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Beautiful Women and Their Monstrous Men: An Examination of Gender Politics in "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard"

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by
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This project is dedicated to:

Stephen Graham
for being the best possible advisor I could have asked for

My Mom
for calming me down every time dropping out began to sound like a good idea

My Dad
for helping me put things into perspective

My Brother
for always keeping me motivated

My Friends and My Boyfriend
for distracting me when I desperately needed it

and to

My Five-Year-Old Self
for falling in love with fairy tales and leading me to this project

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Some of my strongest memories from childhood deal with the time I spent in the basement of my family's old home. This was my domain, and wherever my imagination took me, I was free to go. There, I would frequently indulge in my most favorite Disney movies, dressed in full princess attire of course, not only watching these films, but singing every single song as if I was an animated chorus member myself. I loved the wonder of these storylines: the enchanted castles, the very much living household objects that were inanimate in my world, the destruction of evil and the triumph of good. It was all so intoxicating. However, for me, the most important element was the fact that there was a heroine in the center of it all, escaping unlikely odds and getting her happy ending. My allegiances always happened to lie with the heroines who didn't just sit by and let their fates be decided; Cinderella never did anything for me, but Belle was another story. Perhaps I identified with the fact that she was a brunette and shared my dislike for annoying boys; regardless, the movie *Beauty and the Beast* has always stayed with me, and even today, it remains my favorite of them all.

Fairy tales are still very much present today and they have managed to manifest themselves in other ways besides canonical tales and Disney classics: television series have adapted the storylines, movies incorporate their many themes, revisionists write risqué renditions, live performances run on the Broadway stage, and children's picture books continue to fill the shelves, all providing evidence that these stories still resonate with adults long after they have graduated from their adolescent bedtime stories. However, this leaves us with the question of why is this so? Maria Tatar addresses this question in her introduction to *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ultimately concluding that "they must be addressing issues that have a significant

social function." She continues, "Fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life" (xi). For example, the story of "Beauty and the Beast" was originally written, in part, as a comment on the practice of fathers marrying off their daughters for financial gain. While this was certainly an important social issue of the eighteenth century, it is thankfully not a reality that young girls of today have to face. However, the story still remains relevant because revisionists have successfully adapted it to reflect modern concerns. Each new variation allows for a building upon of these classic tales, creating a rich intertextuality that permits these stories to remain culturally significant. Thus, as Carolyn Heilbrun has professed, "Out of old tales, we must make new lives" (qtd. in *The Classic Fairy Tales* xiii).

The dissemination of fairy tales across countries and continents since their original conceptions is truly astounding, and variations of the same themes exist in all corners of the world. As Marina Warner notes in her *From the Beast to the Blonde* theorists have began to conceptualize this process in terms of scientific metaphors: "wave theory offers an image of a stone thrown in a pond, radiating in rings outwards where they might meet other ripples and join in chevron patters with other stones cast in other seas of story" (xxiii). This theory holds true for all media, not just exclusively literary variations. Previous elements, or ripples, from earlier versions inevitably effect the forthcoming interpretations, and it is up to the individual creator to decide if they want to continue a certain tradition, or radically alter their portrayal.

Thus, my paper explores this evolutionary process as it has affected the depiction of female protagonists. The degree to which fairy tales are detrimental to women is a frequently debated topic; while some critics associate fairy tales with the subordination of women, others praise them for the powerful female characters they portray, such as the staple role of the fairy

godmother. Rather than aligning myself with one or the other of these extreme positions, I personally side with the likes of Margaret Atwood: everything depends on the particular rendition. While Atwood thoroughly defends the merits of the Grimm tales, she has stated that, "When people say 'sexist fairy tales,' they probably mean the anthologies that concentrate on 'The Sleeping Beauty,' 'Cinderella,' and 'Little Red Riding Hood' and leave out everything else" (qtd. in *The Classic Fairy Tales* xiv). Like Atwood, I would agree that certain tales reinforce patriarchal stereotypes, but this has not limited my overall appreciation for the genre.

Thus, it has been the goal of this project to trace the changes made to two distinct heroines throughout multiple variations, both literary and film, that have proven influential to the story's overall lineage (the importance of each chosen variation will soon be discussed at greater length). The two heroines are Beauty from "Beauty and the Beast" and the traditionally nameless wife from "Bluebeard." In general, the two heroines create an interesting contrast because their experience with their courtiers are essentially inverse: while Beauty is taught to not trust appearances through her romance with a gentle beast, Bluebeard's wife ultimately ends up married to someone who is as ugly on the inside as the horrible beard he dons on the outside. Moreover, unlike most stories that find their roots in multiple sources, both of these original texts come from the authorship of one individual, allowing for a concrete starting point in terms of analysis. Furthermore, the chosen variations do not only encompass literary and cinematic works, but they also traverse all intended age groups. As Marina Warner found herself in her extensive study of the many tale types, it was particularly important for this project that I "look at the context in which [these stories] were told, at who was telling them, to whom, and why" (Warner xvi). This recognition was significant because comparing a children's narrative to one intended for adults, in terms of literary merits, is not entirely productive; the two stories would

naturally be different as a result of the separate audiences, and very little would be revealed in the process. Thus, my goal was not just to discover their differences, but instead to track the overall trajectories of heroines and find an underlying trend in their developments. My interpretations of each story are neither staunchly feminist, nor thoroughly conservative; as stated, my allegiances lie somewhere in the middle. I have instead sought to be objective in terms of the creator's aim and their intended audience; an exploration of their potential motives is included for each work and the portrayal of the heroine is placed in the context of when the story or screenplay was written.

The first chapter of this project solely pertains to the story of "Beauty and the Beast." The first section deals with four chosen literary works, one from Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot Gallon de Villeneuve, one from Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, and two from Angela Carter; additionally the second section pertains to two cinematic interpretations, one each from Jean Cocteau and Disney. In regards to the importance of each, Villeneuve's *La Belle et la bête* has been incorporated because it is the founding text that started all of the forthcoming variations. From this original text, five structural elements have been identified by folklorist Stith Thompson that must be met in order for a story to be considered a "Beauty and the Beast" variant: (I) The monster as husband, (II) Disenchantment of the monster, (III) Loss of the husband, (IV) Search for the husband, and (V) Recovery of the husband (qtd. in *The Classic Fairy Tales* x). Thus, all of the following variations that have been included in this project meet these structural stipulations. Following Villeneuve's original text is Beaumont's shortened take on the original story; it is her version that has become the canonical text and has served as the inspiration for the subsequent renditions that followed. Furthermore, Carter's two interpretations of the original tale, "The Tiger's Bride" and "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," have been included

because Carter herself is one the most renowned feminist revisionists of the twentieth century; the two stories differ radically, and due to this, analysis of both is warranted. Moreover, in regard to the two film selections, Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* has cemented its place in history, not only for its influence on the avant-garde film movement, but because, as Roger Ebert described it, it is "the most magical of all films" (Ebert). The movie itself is based on Beaumont's version, and today it still exists as one of the most famous renditions of the tale. Finally, Disney's animated *Beauty and the Beast* has been incorporated because of the extreme popularity it has maintained since its release in 1991; this is the version that a majority of the public is familiar with today, helping to maintain the mass cultural relevance of the original story. The film even resulted in one of the longest running Broadway musicals, lasting from 1994 until 2007.

Continuing in this fashion, the second chapter exclusively pertains to "Bluebeard," with the first section once more addressing four literary versions and the second pertaining to two films. The literary works include individual stories from Charles Perrault, The Brothers Grimm, Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood, while Georges Méliès and Jane Campion are the two separate directors of the films. As with Villeneuve and "Beauty and the Beast," Charles Perrault is the original creator of the story of "Bluebeard;" as Casie E. Hermansson states in her comprehensive study of Bluebeard's lineage, "If there is such a thing as 'the real Bluebeard,' this tale is it" (4). From this original tale, as folklorists have since established, a narrative is considered a Bluebeard variant if it contains the following three elements: "a forbidden chamber, an agent of prohibition who also metes out punishments, and a figure who violates the prohibition" (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 138-39). As with the rules pertaining to "Beauty and the Beast," the following variations included in this chapter all follow these three guidelines. Thus, the next retelling explored is "Fitcher's Bird" by The Brothers Grimm; Hermansson

describes this story as a "principal variant" of the Bluebeard tradition, displaying its close ties to the original text (5). Following The Brothers Grimm are two of the most popular feminist revisions of the Bluebeard narrative: "The Bloody Chamber" by Angel Carter and "Bluebeard's Egg" by Margaret Atwood. Carter and Atwood have cemented their place as the premier revisionists of the twentieth century, and "the feminist and revisionist use of the Bluebeard tale is typified" through their work (173). Moreover, in regards to the chosen films, Georges Méliès' *Bluebeard* has been incorporated because it is not only one of the first cinematic portrayals of the tale, but it also typifies the early twentieth century works that looked to "problematize and challenge the traditional expressions of the Bluebeard story" (133). Finally, Jane Campion's *The Piano* acts as a prime example of the self-reflexivity that contemporary renditions have demonstrated.

The third and final chapter of this project thus begins with an initial comparison of the two founding texts in order to gage the similarities and differences between the two tale types. Once these are established, underlying trends in the progression of the two heroines will be explored, and the degree to which their inverse plotlines have affected the heroines' trajectories will be revealed. It is my hope that I will be able to display a clear progression in the characterization of both heroines through my chosen literary and cinematic variants.

CHAPTER I

A BEAUTY AND HER LESS THAN BEASTLY BEAST

"Why should you wish to behold me?" he said. "Have you any doubt of my love? Have you any wish ungratified? If you saw me, perhaps you would fear me, perhaps adore me, but all I ask of you is to love me."

"Cupid and Psyche"

The classic fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" is the most well known of all the animal bridegroom variants. This iconic tale has seen many renditions since its original publication, and each presents the reader with the potential power of true love; because of this, the story has remained a staple in children's entertainment, but it has also proven to manifest itself in adult literature and film. As the title immediately tells us, the heroine of this tale is named Beauty, and the degree to which her name defines her depends on the author's chosen medium, time, place, and ideology. As this chapter will soon reveal, the creator's interpretation of what makes an ideal woman plays an important role in their overall characterization of the heroine.

BEAUTY IN PRINT

As previously mentioned in the introduction, unlike most other fairy tales, "Beauty and the Beast" did not emerge from the oral tradition. Though animal bridegrooms and transformative love have always been a common theme among folktales, the overall plot of this popular tale originated from one source only: *La Belle et la bête* by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot Gallon de Villeneuve. Madame de Villeneuve included this founding text in her *Les contes marins ou la jeune Américane*, published in 1740. This version has never attracted wide readership because of its intricate plotline, excess of characters, and overall length; this original text was indeed not meant as a children's tale, but rather as an adult novella. However, though it was not an instant best seller, Villeneuve's creation contained all the plot elements that would allow Madame de Beaumont to create the best known version of the tale just sixteen years later.

Furthermore, various elements from this original novella have managed to surface in other retellings: Andrew Lang included an abridged version in his bestselling "Blue Fairy Book" in 1889.

For the most part, Villeneuve's novella begins in the fashion that many have come to know and love. A wealthy merchant loses his fortune, forcing him and his children to move to their country home; after returning from trying to restore their wealth, the father gets lost in the woods and ends up having to stay in the Beast's castle. Although he enjoys the Beast's hospitality, before the father leaves he goes to take a rose for Beauty and receives the infamous ultimatum: either one of his daughters willingly comes in his place, or he will be sentenced to death. Thus far the narrative elements are consistent with the Beaumont version; however, once Beauty enters the world of the Beast's enchanted castle, we encounter many unfamiliar details. As Virginia E. Swain notes in her article, "Beauty's Chambers: Mixed Genres and Mixed Messages in Villeneuve's Beauty and the Beast,"

> The novel is indeed an odd mixture of extravagant descriptions, fairy-tale conventions, innovative dream sequences, and rational argument. The main narrative of the couple's enchanted courtship and marriage is followed by the history of the Beast's original metamorphosis and the lengthy revelation of Belle's genealogy…
>
> (197)

This parallel universe Villeneuve creates within the castle is both magical and logically constructed. This proposes an interesting contradiction to the reader and could almost cause one to lose their sense of wonder as they realize that they have entered a world that is as "rigidly structured and rationally organized" as their own (197). However, it is likely that Villeneuve employed this contrasting combination in order to present to the reader a world that, though it may be fantastical, makes very real comments on 18th century French society. As Jack Zipes claims in his article, "Cross-Cultural Connections and the Contamination of the Classical Fairy

Tale," the French female authors wrote "serious commentaries on court life and cultural struggles" (858). Thus, in order to create their social allegories, these female authors would often employ the strategy of, "the more implausible they made their stories, the more plausible and appealing were their hidden meanings that struck readers as truthful" (860). Villeneuve proved to be no exception to this rule, and more specifically, her story commented on,

> …the corrupt and vicious intrigues of court life, of fortune-hunting and marriage-broking, pandering and lust in the eighteenth century, and, like so many of the first literary fairy tales, campaigns for marriage of true minds, for the rights of the heart, for the freedom of true lovers of romance.
>
> (Warner 290)

Thus because Villeneuve's novella was a clear comment on eighteenth century French society, it is interesting to then see how her depiction of Beauty relates to how women at the time were perceived.

In general, French women came second to their male counterparts in the eighteenth century; however, in some regards, their social standing was improving. In 1740 when Villeneuve first published *Les contes marins ou la jeune Américane*, women were still not recognized as full citizens by the French government. However, the formation of salons played an important role in French women's rights. There, upper class, well-educated women would gather to discuss numerous topics, including politics, literature, and the various happenings of high society. These female forums are also credited with conventionalizing and institutionalizing the French literary fairy tale (Zipes 859). This tradition of females gathering to discuss various concerns was even continued during the French Revolution, where women would partake in various political activities, such as forming clubs and speaking out at meetings; this in turn allowed for later feminist movements to evolve (Davidson 203). Additionally, in some regards, "women's status was improving" during Villeneuve's time, "due to an emerging emphasis on

virtue as something inherent in the individual, as opposed to honor which functioned through familial connections" (198). As we will soon see, this idea of virtue plays an important role in Beauty's overall character, especially in Beaumont's later recreation.

Thus with Villeneuve herself being a well-educated woman, who often frequented salons, it is no wonder that one of Beauty's most important character traits is her general intelligence. Beauty's clever nature is first emphasized when her father finds out that one of his ships has finally returned to port. Naturally, her greedy sisters ask for jewels, clothes, and other glamorous gifts; Beauty, by contrast, states merely that she would like to see her father "return in perfect health" (Villeneuve 156). Touched by her request, he begs her to ask for something tangible, so her sisters will not look upon her with contempt. Beauty eventually consents and asks for just one single rose, explaining that "By this request she obeyed her father and at the same time avoided making him go to any expense for her" (156). This seemingly small detail subtly emphasizes Beauty's astuteness: she is ultimately able to succeed in her goal, while still appeasing her father's request.

Another dimension of Beauty's intellect is reveled when she gives her father wise financial advice. Before it is time for the father to depart, the Beast states that he is allowed to fill two trunks with treasures in order to support the rest of his family. When Beauty and her father begin this task, she takes charge and makes sure that he makes the right economic decision:

> I think… that it would be better to empty these trunks and to fill them with coins that you can give to your children at your pleasure. This way you won't be obliged to tell your secret to anyone, and you'll be able to keep your wealth without any danger. The advantage that you'd derive from the possession of these jewels, although their value might be more considerable, would be fraught with complications. For one, in order to obtain money, you'd be forced to sell them to people who would only regard you with envy…Gold coins, on the other hand, will place you beyond the reach of any such misfortune…
>
> (168)

Here, it is clear that Beauty learned from her family's previous mistake – one of the most significant signs of intelligence – of living a visibly lavish lifestyle; she remembers the problems that it had caused them, in addition to the fickle friends it brought. Having learned from this experience, Beauty gives her father sound advice that proves to be right in the end. Later in the story, Beauty's father praises her for advising him correctly, and ultimately allowing him to live a happy and comfortable life. Furthermore, in the same scene Beauty not only gives him the correct monetary advice, but also shares another form of wisdom with him. After the father saw just how heavy the trunks were and how impossible it would be to carry them, he cursed the Beast and believed that he was ultimately mocking them. However, Beauty knew better and immediately reprimanded her father. She encourages him not to be so hasty with his judgment and to trust in the Beast because he has yet to give them a reason not to. To this, Villeneuve affirms to the reader, "Nothing could have been more prudent than this advice" (168).

