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Narratives of patriarchy : fairy tale heroine role models in two animated films

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**NARRATIVES OF PATRIARCHY: FAIRY TALE HEROINE
ROLE MODELS IN TWO ANIMATED FILMS**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Wendy Yarberry

December, 1996

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ABSTRACT

NARRATIVES OF PATRIARCHY: FAIRY TALE HEROINE ROLE MODELS IN TWO ANIMATED FILMS

by Wendy Yarberry

This thesis addresses the topic of patriarchy in conjunction with fairy tales. It examines the patriarchal themes within two animated Disney films, Aladdin and Beauty and the Beast, and looks at the heroine of each film as a potential role model for young girls.

Role model data focuses upon appearance and actions of heroines. Actions are categorized as active, inactive, and deferential. Inactivity is defined as passivity. Appearance is a subjective measure of beauty, style of dress, and body shape. Textual analysis is the method used.

Research on this topic reveals that numerous patriarchal themes are present within these two texts. Role model information found that the heroine of Aladdin did not function as a healthy role model; the heroine of Beauty and the Beast was a positive role model.

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Narratives Of Patriarchy: Fairy Tale Heroine Role Models In Two Animated Films

CHAPTER 1

Despite the changes in our society following the women's movement, women are still limited in their attempts to gain equality within our patriarchal system. These limits are evident when we realize that women are still paid less for performing the same job as men in our culture. Likewise, statistics tell us that women are physically attacked and abused in numbers which would have been unbelievable thirty or forty years ago. While we receive messages from the culture which tell us that we've "come a long way, baby," apparently we have not come far enough.

Given the complexity of our culture, it is difficult to explain why some individuals wield power and some do not. However, it seems clear that the creation of power relationships is constructive and interactive. Social roles are also constructed and negotiated by individuals and groups within society. These roles include those of race, nationality, class, age, and gender. Gender, in particular, is an important component in the context of patriarchy as it has traditionally defined the roles men and women acquire, thus, predetermining to a certain extent, their behaviors and actions.

It seems clear that this acquisition of roles begins through the process of socialization. Family, peers, and institutions such as church and school contribute to this process, sending messages as to appropriate and acceptable roles and behaviors. What is less clear is why young boys and girls continue to be socialized differently. Little girls are taught the need to be careful and considerate and feminine. They also receive messages which insist that it would not be wise to explore or risk too much. After all, girls are taught that there will always be someone else to rely upon, someone else who can lead the way. As a result of these messages, too many little girls grow up to

be dependent, passive, and overly concerned with appearance. Consequently, they look to others within society for guidance. The role models they find, then, are critical and especially influential.

The media's influence upon these issues only assists in the acceptance of these social mores. Television, in particular, acts as a transmitter of ideology. While the impression is given that television is an objective and unbiased medium, in actuality, television simply reinforces the dominant view. Because young children are susceptible to the persuasive power of television, there is certainly reason for concern over its role in the socialization process.

In combination with television, video cassette recorders have made available a new means of accessing children's literature. In all probability, the majority of children will now view their favorite stories rather than read them or hear them read aloud. In particular, the fairy tale has always been a favorite of children, beguiling them with its magical characters and lovable creatures. However, as entertaining as these tales may be, fairy tales have been shown to portray women in an unfavorable light as heroines of these tales are almost always passive, beautiful creatures who must rely upon a man if they are to live happily ever after.

Because of a resurgence of interest in fairy tales, Walt Disney has recently released several new animated films. Disney Studios is perhaps the most prolific producer of children's films and has recently begun to focus upon making their films available on videos as well. I am especially interested in the Disney renditions of these tales as Disney has in the past been one of the worst offenders in its portrayal of heroines as passive, helpless women. I have chosen in this study to conduct a textual analysis upon two of Disney's recent releases, Aladdin and Beauty and the Beast, as I feel textual analysis will render some insight into the themes of these films as well as provide new information about the fairy tale heroine as role model. In particular, this

study examines these films in the context of patriarchy. My interest lies in the appearance and actions of the heroine and in the message she sends to young girls who may, in actuality, view these films hundreds of different times.

I have chosen hermeneutic analysis of these texts as I feel it best suits my purpose and study design and because it allows me as a researcher to be subjective and interpretative of the material. I agree with Littlejohn (1992) when he says "we [must] let the text speak to us, yet we cannot understand it apart from our own prejudices and presuppositions" (p. 222). In so saying, my study comes from the perspective of a White, middle class mother of two young children. My role as mother is, perhaps, the driving force behind this topic and the concerns of the study. In other words, the insights of this study and paper will necessarily be reflective of my own experiences and outlooks.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Limitations of Patriarchy

Married women in particular suffered 'civil death,' having no right to property and no legal entity or existence apart from their husbands Married women could not sign contracts; they had no title to their own earnings, to property even when it was their own by inheritance or dower, or to their children in case of legal separation. Divorce when granted at all by the courts or by legislative action, was given only for the most flagrant abuses: adultery, desertion and non-support, and extreme cruelty. With respect to women's ability to gain redress on an equal basis with their husbands, both law and practice varied widely, from the relative liberality in New England to the stringent limitations of the mid-Atlantic colonies. In the South divorce statutes were for a long time non-existent, and the legal dissolution of marriage was infrequent and difficult to achieve. (Nicholson, 1986, p. 48)

In her study of gender and history, Nicholson (1986) uses the preceding passage to describe the conditions for White women in nineteenth century America. This passage does not even begin to focus upon the plight of Asian or African American women who existed as slaves and/or concubines and who were denied "equal rights" much longer than Caucasian women. It is clear, however, that historically, women and their rights have always been subject to patriarchal control. While this passage certainly illustrates the plight of nineteenth century women, surely we can consider ourselves fortunate that such conditions no longer exist for the majority of women today. With the suffrage movement of the nineteenth century and the women's movement of the twentieth century, great strides have been made to improve women's legal and economic conditions. Yet, while it may be true that women are no longer overtly treated as property owned by their husbands legally, other restrictions still remain which significantly limit, or attempt to limit, women's achievements, rights, and functions within a patriarchal society.

