Some motifs continue; Carter sets both stories in the winter, and both pick up right at the point of entry into the supernatural world. However, even these vary drastically. In “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon”, the winter setting lends the story its wonderland isolation, its magical suspension of the expected, and its gentle and pleasant



mood. Winter in “The Tiger’s Bride” creates a mood of desolation and despair. In both stories Beauty’s father has ruined his own fortune, but the second one gives it a much more destructive sense, and presumably follows different lines; at the very least, Carter explicitly characterizes the father as a degenerate gambler. Though “The Tiger’s Bride” also starts with Beauty’s duty to her father, it has none of the positive connotations the traditional tale gives it; instead, Beauty’s responsibility to her father literally traps her into being nothing more than property, lost to the Beast in a game of cards when “ownership prevails over affection” (Brooke 77).

This Beauty has a more active voice in her story than her counterpart in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon,” yet has far less freedom to decide her fate when her father makes a commodity of her. Fate has no hand in her situation, but Beauty remains with the Beast because she subscribes to society’s arbitrary assignments of feminine honor, leaving her trapped as much by her own misinformed pride, especially in her inability to divorce sexuality from morality (Brooke 81), as by the machinations of men. They certainly have a hand in making Beauty a victim, and the story directly confronts the masculine commodification of feminine sexuality in Beauty’s own awareness of the transaction which lands her in the Beast’s castle (Brooke 80), but so long as Beauty cannot break the social bonds which her ‘honor’ places on her, she actively participates in her own victimhood. The reader has special insight into this side of Beauty given the story’s point of view: we get a first-person view inside Beauty’s head, looking out at a bleak and desolate world which points only to her own ruination by the father whose profligacy led to losing his own daughter to his gambling habit.

Thus, Beauty leaves her desperate family situation to enter the Beast's domain. However, this too differs greatly from other *Beauty and the Beast* stories; though the Beast of this tale owns a palace, it is a palace in shambles, its dining room given over to horses, its windows and doors useful only to let the wind in. The place has an almost hellish quality for Beauty, suited to the request the Beast gives her in place of the traditional offer of marriage: to strip herself bare to his eyes. Beauty, far less the innocent virgin child in this story than in "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon", has an understandable disgust for the request and its overtly sexual connotations, her pride and her failure to recognize that she can own her sexuality (Brooke 81) bars her ability to escape. She takes advantage of none of her opportunities to escape in some form or another because, as the valet states, she is "a woman of honour" (Carter 161, 163).

She eventually bends only in return to the same revelation of vulnerability by the Beast. However, this story makes it clear the Beast is just as his name suggests: an animal pretending at being a man, rather than the other way around. This would peg him a monstrosity in the eyes of the world, and the strange magic at play in this story continues to manifest in strange and uncomfortable ways. The Beast has a satyr for his valet, who gives Beauty a simulacrum of herself for a maidservant: a "marvelous machine" (Carter 163) which reflects Beauty's attitude of her role in the world within the context of the story; no other humans live or work in the crumbling, dilapidated palace. The sorcery at work in the palace comprises little more than cheap conjurer's tricks and illusions, and the reader's growing awareness of this fact creates an almost cynical atmosphere for the whole tale. Yet because "the uncanny is what invites transgression," (Brooke 79) it also

helps put emphasis upon the real truth, so that when the Beast reveals his stripes to his guest and Beauty, in return, bares her skin to the cold winter air, it has none of the same cheap vulgarity evident throughout the palace.

Here, too, we have a very different Beast: a tiger, rather than a lion, as a start, but a tiger who takes great pains to conceal the truth of his identity. He wears a mask, a wig, and gloves; he covers every inch of himself in clothing, and wears an incense pot to disguise his musk (Carter 156). Despite these attempts Beauty notices immediately the strange abnormalities of the Beast's appearance when they first meet, but not until she has been taken to the Beast's palace does she begin to realize the situation she is in. Over the course of the story the Beast grows less and less human, rather than more so, and sheds all trappings of humanity by the end when Beauty finds him pacing in a chamber full of "gnawed and bloody bones" (168). Yet he has a savage, captivating grace which suggests a kind of freedom the Beauty of this story has never experienced—her own sexual and physical autonomy (Brooke 81)—and Beauty is drawn to him despite knowing what he is because he represents an escape from the cage of morality; by abandoning her preconceived notions of good and evil, Beauty can achieve freedom (Gamble 42).