Beauty's time in the castle also proved to highlight other aspects of her intelligence. The reader knew that Beauty would make the best of her unfortunate situation by the way she handled her family's previous misfortunes in the beginning of the story. Unlike her other two sisters, Beauty displayed great "perseverance and resolution," and "bore her lot cheerfully and with strength of mind much beyond her sixteen years" (154). Thus, Beauty continues in the same fashion once she enters her newfound home. For example, when Beauty first goes to explore the castle, the reader is immediately informed that she is going to make the best of her situation through her love of learning. Upon finding the salon full of instruments, the art galleries, and the extensive library, the narrator announces, "Her great desire for learning could easily be satisfied in this place and would help her ward off the boredom of always being alone" (171). In addition to Beauty's dedication to knowledge, her mind also seems to always be at work while in the

castle. Each night Beauty is visited by a handsome "Unknown" man in her dreams, with whom she immediately falls in love. However, instead of just accepting her dreams as nothing more than dreams, Beauty tries to understand why they are happening. Though she is unable to figure out the Unknown's message of, "Love him who loves you. Do not be misled by appearances, and release me from prison," Beauty strives to somehow solve the mystery (176). In her mind, she decides that the Beast has her Unknown locked somewhere in the castle, and she would attempt to find out if this was true by questioning the Beast. Though her hypothesis was incorrect, it shows that Beauty did not simply accept things at face value, and sought to find the greater meaning behind her situation.

Beauty's wit also proves to be partnered with an incredible sense of character. As Villeneuve informs the reader at the beginning of the tale, Beauty possesses a "strength of mind uncommon in her sex" (155). One instance where this is made clear to the reader is when Beauty is forced to reprimand her Unknown. One night while dreaming, her Unknown reveals to Beauty that he wishes to kill the Beast. To this Beauty shouts, "Stop, you barbarian! Don't harm my benefactor. Kill me instead!" (179). This angers her Unknown, and he reproaches her for taking the side of the Beast. However, Beauty does not back down from his assertion and fires back, "You're ungrateful. I love you more than my own life and I'd rather lose it than stop loving you… But these tender feelings cannot dispel my gratitude. I owe everything to the Beast" (179). Thus, Beauty's love for her Unknown did not stop her from both reprimanding him and standing up for what she believes in. It would have been very easy for Beauty to follow along with the thoughts of her Unknown, regardless of her own personal beliefs, in fear that her feelings would upset the man she loves. Instead, Beauty clearly displays her uncommon strength of mind, and

even her development as a character overall; here she is able to look past the Beast's horrifying exterior, and see him for the good soul that he is.

Another instance where Beauty's exemplary character surfaces, is when she meets her future mother-in-law, the Queen. When Beauty announces that she is merely a merchant's daughter, the Queen erupts in disappointment. While she is grateful for Beauty's success in transforming her son, she could not help but be "discouraged by the prospects of the prince's future happiness if it must be purchased by an alliance so degrading to us and so unworthy of him" (194). While the Prince pleads with his mother and the great fairy to consent to their marriage, Beauty holds onto her dignity. When the Queen asks if there is any other way to repay her, Beauty simply replies,

> I thank you, madam, but I require no reward. I'm more than repaid by the pleasure of having broken a spell that had deprived a great prince of his mother and of his kingdom. My happiness would have been perfect if I had done this service for my own sovereign. All I desire is that the fairy restore my father to me
>
> (195)

Beauty could have easily groveled for the mother's approval, or could have even been angered by her ingratitude, but she remained unflappable. Though she loved the Prince and wanted to marry him, she did not intend to beg. Here, her noble behavior is likely due to her "aristocratic essence," which as Lewis Seifert notes, will always "win out" in the end in a fairy tale (Seifert 902).

Overall, in Villeneuve's eyes, Beauty seems represent the ideal female of her time. While Beauty did make sacrifices for the men in her life and was thoroughly virtuous throughout the tale, these were not her defining characteristics, unlike the Beauty that Beaumont later recreates. Instead, Villeneuve created a heroine who was both well-educated and uncommonly headstrong for her sex. Furthermore, by placing her in juxtaposition to the other female characters that

surrounded her, Beauty's realistically ideal nature was further highlighted. The Queen, the great fairy, and Beauty's mother – who was also a fairy – were all unfeasibly (for the period, of course) powerful women who defied their feminine roles. The Queen successfully led her country's army when the King died, eventually vanquishing their enemy. The great fairy quietly worked to save the Prince from his monstrous fate, and also gave Beauty the happily ever after she deserved. Finally, Beauty's mother proved to be the strongest of all having disobeyed fairy law by marrying for love, and then triumphing over her punishment by surviving the "terrible act" (becoming a serpent), not once, but twice. In the eighteenth century, it was thoroughly ridiculous to think that a woman could lead an army, play God, or even have the mental resolve to endure any kind of "terrible act." By placing these unrealistically powerful women around Beauty, it highlighted her merits as an average woman. Thus, Villeneuve was successfully able to create a reasonably ideal heroine for her time: beautiful, smart, and captivating.

While Villeneuve's founding novella includes a rather progressive female heroine for her time, the author of the following version ultimately reverted from this tradition. In 1756, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont published an abridged version of Villeneuve's text, which quickly became the most widely circulated version of the original story. Madame de Beaumont herself was an experienced teacher who had worked as a governess for many years in London, regardless of her aristocratic background. Having gained experience as an educator of young women, Beaumont decided to write her own academic publications. While she published many things throughout her life, her *Magasin des enfants* proved to be one of the most influential; it even reached international fame, having been translated into twelve different languages (Brown 210). She prefaced this work by stressing that her views were based on practice, not theory, and she defended a woman's intellectual potential. Ultimately, her goal was to "provide a more child-

centered but carefully supervised education based on reason and religion that would lead to personal happiness and social utility" (208).

The text itself was unique because it engaged the pupil. It was divided by day, with different lessons for each; the topics included "history, geography, basic physics, and the natural sciences interspersed with discussion of a variety of topic generated by Bible stories, moral tales, fairy tales, homilies, and other exemplary narratives" (208-09). The moral tales particularly give insight into her view of how a young woman should behave; they promoted virtue above all, and rebuked vices such as "arrogance" and "willfulness." This created an interesting inconsistency in Beaumont's own ideologies, because while she "advocated more equality and autonomy for women in society," her tales were "contradictory insofar as they depict how girls should domesticate themselves, support men, and prove their worth through industriousness and good manners" (Zipes 863-64). Thus, while Beaumont published her version a mere sixteen years after Villeneuve's, her ideas on what made a progressive woman were incredibly different. Instead of creating a heroine that embodied similar characteristics to that of Villeneuve's, her Beauty personified virtue, displaying her belief that this was the key to improving women's status. Hence, it is no wonder that Beaumont incorporated these values into her version of "Beauty and the Beast" (which was included in this particular publication) in order to create a "parable of instruction." Angela Carter defines this as tales that are "vehicles for indoctrinating and enlightening children about the virtues of good manners, good breeding, and good behavior" (qtd. in *The Classic Fairy Tales* 26). This style of story writing proved to have a powerful effect on fairy tales, as many authors continued this tradition throughout the rest of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century.

With Beaumont valuing virtue above all other qualities, it is no surprise that Beaumont's Beauty is perfectly docile and as selfless as humanly possible. Her two sisters prove to not only be the villains of the tale, but also her foils. They are both described as "vain and proud," and when the family is forced to move to the countryside because of their misfortune, the townspeople are happy to see them suffer (Beaumont 32). These two qualities are exactly what Beaumont warned her pupils against; thus, unsurprisingly, these are the two dominating characteristics of her female villains. Comparatively, Beauty proves to be the complete opposite; the townspeople describe her as "sweet and sincere," and kind to the poor; she even has an affinity for "good books," all of which fuel her sisters' hatred for her (32-33). However above all, Beauty's father admires her for her "virtue" and her "patience," the two qualities that ultimately come to define Beauty (33). This immediate description of Beauty proves to be Beaumont's ideal description of a young woman, and these were the qualities she looked to instill in her pupils through these lessons.

While reading Beaumont's version, it is hard not to be baffled by Beauty's utter selflessness; her own life and well-being seem to come second to the needs of others, especially the males in her life. When the father comes home to tell his children of his unfortunate fate with the Beast, Beauty immediately volunteers her life as if she had been preparing for this moment since her birth:

> Why should I shed tears about Father when he is not going to die. Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I am prepared to risk all his fury. I feel fortunate to be able to sacrifice myself for him, since I will have the pleasure of saving my father and proving my feelings of tenderness for him.
>
> (36)

Beauty leaps at the opportunity to prove herself to her father, making it seem that all of the love and tenderness she had showed him before was not enough. Though her father and her brothers

both try to protest, Beauty quickly ends the conversation with a morbidly melodramatic statement: “You can’t keep me from following you. I may be young, but I am not all that attached to life, and I would rather be devoured by that monster than die of the grief which your loss would cause me” (36). Beauty is a young and of course beautiful woman who has an entire life to look forward to, but she seems to place no value on that. Being able to sacrifice her life for her father’s proves to be more important than her own chance of future happiness. This ultimately lets the reader know that Beauty’s own personal fulfillment is thoroughly dependent on the happiness of others.

Beauty continues in this fashion as the story proceeds, showing little to no growth as a character overall. Instead of realizing that it is impossible to please everyone, and that sometimes one must put one’s own needs before the needs of others, Beauty finds herself in a bit of a dilemma when she is forced to try and please both males in her life. When Beauty sees that her father has been ill, she tells the Beast that she would like to see him and if he denies her this privilege then she will “die of grief” (39). The Beast then responds that he would rather die himself then cause Beauty pain, so he consents to her wish; in turn it is now his time to die from grief due to her departure. Beauty, being caught between the needs of two separate males, bursts into tears and cries, “No, I love you too much to be the cause of your death” (39). Luckily, Beauty is able to come up with the solution of only being gone for one week, but this tug of war-like scene is almost comical. Before the Beast entered her life, it was easy to just devote herself to her father. However, the addition of another important male figure has left her divided; she is forced to figure out a way to please both of them, regardless of her own desires.

The devotion Beauty displays for the men in her life is a reality that Beaumont was familiar with. In her publications, she was not afraid to share with her pupils the troubles that life

often presented; as Penny Brown notes, she did not "present a rose-tinted image of married life," and the girls were "encouraged to voice their anxieties about a state that may involve an unquantifiable degree of self-sacrifice and onerous duty" (Brown 210). Beaumont herself was aware of the downfalls of married life, having left an unhappy marriage after two years, and eventually remarrying years later (Warner 292). Thus, it is understandable why Beaumont decided to reshape Beauty's character in a way that would help alleviate these fears. Though Beauty does give up a great deal throughout the story, she eventually receives her "happily ever after." By contrast, her vain and jealous sisters are punished: not only do they make unhappy marriages, but they are eventually transformed into statues, forced to look upon their sister's happiness forever. By the end of the story, Beaumont is sure to drive the moral home, finishing with, "The prince married Beauty, who lived with him for a long time in perfect happiness, for their marriage was founded on virtue" (Beaumont 42). Beaumont is thus letting her pupils know that if they too lead a virtuous life, then they will inevitably receive their happy ending as well.

The possibility of complete self-sacrifice is not the only fear that Beaumont's tale looked to ease. The unfortunate reality for women during the eighteenth century was that they were not always in control of whom they married. Often, fathers married off their daughters at very young ages, with no guarantee that the intended groom was a good-natured man. It was not unusual for young girls to find themselves in unhappy, and in some extreme cases, dangerous situations; they too sometimes found themselves living with a monster (a possibility we will soon see in the tale of "Bluebeard"). As the Beauty of Villeneuve's version muses, "How many girls are compelled to marry rich brutes – much more brutish than the Beast, who's only one in form and not in his feelings or his actions?" (Warner 290). This astute observation is made clear to the reader in Beaumont's tale. When Beauty first arrives at the Beast's castle, she is almost certain that the

Beast plans to devour her. This in itself expresses the sexual anxieties young women had upon entering the home of their husbands; they immediately became the prey that would be used to fulfill their husbands' sexual appetites. However, although Beauty enters with these fears, she quickly learns that she was mistaken; she not only finds herself in a beautiful and enchanted castle which caters to her every need, but she is also in the company of a gentle and kind Beast. The Beast makes it clear that he idolizes her and Beauty is impressed with his "good heart" (Beaumont 38). Ultimately, Beauty's willingness to look past his physical appearance transforms him back into his original human form, which leaves Beauty "pleasantly surprised" (41). In the end, Beauty's marital success implies to young girls that even some of the bleakest situations could end with happily ever after. Though it is admirable to look to alleviate a young girl's fear of leaving her home for the first time, Beaumont paints an imperfect picture. Beauty, who does not proactively ensure her own happy ending, proves to be incredibly lucky, being that her happily ever after depends entirely upon those around her. At the end of the day, unlike Beauty, not every girl is awarded a handsome prince in return for her "goodness." Though hope can be good, being prepared is always better; thus Beaumont would have served her pupils better by equipping them for life's curveballs, rather then shoving one quality down their metaphorical throats.

As previously mentioned, Beaumont's version spread across the globe, allowing it to achieve widespread popularity. Due to this, an incredible number of retellings have surfaced since its original publication on 1756. As Betsy Hearne notes in her article, "Beauty And The Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale: 1950-1985,"

> An examination of the story's development reveals an organic shaping and reshaping around a core of basic elements in response to historical and cultural influences. Eighteenth-century versions are affected by the forging of folk narratives with a new literary tradition; the nineteenth century, by innovations in bookmarking and printing;

> and the twentieth century, by the influence of psychological interpretations, new media techniques, and mass market distribution.
>
> (74)

These innovations in bookmaking and printing in the nineteenth century gave way to illustrated versions of the tale, as Hearne thoroughly discusses in her article. A clear fascination with the visual aspects of the tale (a beautiful girl forging a relationship with a horrible beast), surfaced during this period; thus it is no wonder that the new media techniques of the twentieth century allowed for the natural progression of film interpretations (two of these important film renditions will be discussed in the following section). However, not only did the twentieth century see the emergence of "Beauty and the Beast" inspired films, but this "influence of psychological interpretations" led to radical literary retellings.

Amongst the many twentieth century authors who were inspired by fairy tales, Angela Carter proved to exist in a realm far above the rest. *The Bloody Chamber*, published in 1979, is a collection of fairy tale inspired stories, and it is often referred to as Carter's most memorable and masterful work. In these tales, Carter does not merely re-tell these childhood favorites as many have come to believe. Rather, as Carter stated herself, "My intention was not to do 'versions' or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, 'adult' fairy tales, but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories" (Simpson). Due to this, the reader encounters wonderfully imaginative tales, that both arouse childhood memories and comment on their often "violently sexual" latent content (Simpson).

In an interview with Susannah Clapp (one of Carter's former friends and editors), she recalled a particular interview of Carter's before she passed. As Clapp remembered, Carter was asked why she had wanted to work with fairy tales; to this she replied that there was a need for more heroines. The interviewer went on to raise the point that fairy tales in general were filled

with heroines. Clapp then fondly remembered Carter's undaunted retort: while this was true to some extent, heroines like Sleeping Beauty did not exactly have much "get up and go" (Messages From Angela Carter). Thus, this desire to create compelling female characters is explicitly clear in Carter's work. As a child, Carter was heavily influenced by her upbringing, having been raised in a predominantly female home. Furthermore, Carter herself was coming into adulthood during the British women's liberation movement beginning in the late 1960's. During this period, feminist ideas began to surface, with women " questioning and redefining their roles as wives, mothers, workers and lovers in the light of their own experience, rather than through men's eyes" (Murray). These experiences proved to have a profound impact on Carter, and she later described herself as a "card-carrying and committed feminist" (Carroll).