As more women have entered the work force, functioning in jobs and careers previously held exclusively by men, one would expect to find a new sense of equality. The Bureau of the Census found that women comprised 46% of the labor force in 1990. However, while women may currently hold the same job titles and handle the same duties as men in their fields, salaries for women are, for the most part, still unequal. According to the January 1993 U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 2307 and the Employment and Earnings report for that same time period, men in managerial and professional positions earned, on average, \$791 per week in comparison to women in the same fields who earned only \$580 per week. Those statistics reveal that male executives are earning at least 30% more than their female counterparts. Likewise, women are seemingly permitted to advance only so far before they are inexplicably and silently denied further promotion into the top ranks. The "glass ceiling" appears to be still in effect. In a fact finding report of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, March 1995, it was reported that only 6.6% of professional women today occupy top executive positions, Vice President and above, in major Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies. These statistics, while thought-provoking, do not even report on the multitude of women in our country today who are unemployed and dependent upon social agencies for the most basic of needs—food, clothing, and shelter.

The Patriarchal Influence upon Image

These inequalities, while limiting, are at least obvious and therefore somewhat easier to combat. Bartky (1988) contends, however, that as women resist patriarchy, "older forms of domination are eroded [while] new forms arise, spread, and become consolidated" (p. 81). Bartky (1988) argues that a "disciplinary power . . . increasingly charged with the production of a properly embodied femininity" (p. 80) attempts to regulate the size and contours of a woman's body. As a result, a woman's appearance is often as important as intelligence, drive, and ambition in determining

what she achieves in life. Bartky (1988) posits that women have become slaves to an ideal image, aware that they are "under surveillance in ways that he [man] is not, that whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or to excite" (p. 81). Wolf's (1991) beauty myth seems to only confirm Bartky's contentions.

Wolf (1991) argues that as women "released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned to carry on its work of social control" (p. 10). In her theory, Wolf (1991) contends that women feel forced to attain an ideal cultural standard, an ideal that posits that the "perfect" woman is beautiful, feminine, and focused upon pleasing those around her. She posits that the ideology of an ideal beauty seeks to "undo psychologically and covertly all the good things that feminism did for women materially and overtly" (p. 11). The problem with this emphasis upon appearance, as she sees it, is with the proliferation of these images of beauty from our culture which suggest that only the ideal, mostly unattainable, image of female beauty is acceptable. She argues that if the "icon of the anorexic fashion model were one flat image out of a full spectrum in which young girls could find a thousand . . . visions of possible futures, that icon would not have the power to hurt them" (Wolf, 1991, p. 2). Unfortunately, this image of womanhood has become the trend, rather than the exception, in our society.

Negative Images of Womanhood

This icon of the anorexic fashion model was, in fact, the topic of discussion in a recent Newsweek article that related the latest "fashion craze" in which young models are sought who can project a "desexed, easily broken, and . . . emaciated image" (Leland, 1996, p. 66). The contention of the article is that at a time when women have supposedly become more powerful in our society, "we are awash in depictions of teenage girls as passive victims - of abuse, of the oversexualized media, of predatory boys - and of girlhood as damage and degradation" (Leland, 1996, p. 66). It would appear that the

media and the fashion industry are instrumental in defining what is acceptable as an image of femininity.

Of special concern are the young girls who are willing to take extreme steps in order to meet the ideal standard held by our culture. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, or "dependency diseases" (p. 113) as Dowling (1981) labels them, are at an all time high. Obsessed with an "ideal" appearance of slimness, young girls (as well as adult women) begin the process of dieting until somewhere along the way they have lost sight of their initial goal of weight loss and have latched on instead to the belief that if being slim is socially acceptable, becoming more and more thin can only lead to greater acceptance from the culture. They progress through this process until they can no longer realistically judge appearance at all. It seems, ironically, that by denying themselves food (and ultimately health and well-being), these young girls believe they have finally found power as individuals and acceptance by society. This issue of power, then, is an ongoing struggle within individuals and within society as a whole. Power and equality, as we have seen, is defined differently from person to person. For many women in the work force, equality means equal pay and respect. For some young girls, power is defined as personal beauty and acceptance within the culture. While the struggle for equality and power affects probably everyone in society at some time, feminists are concerned with women's attempts to gain power.

Early Feminism vs. Patriarchy

Many feminists argue that the only way to combat the negatives of patriarchal control is to fight for equality within the male world, working through the male systems, such as the legal system, to gain the same types of power as our male counterparts. There, they argue, justice is blind and women can rightfully gain control over the outcome of their lives and that of their children. However, this belief that our culture's systems and institutions are free from the influences of centuries of male

domination is perhaps naive. In our courts today, legal cases are being presented which ultimately determine if a woman has the right to make decisions affecting her own body and her chosen lifestyle. For instance, the recent court decision to transfer custody of a 3-year-old child to the father because the mother chose to attend college and enroll their child in full-time daycare sparked outrage in women in this country as the ruling was hotly debated in newspaper editorials, radio talk shows, and television news shows such as 20/20. In addition, the courts are now hearing cases which will ultimately decide whether a woman has the right to terminate a pregnancy whenever she wishes or if the wishes of the father of the unborn child must be considered. While these issues are certainly complex and pit the rights of women against the rights of men, the rights of mothers against the rights of fathers, it seems unbelievable that in today's society men are still allowed through legal means to determine what happens to a woman's body and to penalize a woman for her personal decisions and choices, even when those choices are supposedly protected by law. As Barrett (1988) points out, the fundamental issue of a woman's right to control her own body is at odds with the "control exercised by the medical profession, the church, and the state over women's reproductive functions" (p. 46).