The transformation at the end of the story makes up the most interesting part... because the Beast does not transform, abandoning his animal shape. No, this story gives Beauty a new shape instead. It makes sense, given Beauty's options, but the surprise and twist ending has its own kind of graceful beauty. Rather than return to her father, knowing the depths of his degeneration and the paucity of his affection, Beauty

sends the simulacrum to play her mechanical role for her father (Brooke 83) and chooses to remain with the Beast. No trial period, no promises to return; Beauty sends her simulacrum in her place to her father and goes to the Beast, where “his tongue [strips] off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and [leaves] behind a nascent patina of shiny hairs” (169); Beauty loses the façade of her own humanity to become a tiger herself. Here, Beauty must look past her own appearances and make a decision to free herself from the confines of her desperate world, becoming something she might perhaps have been all along. However, this ending doesn’t entirely satisfy the reader, and shouldn’t; taken in conjunction with “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon,” it reflects a series of problematic implications which fail to fully erase the traces of patriarchal power evident in the narrative (Brooke 84). Carter gives her readers no way to escape the cycle of the bloody chamber; instead she proposes that the victim can accept the chamber and face her own complicity in her victimhood (Gamble 41), evading any universal truths the reader might attempt to assign the stories. Mrs. Lyon ends her tale in sterility and pampered comfort, having tamed her beast, while the tigress has joined hers in a masculine reflection of power and sexuality. She has liberated herself, but she has also affirmed her place outside of the rules of society, and in so doing does not transcend them; she slips the proverbial leash, but her escape represents a regression to a baser reality rather than a confrontation of the system. Neither union provides the same kind of safe resolution which other version of the fairy tale give their audience, but the lack therein pulls this ‘safe’ ending into uncomfortable light because it questions what we

accept as normal and acceptable, illuminating the less desirable realities of marriage, humanity, and adulthood in our modern world.

The inflammatory implications Carter encoded in her twin *Beauty and the Beast* tales drew sharp criticism from some of Carter's feminist contemporaries for its "double function...working against masculinist representations of women while potentially reinforcing them through its parody" (Brooke 69), perhaps due to the very fact that she used such a well-recognized form to reflect the uncomfortable reality of patriarchal suppression of femininity still prevalent through 1979. The attention paid to fairy tales in the last century has opened them up to criticism from many different directions, and as the American population consumes these fairy tales, the old forms in which the fairy tales have been preserved grow increasingly problematic. Preserving them in these forms only perpetuates these problems, which derive not only from a feminist point of view but from a democratic, critical eye as well. Many of them, for example, romanticize monarchy and nobility; one need only look as far as the pantheon of Disney princesses to understand how the idea has taken hold in the modern imagination. The romanticism pays no attention to the reality of a medieval monarchy: the broad social gap between the narrow shelf of nobility and the massive base of the peasants providing the power and money which support the nobility (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 74-75). In light of the broadening socioeconomic gap between the very rich and the increasingly poor in American society, as well as the thinning middle class, critical consumers ought to find the romanticization of nobility at the very least concerning, especially as the usually antiquated setting of most fairy tales further detaches them from reality, even more so than the fantasy themes

themselves. A marriage of two opposites in this problematic light only creates a problematic person, with unresolved flaws and complications.

Enter, then, repeated attempts to modernize fairy tales. Unfortunately, even the rapidly evolving technology of the day can't always account for the magic themes in fairy tales. The 2012 remake of the *Beauty and the Beast* television series relies upon genetic and cloning theory to create its Beast, but this explanation still has a science fiction feel to it, which changes how readers approach the story. Putting a story in a modern setting for serious consumption almost resists adding magic and, if this is the case, this resistance could interfere with a readers' ability to relate to the story and, more importantly, its characters. At the same time, relying solely upon a setting several hundred years in the past to justify magical themes and interference makes the story even less relevant to a contemporary reader because said reader has no way to relate to the reality of a character's situation. Archetypes allow for the projection of fears, concerns, anxieties, and the like, but only to a limited extent, and their power to do so diminishes when the form dictates how a character should behave, especially when many behaviors have drastically changed.