In addition to her commitment to formidable female characters, she was also driven by this idea of change. As Clapp recalled, "she was fascinated by things that were changing; that were almost one thing, and almost another, and were sometimes, you couldn't tell the difference" (Messages From Angela Carter). Clapp went on to support this claim by discussing the journals Carter had written on women's fashion. She made it explicitly clear that her attention to fashion did not stem from her own fashionable instincts, but rather her interest in "the idea of women making themselves up," as in, "the way we construct ourselves" (Messages From Angela Carter). As a result, captivating heroines and personal alterations (physical and psychological), played significant roles in Carter's stories, with both of her variations of "Beauty and the Beast" being two of the most striking examples. While "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" prove to be two incredibly different stories, they both provide the reader with the dominant heroines and drastic transformations that Carter enjoyed portraying.

Of the two variations, “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” lies closer to the plot of the original tale, with Beauty unexpectedly falling in love with a Beast; this love of course transforms the Beast back into a handsome prince and the rest is history. However, though the plot remains similar, the Beast is not the only character that experience’s a transformation. While reading the story, Beauty herself evolves before the reader’s eyes, and though she remains completely human the entire time, her growth as a character is evident. As previously covered, the Beauty of Beaumont’s tale was the ideal model of virtuous perfection. However, it is clear in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” that Carter instead sought to create an imperfect heroine; as she had previously written, “To be the object of desire is to be defined in the passive case. To exist in the passive case is to die in the passive case - that is, to be killed. This is the moral of the fairy tale about the perfect woman” (Simpson). Thus, Carter’s Beauty is far from perfect and certainly not passive; though she may have various character flaws, she is still able to successfully save the Beast’s life in the end.

Beauty’s relationship with the Beast begins on less dramatic terms then that of the original tale. Though the Beast does reprimand the father for taking a rose for his daughter, his punishment is not death, but instead the Beast requests that be brings Beauty to dinner. In this scene, the narrator describes the photo of Beauty that the father had taken out to show to the Beast: “The camera had captured a certain look she had, sometimes, of absolute sweetness and absolute gravity, as if her eyes might pierce appearances and see your soul” (Carter 147). This one description allows the reader to know that she is much more than a pretty face, a fact that becomes evident once Beauty enters the Beast’s castle. Upon meeting the Beast, Beauty seems to be incredibly observant and highly aware of her impending situation:

> How strange he was. She found his bewildering difference from herself almost intolerable; its presence choked her. There seemed a heavy, soundless pressure upon her

> in his house, as if it lay under water, and when she saw the great paws lying on the arm of his chair, she thought they are the death of any tender herbivore. And such a one she felt herself to be, Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial.
>
> (148)

Here, Beauty is keenly aware of their physical differences and just how vulnerable this makes her; she recognizes that his great strength makes her the prey in more ways than one. Beauty understands that the Beast could devour her both physically and sexually; while he is a ferocious carnivore who can actually consumer her, the dangerous sexual undertones of unwillingly losing her virginity to him are clear. Furthermore, Beauty is also aware of this unknown pressure upon her, which is ultimately the transformative power she possesses.

In addition to Beauty's intuition, she also proves to not be as blindly selfless as the Beauty's of the past. When it is suggested that she remains with the Beast while his lawyers aid her father with his financial woes, Beauty is not simply given blind satisfaction by aiding her father. Though the narrator does note that she would "go to the ends of the earth" for him, Beauty is not entirely thrilled by this situation. Immediately she felt a "pang of dread," and was "possessed by a sense of obligation to an unusual degree" (148). It is the fact that Beauty agrees to remain with the Beast, even though it is clear that she does not want to, which elevates her act of selflessness. The robotic replies of the past Beauty's display no internal struggle; comparatively, this Beauty is willing to put her reservations aside to ultimately help her father.

As the story progresses the reader soon witnesses Beauty's unpleasant transformation. Upon receiving word that the father's wealth has been successfully reinstated, the Beast immediately becomes distressed at the thought of Beauty departing. Moved by his sorrow, Beauty agrees to return before the winter is over. However, it is once Beauty enters the London life of opulence that her very own transformation begins. Since the father had ruined himself

before Beauty's birth, she was unaccustomed to living a life of luxury. Nevertheless, she quickly took to it, and her external appearance began to reflect her newfound self-absorption:

> Returning late from supper after the theatre, she took off her earning in front of the mirror; Beauty. She smiled at herself with satisfaction. She was learning, at the end of her adolescence, how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers was plumping out, a little, with high living and compliments. A certain inwardness was beginning to transform the lines around her mouth, those signatures of the personality, and her sweetness and her gravity could sometimes turn a mite petulant when things went not quite as she wanted them to go. You could have said that her freshness was fading but she smiled at herself in mirrors a little too often, these days, and the face that smiled back was not quite the one she had seen contained in the Beast's agate eyes. Her face was acquiring, instead of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expensive cats.
>
> (151)

Here it is clear that Beauty has been thoroughly changed by wealth; because she has been spoiled by this life of excess, she no longer retains that look of both "sweetness" and "gravity" that had been previously described. Instead, narcissism has grabbed a hold of her, and she began to feed off of material items and compliments, with her physical features even beginning to reflect this inward transformation. Not only had her skin began to plump, most likely due to frequent over-indulgent meals, but she even began to lose her natural beauty. Instead, she had become so groomed by high-society, that Carter likens her prettiness to that of an overly cared for cat. This type of "beast" in which she is compared to displays that she is no longer her own person, but instead just a lap-cat, waiting to be pampered and petted by whichever owner possessed her. Moreover, while this transformation was occurring, spring had arrived and her promise to the Beast was broken.

The fact that Beauty was so susceptible to temptation essentially makes her more "human" as a character. In Beaumont's version, as well as many others that followed, Beauty did not forget about the Beast because of her own flaws, but rather she was tricked by her two jealous sisters. Here, Beauty's broken promise stems from her own weakness, which makes her

return to the Beast even more heroic. Once the Beast's faithful canine companion frantically arrives at Beauty's door, she snaps herself out of this opulent trance, and rushes to save the Beast. It is both her act and confession of love that transforms the Beast back into his human form. Thus, Beauty was completely in charge of her own destiny, and was the only one capable of creating her own happy ending.

Comparatively, "The Tiger's Bride" proves to stray far away from the original "Beauty and the Beast" plotline. Carter makes this incredibly clear through her opening line of the story: "My father lost me to The Beast at cards" (156). This one line sets the stage for a very different scenario; not one based off a heroine's act of paternal love, but rather with an unwilling heroine becoming collateral damage from her father's gambling addiction. This line also shows that the story takes place in the first person, finally giving Beauty a voice of her own. Thus hearing Beauty's inner thoughts provides the reader with direct insight into her character, giving her a kind of power that the past Beauty's did not enjoy. Furthermore, with this power, Beauty does not merely think kind thoughts in regards to her degenerate father and unfortunate situation. Instead, it is clear that she is cynical, witty and highly aware of the cruel world she is a part of. This distinct voice of hers becomes evident as she furiously watches her father lose everything: "What a burden all those possessions must have been to him, because he laughs as if with glee as he beggars himself; he is in such a passion to donate all to The Beast" (154). This biting remark displays her sardonic wit and her overall disdain for her father. This is further enforced by her line shortly after, where she explains why she had originally been in favor of moving to this region: "Indeed, I myself spoke up in favour of this remote, provincial place, out of fashion two hundred years, because, oh irony, it boasted no casino" (154). Here, Beauty is incredibly aware

of the perverted joke that life has played on her, indicating that gambling and misfortune seem to exist wherever her father goes.

As the story continues, Beauty is transferred into the Beast's possession and yet another facet of her character is revealed. As the valet leads Beauty into the Beast's castle, she states, "I held my head high and followed him; but for all my pride, my heart was heavy" (160). Here the reader learns that though Beauty finds herself in a miserable situation, she would not allow her exterior to portray this. Beauty's pride and fearlessness as a character becomes even more evident in her first meeting with the Beast at his castle. In this scene, the valet informs Beauty of the Beast's one request: if she agrees to let the Beast see her naked, then she will be promptly returned to her father, with all of their lost possessions as well as "a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses" (160). To this, Beauty lets out a "raucous guffaw," which is captioned by memories of her childhood nurse chastising her for such a sound. When she remembers her nurse saying, "no young lady laughs like that," she responds internally "But I did. And do" (161). This not only displays the natural independence and defiance within her, but this continues to blur the lines between humans and beasts; Beauty has had her very own "roar" since birth, and she would maintain it regardless of what other young ladies did. After her outburst, Beauty's verbal response is scathing, and she likens herself to a prostitute due to the nature of the Beast's request. Beauty's pride would not allow her to reveal her virginal skin to him, no matter how much he was willing to pay. Moreover, when she sees that her response has hurt the Beast, she is thoroughly pleased; Beauty values herself and will not be taken advantage of. As the story continues, the reader is consistently reminded of this integrity, as the valet repeatedly calls her "a woman of honour" (161).

As the story progresses, the Beast soon realizes that Beauty will not change her mind. Thus instead of asking to see her naked for a third time, he invites her to go riding. It is on this excursion that Beauty goes through a sexual and spiritual awakening, which ultimately leads her to her unconventional happy ending. Once they reach the riverbank, the valet announces that since Beauty will not reveal herself to the Beast, the Beast must reveal himself to her. Upon seeing the Beast in his natural form, Beauty is so moved by his magnificence that she states, "I felt my breast ripped apart as if I suffered a marvelous wound" (166). This experience thoroughly changes her, allowing her to emerge as a new person. When the valet went to cover his master, she immediately stops him, and then begins to undress herself. She is so profoundly affected by the Beast's beauty and vulnerability that she wants to share her natural form with him as well. For Beauty, this is a moment of epiphany: humanity is not something to be admired.

Throughout the story, the reader is consistently given hints about Beauty's inclination toward the animal kingdom. In the beginning of the story Beauty states that she had "always held a little towards Gulliver's opinion," and she later reiterates this point by calling horses the "noblest of creatures" (157) (164). Furthermore, her reverence for the animal kingdom is enforced by her disgust for the human race. Her father is a key example of human deficiency, and she blames his abandonment on "human carelessness." While out riding with the Beast and his valet, she also raises the unsettling point that the human race is completely dominated by men:

> If I could see not one single soul in that wilderness of desolation all around me, then the six of us – mounts and riders, both – could boast amongst us not one soul either, since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beasts nor women were equipped with the flimsy, insubstantial things when the good Lord opened the gates of Eden and let Eve and her familiars tumble out
>
> (165)

Beauty's consciousness of the subjugation of women and beasts by a male dominated society causes her to fully embrace her surroundings. As she notes when she first arrives at the castle, the Beast "bought solitude, not luxury, with his money" (159). Thus, by being successfully removed from the outside world, Beauty finally "felt at liberty" for the first time in her life, as she walked along the river after having exposed herself to the Beast.

Once Beauty returned to the castle, the Beast was prepared to restore her to her father. However, upon looking into the magic mirror, Beauty sees her father, basking in his returned wealth, and ready to depart without her. This moment proved to be the ultimate validation that Beauty needed; she no longer wanted to be a part of her father's world. Soon after, she strips naked and wraps herself in furs, already likening herself to an animal. She then rushes to the Beast's den, where clothes and etiquette no longer restrain him; instead he paces on all fours with the bloody bones of his dinner strewn across the floor. Instead of being frightened, Beauty squats down and holds out her hand as a sign of acceptance. To this the Beast purrs, slowly heads towards Beauty and then begins to lick her hand; from this, Beauty is transformed into a beast herself: "… each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shiny hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur" (169). Here Beauty's erotic transformation proves to be the height of her as sexual awakening. As Salman Rushdie notes in the introduction to *Burning Your Boats*, it is as "though her whole body were being deflowered and so metamorphosing into a new instrument of desire, allowing her admission to a new…world" (xii). Beauty is finally a part of a world that allows her to be free, and she was led there by her own acceptance and understanding.

BEAUTY ON SCREEN

Among the many film adaptations of "Beauty and the Beast" that have surfaced since the twentieth century, Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* (1946), has proven to be one of the most iconic. As the opening credits reveal, he based the story off of Beaumont's version, and there are even instances throughout the film where the dialogue is directly taken from the original story. However, though the film is adapted from this version, Cocteau not only proved to make multiple additions to the story (many of which were included in the later, widely popular Disney version), but he also directed it towards an adult audience. Because of this, Cocteau was able to fully flex his artistic muscles and create a film that was described by New York Times film reviewer, Bosley Crowther, as, "a fabric of gorgeous visual metaphors, of undulating movements and rhythmic pace, of hypnotic sounds and music, of casually congealing ideas" (La Belle et la Bete [1947]). Thus, while it is undeniable that Cocteau managed to create something that has earned a prominent place in cinematic history, it is his treatment of the heroine that is in question here. In relation to the other variations that have been chosen for this chapter, Cocteau is the only male author/screenwriter. Unsurprisingly, his portrayal of Belle is very different to that of his female peers. As Cynthia Erb notes, "Cocteau's film reduces the importance of the original story's focus on Belle's perspectives (but does not eradicate it) in order to promote the significance of male perspective and desire" (Erb 53). While watching the film, it is clear that the

Beast's character is far more complicated and multifaceted then Belle's, successfully reducing the heroine to a subordinate role.

Unlike the literary versions that preceded the film, this Beast proves to be in severe conflict with himself; while he recognizes that he has a "good heart," he finds it difficult to resist his animalistic urges, because he is ultimately a "monster." At one point in the film, while out for a walk with Belle, the Beast hears a deer run past, and he is immediately thrown into a moment of contention: should he be the animal that he is and go hunt, or should he try to retain whatever humanity he has and remain with Belle? Ultimately in this particular scene he is able to control himself, most likely due to Belle's presence; however, he is not so successful in other parts of the film. Due to Cocteau's brilliance, the Beast's hands would smoke anytime he finished hunting. Often he would stare in anguish at his smoking, bloody paws, displaying the guilt he felt. The Beast desired above all to be human, and though he makes concerted efforts to be as human possible (ie. consistently being fully dressed in elaborate clothes from the neck-down in order to give the illusion that he has a human's body), he is ultimately unable to thoroughly resist his true nature. Because of this, as Belle notes herself, the Beast is often far crueler to himself than he is to humans.

In comparison to the Beast, Belle is far less interesting as a character. Though she does display moments of bravery and conviction, she is essentially defined by her name, la belle. In regards to her finer qualities, Belle does exhibit a degree of heroic bravery when she sneaks off to the Beast's castle without telling her family. Unlike the original story, Belle was not accompanied by her father, showing that she would not allow him, nor her other suitor, Avenant, to deter her from accepting her fate. Additionally, in Belle's other moment of resolve, she reprimands the Beast when he inappropriately shows up at her door late one evening. After

having fled from her earlier, the Beast arrives at her room in his most beastly state: ripped clothes, bloodstained, and smoking from the hunt. At this point he is clearly a predator and an evident danger to Belle's safety. However, instead of being frightened, Belle reprimands him for behaving in such a manner, and even throws her scarf at him, demanding that he clean himself up. Both her words and her glare prove to have a profound effect on the Beast, causing him to back away in anguish, shouting "Close your door… Your look burns like fire."