However, this feminist ideology that to gain power one must imitate the powerful males of our society has within it some inherent flaws which cannot adequately explain the complexity of life within a patriarchy. For example, Lerner (1986), as an advocate of this ideology, argues that while women today may already exercise more power than women did in previous generations, that power is still limited or confined to specific areas. She contends that men in a patriarchal society "hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power" (Lerner, 1986, p. 239). While Lerner's (1986) assertions are valid, it must be noted as well that not all men are privy to the power of our patriarchal institutions. Men of color as

well as poor, gay, and homeless men are often equally limited to legitimate power within our society. Thus, this belief that "men are the enemy" negates the essential truth that power within the patriarchy belongs almost exclusively to wealthy, educated, White males. While I cannot always factor in the effect of patriarchy upon the men in our culture as this study focuses predominantly upon women, I do not want to foster the illusion that patriarchy limits only women; patriarchy is equally restrictive for a large portion of our male citizens, hindering their attempts at equality as well.

New Feminist Theory: Power Through Separation

As the early feminist ideology of the 1970's and 1980's seems to supply an inadequate answer to the complexity of gender issues in our society today, we must then consider newer theories of feminism which examine the struggle for equality from a different perspective. At the opposite end of this feminist spectrum one finds examples of new theory such as lesbian feminism which has at its core the assumption that a connection exists between the emotional/erotic commitment to women and political resistance to patriarchal domination. Advocates of this theory (Gowens, 1993; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994) contend that sexual preference and sexual identity have been used as a means of both defining who a woman is and limiting what she can become. Heterosexuality, they contend, only emphasizes male power within relationships. These writers believe that women need to separate themselves and to develop and prioritize sexual and personal power in order to replace the "false" power, i.e., economic and political power, of the male society. When women extricate themselves from the struggle for power, these feminists posit that the power structure will collapse as women are no longer willing to "play the game."

This feminist approach also has some validity; rather than conforming to male expectations, these writers argue that women focus instead upon personal and sexual power, empowering themselves without assistance from males within the social

structure. This ideology also advocates emphasis upon women's culture and contributions, redefining social reality through the female perspective. While these are positive aspects of the new wave of feminism, this approach portrays our entire social system as perhaps a bit too simplistic. This notion that one group can effectively separate themselves from another group negates the complexity of society as a whole and overlooks the intricacies inherent within relationships and gender roles.

Complexity of Power

Researchers such as Coward (1983) and Nicholson (1986) argue that real power is much more elusive and ambiguous. These writers are more concerned with the power inherent in language and in the social policies of our society as they contend that wielders of this power shape women's lives at the most basic level. Coward (1983) points out "power can be exercised by the form of language and the ability to control or manipulate situations, to exclude and marginalize groups" (p. 284) as well as through social policies which determine "who gets tax relief, what kinds of housing are built and who is provided with housing" (p. 284). Language and those who utilize it effectively do indeed exercise tremendous power as they have at their disposal the ability to persuade and even manipulate. However, what is not said and who is not allowed to speak is just as critical to the issues of control and power. Language is also a means of excluding those who cannot comprehend the language or who cannot decipher the "code" words commonly used within a group. Coward (1983) goes on to add that the social policies of a society can also work to the disadvantage of women, creating dependency upon men. Nicholson (1986) contends as well that women's personal dependence upon men has gradually been replaced by "a more impersonal subordinate position within the workplace and by a mass dependence on the states' welfare institutions" (p. 25). As women have struggled to free themselves from the control of men, they find that they are now controlled

through faceless bureaucracies with the power to determine at what level they, as women, function within the society. As Nicholson (1986) argues, "private patriarchy . . . has itself become public" (p. 25).

Interactive Nature of Social Constructions

As I have pointed out, patriarchy does continue to limit many of the individuals who exist within this social system. Women are but one of the casualties. Why some individuals wield power and why some do not is complicated. Gender and power are multidimensional facets of life within our culture. Just as the social structures and institutions of our culture are created and perpetuated through the interaction of individuals, gender is also a negotiated role, negotiated because individuals are much more than one-dimensional clay figures without volition. Individuals have the ability to affect the world they live in; they are also affected by the world they live in. The experience of women, indeed, all persons, is shaped through interaction within the culture. Schutz (1970) wrote,

the world of my daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one, shared with my fellow men, experienced and interpreted by others: in brief, it is a world common to all of us " (p. 163)

Society and selfhood are interconnected, an ongoing, co-mingling process. Who we are as individuals is determined to a great extent by the social roles we have learned. Gender is but one set of roles we take on; a person might also be defined as Caucasian, Irish, and middle-aged. The composite of these social roles makes us each unique and yet similar. We can identify with others of Irish descent; we may share similar life experiences with others who are also middle aged. If these roles are as complicated and complex as it seems, surely input comes from a variety of sources over a number of years. What we must ask, then, is how are children socialized into these social roles, in particular, gender roles.

Early Gender Identification

While our culture supplies an individual with a number of role models over a lifetime, it is important to realize that the acquisition of gender roles, and subsequently, gender role models, begins in the first couple of years of life. Child psychologists and developmentalists have found that gender identity or the sense of one's self as either male or female appears established by the age of two and a half or three and is considered, to a great extent, irreversible. Drabman et al. (1981) found that sex typing is so strong by the time children enter school that they will actually reverse the sex roles of video-taped characters to fit their already formed opinion of male/female roles. It seems clear from this research that young children begin the process of sex-role development quite early in life. Gender role models are simply further reinforced during the first two years of school. In particular, it appears that imitation, beginning with the earliest role models, is the primary means by which children "try on" different roles.

Imitation and the Learning Process

[The] process of imitational learning is involved in the learning of both the specific and the complex components of a sex-role: 'both concepts [identification and emulation] encompass the same behavioral phenomenon, namely the tendency of the person to reproduce actions, attitudes or emotional responses exhibited by real-life or symbolic models.' (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, and Zellman, 1978, p. 105)

From the field of child development, Piaget's writings on learning, as interpreted by Pulaski (1980), suggest that learning for preschool children takes place first on a symbolic level. Images, make-believe symbols and gestures are ways in which a young child assimilates "symbolically the activities, roles, and ideas of the world around him" (Pulaski, 1980, p. 28). Piaget contends that children use make-believe and imitation as the first steps in this learning process, utilizing play time as an opportunity to experiment with different roles and activities. He theorizes that "by imitating the

speech, the behavior, the activities of adults, children learn to adjust to new situations in their world" (Pulaski, 1980, p. 28).