Sadly, the distinction between fantasy and reality sometimes interferes with the purpose of the fairy tale—most especially when following the details of a story's plotline, rather than the timeless lessons it offers and, in this case, the critical marriage of the unconscious opposites. Most of the time, a fairy tale in its traditional form doesn't offer any real solutions that appropriately apply to modern settings—for example, marriage as the ultimate and only option for a girl looking to get ahead in life, which many of the

currently circulating versions of *Beauty and the Beast* perpetuate. If you look at the typical incarnations of the story, Beauty has no real options, and she alone among the cast has any real change of character. The Beast, supposedly a desirable partner all along beneath his rough and undesirable exterior, has no need to change. Disney loosens this theme, but substitutes it with one potentially more harmful by suggesting that Belle has changed the Beast with her love, attention, and friendship, despite the somewhat abusive overtones in the Beast's behavior toward the beginning of the film. What do these themes give young girls to take away from the story? The lessons *Beauty and the Beast* suggests—"marriage is the only option", or "you are desirable only after you have changed who you are, or because of your physical attraction, domesticity, and ability to sublimate yourself for others' needs"—don't appropriately apply to the reality of the modern world, and the important lessons, such as remembering to look past appearances and keeping promises, can sometimes slip into obscurity beneath these more concerning themes.

Therefore, the story needs radical redefinition in order to reflect a more comprehensive and forgiving view of femininity in the unconscious, both in itself and in its opposite reflection of the masculine. Beauty has every right to be a powerful and independent princess, or no princess whatsoever; she can make her own decisions, and maybe she doesn't need to marry or stay with the Beast at all, so long as she has learned enough from him to achieve full personhood in her own right without requiring the marriage at the end as symbolic of that internal union. Sometimes the Beast really has no redeeming qualities—sometimes he is just a beast, either animal or man, the very worst

of unconscious masculinity. Maybe they don't need to fall in love. The story provides a foundation upon which to create millions of different stories, each recognizable as the same and yet entirely different. The details hold far less importance than those foundations and the lessons to be laid upon them. The story's basic framework provides cues by which readers can critically reflect on prevailing societal attitudes, evident in the more traditional forms of the story, and how those affect the two-in-one creation of full personhood by the end of the tale. Rather than throwing out the story entirely for its misogynistic themes, writers can play with these themes to highlight them, twist them, parody them... to turn them into the monsters they really are, pointing out the breakdown in what constitutes a Beauty and a Beast, together.



## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

*And they lived happily ever after.* Except, of course, they didn't, or readers would have no real need to return to the story after its traditional end. Though the familiar phrase gives readers a sense of resolution and comfort, the balm lasts only temporarily, and starts to burn if you look too closely at *how* they lived. The traditional tale assumes that Beauty lived forever in submission to her prince-who-was-a-Beast, who has assumed all the best of his experience and come out none the worse for wear after having spent a significant portion of his life in exile, an uneven marriage wherein the feminine has been subjugated to the acceptable masculine. The more cynical critic of the tale would of course point out that, in reality, there are no happy endings—or at least, not easy ones—and even fairy tales sometimes reflect this incredibly uncomfortable fact. The Grimms' fairy tales, though many of them gave the princes and princesses their happy endings, close more often than not with gruesome depictions of death and torture to punish the stories' transgressors, so obviously not *everyone* lived happily ever after.

However, that readers can revisit that happily ever after forms the true beauty and attraction inherent in fairy tales. They provide a mental stage upon which our anxieties play themselves out (Cashdan 15). The study of fairy tales' psychological impact goes back to Freud, whose psychodynamic theory readily lent itself to the analysis of enduring cultural stories for their underlying meanings. The stories' enduring elements, many of which center around a pivotal female figure, specifically draw out suppressed Oedipal struggles and concerns (Cashdan 11). At the very least, they reflect the inner realities of

the mind which society attempts to shield children from. Without stories that deal specifically with the darker side of human nature, children would have no way to deal with knowing that they are “not always good...and often, even when they are, would prefer not to be,” and in this vacuum learn to figure themselves as monstrous because of it (Bettelheim 272).

The mental stage also has its players. This liminal space of suspended reality allows the archetypes to take shape, engaging with the conscious mind through the narrative of the fantasy story. These archetypes assume the shapes which require the most effort to address, but on a more conscious level the caricatures of the characters make up a safe space for reality-testing. The fictional dream of the story frees and enables the reader to seize hold of latent anxieties and uncertainties regarding the future as a way to control it, the whole performance made possible within the stories’ structures and set forms. Furthermore, the players upon the mental stage navigate the difficult journey to wholeness and unity by merging together; their marriage at the end of the tale represents, on a psychological scale, the emergence of oneness in the self.