Though Belle does act courageously in these two instances, this quality does not dominate her character; instead it is Belle's beauty that not only defines her, but also determines her interactions with those around. The importance of the way Belle is perceived by others is indicated by the fact that our first view of Belle is through her reflection. In addition, the significance of Belle's beauty is further enforced through Josette Day's portrayal of the character. As Sir Christopher Frayling explains in his commentary on the film (included in the edition released in 2002), Day consistently positioned herself in statuesque positions, making her breathtaking to behold, but ultimately just a living picture, or "tableau vivant." He even continues this thought further as he contemplates Day in comparison to Beaumont's Beauty: while Beaumont's was relatively clever and enjoyed "good books," this Belle was simply an object of desire. Cocteau's Belle also comfortably accepts this role as the film proceeds. Upon first arriving at the Beast's castle she claimed that she did not "feel at ease in all this finery." However, as the movie continued, Belle quickly became accustomed to just being beautiful. In the aforementioned incident where the Beast came late to her door, Belle was inside primping herself in front of her enchanted mirror. Similarly, when Belle had returned to her family's home, Belle's two sisters found her in her room dressed in full "finery" and once again staring at

herself in a mirror. Thus, while Beaumont's Beauty may have spent her free time reading, this Belle would rather maintain her physical appearance.

Consequently, it is Belle's attractiveness that drives the storyline, not her actions. As Lora Mulvey brings to light in her infamous article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"

> What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (19)

This statement strongly resonates with Cocteau's cinematic portrayal. The Beast aspires to fight his beastly ways because he is both enamored with Belle's appearance, and he also fears her disapproval. Similarly, the subplot of Belle's romance with Avenant is driven by his desire for her. Thus because Belle is lusted after by both men, in addition to having no other power except for her beauty, she is consistently vulnerable to their sexual desires. For example, when Avenant first proposes to Belle she turns him down because she claims that she cannot leave her father. However, instead of accepting this answer, Avenant traps Belle against his body with an arrow (a dangerous object in itself) and then tries to kiss her against her will. Belle is only able to escape from him because her brother, Ludovic, intervenes. Similarly, in a later scene when Belle first arrives at the castle, she faints at the sight of the Beast. The Beast then proceeds to pick her up and carry her limp body into the castle and up to her room. Upon entering the room's threshold, Belle is magically put into an elaborate dress, which resembles a wedding gown. This instantly gives the viewer an image of a groom carrying his bride through the entrance of their bedroom in order to consummate their marriage; this image is further enforced when the Beast places Belle on her bed and then proceeds to stare longingly at her.

Finally, in addition to the vulnerability Belle's beauty caused her, it even stripped her of her full transformative power as the heroine. In the original tale, Belle maintained some control

over her fate by being able to verbally confess her love for the Beast. Instead, Cocteau completely rid Belle of this right, and instead "interrupts the words of Belle (Josette Day) with a visual crosscutting pattern that alternates between the Beast's dying soliloquy and Avenant's invasion of Diana's temple" (Erb 54). Here, Belle is not even able to express a degree of verbal power, but instead merely transforms the Beast through a "loving look." Once again it is an aspect of Belle's appearance that drives the plot, not her own actions.

Cocteau's reason for diminishing Belle's role as the heroine could be grounded in various theories. Many have come to believe that Cocteau's homosexuality led him to make the Beast and Avenant more significant as characters, both of whom were played by the same actor, Jean Marais. Sir Christopher Frayling's commentary even reveals that Cocteau was infatuated with Marais, and he spent the entire film trying to capture him in the perfect light. There are also "gay inflections" throughout the film, including the addition of Diana's Pavilion, the goddess who "famously abstained from heterosexual love" (54). Moreover, Cocteau's lessening of Belle's importance as a character could have also been due to his dedication to the gothic tradition. Cynthia Erb presents this idea, which was discussed by Eve Sedgwick in *Between Men.* There she found that in the gothic tradition, "…the homosocial relationship of male rivalry often overtakes the heterosexual union in narrative significance, becoming heated, tensed by a virtually libidinous charge" (54). Finally, in the French film tradition during this time, there was a tendency to simply diminish the female presence. As Sarah Hanley notes in her article "European History in Text and Film: Community and Identity in France, 1550-1945," prominent women were excluded from some of the most important films of the time. For example,

> …women active in the French Resistance during World War II are conspicuously missing from that movement in *Sorrow.* Standing around but silent (except for some quiet laughs) are wives whose peasant husbands recount resistance exploits (as do men in other interviews). Women resisters are not interviewed.

(14)

Due to this, it is possible that Cocteau subscribed to a similar style as his contemporaries. Nevertheless, it is apparent that Belle's role as the heroine is reduced, and the focus is instead placed upon her male counterparts, especially the Beast.

Continuing in the cinematic tradition, Disney released its very own animated version of the fairy tale in 1991. Disney, like Cocteau, significantly altered Beaumont's version, creating a second male suitor for Belle, fleshing out other characters, and adding a few plot twists. As a result, the viewer is given a much more complex and modern tale. However, a pattern seems to persist where "Disney" and "controversy" go hand-and-hand; *Beauty and the Beast* proves to be no exception to this rule. In many ways, *Beauty and the Beast* is a pioneer of sorts, because the screenplay was written by Linda Woolverton, the first female writer of a Disney animated feature (Ross 60). Woolverton realized the complexity of her task from the beginning and explained, "It's very difficult to take the originals and convert them into a story that works for the Nineties… You have to consider what kids are like now in terms of sophistication, you have to make sure that your themes are strong, that people can relate to the characters, that the story isn't sexist" (Cummins 23). When the film was first released, it appeared as if Woolverton had succeeded in this goal; critics praised the filmmakers for their progressive heroine, one who was much more than just a pretty face. Janet Maslin of the *The New York Times* found that Belle was "a smart, independent heroine…who makes a conspicuously better role model than the marriage-minded Disney heroines of the past" (22). Though this is how Belle – along with the film – was first perceived, critics soon began to poke holes in what many saw as Disney's first feminist production.

In June Cummins' "Romancing the Plot: The Real Beast of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast,*" she unabashedly criticizes the film for perpetuating the traditional female role which could be found in traditional fairy tales: "that is, it encourages young viewers to believe that true happiness for women exists only in the arms of a prince and that their most important quest is finding that prince" (22). Cummins emphasizes that Belle merely functions as a "plot device" in the tale, and is used to support the overall "romance plot." The romance plot – previously defined by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and quoted by Cummins – ultimately encapsulates her main issue with fairy tales themselves:

> As a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest…[and] incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success. The romance plot separates love and quest, values sexual asymmetry, including the division of labor by gender, is based on extremes of sexual difference, and evokes an aura around the couple itself. In short, the romance plot, broadly speaking, is a trope for the sex-gender system as a whole.
>
> (24)

For Cummins, though Belle starts off as certainly a more interesting heroine who is well read and has dreams of one day leaving her "provincial town," she ultimately gets absorbed into the romance plot and consequently loses all of her passions and goals in return for her handsome prince.

While staunch feminist critics – like Cummins – find Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* to be just another display of a woman gaining happiness through her partner, I would argue instead that though Beauty does end up with her prince, that is not her only accomplishment, nor her sole source of happiness. Many critics have come to equate a heroine's marriage with her death. While this may be true in some cases, it can be argued that this does not apply to Belle. As Deborah Ross astutely notes, "When the marriage seems to grant the heroine true personal fulfillment and possibilities for further growth, the end may actually seem like the beginning of a

new life" (60). By analyzing Belle's growth as a character one can see that her relationship with the Beast did not stunt her, but rather allowed her to evolve as a character overall.

Upon first meeting Disney's Belle, it becomes clear that she is very different from Beaumont's. Though the townspeople do describe her as "beautiful," the next adjectives to immediately follow are not "kind" and "virtuous." As Belle waltzes through town to pick up a new book from the library, the townspeople begin to gossip, with one eventually singing, "Behind that fair façade, I'm afraid she's rather odd." Ultimately they find her strange, because as Belle later notes herself, she has nothing in common with them; while they are all content with performing the same tasks each day – which Belle highlights in the beginning of the song – she comparatively longs for something more. Belle makes it abundantly clear that she dreams of one day leaving this "provincial town" in order to find "adventure in the great wide somewhere," with "someone" who understands her. Here, Belle clearly states her goals, which instantly sets her apart from her predecessors; the Beauty's of the past were completely content with their small town lives. Though in the film Belle does take on the role of caretaker for her father – which is consistent with the earlier versions – this does not seem to anchor her. Unlike the original Beauty's, this one is attached to life, and cannot wait to go and live it.

As in Beaumont's version, Belle has her very own foils in this film, which help to highlight her differences from the other women. Instead of the two evil sisters of the canonical version, Belle is contrasted with the three beautiful blonde girls that appear in various parts of the film. While these girls are not mean spirited like the sisters, they display the stereotypical female vapidity which Beauty herself defies. The three blondes are identical, and they even wear the same dress, albeit in different colors. This implies that, surface appearance aside, vacuous girls are essentially all the same. During Belle's first interaction with her other hyper-masculine

suitor Gaston, the three girls are shocked when she completely dismisses him. In succession, one asks "What's wrong with her;" then the next cries, "She's crazy;" and the third and final girl swoons, "He's gorgeous." Later in the film, the three blondes even allow Gaston to physically manhandle them in the song "Gaston." While sitting upon a bench, Gaston lifts all three of them with one hand, and right before he sets them back on the ground, Gaston's sidekick Lefou sings, "Not a bit of him's straggly or scrawny." The sexual innuendo is clear, and even as the girls are dropped back down, a bit of their undergarments are revealed, confirming his sexual prowess. By contrast, Beauty is able to see past his good looks, and to recognize him for the brute that he is. In their opening interaction, Gaston chastises her for reading, and snarls, "It's not right for a woman to read– soon she starts getting ideas…and thinking." When Belle patronizingly calls him "positively primeval," he displays his lack of intelligence by thanking her. Shortly after this, when Belle's father unperceptively suggests that she become friendly with Gaston, even calling him a handsome fellow, Belle makes her opinion of him very clear: "He's handsome alright, and rude, and conceited, and… oh papa, he's not for me." Thus, while the three blondes care only for his looks, Belle is looking for much more in a partner.

As the movie continues, Belle's aversion to Gaston allows the viewer to see just how much she respects herself and her goals. At one point when Belle is at home, Gaston unexpectedly shows up, planning to make her his wife; however upon entering, Belle immediately begins to dodge his aggressive advances. As he sits down, he begins to paint a picture of what their married life would be like, with Belle messaging his feet at the end of the day and caring for their six or seven "strapping boys;" all the while his muddy feet are placed upon Belle's book of adventure and romance, literally stomping all over her dreams. After depicting this bleak future, he begins to get aggressive with Belle, trapping her in the corner of

the room, and then once again by the door. Finally he attempts to kiss her against her will, and to this she shoves him out the door. Belle would never allow such a man to violate her, nor rob her of her dreams. In the following song, Belle mocks the idea of becoming his "little wife," and she states that she wants so much more then they have planned for her.

In sharp contrast to her scenes with the bestial Gaston, Belle's encounters with the Beast not only bring out the best in her, but also in him. However, Belle is not handed the perfectly kind Beast of Beaumont and Cocteau, able to immediately win her over with his tenderness. This Beast was originally transformed because of his "spoiled, selfish, and unkind ways," and elements of this condition persist. Due to this, their relationship requires work, and Belle manages to help him become a better person in the end. At one point, Belle flees the castle, "promise or no promise," after the Beast verbally assaults her. Upon her escape, she encounters a pack of wolves, and though the Beast saves her, he soon passes out from his injuries. At this point the viewer can see a moment of conflict in Belle's eyes: she could leave him there to die and escape with her freedom, or she could take him back. Belle of course does the noble thing and returns him to the castle, but this time she does not allow him to yell at her. When he begins to blame her for the recent events, Belle does not back down and argues with him nose-to-nose. This not only shows just how brave Belle is (a quality that is also revealed when she offers to take her father's place as the Beast's prisoner), but it also allows the Beast to gain the respect for her that lets their relationship flourish. As the viewer watches their love unfold, it is clear that their relationship does not hinder Belle, but rather allows her to find a true and meaningful happiness. During one scene, as the Beast watches Belle out and about in the garden, he states that he wants to do something for her. To this Cogsworth states, "Well there's the usual things… flowers, chocolates, promises you don't intend to keep." While these may be the gifts of choice

from the average suitor, the Beast instead surprises her with his extensive library, truly showing that he understands her. As Ross notes, “Naturally she chooses to marry the gentleman who gives her the key to his extensive library, not the ‘positively primeval’ clod who throws her book in the mud with a warning about what happens to society when women are taught to read” (62).

Ultimately, Belle’s courtship and eventual marriage to the Beast did not signal her death, but rather allowed her to find happiness and personal fulfillment. When looking back at the original goals Belle stated, she successfully fulfilled them all: she left her provincial town, found adventure both at the Beast’s castle and while heading back to save him, and even ended up with that someone who understands and appreciates her. Furthermore, the final scene indicates that Belle has finally found a home that not only makes her happy, but also allows her to fit in. In that opening song where the townspeople gossip, Belle walks through town as an outsider, with her nose in a book as everyone else hustles around her, commenting on her oddity. Comparatively, in the final scene, Belle and her prince waltz around the ballroom with their family and friends circling around them, looking on with admiration. Thus one can see by comparing these two scenes that Belle has finally found true happiness, and can now begin a new life with her partner.

CHAPTER II
A WIFE AND HER HORRIBLE HUSBAND

Perhaps the very greatest uneasiness which a child had ever felt was Pandora's vexation at not being able to discover the secret of the mysterious box.

"Pandora's Box"

As we saw in the previous chapter, the story of "Beauty and the Beast" sends a positive message to its readers, allowing them to know that an externally beastly man could in fact be a kindhearted soul. This chapter will not portray such happy thoughts; instead, "Bluebeard" is a gruesome tale that consists of a sadistic man who is equally as ugly on the outside, and the plight of his wife to escape a horrible fate. Due to this, the story does not retain the mainstream popularity that "Beauty and the Beast" has achieved; with its gory details, it is understandable why Disney never chose it as its next animated project. However the story has proven to influence writers and filmmakers since its original publication, with recent feminist revisionists in particular taking an interest in the tale. The often nameless heroine – or sometimes later identified as Fatima – has been portrayed in various lights, ranging from an active agent in her rescue, to a helpless victim who needs to be saved.

THE EIGHTH WIFE IN PRINT

Similar to "Beauty and the Beast," the story of "Bluebeard" originated from one particular source: Charles Perrault wrote the original version and included it in his *Tales of Mother Goose*, which was published in 1697. What inspired Perrault to create such a horrifying

tale is still speculated today, but overall it was he who created the groundwork for the variations to come. In general, seventeenth century conditions for women in France were not entirely progressive; as we saw in the previous chapter, it was not until Villeneuve's time that French women began to see some progress in terms of being recognized as more than just subpar citizens. However, one area where females were able to thrive was in fairy tale authorship; in fact between 1690 through 1715, "the *conteuses* published two-thirds of all the fairy tales" (Seifert 922). Yet, these *conteuses* did not write in order to create progressive female characters, but rather to renew the French aristocracy, which was believed to have "fallen into moral and genealogical decline" (923). Due to this, many of these stories produced by women, "promoted an ideal femininity that privileged domesticity over sociability, submission over assertiveness, and silence over conversation" (923). Perrault however took a slightly different approach in his mission to moralize a decaying society: instead of creating an essentially perfect heroine, he made a flawed one – at least in his eyes – who needed to learn from her mistakes.