Likewise, from the field of communication, we have George Herbert Mead's work, as interpreted by Littlejohn (1992), in which he posits the theory of symbolic interactionism which suggests as well that children learn to see self through role-taking, copying the behavior of others within their sphere. Family members, especially same-sex parent, represent, perhaps, the very first role models for children. However, as children begin to interact outside the family, they are also influenced by school, church, and peers.

As a result of their interaction with significant others such as parents, siblings, and peers, [children] come to view themselves as they perceive others have viewed them. They come to take on the persona that has been reflected to them in their many interactions with other people. As they behave in ways that affirm this image, it is strengthened . . . (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 173)

However, this process of self-identification, indeed, socialization, is not always the same for boys and girls. Pipher (1994) reports that "girls are trained to be less than who they really are. They are trained to be what the culture wants of its young women, not what they themselves want to become . . . America today is a girl-destroying place" (p. 44).

Culture's Impact upon Young Girls

The process of socialization begins innocently enough when as Frieze et al. (1978) point out,

a child . . . develop[s] a preference for, as well as an awareness of, the role associated with her gender. That is, a girl must prefer the behaviors, objects, and roles stereotyped as female and incorporate these into her behavior if she is to learn her female role. (p.128)

The problem behind this incorporation of "female" behaviors and roles lies in the messages received and the role models emulated. Traditionally, women have been characterized as more dependent and passive, i.e., less assertive and active than their

male counterparts. And while we would like to think that the women of today no longer fit these characteristics, surprisingly many still do. Of course, there are strong, successful women who provide healthy role models; women such as Ann Richards, Hillary Clinton, and California senators Boxer and Feinstein as well as the less known female lawyers, analysts and engineers who populate our world. But for each of these women, there are probably hundreds more who, regrettably, are more dependent than they would wish. Psychologists say that the trait of independence is usually developed, if it develops, before the age of six. Eleanor Maccoby, a psychologist specializing in psychological sex differences, contends that "the key to the matter [development of independence] is whether or how soon a girl is encouraged to assume initiative, to take responsibility for herself and solve problems by herself rather than relying on others" (Dowling, 1981, p.105).

Dowling (1981) contends that parents today continue to make things too easy for the little girls; girls are "overprotected, overhelped, and taught that all they have to do to keep the help coming is be 'good'" (p.105). Girls are thought to be less sturdy, handled less roughly, and receive a message quite early on that their parents are perhaps a bit too anxious for their welfare. While parents take pride in their little boy's every move towards independence, little girls, they reason, may hurt themselves. It is at this point that "parents begin inculcating their small daughters with the idea that so far as risk-taking and the evaluation of their own safety are concerned, they should not trust themselves. And self-trust, as we know, is crucial in the development of independence" (Dowling, 1981, p.109).

It appears then that one of the first crucial differences in how boys and girls develop centers around the issue of independence. The development of independence seems to stem from early exploration and activity as infants, progresses as children accomplish small tasks, and solidifies as a strong personality trait once a child feels

confident that she can trust her own judgment, that she can, in fact, do it--whatever "it" may be. As Bardwick (1971) writes "independence . . . results from learning that one can accomplish by oneself, can rely upon one's own abilities, can trust one's own judgment, and can become invested in a task for its own sake" (p. 115).

This issue is also critical to my own line of thought. If young girls are not encouraged to be independent and never develop a true trust in themselves, it seems likely that they must then look to those around them for guidance. Do not, then, the role models they find in their world take on greater importance in their discovery of who they can be and how they should behave? Young girls who imitate role models who constantly react rather than act in situations and who are dependent upon others for assistance may not be learning the value of setting personal goals and making decisions as active agents in the design of their own lives. Even if the role model reacts in an intelligent, appropriate manner to whatever circumstance in which she finds herself, there is still a subtle lesson being taught that women respond to their environment rather than shape it. Without role models who initiate, plan, act, and make something happen to their world, young girls are perhaps more likely to focus upon becoming acceptable in their world as it already exists. If their dreams and plans do not coincide with that of the society which surrounds them, young girls must either abandon those dreams altogether in order to "fit in" or battle a culture which encourages conformity and often ridicules those who choose to be different. Having the ability to act independently of the thoughts and actions of those around them would seem critical if one is to strive for those dreams not endorsed by the general populace.

Pipher (1994) agrees that young girls are taught to value fitting in and are much more likely to behave in ways acceptable to those around them than are young boys within our culture. Pipher (1994) adds that because young girls have been "socialized to look to the world for praise and rewards [they become] other-oriented and reactive"

(p. 257). As they enter adolescence, they begin to care less what their parents think and to care more about the thoughts and suggestions from those around them. Peers and media-created celebrities become the role models. As a result of this cultural pressure to fit in, Pipher (1994) contends that young girls split into "true and false selves" (p. 22). She writes, the "gap between girls' true selves and cultural prescriptions for what is properly female creates enormous problems" (Pipher, 1994, p. 22). From her interviews with young girls she has determined that "certain themes, such as concern with weight, fear of rejection and the need for perfection, [are] rooted in cultural expectations for women rather than in the 'pathology' of each individual girl" (Pipher, 1994, p. 35). In other words, young girls begin to focus upon these themes because they are the prevalent themes of the culture. In particular, media transmit cultural idioms daily to the young of our society.