Do we want Beauty and the Beast to live happily ever after? What does it even mean to do so? As a story of dual transformation—beast to man, common to noble, internal and external—the tale rewards *both* characters for their endeavors and their trials in making a virtue of necessity, finding something worthwhile in an untenable situation. The characters overcome their circumstances and limitations, including those obstacles which they create themselves. Their happily ever after comes about *because* of their metamorphoses; it happens because they have achieved their potential and become one

whole. However, inasmuch as this occurs on the individual level, it only occurs as one small part of the whole they form in marital unity at the end of the tale.

Beauty and her Beast reflect each other. Where Beauty must overcome her too-strong attachment to her birth family—and particularly her father—the Beast must learn to accept and rely upon another human for help and consolation. Both overcome the bonds of their previous lives, reaching a new kind of freedom together they fail to achieve alone. The traditional format of the tale neatly wraps up their story in classic fairy tale style by appointing them the highest honor a fairy tale can convey: it makes them rulers of their own domain, a king and queen in their own right, only able to achieve such status through their union and reliance upon each other. The disparate pieces of their individuality come together in a cohesive whole within the mind, successfully resolving their independent anxieties.

Their pervasive appearances throughout literature make them far more than the basic unconscious structures of the anima and animus, as they comprise elements of both the conscious and the unconscious. Assigning them to purely unconscious function ignores the important function which conscious cognition plays in tracing the tale and relating to it. This conscious, cognitive portion asks the uncomfortable questions society prefers to leave out of fairy tales, leading to interpretations like Angela Carter's. Both characters have bits and pieces which don't fit the neat profile Villanueva, Beaumont, Lang, and Disney would happily give them, and writers like Carter pick up these pieces to play with them and see how they cut. Turned one way, Beauty evolves into a cunning, almost conniving woman capable of manipulating even a powerful and leonine Beast into

a tame house-cat; turned another, Beauty shucks society entirely in her union with the Beast. Further evolutions posit a chameleon-like ability to become any number of women, each of whom could or would reflect different aspects of the unconscious which the audience can confront and assimilate...or overcome.

But what happens when you take a critical look at your favorite childhood fairy tale and don't like what you find? The tale has its problems; although these don't negate its value as a fairy tale, they beg the kind of critical reflection which the dazzle of a Disney film directly tries to ignore, and growing up with the story must often mean confronting its complex and not always positive themes. These stories form the basis of the personal narratives which define a person's life, and this story in particular plays a pivotal role in the underlying psyche of Western culture today. Girls across the United States grow up watching Disney's 1992 film, imbibing its lessons and its morals before they even have the capacity to understand the whole of what is happening on screen. Growing up with it, they learn not to question it—to love it as an unapproachable classic—and simply accept the morals it imparts without scratching beneath the surface to find the dangerous associations it can form (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 74). The underlying narrative recurs in literature as girls grow older, too, with echoes reaching as far as such popular series as the *Twilight Saga* and *The Wicked Years*. The sum narrative, rather than its individual parts, slips deep into how we tell stories and emerges in unlikely places, but in doing so it carries incredibly troubling associations. No single interpretation of the story gives a fully satisfying resolution to these concerns, and considering multiple versions of the narrative only serves to highlight their individual inadequacies.

What does it mean to have a happy ending? Does it require a fully satisfactory resolution to the narrative's questions and concerns? Or does the happily-ever-after mean that the reader *can* come back to the story, not content to leave it be? As a psychological narrative, it requires some resolution in order to achieve its goal of comforting the audience or the reader, but the questions that remain unanswered provide the most interest for returning to the story. Filling in the blanks makes the characters into archetypes which adopt our deep unresolved concerns, providing meaning to the fairy tale and to the real context within which they exist, giving life and depth to the story in each and every mind that touches it. The characters hold powerful places on their own within the unconscious world which the story reflects, but their marriage at the end of the tale represents a union of their opposites, a merging of two seeming absolutes into a harmonious whole which has faced, overcome, and accepted the individual flaws of its two halves. The happy ending, then, comes from the deeper knowledge of the self in light of the characters who alone fall short of the ideal—only together do Beauty and the Beast achieve the kind of deep, full personhood to which each human being aspires.

## Notes

1. The film's introduction explains the enchantment, in which the Beast has until his twenty-first birthday to find a girl to fall in love with him, and gives the length of time between its onset and Belle's entry into the story as about ten years, with the window of opportunity on the verge of closing when she first enters the castle.

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