From the beginning of the story, Perrault does not shower his heroine with compliments. The only things we immediately learn about her is that she is beautiful, and though at first unwilling to marry Bluebeard because of his frightful appearance, her opinion is quickly swayed by his incredible wealth. As Marina Warner notes in her *From the Beast to the Blonde*, "In many Mother Goose tales, money and romance are bound up together, but of the two, money is by far the more pressing problem" (265). "Bluebeard" proves to be no exception to this rule, with Perrault's heroine altering her view of Bluebeard simply because he could provide her with an opulent lifestyle, regardless of the knowledge that his previous wives had also mysteriously disappeared. Patricia Hannon recognizes in her "Heroes and Heroines in the Tales of Perrault," that the wife enters into the marriage with self-interest in mind, not romantic illusions: "Every bit

as artful as her mate, this young aristocrat shows a remarkable flexibility, a willingness to compromise with the ideals of her class in order to flourish in the newly emerging order of things" (945). This ultimately proves to be problematic, and by not marrying for love, the heroine ultimately does not find her happy ending with Bluebeard. Furthermore, Perrault instills this lust for wealth in all of the other nameless women in the tale. Later, as soon as Bluebeard leaves the home for his business trip, his wife's friends – who are of course females – rush over, uninvited, to the house in order to see its "splendors" (Perrault 145). Further adding to the flawed nature of women, these friends even find themselves envious of their friend's good fortune. This in itself seems to represent the decay of the French aristocracy, ultimately craving wealth above all, instead of perusing knowledge and high moral character.

As the story continues, the reader is also acquainted with the heroine's most significant flaw: her curiosity. Perrault seems to take a page from the story of "Adam and Eve," as well as "Pandora's Box," by perpetuating the idea that curiosity is a woman's downfall. Both Eve and Pandora disobeyed their orders – Eve eating the forbidden fruit and Pandora opening the infamous box; this in turn gave way to the stereotype that all women are just too curious for their own good, with Bluebeard's wife being no exception to the rule. Later versions of the story even came to include the subtitle "The Effect of Female Curiosity," or "The Fatal Effects of Curiosity," in order to "bring it in line with cautionary tales about women's innate wickedness" (Warner 244). Thus as soon as Bluebeard leaves the home, after forbidding her from entering his secret chamber, the wife is immediately tormented by her curiosity; because of this she cannot even stand to entertain her friends, causing her to run so quickly to the forbidden room that she almost breaks her neck. However, there is a brief moment before she opens the chamber, where she reflects on the "harm that might come her way for being disobedient" (Perrault 145). In this

moment, the wife recognizes that she is about to do something wrong, and she even temporarily fears the consequences. This proves important for Perrault's first moral, which is included at the end of the story: "Curiosity, in spite of its many charms,/Can bring with it serious regrets…" (148). This moral thoroughly blames the wife for her misfortunes: if only she could have been a bit less curious, then her and her husband could have lived happily ever after. This thought is of course completely absurd; the chances of a happy life with a madman are incredibly slim, especially when you consider the question, what had made him kill his first wife? One important thing that separates Perrault from the later folklorists who made renditions of his tale, is that they did not portray the wife's curiosity as a flaw. Instead they found that she was bound by a duty to herself to open the chamber, with one heroine even stating, "I have to know what is in there" (Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 58). Thus, while these folklorists found the wife's curiosity noble, Perrault condemns her for it.

Adding to Perrault's poor portrayal of the wife, she proves to be a helpless victim who waits for fate to take its course. Through this, as Maria Tatar recognizes in her *Secrets beyond the Door*, Perrault successfully "undermines a robust folkloric tradition in which the heroine functioned as a resourceful agent of her own salvation" (61). Instead of being cunning or courageous, the wife simply waits for the arrival of Bluebeard, and her only defense against his will is to weep and beg for her life. This of course does not sway his evil heart, and in the end, the wife only seems to be saved by sheer luck: her sister Anne just happens to be in the castle (even though there is no prior mention of her being there) and her brothers had also coincidentally planned to visit her that day. Everything falls into place for the wife, with her hyper masculine brothers (one a dragoon and the other a musketeer), bursting through the gate just as Bluebeard is about to murder her. They ultimately save her from death by killing

Bluebeard himself, and since he had no other heirs except for his wife, the entirety of his wealth is left to her; this and her marriage to a "very worthy man," prove to expel her memories of "the miserable days she had spent with Bluebeard" (Perrault 148). Thus instead of creating a perfect heroine who consistently exemplifies submission to and adoration of her husband, Perrault's is at first disobedient and self-interested, in his opinion of course; because of this, she must learn her lesson in order to achieve her happily ever after.

As Perrault's "Bluebeard" made its way across the globe – both in published and oral form – variants of the story began to surface. Though not necessarily suitable for children in terms of subject matter, the story proved to survive because of its murderous details that both horrified and intrigued its audience. Among the many retellings of "Bluebeard," the Brothers Grimm produced two adaptations in their collection of fairy tales entitled *Children's Household Tales*, or *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, which was first published in 1812. In this first edition, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm included eighty-six stories, many of which they collected from their numerous informants. Of these eighty-six stories, the two that are reminiscent of Perrault's original tale are "Fitcher's Bird" and "The Robber Bridegroom." However, of the two, "Fitcher's Bird" is the most closely related to the original, fulfilling all of the aforementioned guidelines of a Bluebeard narrative. Nevertheless, despite its narrative similarities, the heroine is portrayed in a very different light; instead of being condemned for her curiosity, she is characterized as a cunning agent of not only her own survival, but of her sisters' as well.

The Grimms collected this particular story from three of their main female informants: Dörtchen Wild (Wilhelm's wife), Friedericke Mannel, and Katerina Viehmann (Maclean 46). In fact, at least eighty percent of the tales the Grimm brothers collected were from female informants, thus allowing them to tap into "a rich vein of woman-to-woman telling" (37-38).

Because of this, the Grimm tales are not as thoroughly biased towards men as popular belief seems to insist. As Marie Maclean finds in her article "Oppositional Practices in Women's Traditional Narrative," in regards to the Grimm collection,

> If woman is a mere object in tales with an active hero, man is equally a mere object in tales with an active heroine. Whether this is desirable is another matter; at least it is fair. On a fairly subjective assessment, of the 200-odd tales in the Grimm collection seventy-three have a female actantial subject and ninety-seven a male actantial subject… An actantial study of the relationship of subject to helpers and opponents and of their attainment of the object value shows the proportion among female subject of active to passive is about forty-seven to twenty-three, and the proportion among males about sixty-five to twenty-nine.
>
> (46)

Maclean's assessment of the Grimm collection proves important, because it expels the idea that tales either created or recreated by male authors have consistently placed female characters in subordinate roles. While she does make it clear that the Grimm collection does have its fair share of stories with inactive females, at least this is balanced out by a nearly equal ratio of stories with idle men. Having grown up reading the Grimm tales herself, Margaret Atwood came to a similar conclusion, finding that not all fairy tales are as harmful to women as many feminist critics have declared:

> The unexpurgated *Grimm's Fairy Tales* contain a number of fairy tales in which women are not only the central characters but win by using their own intelligence. Some people feel fairy tales are bad for women. This is true if the only ones they're referring to are those tarted-up French versions of "Cinderella" and "Bluebeard," in which the female protagonist gets rescued by her brothers. But in many of them, women rather than men have the magic powers.
>
> (qtd. in *The Classic Fairy Tales* 143)

"Fitcher's Bird" proves to fall under this category, and it is incredibly telling that Atwood places it in direct comparison with tales like Perrault's "Bluebeard:" the differences between the two heroines are unbelievably stark as we will soon see. Atwood herself was drawn to the tale of "Bluebeard," allowing her to write a variant of her own years later. Unsurprisingly, her unique

interpretation of the heroine proves to inhabit the spirit of a Grimm heroine far more than one of Perrault.

"Fitcher's Bird" begins under a very different pretext then that of Perrault's "Bluebeard:" instead of a beautiful young woman compromising her ideals for a wealthy husband, the heroine, as well as her sisters, are tricked into entering the home of their monstrous suitor. As the story begins, "There once was a sorcerer who would disguise himself as a poor man, then go begging from door to door in order to capture pretty girls. No one knew what he did with them, for they were never seen again" (Brothers Grimm 148). This immediately allows the reader to know that the male protagonist is the deceitful one, unlike in "Bluebeard," where the reader does not learn of his true nature until the wife opens the chamber.

As the story continues, we learn that this particular sorcerer makes his way to the home of a man with three beautiful daughters. Upon his first visit, simply by touching the eldest daughter, she is magically forced to jump into his basket. The sorcerer then hurries off with her to his castle, where he promises her anything she desires and assures her that she will be happy there. However, after a few days, the sorcerer claims that he needs to head out on a journey. He thus informs her that she can go anywhere in his home except for the room that is opened by one particular key. He also gives her an egg and instructs her to carry it everywhere she goes. Once he leaves, though having originally planned to walk past the door, the eldest daughter is overcome with curiosity, causing her to enter the forbidden room. Inside, she finds the mutilated bodies of the women from his past, and thus overcome with horror, she drops the egg into a basin of blood. As with the key from "Bluebeard," she is unable to remove the blood from the egg, immediately giving her away once the sorcerer returns. He subsequently chops her to pieces and

throws her in with the other mangled bodies. The middle sister unfortunately proves no luckier than the eldest, and soon meets the same exact fate.

While the first two sisters fall victim to the sorcerer's test, the youngest daughter, who is also the heroine of this tale, escapes the same fate by being both "clever and cunning" (149). Instead of taking the egg with her through the castle, she hides it in a safe place and then eventually enters the chamber. Once inside, she finds her sisters' butchered bodies and then begins to reassemble them, magically bringing them back to life. The youngest daughter then successfully engineers a plan to rescue herself and her sisters from the sorcerer's clutches. Upon his return, the sorcerer finds that there is no blood on the egg, and he exclaims that she passed his test and that he "no longer had any power over her and had to do her bidding" (150). The youngest daughter uses this to her advantage and tells him that while she prepares for their wedding, he must carry a basket of gold to her family, but instead of gold, the basket contains her two sisters. Also, to ensure that he does not look inside the basket, she tells him that he is not allowed to stop along the way, and she will be watching him from her window. The sorcerer thus drops the basket off, allowing the sisters to send for help as the youngest had requested. Meanwhile, the intended wife puts "a skull with grinning teeth," adorned with jewels in her window. She then disguises herself as a fitcher's bird by crawling into a barrel of honey and feathering herself. Once disguised, she easily walks past the sorcerer and his wedding guests who believe the figure in the window to be the bride. However, once they all enter the house, the daughter's brothers and relatives lock them in the house and set it on fire, burning them all to death.

Just from the immediate description of the tale, it is clear that the heroine is incredibly resourceful; without any external help (except for her relatives aiding in setting the house on

fire), she successfully manufactures a plan within a moment's notice, that not only ensures her and her sisters' safety, but also makes sure that no other woman will fall subject to the sorcerer again. Her cleverness is also put in direct contrast with the foolishness of her two sisters; being that they both fell into the same trap, the youngest daughter's cunning appears exceptional, giving her the heroic qualities that any fairy tale protagonist needs. In addition to the heroine's daring qualities, the story itself does not condemn women for their flaws as with Perrault's original version. For example, Perrault condemns Bluebeard's wife for her uncontrollable curiosity, and he even makes it clear that all women maintain the same fatal flaw in his closing moral. However, the sisters of "Fitcher's Bird" are not defined by their curiosity, and instead of uncontrollably running to the secret chamber, they are able to go through the whole house before coming to the room. Though they do plan on walking right past the door, curiosity simply gets the best of them, and this proves to be the only mention of the trait throughout the entire tale. The Grimm Brothers did not feel the need to add a final moral chastising all women for their inquisitiveness, especially since it was the heroine's curiosity that allowed her to find her butchered sisters.

Furthermore, the story includes the added element that men could be equally as disobedient as women. While the sorcerer claimed that he was subject to his future wife's bidding, he still proved to disobey her when he was sent to deliver the basket. Though he was told that he was not allowed to stop, he still tried to rest twice, only to be unknowingly chided by the sisters in the basket. The ending also proves to be incredibly unforgiving of the sorcerer. While Perrault's second moral almost exonerates Bluebeard for his crimes, claiming that he is not the average man, "Fitcher's Bird" ends with the sorcerer and his crew burning to death. This

being the final line of the story leaves the reader knowing that justice was served, and exception or not, his fate was deserved.

Angela Carter, as discussed in the previous chapter, was one of the foremost feminist revisionists of the twentieth century. As seen with her two renditions of "Beauty and the Beast," Carter was, as she put it, "all for putting new wine into old bottles… especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (qtd. in *Secrets beyond the Door* 119). Her two different portrayals of Beauty thoroughly exhibited her desire to create more active heroines who also manifested her fascination with both physical and physiological change. Unsurprisingly, Carter's vision of Bluebeard's heroine does share these same characteristics with her two Beauties, however the circumstances in which they are displayed are far less wholesome. While Carter does highlight the latent sexual content of the original "Beauty and the Beast" in both stories (the portrayal of Beauty's erotic transformation into a beast in "The Tiger's Bride" for example), "The Bloody Chamber" displays Carter's interest in the violent aspects of sexual desire, which in turn influenced her portrayal of the heroine. Carter herself wrote a critical work entitled *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) that discussed the impact pornography has had on both women and feminism. In her article "'Born to Bleed': Myth, Pornography and Romance in Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber,'" Michele Grossman points out Carter's most compelling argument of the book, in that pornography and myth are incredibly interrelated: "In examining the ways in which mythology and pornography intersect, she emphasizes that it is the dominant ideology of the culture that produces them, rather than anything inherent in myth or pornography as such, which renders these master narratives oppressive or dehumanizing" (151). Thus Carter's recognition of this important similarity between myth and pornography certainly proves to play a role in her portrayal of "Bluebeard." The lines between myth and pornography

are frequently blurred in "The Bloody Chamber," and by including an active heroine and valiant mother, Carter was able to create a progressively feminist narrative, instead of the frequently repressive stories that exist in by both genres.

In order to explicitly link myth and pornography together, the plot is thoroughly based on the Bluebeard narrative, but also includes elements from pornographic literature. For example, Carter's decision to write the story through the first person perspective of the heroine helps draw this connection. As she notes in *The Sadeian Woman*, "many pornographic novels are written in the first person as if by a woman, or use a woman as the focus of the narrative" (qtd. in Grossman 154). The important difference though between Carter's use of this technique and the pornographic novels that she references, is that she is a female herself as opposed to the male authors who dominated the production of pornographic literature during the late 1900s. Thus Carter's portrayal of female sexuality is genuine, unlike many of the misguided male-constructed interpretations. Furthermore, the passages themselves, when transported out of the context of the story, could easily fit into any risqué publication:

> My satin nightdress had just been shaken from its wrappings; it had slipped over my young girl's pointed breasts and shoulders, supple as a garment of heavy water, and now teasingly caressed me, egregious, insinuating, nudging between my thighs as I shifted restlessly in my narrow berth.
>
> (Carter 112)

The language itself is erotic, but the reader is thoroughly aware that the speaker is in touch with her own sexuality, and that the pleasure she is receiving from the nightdress is welcomed. This section is further placed in direct juxtaposition to the scene in which the heroine comes in contact with her husband's actual collection of pornography:

> Yet I had not bargained for this, the girl with tears hanging on her cheeks like stuck pearls, her cunt a split fig below the great globes of her buttocks on which the knotted tails of the cat were about to descend, while a man in a black mask fingered with his free

> hand his prick, that curved upwards like a scimitar he held. The picture had a caption "Reproof of curiosity."
>
> (120)

This description of the stumbled upon image is graphically grotesque and it would have likely been created by a male pornographic artist. The girl in the picture is clearly in pain, while the male onlooker receives a form of perverted pleasure from this. As compared to the welcomed arousal the heroine received from the nightdress, here the female's pleasure plays no role in the male generated pornography. Thus this jarring image in comparison to Carter's sensual text is meant to make a direct comment on how inaccurate the male construction of female desire can be.