Television and Socialization

The vulnerability of children to the effects of television has been well documented. Beginning with the theory of cultivation, we know that heavy viewers of television are more likely to use television as a means of interpreting reality. Cultivation theory posits that to heavy viewers the "reality" seen on television is accepted as a true portrayal of the world at large. Television also plays a formidable role in the stereotyping of gender roles. Frieze et al. (1978) point out that

television characters act out the cultural stereotypes, [that] news media point out the consequences for violation of gender-role norms, [and that] storybooks and textbooks depict cultural stereotypes and illustrate both the rewards for conformity and the punishment for deviation. (p. 124)

Littlejohn (1992) notes that although some audience members actively attend to and think about the messages they receive from the media, it is doubtful that young children view television as judiciously. To children, television acts as companion, storyteller, and persuader all in one. As Littlejohn (1992) explains,

television is a centralized system of storytelling. It is part and parcel of our daily lives Television cultivates from infancy the very predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other primary sources [In fact], television has become the primary common source of socialization (pp. 358-359)

It should come as no surprise that mass-media are instrumental in socialization as the media are simply social and cultural institutions much like our churches and schools. In fact, "the entire television industry is a cultural production because it is a means for creating, disputing, reproducing, and changing culture" (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 253). The danger of television's intervention into the learning process comes through its ability to communicate ideology to the impressionable young of society. Although multiple ideologies may exist side by side in society, resulting in societal tension, conflict and discussion, Littlejohn (1992) contends that this open discussion is not characteristic of media. He writes, the "irony of media, especially television, is that they present the illusion of diversity and objectivity, when in fact they are clear instruments of the dominant order" (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 253).

The presence of ideological messages can also be found in children's videos, a fairly new example of media. With the advent of the video cassette recorder, children can now utilize the television/VCR to access films that previously were only available for periodic viewing at the movie theater. In fact, sales and rentals of children's videos have become a booming business, retailing millions of dollars a year, as videos now seem to be the predominant means by which most young children access literature.

Popular Children's Tales

As we look at a child's environment, it is clear that for most children reading and hearing (and now viewing) stories is one of their favorite pastimes. In particular, children's stories make use of the elements of fantasy and exaggeration in a vivid and expressive way which has the potential to significantly influence how they view the world and those around them. If a good story can still work its "magic" on us as adults,

can our children help but be likewise entertained and enthralled with the stories they hear, read, and view during such an impressionable developmental age?

While some researchers (e.g., Jordan & De Caro, 1986) point to the existence of folk tales (e.g., Paul Bunyan, Annie Oakley) which they argue present strong men and intelligent women in adventures, the folk tales they refer to are sparse in number, exotic, or relatively unknown to the present generation of children. Fairy tales, on the other hand, are quite popular and yet, unfortunately, do not seem to present women in as favorable a light as the tales endorsed by Jordan & De Caro (1986). With the exception of Goldilocks, it is difficult to produce a single tale from among the popular and widespread Grimm Brothers and Walt Disney tales which present mortal women as strong, powerful models (Oliver, 1977). Past researchers (e.g., Lieberman, 1972; Oliver, 1977; Stone, 1975; Stone, 1985) of fairy tales have argued that these tales depict women in dependent, traditional roles which encourage the powerlessness of women. In a summary of their findings, I have grouped together those themes or issues which shed light upon the portrayal of women in these tales.

Traditional Roles: A Prerequisite for Heroines

Rowe (1979) argues that fairy tales are not simply entertaining fantasies but rather "powerful transmitters of romantic myths which encourage women to internalize only aspirations deemed appropriate to our 'real' sexual functions within a patriarchy" (p. 239). She states that female readers of folktales "subconsciously assimilate subtle cultural imperatives from the text which . . . make the female's choice of marriage and maternity seem commendable, indeed predestined" (Rowe, 1979, p. 239), thus reinforcing the value of traditional role models. Rowe (1979) contends that this emphasis upon the importance of the roles of wife and mother should not come as a surprise as a "culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity" (p.239). Dutiful daughters become

obedient wives who eventually transform yet again into loving mothers. The few women who do not accept the traditional roles of mother and wife are ultimately punished in fairy tale society. The wayward heroine eventually bows to cultural expectations and accepts the prescribed roles outlined by her culture; the vain stepmothers and jealous witches are inevitably killed for the unnatural roles and actions they portray within the tale. A woman without a man, attempting to achieve an independent identity, is seemingly not allowed in the fairy tale world; it is practically unheard of. It would appear that even in the world of make-believe, the wish for female freedom and independence is seen as a threat.

It is significant that not one of the fairy tale heroines seems the least bit disturbed by the outcome of the tale. Cinderella and Snow White readily submit to a patriarchal system and apparently accept the traditional roles as prescribed by society. Most readers of the Cinderella tale must assume that Cinderella, once crowned, attends to her children and to her husband rather than to affairs of state. Given what we know of the fairy tale world, it seems unlikely that Cinderella rules equally with Prince Charming if they are to live "happily ever after." The men and women of these tales seem to have an unspoken understanding that women have no need of power and should be content within their roles as wife, mother, and daughter.

Allocation of Power

Heroines have beauty; heroes have power. Apparently, beauty and power is not an acceptable combination for women within fairy tales. Those human female characters with power are typically depicted as domineering, ambitious, and strong-willed such as the cruel stepmother or the evil queen. All other powerful female characters within these tales are portrayed as extremely ugly and animal-like such as Ursula in the tale The Little Mermaid who is part woman, part octopus or a wicked witch with the stereotypical long nose, wart, and pointed chin. I imagine none of these characters are

likely to be accepted by young girls as acceptable role models. With a choice between beautiful Cinderella (who has no power but is finally "rewarded" with Prince Charming) and the stepmother (who has significant power but is portrayed as evil and self-serving), most young girls are not likely to choose the strong, powerful model of the text due to the characterization of these powerful women as reprehensible and "unnatural." Indeed, Stone (1975) writes that most female characters within the fairy tale, "if they are not witches or fairies or wicked stepmothers, are insipid beauties waiting for Prince Charming" (p. 128). One must apparently be one or the other; a beauty with a remarkably sweet nature or a scary, ugly hag with power. Is there an underlying message here that to court power is also to court alienation from society? If we are to believe the fairy tale narratives, while these powerful women may have a season in which they rule, their time is limited. The powerful women within these texts are shunned by others and ultimately destroyed for their actions. The evil stepmother or the wicked queen represent the only human women who attain and wield power in these stories. The use of their power always stems from jealousy. The only powerful female characters who use power for good are fairy godmothers and other non-human characters.

The other most notable characters possessing power within the fairy tale are the males. One observes that action and independence are reserved almost exclusively for the men in fairy tales. While the heroine has her freedom restricted, unable to explore due to a spell or a deep sleep or perhaps her own inhibitions, heroes are using that same time to discover their independence and power. The narratives within these tales inevitably consist of male characters fighting the villains, overcoming the obstacles, and saving the day. Female characters are more likely to be acted upon than to act and most often end up as a handsome prize for the man, given as a reward, ironically, for his actions within the story. In several tales (most notably, Aladdin), the male character

inherits a position of power such as ruler in exchange for his actions in saving the kingdom or rescuing/wooing the princess. The females are, in effect, without power or voice, bartered from one man (usually a father) to another (usually a husband) as the male figure deems appropriate. Father—or patriarchal society—always seems to know what is in the best interest for the females under their rule. Stone (1986) writes "heroes succeed because they act, not because they are. They are judged not by their appearance or inherent sweet nature but by their ability to overcome obstacles" (p. 45).

Heroes are most often found utilizing physical power and strength as a means of attaining whatever it is they desire or by removing through brute strength whatever stands between them and their intended path. Some heroes also succeed by intellect; a source of power in its own right. Many of these tales focus upon the ability of the hero to outsmart his enemy. By outsmarting the genie or solving the riddles placed before them, the hero always ultimately succeeds and gains power, wealth, and prestige in doing so. Very rarely, do we find heroines utilizing either of these forms of power within the fairy tale narrative.

Beauty and the Plight of the Fairy Tale Heroine

Without power, then, how do our heroines succeed? What must they do to gain their place in the fairy tale world? It would appear that beauty is the only trait needed to be a heroine, beauty as it is defined by the culture. All the heroines of these tales are English-speaking, White, and heterosexual. As long as the heroine meets these requirements, she is then chosen by a strong and handsome man. Stone (1986) writes, "heroines are not allowed any defects, nor are they required to develop, since they are already perfect. The only tests of most heroines require nothing beyond what they are born with: a beautiful face" (p. 45). So we find almost immediately that the heroine gains husband and often royal standing by simply possessing the greatest beauty.

And unlike our heroes who must outsmart or outmaneuver the enemy, as Lieberman (1972) argues, the heroine doesn't have to "do anything to merit being chosen; she does not have to show pluck, resourcefulness, or wit; she is chosen because she is beautiful" (p. 386). Cinderella is chosen, as Lieberman (1972) points out, from what amounts to a beauty pageant. All the young, single girls of the kingdom are invited to attend, and the prince then chooses the most beautiful for his wife. Fairy tales give beauty a "commercial advantage" (Lieberman, 1972, p. 386). Even Bettelheim (1976), a vocal proponent of fairy tales, admits that the "rescuers fall in love with these heroines because of their beauty, which symbolizes their perfection" (p. 277). The fairy tale's emphasis upon beauty and perfection must surely have far-reaching repercussions for young girls. It would seem almost impossible to live up to such expectations. However, if we have learned anything from these tales, it is that anything is seemingly possible if one is willing to wait long enough.

The Art of Waiting

Lieberman (1972) contends that heroines are never ignored; they may be oppressed initially, but they are ultimately rewarded—if they wait long enough. In some variations of the tale, Sleeping Beauty sleeps for one hundred years, waiting for someone to break the spell. In fact, the heroines of these tales are practiced in the art of waiting, standing by passively until a decision is made or a prince arrives. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are prime examples of the patient heroines, held in the ultimate state of passivity, a deep sleep. Cinderella, likewise, is content to wait at home until the prince discovers her true identity and saves her from a life of drudgery. Cinderella makes no attempt to improve her condition. She does not make a plan or take a chance. She escapes her life of drudgery not by her own doing but rather through the power of her fairy Godmother and later the prince. The common themes within these tales is that patience is rewarded and usually the reward is a man, a prince. None of these heroines

attempt to change their lives through their own actions. Snow White is even willing to wait passively while the huntsman raises his knife to strike her down; she does not attempt to fight or flee. These heroines send the message that anything worth having is worth waiting for and that inactivity is a noble virtue.

If the message is received by readers or viewers of these tales that all one must do to succeed is to wait to be chosen, women can never hope to possess power, even that power needed to empower themselves as true power is rarely bestowed upon someone. True power, all too often, must be fought for—even when the fight is for the right to direct one's own destiny. Ironically, even in real life, many women who do achieve the same power and status as that of their male counterparts also gain a reputation as domineering, unnatural, and self-serving, the same adjectives used to describe our fairy tale witches and jealous stepmothers. In fact, the portrayal of life within the fairy tale often mirrors, to a certain extent, real life.

Patriarchal Reality as Found in Fairy Tales

Oliver (1977) posits that fairy tales always represent some perception of reality consistent with the prevailing social structure. "By their very powers of enchantment, myths and tales serve to perpetuate the values and social relationships which generated them" (Oliver, 1977, p. 86). She argues that fairy tales describe the relationship between boy and girl, man and woman, as it exists in the real world. She contends that, although cloaked in symbolism, these depictions serve the dominant culture and help to shape its future image. There seems to be an inherent danger if we concede that fairy tales do present just enough of reality to be found acceptable without question by young viewers. It is especially critical, however, if we accept Oliver's (1977) contention that in a world dominated by men, the fairy tale must then reflect a world view defined by men and "perpetuated in their own interests" (p. 86). Both Lieberman (1972) and Oliver (1977) posit that fairy tales promote a theme of female

inferiority, imposing limitations on young girls based purely on gender. Lieberman (1972) goes on to state that "millions of women must surely have formed their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behavior would be rewarded, and of the nature of reward itself, in part from these favorite fairy stories" (p. 385).