In terms of the heroine herself, the reader witnesses her sexual and cognitive transformation into womanhood. While still remaining in her mother's home, the heroine still considered herself a child; however upon her marriage, the title "child" was now replaced with "wife" instead. Thus, inside the world of the Marquis' castle, the heroine was forced to mature in a matter of days. Not only does she sexually enter womanhood through the loss of her virginity, but also newfound sexual desires seem to be awakened in the process:

> I felt a vague desolation that within me, now my female wound had healed, there had awoken a certain queasy craving like the cravings of pregnant women for the taste of coal or chalk or tainted food, for the renewal of his caresses... I lay in bed alone. And I longed for him. And he disgusted me.
>
> (125)

The heroine's first sexual experience proves to trigger the "promise of debauchery" that the Marquis was able to previously detect (123). Later in the story, she even attempts to use her newfound sensuality to save herself from her husband's wrath: "I forced myself to be seductive, I saw myself, pale, pliant as a plant that begs to be trampled underfoot, a dozen vulnerable appealing girls reflected in as many mirrors, and I saw how he almost failed to resist me. If he

had come to me in bed, I would have strangled him, then" (137). Though she fails in this attempt, she was still able to employ her newly attained femininity as a potential weapon in her arsenal.

Moreover, this sexual awakening also proves to awaken a need for a deeper understanding of her current situation. As the heroine lay in bed after her husband's withdrawal from the castle, she finds that she is accompanied by a "sleepless companion," which is ultimately her "dark newborn curiosity." While this certainly pertains to her erotic desires, it also relates to her need to understand her husband. After spending the day at her piano, the heroine decides to devout her nighttime activities to finding evidence of her husband's "true nature" (127). Though she begins this task by searching his office, her pursuit eventually leads her to the room in which she is forbidden from entering. Though she considers his departing instructions, the heroine defiantly states, "it was imperative that I should find him, should know him" (130). This proves reminiscent of the aforementioned early folklorists who wrote Bluebeard variations shortly after Perrault. Like these early writers, Carter portrays the heroine's curiosity as a necessity, not a flaw; and even as she traveled down the dark passages to the secret room, she felt no fear, knowing that this was something she had to do. Due to the certainty of her choice, upon her husband's unexpected return, the heroine accepts her fate because she understands her role in the story. She does not regret or forsake her curiosity, but instead recognizes her relationship to the imperfect females of the past.

> … I must pay the price of my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, since that destiny was himself; and I had lost.
>
> (137)

Thus the heroine's maturation into womanhood throughout the story certainly leads her to this point. Though it unfortunately brings her to the brink of death, she is able to obtain perfect

clarity, transforming her into a more cerebral heroine than we had previously experienced in the Bluebeard tradition. While the heroine of "Fitcher's Bird" was an incredibly clever and active heroine who was able to devise a plan in order to save herself, as well as her sisters, Carter's is progressive in a way that has often been explored in modern literary fiction; not only is she aware of her sexual needs and desires, unlike any other heroine that we have already explored, but she also attains a form of situational clarity that is unique as well.

In addition to Carter's uncommon heroine, she also adds one final feminist twist at the end. As opposed to being saved by the only other masculine presence in the story, Jean-Yves, the blind piano-tuner, the heroine is unexpectedly saved by her valiant mother. Simply through the amazing sense of "maternal telepathy," the mother is able to burst into the courtyard and do the job that no other person had previously succeeded in. As opposed to the hyper-masculine brothers of Perrault's original tale, Carter gives us a wildly heroic mother who proves extraordinary, which is exemplified through the description of her entrance into the courtyard:

> You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father's service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witnesses of a furious justice.
>
> (142)

Adding to this incredible image that Carter portrays, the mother then coolly sends one single bullet between the eyes of the charging demonic figure, killing him as she had done to the "man-eating tiger" that she disposed of at the mere age of eighteen. Ultimately, the mother is the powerful female presence that helps give the reader the full range of empowered female characteristics.

While Carter does reign as a premier feminist revisionist, she shares this title with Canadian author Margaret Atwood, who was both her literary colleague and dear friend. Like

Carter, Atwood had been greatly affected by fairy tales as a child, causing her to write numerous novels, short stories, and poems that display this influence. As previously mentioned in this chapter, Atwood grew up reading the Grimms, which has led her to the conclusion that not all fairy tales are as detrimental to women as many feminist critics have portrayed them. Thus this appreciation for the Grimm stories has repeatedly revealed itself in her work, with "Fitcher's Bird" and "The Robber Bridegroom" proving to be two major sources of inspiration; through this, it seems that Atwood's goal has not been to reclaim the old patriarchal tales, but instead to highlight the more obscure ones that portray strong female heroines. In Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg," she seamlessly weaves elements from both Grimm versions, as well as Perrault's original tale, to create a short story that is distinct from the other versions that we have already explored. The story itself is "a contemporary, realistic retelling of the Bluebeard tale from the perspective of the last wife," as it follows her "mundane activities" throughout a singular day (Barzilia 192-93). This choice in setting, mode, and meditation thus sets the stage for a heroine who seems to fit more into the category of "Suzie Homemaker" then the lionhearted mother of Carter's "The Bloody Chamber."

Atwood's unique relationship to feminism is important to first take a look at in order to understand her portrayal of Sally. In an interview with *The Rumpus* in 2013, Atwood described herself as a "pre-feminist," in that she came of age before the Canadian feminist movement, which began in the late 1960s (Frangello). However, in 1969 her first novel, *The Edible Woman,* was published, directly coinciding with the beginning phases of the movement, with the Montréal Women's Liberation Movement being founded in 1969 and the publishing of a feminist manifesto by the Front de libération des femmes du Québec in 1970 (Eichler and Lavigne). This co-occurrence has thus linked Atwood to the movement, and though she recognizes their

connection, she has insisted that her writing “was not informed by it" (Akbar). Moreover, her individual perception of feminism is different from the likes of Carter, which has in turn influenced her portrayals of female protagonists. While Carter looked to level the gendered playing field by creating heroic female characters, Atwood recognizes the differences between the sexes, and instead of looking to eradicate them, she has instead sought to highlight and understand them. As Atwood stated in an interview with *The Independent* in 2009,

> It's not picking up socks that's the issue. Who is the “we” that we are talking about [in feminism]? Are we talking about the children who are involved in sex trafficking, or the women in Bangladesh? Are we talking about the Eastern European women who are promised a place in the West and end up as sex slaves? Feminism is a big term. If we are asking “Are women human beings?” we don't need to vote on that. But where do we go from there? Are women better than men? No. Are they different? Yes. How are they different? We're still trying to figure that out.
>
> (Akbar)

Thus, it is the concept of “equal but different” that not only informs Atwood’s representation of Sally in “Bluebeard’s Egg,” but also in many of her other female characters. Sally’s domesticated role proves to manifest itself in other Atwood individuals, a point that Tammy Amiel Houser notes in her article “Margaret Atwood’s Feminist Ethics of Gracious Housewifery.” As she states, Atwood often represents, but also repudiates, “this familiar association of women with domesticity and its androcentric assumptions about women’s homey roles” (117). Thus, though Sally may be the keeper of the home, she pushes against this boundary and looks to understand her current situation, as Atwood has looked to understand the innate differences between the sexes.

At first glance, Sally does not exactly seem like a progressive heroine. As the story begins, “Sally stands at the kitchen window, waiting for the sauce she’s reducing to come to a simmer, looking out” (Atwood 154). Within this one sentence, the premise of Sally’s character is revealed to the reader: though she does play the role of housewife, Sally constantly tries to look

deeper into her current situation, indicated through the action of her looking out the window. Throughout the entire story, Sally physically performs the chores of a traditional housewife, by cooking, preparing for, and hosting a dinner party for her husband's heart surgeon colleagues. However, while Sally goes through these homey tasks, the narrator reveals her internal struggle, which mainly deals with her desire to understand her relationship with her husband, as well as the inner workings of his mind. Thus, Ed's psyche essentially becomes the forbidden chamber that Sally is forbidden from entering.

Sally proves to be a complicated character in that although she is an intelligent woman, her decisions are governed by her desire to please her husband. What particularly seems to haunt Sally is that she does not know what caused Ed's first two marriages to fail. His "protestations of ignorance" not only frustrate Sally, but it is also a source of anxiety for her. As the narrator states, "if he doesn't know what happened with the other two, maybe the same thing could be happening with her and he doesn't know about that, either" (158). Thus, Sally's fear of perhaps being the false bride of this tale drives her to seek his approval at all times. Not only does this make Sally incredibly self-conscious of her physical appearance, but she even originally began taking night classes with the hope that Ed would find her more interesting; however she is always sure to "belittle" the classes just a bit in order to make it clear that nothing in her life is "even remotely as important as he [is]" (171). Additionally, Sally even seems to prevent herself from being successful in terms of her career, so that she does not upstage Ed and his achievements. Though Sally can easily take on a position of importance, she instead maintains "comfortable enough jobs that engage only half of her cogs and wheels, and that end up leading nowhere" (161). Despite the fact that Sally jokes about having "reached her level of incompetence" to her friends, it is essentially Sally's fear of intimidating or upsetting Ed that

keeps her from pushing herself (162); as the narrator later states, " she knows also, most of the time, when to keep her trap shut" (164).

Though the story begins with a picture of Sally living her life in order to please her seemingly "stupid" husband, the scope of her relationship with him changes as she starts to probe deeper. At the beginning of the story, Sally likens her attraction to Ed and their eventual marriage to an Agatha Christie novel:

> …the kind in which the clever and witty heroine passes over the equally clever and witty first-lead male, who's helped solve the crime, in order to marry the second-lead male, the stupid one, the one who would have been arrested and condemned and executed if it hadn't been for her cleverness.
>
> (158)

This original understanding of her marriage through the lens of a childhood favorite does not prepare Sally for the grownup game that Ed is playing with her. This is even indicated through Sally's memory of when she would play Monopoly with Ed and his kids. Though Sally would play for fun and chide him for not letting the kids win, Ed would play strategically and show no mercy: "Ed never offered deals, and never accepted them" (168).

Consequently, it is not until Sally begins to look at her marriage through the context of "Fitcher's Bird" that she is able to find some real answers. The prospect of Ed being anything but stupid had rarely occurred to her, thus the encounter with the tale in her *Forms of Narrative Fiction* class opens up an interpretive door for her. Even before she sits down to finally work on her assignment weeks after receiving it, the reader can see that Sally is beginning to become more perceptive of Ed's true nature. As Sally teases Ed with a joke about the droves of women who lust after him, she is able to closely study his body language in order to interpret his thoughts:

> "Is that complacency, in the back turned to her? Maybe there really are these hordes of women, even though she's made them up. Maybe they really do behave that way. His shoulders are slightly drawn up; is he shutting her out?
>
> (167)

In this moment, we finally see Sally at her most perceptive, and it is from this point on that she gets even closer to understanding her marriage. Shortly after this incident, Sally finally sits down to work on her original version of "Fitcher's Bird," and begins to insert herself into the text. As Maria Tatar notes herself, "'Fitcher's Bird' becomes a text that challenges Sally to consider the role she plays in her marriage and to reflect on how her own story conforms to or deviates from the terms of the old tale" (*Secrets Beyond the Door* 112). This text also proves to prepare her for the revelation that Ed may not exactly be what he seems, and that an affair between him and her best friend is a possibility. Before Sally's encounter with "Fitcher's Bird," she may have been able to forget the image of Ed's hand upon Marylynn's upper thigh and convince herself that their unchanged expressions meant that she actually saw nothing, but this is no longer feasible. As Tatar additionally notes, "She may not know for certain whether Ed has been conducting an affair with her best friend Marylynn, but once on the track to the truth, she can no longer shut out knowledge" (113). Thus, the days of Sally downplaying her intelligence to appease Ed are over; this is indicated through Sally's final image of the egg she had originally imagined from "Fitcher's Bird:"

> But now she's seeing the egg, which is not small and cold and white and inert but larger than a real egg and golden pink, resting in a nest of brambles, glowing softly as though there's something red and hot inside it. It's almost pulsing; Sally is afraid of it. As she looks it darkens: rose-red, crimson.
>
> (Atwood 178)

What's within the egg, Sally does not yet know, nor is she certain about what should be her next course of action. This lack of plan is likely due to the fact that when Sally was remembering the story of "Fitcher's Bird," she completely neglected the ending: "There was more, about how the

wizard met his come-uppance and was burned to death, but Sally already knew which features stood out for her" (173). Sally's decision to cut the story off at the point in which the wizard stated that he "no longer had any power over" his intended wife, reflected her subconscious desire to one day hear Ed say the same thing to her. However, that is no longer an option for Sally, and without the thorough knowledge of the heroine's daring escape in the original story, Sally is left afraid for what is to come. Nevertheless, she is aware that since she has finally peaked into Ed's "forbidden chamber," nothing in her life will be the same.

THE EIGHTH WIFE ON SCREEN

One of the earliest and most significant film representations of "Bluebeard" came from Georges Méliès in 1901. Credited as the first wizard of cinema, Méliès chose to recreate the Bluebeard tale by way of a ten-minute comical silent film. The film itself proves important because it both ideologically strays away from Perrault's original version, and also, as Casie E. Hermansson notes, "… represents perhaps the first modern European gesture for the Bluebeard story by virtue of putting it on film" (134). Though the plot essentially remains true to the original narrative, Méliès manages to work in a few changes that comment on the relationship between the sexes in early twentieth century France. It is thus his unique interpretation that strays away from the traditional French portrayal of the tale, one in which the wife is wholly blamed for her misfortune, while Bluebeard is absolved.

It is no surprise that Méliès turned to the story of Bluebeard for narrative inspiration since his film aesthetic was very much influenced by the French *féeries.* As, Katherine Singer Kovács outlines in her article "Méliès and the 'Féerie,'" these spectacle shows attracted the theatre-going public due to the thrills and excitement that they provided audiences with:

> Like melodramas, the plots of most *féeries* pivoted upon a struggle between forces of good and evil. But while these forces remained invisible in melodramas, in *féeries* they

> were incarnated onstage by gnomes and witches. The plots of *féeries* were usually adapted from fairy tales in which supernatural creatures intervened in the lives of men. (Kovács 1-2)

The *féeries* were born a bit after the end of the French Revolution and continued to dominate the French stage well into the late nineteenth century. With Méliès himself being born in 1863, he grew up marveling at the *féeries* he saw; this ultimately led him to become a magician, eventually granting him his own show at the Robert-Houdin theater (7). Thus, it is no surprise that later when he made his transition into film, Méliès found a way to incorporate the magic that had already become an integral part of his success. In order to achieve this, Méliès invented a variety of cinematic tricks that allowed him to astound audiences and simultaneously revolutionize filmmaking; this included his first discovery, the "stop-motion trick," which allowed him to make transformations and disappearances happen within a blink of the eye. From this point on, as Méliès described it himself, "one trick led to another," ultimately supplying him with an extensive arsenal of techniques (Méliès 30). Méliès of course employed many of these in his recreation of Bluebeard, while concurrently remaining true to the "conventions of the *féerie*" by staying within the "genre's traditional thematic and structural limits" (Kovács 12). Méliès even shot his films from the "position of a spectator in the orchestra of a theater," helping to create the sense of watching a staged rendition of a French *féerie* itself (7).

The film begins with Bluebeard entering town in order to procure a new wife from the father of many daughters. However, while in the original tale Bluebeard attains the affection of one of the two daughters from a "respectable lady," the relationship he fosters with his eighth wife in Méliès' rendition is not as natural. After three of the daughters refuse to marry him, Bluebeard presents his wealth to them, but all are still unwilling. Thus, the father eventually forces one of the daughters to agree to marry him by literally pulling her hand and placing it in

Bluebeard's. This change is important because Méliès makes a direct comment on the tradition of fathers marrying off their daughters for financial purposes. To further highlight the absurdity of the practice, Méliès incorporates a slapstick moment into this first scene. After the daughter is forced into agreement, Bluebeard calls out the officials in order to have the necessary marriage paperwork signed. While this legal matter is being handled center stage, the viewer also sees the other women who flank the left side of the shot being properly courted by some seemingly desirable men; as they laugh and talk, the poor wife reluctantly signs her life away and then throws the pen down in defeat. Additionally, in order to sit with these women, one of the men takes the chair that was meant for the head official. Thus, when the official finally goes to sit down, he falls from the absence of the chair. This image of a stocky man with a giant, white wig falling and squirming on the floor is of course funny, and it implies that the marriage he just officiated was also a joke in itself.