However, there are some researchers who argue that these apparent restrictions against women in fairy tales are only symbolic, not meant to be interpreted as a literal means of living and behaving. In fact, proponents of fairy tales argue that these stories are appropriate tales for children filled with agreeable heroines and happy heroes.

Proponents of Fairy Tales

While I have cited many researchers who find fairy tales offensive and threatening to the emotional welfare of children, there are those who argue (e.g., Bettelheim, 1976; Lurie, 1970) that fairy tales are a healthy alternative for children and that these tales portray much more than the trivial "happily ever after" ending would suggest. These proponents of fairy tales, while few in number, argue that fairy tales are innocent of sexist stereotyping. They contend that contrary to the opinions given by feminist researchers, fairy tales serve a necessary function in children's development of healthy role models. Perhaps the most vocal proponent of this position is Bruno Bettelheim. Bettelheim (1976) argues that fairy tales are understood by children at an abstract level. He contends that children do not relate to the hero or heroine based on such mundane issues as gender, prestige, or power, but rather that children see in the hero's or heroine's problem their own struggle to grow up. Bettelheim (1976) states that "the child who is familiar with fairy tales understands that these speak to him in the language of symbols and not that of everyday reality" (p. 62). Bettelheim (1976) defends his contention that fairy tales help children through difficult periods of development by pointing out, as an example, that the passivity shown

in the heroines of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty should not be seen as portrayals of weak female characters but rather this passivity as a trait is there to "encourage the child not to be afraid of the dangers of passivity

. . . [as] long periods of quiescence, of contemplation, of concentration on the self, can and often [do] lead to highest achievement" (p. 226). Bettelheim (1976) argues that the depiction of the girl "turning inward" (p. 226) for contemplation and the boy "aggressively dealing with the external world" (p. 226) should not be interpreted literally. He claims instead that children will realize that these actions of the heroine and hero simply represent two different ways of dealing with the world rather than an attempt to dictate acceptable modes of behavior for males and females in society.

Bettelheim (1976) goes on to add that the ending of each fairy tale is always optimistic, belying any fears the child may have due to the sometimes serious and terrifying events within the story. He states that children can always predict that there will be a happy ending whether the "outcome is due to the virtues of the hero, chance, or the interference of supernatural figures" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 37). And yet, Bettelheim (1976), who argues that these tales do not reflect different expectations about male and female roles and abilities, apparently never sees the obvious contradiction that the heroine never has a part in the outcome of the tale. Chance and mystical creatures have more of a hand in the outcome of these tales than do the heroine. What an indictment of these texts Bettelheim (1976) has made without even realizing it. It is always the man who saves the day, perhaps with a bit of good luck, but it is never the woman.

While Bettelheim's (1976) arguments on the symbolic nature of fairy tales have some validity, it seems reasonable to expect that a child who is wise enough to grasp concepts at the abstract level, as Bettelheim (1976) argues they do, is certainly old enough to also comprehend the obvious differences portrayed by male and female

characters. Bettelheim (1976) himself states that children "intuitively comprehend that although these stories are unreal, they are not untrue" (p. 73). This statement mirrors my own assertion that while children may learn to discount the fantasy aspects of these tales, they are also learning that fairy tales reveal some very true examples of male/female roles and do, in fact, reflect the gender values of their society. In addition, while I can agree with Bettelheim's (1976) argument that fairy tales often make their point through the use of symbolism rather than actual depictions, there must necessarily be some concern about the symbols used. For instance, Bettelheim (1976) tells us that the "hearth, the center of the home, is a symbol for the mother" (p.248). In modern societies, mothers no longer remain exclusively at home, and in many instances do not wish to have their daughters taught (whether symbolically or not) through fairy tales that they are expected by society to remain at home. Through such symbolism, then, fairy tales have the power to teach cultural norms, to provide the child with examples of acceptable societal behavior. Bettelheim (1976) confirms the power of fairy tales as he states that they are a unique art form "fully comprehensible to the child, as no other form of art is" (p. 12). If this art form helps to socialize our children, I am concerned with the possibility that the messages within these tales have an influence over our children's decisions as adults and, more important yet, over the type of adults that they will become.

Lingering Power of Fairy Tales in Adulthood

Many might argue that these are simply tales read or viewed by millions of children who eventually grow up, become adults, and leave the fantasy of fairy tales behind. How can entertaining tales read in childhood impact adults? Such is the question raised by Rowe (1979). She argues that although women are still attracted to the fantasies found in texts such as fairy tales, the changes brought about by the women's

movement, among other things, have redefined the sexual and social roles of women.

Rowe (1979) writes,

Fairy tale fantasies have come to seem more deluding than problem-solving. 'Romance' glosses over the heroine's impotence: she is unable to act independently or self-assertively; she relies on external agents for rescue; she binds herself first to the father and then the Prince; she restricts her ambitions to hearth and nursery. Fairy tales, therefore, no longer provide mythic validations of desirable female behavior; instead, they seem more purely escapist or nostalgic, having lost their potency (pp. 239-240)

Rowe (1979) does admit, however, that romantic fantasies continue to "exert . . . a powerful imaginative allure" (p. 240); indeed, she insists that "romantic tales exert an awesome imaginative power over the female psyche—a power intensified by formal structures which we perhaps take too much for granted" (p. 249). Rowe (1972) argues that women can simply reject fairy tales as tales of childhood with no influence over their adult lives or they can contend, that as adults, they are well able to separate fantasy from actuality. But she insists that either action negates "the potency of cultural myths and personal fantasies in shaping one's experience" (Rowe, 1972, p. 252). Rowe (1972) posits that as long as women design their lives to "conform with romantic paradigms" (p. 253), they cannot escape the grasp of patriarchy. While the women's movement has freed women from traditional roles, Rowe (1972) contends that it is women who continue to limit themselves as they insist on clinging to "ideals of femininity" (p. 253). Perhaps, as she suggests, there is real ambiguity for women who strive to be free of these earliest fantasies but, conversely, long for a Cinderella-like life. As she points out, it is the "liberation of the female psyche" (Rowe, 1972, p. 253) that women must fight for now.