As the film continues, the wife is brought back to his castle and seemingly looks happy during their marriage feast. This joy is fleeting though since in the following scene Bluebeard announces his departure from the castle and his rule pertaining to the secret chamber. Bluebeard's warning is incredibly explicit, and it is clear to the audience that the wife understands that her disobedience will be met with dire punishment. However, as soon as the last of Bluebeard's servants exit the castle, the wife throws down the rest of the keys and approaches the ornate door with key in hand, but eventually convinces herself to walk away. Her mind is only changed once the devil, played by Méliès himself, jumps out of a book and lures her towards the door. As Hermansson once again importantly notes, "the devil's power over the wife frees her from at least some of the culpability for her curiosity, usually heavy in French versions" (135). Thus unlike Perrault and many of the French authors who followed, Méliès strays away

from the tradition of condemning women for their uncontrollable curiosity, and inserts a devil into the storyline that pushes her towards the door. Furthermore, Méliès may have even been making a comment on the male author's construction of female curiosity by playing the devil himself. While authors like Perrault have characterized curiosity as a woman's fatal and seemingly inevitable flaw, Méliès' portrayal of the devil could imply that it is not the female who is to blame, but rather the fault lies with the male artist who has lured them towards it.

Once inside the chamber, the wife discovers his previous seven wives hanging on the wall and drops the key in a pool of blood; the devil then reappears and makes the key grow exponentially in size in order to taunt her. At this point another Méliès invention enters the story: the wife's fairy godmother. Though she starts off by chiding the wife for her mistake, she does prove to protect her throughout the rest of the film. For example, in the next scene while the wife is sleeping, the devil begins to conjure nightmares of Bluebeard, the dead wives, and dancing keys. These are put to an end though once the fairy godmother appears and banishes the devil away, allowing the wife to finally get some rest. The addition of the fairy godmother is an interesting invention by Méliès because as Lucy Fischer explains in her article "The Lady Vanishes: Woman, Magic, and the Movies," early magic films generally did not include women with magical powers, and when they did, these women were perceived as dangerous. Thus, Méliès deviates from this "irrational fear of female 'magic'" by including the fairy godmother in his portrayal (Fischer 34). Furthermore, the inclusion of the fairy godmother simultaneously allowed him to incorporate a powerful female presence in the film. Though in the end the wife is still miraculously saved by her two sword-toting brothers, the fairy godmother successfully prevents the devil from coming to Bluebeard's aid once he is stabbed and she completely expels him from the story. She even manages to resurrect the dead wives, allowing them to have their

own happy endings with the courtiers who unexpectedly enter the courtyard. As a result, once everyone exits the frame, Bluebeard finally dies, and the film ends with a "grand *tableau*" of all the happy couples together (including the wife with her new husband), as the fairy godmother presides over them all.

Thus, the three major additions and alterations outlined here prove to not only affect the traditional perception of the heroine, but they also act as a "timely commentary on the status of French feminism (and the need to be rid of legalized spousal murder)" (Hermansson 135). Though women did not obtain the right to vote until 1945, the French Revolution set in motion the desire for full citizenship, causing various activists and organizations to work towards this goal until its eventual obtention. The late nineteenth century saw a strong presence from female activists like Paule Mink and André Léo, who publicly attacked "the existence of the civil, commercial, and penal codes which institutionalized women's subservience" (Eichner 85). Hence, Méliès' inclusion of the involuntary marriage between the daughter and Bluebeard directly comments on such laws, which not only prevented women from being in control of their own future, but also put them at risk for spousal murder. As Maria Tatar points out in her *Secrets Beyond the Door*, "women were principal victims of family violence in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France," where wives were frequently found "hacked to pieces" (56). Additionally, the powerful fairy godmother negates the idea of a subservient woman, and instead provides the audience with a female character that not only acts as an agent of protection, but also one of force who successfully destroys the devil, a masculine presence himself.

While Méliès took more of a traditional route with his early portrayal of "Bluebeard," contemporary film interpretations have departed more freely from the details of the original narrative. Through this, these films have depicted a "self-reflexivity" that has sought to

"challenge traditional genre representations and constructions of the gaze" (Hermansson 160). Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) proves to be a primary example of this development, and it is through this film that we are given a glimpse into the "female gaze," as opposed to the "male gaze" which predominately exists in earlier films (as we saw in Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête*). Campion both wrote and directed the film, giving her complete control over the creative process. Her vision ultimately proved praiseworthy, with the film winning three Oscars, including one for best screenplay (Bihlmeyer 70). While Campion's plot does not stick to the traditional "Bluebeard" storyline, the tale's influence manifests itself in two forms throughout the film: as a pantomime production of the tale inserted midway through the movie, and, more generally, as an overall fidelity to the guidelines previously stated in the introduction in regards to what qualifies as a Bluebeard variant. The secret chamber that exists in this story is the forbidden romance between Ada and Baines, which is prohibited by her husband Stewart; and thus once this trust is broken, it is Stewart who also metes out the punishment (the eventual cutting off of Ada's index finger). A "stained key" is even cleverly worked in, however it takes the form of an engraved piano key that Ada intended for her lover, but instead ends up in the hands of her husband. Thus by affirming *The Piano*'s classification as a Bluebeard variant, we can now examine Campion's heroine and her relationship to the other nameless heroines before her.

We learn early in the film that Campion's Ada has abided by a self-imposed silence since the age of six. No explanation is given, and we are left to wonder if this is "an act of passive aggression or a quirk of character" (70). Regardless, it reduces the importance of spoken language and instead allows the viewer to understand her through an alternate medium: her piano. The movie begins with Ada's internal voice narrating her current situation. We learn that her father has married her off to a man that she has not yet met, and that both she and her

daughter, Flora, will soon depart for New Zealand to live with him. Shortly after this, we see Ada wander over to her piano and begin to passionately play, as she narrates that she does not see herself as silent since she has her piano.

Later in the film we do not only witness the powerful affects that her music seems to have on those around her, but the strength of it is even articulated by the matronly figure, Aunt Morag; while talking about Ada's style of play, she likens it to a "mood that passes into you," and she finds it strange and uncomfortable to have a sound "creep inside you" like that. Thus, Ada's true passion lies in the playing of her piano and it is precisely how others perceive Ada's connection with her piano that dictates her own relationship with them. For example, Stewart immediately diminishes the chance of a happy marriage between him and Ada since he makes the decision to leave the piano behind. Not only does this deprive Ada of her true passion, but it also prevents Stewart from actually understanding his wife, since that is Ada's chosen mode of communication. Instead, it is Baines who is able to first get a glimpse into Ada's soul since he agrees to take her down to the beach where the piano was left. Intertwined with shots of Ada playing, are glimpses of Baines staring intently at her, clearly admiring her "passionate abandon" (72). Ada's relationship with her piano and consequently to those around her feels reminiscent of Belle's circumstances in Disney's rendition of *Beauty and the Beast*. While Gaston reproved her love of books, the Beast instead encouraged her, even opening up his library to her. Baines is even vaguely similar to the Beast in that Ada first finds him to be a brute because of his inability to read and jarring Maori facial tattoos. However, she is eventually able to move past this initial dislike, just as with Belle and the Beast.

Moreover, Ada's playing also effects her relationship with her own sexuality. In regards to the writing of the screenplay, Campion discussed her turn towards the erotic in her creation of the storyline:

> My exploration can be a lot more sexual [than if she had been writing in the nineteenth century], a lot more investigative of the power of eroticism, which can add another dimension. Because then you get involved in the actual bodyscape of it as well, because the body has certain effects, like a drug almost, certain desires for erotic satisfaction which are very strong forces too.
>
> (qtd. in Dayal 30)

Campion's exploration of Ada's sexuality, and eventual infidelity, is not only interesting in terms of the construction of the heroine, but it also dramatizes what has become a commonplace of "Bluebeard" criticism: that the wife's crime extends beyond the mere opening of a secret chamber, to a subtext of discovered sexual infidelity, represented through the blood stained key (the breaking of the hymen at the loss of virginity) and the chosen punishment (female adultery was punishable by death during Perrault's time). Additionally, Campion's goal of creating a sexually cognizant heroine is similar to that of Angela Carter. Both appear to highlight the violent aspects of sex, with Campion even presenting the viewer with two scenes where rape seems immanent.

However, to return to Ada's exploration of her sexuality, it is through her experience with the piano that she is able to go through a sexual awakening. Ada is at first less then thrilled to have to give Baines piano lessons, but Stewart essentially forces her to comply. Nevertheless, Baines and Ada eventually broker a deal that would allow her to regain possession of her piano: each black key would equal one visit, if in return she permits him to perform "things [he]'d like to do" while she plays. Ada strangely consents to this arrangement and their physical relationship begins. While in the beginning it starts off small with him gazing up from below the piano at her while she plays, he progressively desires more, ending in his request to have her lay naked with

him by presenting her with his fully-naked self. This scene also presents the viewer with a prime example of the "male gaze" being diminished as Jamie Bihlmeyer notes in his article "The (Un)Speakable FEMININITY in Mainstream Movies: Jane Campion's *The Piano.*" As Ada complies with Baines' request to lie naked together, we view this scene through the eyes of Flora, who happens to be spying on them:

> Baines embraces Ada awkwardly as we look on with difficulty through the crack. Campion creates a pun here by attaching the traditionally voyeuristic hand-held point-of-view shot to Ada's daughter. Thus, the male gaze is effectively deconstructed by attributing it to a prepubescent female.
>
> (73)

Thus Campion not only uses this scene to show the development of Baines' requests, but to also successfully negate the centrality of the male gaze.

Furthermore, though Ada is at first seemingly uncomfortable with Baines' requests, it proves to awaken something within her that has remained dormant until this point. When Baines eventually gives the piano back to Ada because he claims that their arrangement is making her a "whore" and him "wretched," Ada insists on returning to his house. Though he at first chastises her for not caring, this leads Ada to repeatedly slap him and then sink down to the floor; Baines eventually kneels down beside her and the two finally kiss. The ensuing sex scene between them is incredibly passionate, and it is the first time the viewer sees Ada pour her fervor into anything besides her piano. As Hilary Neroni notes, for Ada, love making even seems to become an extension of her playing: "She uses… the same circular hand motions to explore the male body that we originally see her using to caress and explore her piano before she sits down to play" (301). Thus though Ada definitely begins to develop romantic feelings for Baines, the viewer still sees her experience these newly discovered sexual feelings even after Stewart prohibits her from seeing him. Samir Dayal recognizes in his article "Inhuman Love: Jane Campion's *The*

Piano," that Ada's overall sexual desires are exemplified through the moment she shares with her mirror as Stewart boards up the house:

> Alone in her bed, she is seen kissing her own reflection in a hand mirror: this is neither narcissism nor an example of a woman newly in love. It is a portrait of a woman re-discovering a pleasure that *exceeds its object* or makes an *accident* of its object. (41)

Thus Ada's newfound passion does not only exist in Baines' presence, but instead becomes a part of her. Furthermore, it is because of this newfound passion that Ada is able to free herself from Stewart's home. Throughout a majority of the film, Ada's muteness helps to portray her as a traditionally passive heroine; though her piano playing does act as her primary means of communication, it limits her in terms of explicitly expressing her needs and desires. However, as we will soon see, it is after Ada experiences her sexual awakening that she is able to translate her fierce, new passion into an agent of her rescue.

As previously mentioned, Stewart's discovery of Ada's broken promise results in his chopping off her index finger. After this punishment is executed, Ada lays in bed, recovering from the injury inflicted upon her. As Stewart looks over her, he eventually is taken with an urge to rape her as she sleeps. However, just as he is about to go through with the act, Ada opens her eyes and a telepathic conversation takes place between them. This immediately causes Stewart to retreat, as Ada will not permit him to engage her sexuality unless it is on her own terms (which was seen in the previous scenes where Ada would not allow him to touch her, though she caressed him as he laid in bed). Neil Robinson astutely interprets this scene in regards to Ada's success in not only preventing her impending rape, but in also freeing herself from Stewart's home:

> [Ada] retaliates with a(n) extralinguistic threat that Stewart later names to Baines: "She said, 'I am afraid of my will, of what it might do, it is so strange and strong.'" Whether these words are Ada's or the voice of patriarchy's unspoken fear of women, the intimation

> that the patriarch might have to pay with his body for the desires he inscribes onto the woman's body is more than Stewart can stand. . . . He gives in to Ada's desire to be free from him.
>
> (qtd. in Bihlmeyer 77)

Though Ada's defense here may not make her a traditionally active heroine, she is able to set her own sexual ground rules and intimidate Stewart into releasing her from his home, in turn allowing her happy ending with Baines. Proof of the development of this unique defense is also revealed through an earlier scene with Ada and Stewart where he once again wished to rape her. While waiting to prevent Ada from seeing Baines after witnessing her infidelity, Stewart eventually cuts her off in the woods and tries to pin her down so he can assault her. Though Ada does struggle in an attempt to escape, Stewart succeeds in trapping her. Ada is only able to escape this fate through the far-off calls of Flora, which quickly curtails his success. In this instance, Ada's escape was dependent upon a stroke of luck, however after her sexual awakening, Ada is able to employ her newfound strength in order to save herself. In this story, it is Ada who wields the magic – imagined or real – not the husband. And though the film ends with Ada's return to domesticity by marrying Baines, it happens on her terms and not because she is forced into it, as with her original marriage to Stewart. Though Ada had the chance to exit the world by committing suicide on her voyage back to England with Baines, her will chose life; and not just life, but a life with him. Though the film ends with them together, Ada's acknowledgement of other choices besides marriage are made clear through her nightly vision of her still attached to the piano below the water; though she may be married now, she knows there is always the possibility of something else. Ultimately, through her sexual awakening and subsequent empowerment, Campion's heroine succeeds in freeing herself from her very own Bluebeard.

CHAPTER III

MIX IT ALL TOGETHER AND WHAT DO YOU GET?

The work of art is not the passive surface on which… historical experience leaves its stamp but one of the creative agents in the fashioning and refashioning of this experience.

Stephen Greenblatt

The "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard" tale types both find their roots in one original text, making the initial comparison of the two stories a bit simpler. One of the main differences between these two founding texts – Madame de Villeneuve's *La Belle et la bête* and Perrault's "Bluebeard" –lies in the opposing constructions of the suitors: while in one we are given an apparently beastly creature who is in actuality as gentle as a lamb, the other provides us with an apparently normal man (albeit with an unfortunate beard), who ends up being internally monstrous. The only commonalities that these two male protagonists share are that both are wealthy and command some kind of magical power, though evidence of Bluebeard's magical power in the tale is restricted to the permanently stained key. However, these superficial similarities do not affect the profoundly different underlying myths that structure each story. While the differences between the male protagonists are certainly drastic, more subtle distinctions also exist between the two heroines. While they are both physically described as beautiful, their essential differences lie in the author's portrayal of their innate characters.

As Stephen Benson points out in his book *Cycles of Influence*, a story's popularity seems to correlate to how ideal the heroine's behavior is:

> In literary terms, the most successful and popular fairy tales have been "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Beauty and the Beast," tales in which the behaviour of the heroine can be appropriated easily as a model for proper female behaviour, a readily identifiable and socially successful sign of femininity.

(232)

Benson's assertion proves true when comparing the histories of "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard." Madame de Villeneuve created a heroine who was ideal in her eyes – intelligent and morally irreproachable – and though Villeneuve's version has remained obscure, Madame de Beaumont continued this tradition by idealizing her heroine as well. Conversely, Perrault created a heroine who was fatally flawed and ultimately blamed for her misfortunes. Thus though fairy-tale anthologies from the nineteenth century "suggest that the story of Bluebeard was once at least as prominent a tale type as 'Beauty and the Beast,'" today it has unfortunately fallen into cultural obscurity (Tatar, *Secrets Beyond the Door* 54). Furthermore, Beauty and the eighth wife also retain different levels of control in terms of their futures; while Beauty unlocks her happy ending through her transformative capacity for love, Bluebeard's wife remains helplessly subject to the will of Bluebeard, and is only able to escape his wrath through masculine intervention. As a result, though Bluebeard and the Beast are obviously very different, it is clear that Beauty and the eighth wife were originally just as dissimilar.

Aside from the couples' characteristic differences, their relationships are also presented in contrasting ways. While "Beauty and the Beast" abides by the standard fairy tale convention of the plot unfolding during courtship, "Bluebeard" breaks this tradition by taking the reader beyond marriage. This has proven detrimental to Bluebeard's popularity, in terms of a children's narrative, because it "confirms every child's nightmare of their spouse being a monster" (55). This was especially culturally relevant during Perrault's era, when young girls frequently ran the risk of being married off for the financial gain of their family; thus a story like "Bluebeard" confirmed that marriage, a new, unknown chapter in any young woman's life, could be filled with "life-threatening perils" (55). In comparison, "Beauty and the Beast" looks to alleviate this

particular fear by not only granting Beauty a kind courtier, but also, as Maria Tatar notes, by beginning "with an unhappy situation at home" (54). In the beginning of the story, while her sisters lounge around and taunt her all day, Beauty performs various chores; and though she bears this load dutifully, her life is certainly much more blissful in the Beast's castle, where anything she desires is granted to her.

In his *The Uses of Enchantment,* Bruno Bettelheim devotes an entire section to the comparison of these two tales, and it is clear that he finds "Bluebeard" troubling when considered from the standpoint of a child's development. Though Bettelheim's views are often described as conservative and "phallocentric," he does bring to light some interesting ideas in terms of why "Bluebeard" disappeared altogether from the children's literature category. For Bettelheim, "Bluebeard" is detrimental to children because it is about "the dangerous propensities of sex, about its strange secrets and close connection with violent and destructive emotions" (Bettelheim 303). There is no conformation that marriage is desirable, because once the wedding vows are said, the wife is forced to enter into a world that is not filled with love, but instead with private chambers and perversities, for which her youth has not prepared her. As Bettelheim explicitly states, "That which happens in 'Bluebeard' has nothing whatsoever to do with love. Bluebeard, bent on having his will and possessing his partner, cannot love anybody, but neither can anyone love him" (303). This lack of love between the couple is especially apparent through the wife's mistrust of her husband. A successful, nurturing relationship creates trust, not suspicion, a truth that is emphasized in Villeneuve's novella. When Beauty asks the Beast whether or not they are the only two people in the castle while she is on her quest to understand her "Unknown," she accepts his answer and does not question whether or not he is being truthful. By contrast, Bluebeard's wife can barely wait to see what her husband is hiding,

in turn giving the reader "a woman so determined to discover her husband's dark secrets that she risks becoming twin monster to her husband" (Tatar, *Secrets Beyond the Door* 56). Thus this lack of love, as well as trust, has caused the Bluebeard tale type to take a clear turn away from the children's literature category since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, it has retained a prominent place in adult narratives since it "challenges the myth of romantic love and acknowledges the realities of marital life" (55). While Carter's rendition is certainly more fantastical, Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg" truly presents the reader with one of the frequent possibilities of any relationship: an unfaithful partner. Thus while "Bluebeard" may not be the ideal narrative to show children that love is a possibility, it instead successfully functions now as a vehicle to show the messiness of married life.

To return to Bettelheim's analysis of the two tales, while "Bluebeard" presents marriage in its most dangerous form, "Beauty and the Beast" proves to be ideal for Bettelheim, in terms of children's literature, because it "depicts what true love is all about" (306). Not only is Bettelheim in favor of the fact that love is very much present in this tale, but he also recognizes that no other well-known fairy tale makes it as explicit that "a child's oedipal attachment to a parent is natural, desirable, and has the most positive consequences for all" (307). Beauty's love for her father is strongly apparent in Villeneuve's tale (as well as Beaumont's), and it is not until Beauty is ready to transfer this love to the Beast that their relationship has the ability to thrive, enabling the Beast's transformation into human form. In contrast, not only is the wife's father in "Bluebeard" completely absent, but the reader knows very little about the wife's earlier life in her mother's home. Though I am fairly certain that no experience at home could prepare a young woman for the possibility of marrying a murderer, it is fair to conclude that a healthy and loving upbringing would prevent a girl from transferring her affections too quickly to a man she just met.

Furthermore, while the discovery of Bluebeard's hidden secret leads to disaster, the opposite occurs in "Beauty and the Beast;" as Bettelheim highlights, "it is highly desirable that the Beast's true nature be revealed" (308). Because of this, Beauty's search for clarity, in regard to her situation, is promoted rather than banned; the Beast wants her to know him and even tries to lead her towards this revelation by telling her not to trust appearances. Thus, in the end Beauty is able to recognize her love for the Beast because she knows him to be gentle and kind, and ultimately does not need to question his motives. For Bettelheim this culminates in the perfect adolescent tale because it alleviates any "anxious sexual fantasies" that a child may have; it essentially assures them that "while sex may at first seem beastlike, in reality love between woman and man is the most satisfying of all emotions, and the only one which makes for permanent happiness" (306). Consequently, Beauty and the Beast's perfection, in terms of a children's narrative, has cemented its place in the nursery. However, as we saw in the first chapter, it has also branched out into adult literature and film, complicating its historical trajectory.

Among the six "Beauty and the Beast" variations explored in the first chapter, it appears that regardless of the intended audience, the creator has abided by the tradition of creating an ideal heroine. As previously stated, Villeneuve began this convention through her initial characterization of Beauty, and Beaumont continued in the same fashion, though her ideal woman was dissimilar to Villeneuve's. This tendency to create a personally and culturally exemplary heroine has also manifested itself in the later versions. As we saw in the other two literary "Beauty and the Beast" variations from Carter, her desire for an increase in heroines who displayed what she described as "get up and go" was certainly evident in her depictions of Beauty. For Carter, her ideal woman was feisty and daring, and though both versions display these two qualities in separate ways, they are still present regardless. Furthermore, this tradition

is not only limited to written versions, as both Cocteau and Disney incorporated this initial convention in their films. Despite the fact that Cocteau's portrayal of Beauty was diminished in terms of her presence as the heroine, she still represented his ideal visual depiction of a woman. Though Cocteau became famous for his cinematic creations, he was first and foremost an artist, which was evident through his unique vision. Thus, Cocteau's desire to create visually appealing films trumped any desire he may have had to create a culturally progressive heroine. Josette Day's presence on film and the way in which she was shot exemplified this ambition; nowhere in the film was Cocteau's individual brand of creativity more evident then the scene in which Belle first arrives at the Beast's castle. As Belle runs through the castle, searching for the Beast, she eventually comes to a hallway where the open windows cause the delicate curtains to flutter around her. However, while this is happening, Belle seems to be floating down the hall, a vision Cocteau achieved by having Day pulled along on a trolley (a trick revealed in Sir Christopher Frayling's commentary of the film). This was one of Cocteau's first ideas for the film and certainly one of his best. Thus, while the other literary versions, in addition to Disney's as we will soon see, created characteristically ideal heroines, Cocteau took more of a visual approach. Finally, Disney's popular rendition of "Beauty and the Beast" also sought to create a heroine who would be a role model for young girls. Though the degree to which Linda Woolverton succeeded in this goal is of course debated, it does not negate the fact that this was the initial intention. Disney's Belle was meant, at least according to Woolverton, to reflect a twentieth century girl whose best assets are her intelligence and her ambition.

Thus while Beauty has been traditionally ideal, the precedent Perrault set of a flawed heroine has also, to a certain extent, remained in tact. Of all the variations explored, Perrault is without a doubt the wife's harshest critic, wholly blaming her marital misfortunes on her

curiosity. The one instance explored in the previous chapter where the wife's curiosity is not an issue is "Fitcher's Bird." Though all three of the sister's allow their curiosity to lead them to the forbidden room, this is not the primary issue the story focuses on. Instead, it is the two older sisters' lack of cunning that causes them to fall subject to the sorcerer's wrath; in turn, the youngest sister is only able to succeed because her curiosity is paired with her cleverness. Thus, though the heroine of "Fitcher's Bird" is the one outlier of the group, the other Bluebeard variations all include, to varying degrees, an imperfect heroine. In Carter's "The Bloody Chamber," the wife herself even voices the error of her ways. While waiting in the music room as her murderous husband prepares for her execution, Jean-Yves tells the young wife that she does not deserve this. To this statement, the wife replies "Who can say what I deserve or no?… I've done nothing; but that may be sufficient reason for condemning me" (Carter 140). As previously explained, the wife understood the role she played in the Marquis' game, somehow making her innately flawed, just as Eve and Pandora were. Thus, though she knows that she needed to enter the chamber and acknowledges that she did nothing wrong, her story intertwines with that of the imperfect females of the past. Comparatively, Atwood's heroine in "Bluebeard's Egg" is flawed for an alternate reason besides her constant curiosity. Instead, Sally's real flaw lies in the fact that she limits her intellectual and professional potential so that she does not upstage her husband. Furthermore, Atwood places Sally's forced lack of wits in direct juxtaposition to the incredibly cunning heroine of "Fitcher's Bird." When Sally finally sits down to write her version of the Grimm tale, the narrator states, "The great temptation is to cast herself in the role of the cunning heroine," but she soon decides against this because she thinks it is "too predictable" (Atwood 173). However, the real problem lies in the fact that Sally cannot fill this role because she prevents herself from doing so. As for the film renditions, Méliès remained

fairly close to Perrault's original tale, admonishing the wife in part for her curiosity, but also reducing some of the blame through his creation of the devil. Finally, Ada's fatal flaw in Campion's *The Piano* is a bit harder to discern; though it could be identified as her sexual curiosity, I feel as if her initial imperfection lies in her inability to communicate properly with those around her. Only after Ada endures her sexual awakening is she able to advocate for what she wants, in her own unique way of course. However up until that point, Ada was unable to explicitly express her unhappiness to her husband, ultimately facilitating her eventual unfaithfulness.

While exploring the other consistent trends of these two tale types, the "Beauty and the Beast" narratives remain true to the ritual ending of romantic love. Though the later adult versions – Carter's two stories and Cocteau's film – acknowledge the implicit sexual content of the original narrative, all versions end with visions of love. In comparison, the modern versions of the Bluebeard narratives, all focus, to varying degrees, on the violent sexual connotations of the original story. Though Méliès shied away from the explicitly sexual content, he certainly exploited the violent aspects of the story. As an addition to Perrault's original tale, Méliès had Bluebeard pull his wife down from the tower, dragging her by the hair as her limp body trailed behind him. Additionally, all of the versions discussed that followed Méliès capitalize on "the dangerous propensities of sex" that Bettelheim deplored. For Carter, the Marquis is portrayed as a sexual predator, and the scene in which the wife loses her virginity to him is all but romantic: "A dozen husbands impaled a dozen brides while the mewing gulls swung on invisible trapezes in the empty air outside" (Carter 121). Furthermore, Atwood's display of the threatening aspects of sex is a bit less prevalent, but nevertheless exhibited during the scene where Ed shows Sally his new heart monitor. After the demonstration ends, Sally retrospectively realizes that "this

transaction, this whole room, was sexual in a way she didn't quite understand; it was clearly a dangerous place" (Atwood 166). Thus, though no actual sexual violence occurs, Atwood reveals that it could manifest itself in other seemingly harmless aspects of life. Finally, Campion explicitly displays the potentially hazardous consequences of sexual desire through the chopping off of Ada's finger. However, consequently these three heroines all display the most individual growth, as compared to the other wives explored. Perhaps the added variable of sexual danger adds to the high stakes of their individual situations; nevertheless, these three protagonists are forced to mature either sexually or cognitively (or in the case of Marquis' wife a combination of the two), in order to rescue themselves from their impending fate.

The inverse plots of these two tale types have certainly sent their cultural trajectories in separate directions. Though both are to some degree concerned with "the man as enigma and the heroine's attempt to figure him out'' it has been necessary for each forthcoming heroine to develop the necessary characteristics that equip her for what these new versions have in store (Benson 231). These heroines have not remained stagnant because the stories themselves have consistently changed, due to the rich intertextuality that they display. Each version does not only build off of the original tale, but the ensuing retellings and even other tale types altogether. "The Bloody Chamber" is not only an obvious rendering of "Bluebeard," but it even includes a few nods to "Little Red Riding Hood," with the Marquis telling his young wife, "All the better to see you," right before his sexual consumption of her (Carter 121). This intertextuality is even displayed within these two tale types themselves. As touched upon in the previous chapter, Ada and Baines' relationship is reminiscent of Beauty and Beast's in that though she first views him as a brute, she grows to love him after getting to know him. Additionally, a similarity to the Disney film exists in that the partner both heroines choose is the one that supports their

individual passions. However, in addition to these two connections, another also exits between the film and Carter's "The Tiger's Bride." Ada's sexual awakening is further catalyzed after Baines presents his naked self to her; consequently, this same event occurs in Carter's version after the Beast fully reveals himself to Beauty. Thus, within this one film, Campion manages to make three separate references – whether consciously or unconsciously – to the Beauty and the Beast tradition. This in turn makes Ada a partial compilation of the Beauty's of the past, allowing her to pass on their individual stories and characteristics, in addition to her own unique ones. Similarly, Carter's inclusion of the valiant mother in "The Bloody Chamber" is reminiscent of the three powerful women included in Villeneuve's original "Beauty and the Beast." Though this version has remained obscure, Carter's incorporation of this specific component also helps to keep the intertextuality of the two stories alive.

Overall, the important phenomenon that has occurred with these two heroines is that with each passing version they become so much more then what they were originally defined as. Perrault and Beaumont's canonical tales had lasting effects after their individual publications, and until these stories underwent their respective mutations, Beauty was solely characterized as virtuous, and Bluebeard's wife as curious; there was little room for growth, and the chapbooks and anthologies presented their readers with one dimensional female protagonists. However, as the versions explored here have revealed, these heroines are no longer defined by one characteristic, but instead are wonderfully complicated and multifaceted. They could be intelligent, but insecure about fully unleashing their wits; naïve, but with a capacity to be corrupt; susceptible to temptation, but strong enough to pull themselves out of it; and most importantly they can be flawed, but still deserve happiness. Beauty was said to deserve her happy ending because it was founded upon her virtue, while the wife of Bluebeard ruined her

own marriage because of her curiosity. This one-to-one relationship no longer exists, and being a good wife does not ensure a happy ending, and vice versa. Though Sally did her best to take care of her husband and to be a faithful and loving companion that did not prevent Ed from presumably having an affair with her best friend; conversely, while Beauty in "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" forgot about her promise to the Beast because of her newfound affection for opulence, it did not stop her from eventually getting her own happy ending. The strict characteristic guidelines no longer exist, and the creators have clearly executed their right to portray their heroine as they seem fit.

In sum: The two tale types of "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard" have maintained different cultural trajectories since their initial creation. While Beauty and the Beast has remained both cinematically and literarily prominent for all age groups, Bluebeard today retains its popularity through its adult narrative form. Though the two heroines were originally portrayed as intrinsically different, these lines have blurred in modern renditions, making them neither thoroughly perfect, nor wholly flawed. Though certain traditions of each plotline have remained in tact, such as the convention of romantic love at the end of the "Beauty and the Beast" tales, each individual creator has capitalized on the intertextuality of each story's tradition, not only allowing them to make compelling plotlines, but also complex heroines. Today, there is no one Beauty, nor is there a single eighth wife; instead, each forthcoming heroine is a compilation of those that came before her, helping to keep each of their memories alive.

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