I must agree with Rowe's (1979) contentions. Obviously, modern women today do not view the fairy tale as an actual guide to life; they acquire roles far removed from those of wife and mother. Women today are activists and engineers and playwrights. Yet, as Rowe (1979) argues, women are still bound to the fantasy aspect of these tales.

They incorporate the fanciful images of femininity and romance from these stories into their own subconscious requirements for a fulfilling life, longing to be swept off their feet by a prince who somehow removes the mundane aspects of their life and replaces these with a fairy tale existence. As she points out, the focus of modern women today ought to be the liberation of the female psyche from these romantic paradigms rather than the actual liberation of women from a patriarchal society. Yes, we as women are limited by the patriarchal structure of our society, but I contend as does Rowe (1979) that most of the time we are limited because we allow ourselves to be. As long as we remain caught between our subconscious wish to be romanced and our conscious wish to be free and equal, we will continue to live within a paradox.

Stone's (1985) interviews with men and women about their memories and reactions to fairy tales seem to confirm this sense of ambiguity of which Rowe (1972) speaks. Thirteen years after Rowe's (1972) article, Stone (1985) found that the lingering power of fairy tales continues to influence female readers. She found that these "tales apparently have the power to affect readers deeply, either negatively or positively, in ways that other forms of children's literature generally do not" (Stone, 1985, p. 129). While some readers found gender to be of little importance, reacting instead to these tales on an abstract level, Stone (1985) found that many women openly admired the dependent, powerless heroines and viewed these characters in many cases as models for feminine behavior. Stone (1985) suggests that for these women fairy tales become "problem-creating as 'purveyors of the romantic myth'" (p. 143). She posits that some readers strive whether consciously or unconsciously to attain the ideal femininity as depicted in fairy tale heroines. Stone (1985) quotes one twenty-six year old woman as follows: "It was definitely Cinderella I liked best. She was gorgeous. I was homely, and I kept thinking it would happen to me too—I'd bloom one day. But it's never happened. I'm still waiting!" (p. 136). As Stone (1985) argues, it would appear that

for women, the problem-creating aspect of the tales is the attempted identification with the ideal woman, or the guilt if one fails to identify with her, and the expectation that one's life will be transformed dramatically and all one's problems solved with the arrival of a man. (p. 143)

Well into adulthood this one woman still yearns to bloom into a Cinderella. Stone (1985) contends that "whatever positive functions the tales have for girls in their early lives apparently become less positive for them in later life" (p. 141) as these women incorporate the themes found within these tales into requirements for their adult lives, using these tales as "literal models for ideal female behavior" (p. 141).

While I agree with Stone's (1985) argument that fairy tales continue to influence women's adult lives, I do not believe that adult women use the fairy tale as "literal models for ideal female behavior" (Stone, 1985, p. 141) as she contends. I cannot believe that the majority of women today actually see the heroine as a literal model to emulate. While I believe children do see these heroines as actual role models and will make every attempt to recreate themselves in the image of their favorite fairy tale character, the damage for adult women, I contend, must be as Rowe (1979) argues, embedded in the psyche, thus affecting their adult choices and lives in ways of which they are not fully aware. I do not believe that women now look to Cinderella as a literal model of dress or beauty or behavior. But they are still bound in many ways by the beauty myth as Wolf (1991) pointed out and still subscribe to the belief that they must be feminine and beautiful as well as capable and enthused. And while they may not wish to emulate Cinderella's beauty, they choose instead to emulate Cindy Crawford or Naomi Campbell or Christy Brinkley, super models just as far removed from the appearance of everyday women as is a fairy tale heroine.

How, then, do these earliest role models affect the choices and decisions made by adult women? Some researchers (e.g., Adams, 1990; Dowling, 1981; Rivers et al., 1979) contend that while fairy tales are ostensibly stories for children, they create

unrealistic fantasies and expectations for young girls of who and what they will become as adult women. Adams (1990) writes,

Everyone knows that fairy tales are for children. Those were the myths that lulled us to sleep when we were very young, and even essence has not yet escaped us. Engaged at that time in the child's task of creating the self, we absorbed those myths, internalized those fantasies. Seeping into our unconscious, they cast their spell on us. Because we were girls, we identified with the heroines or princesses of the tales—they were our earliest, and therefore strongest, role models. (p. 13)

Adams (1990) contends that there are truths in these myths, these earliest stories, which help us to make sense of life. Her concern is that many women are unable to distinguish truth from magic and cling unconsciously to those early role models as examples after which they pattern their adult lives.

Adams (1990) and Dowling (1981) both insist that, for many women, life rushes by as they wait on the sidelines. Adams (1990) argues that "many of these women are only existing until. Marking time until. Just getting by until the Prince arrives, and Real Life, followed by Happily Ever After, begins" (Adams, 1990, p.16). Everything hinges on the arrival of a man. And yet, Dowling (1981) has come to the conclusion that once a man does arrive, these same women remain in passive lives, now content to let the man make the decisions and provide safety, immediately assuming the role of "The Protector" (p. 119). These women remain reactive rather than active. Somehow the arrival of the "prince" did not signal the beginning of "happily ever after." Now they remain in jobs they find boring and in marriages they find unfulfilling because there is safety in the known. Venturing out into the unknown means leaving the protection of The Boss or The Husband.

As Adams (1990) notes, autonomy, taking care of one's self and providing for one's self, has only recently become an acceptable and advisable ambition for a woman. Rivers et al. (1979) contend that an entire generation of women were "raised on a dream of prolonged childhood" (p. 15) in which they were taught that they could expect

to be taken care of and protected by a man. Rather than autonomy, these women were taught to believe in the fairy tale life. However, Rivers et al. (1979) caution that although "it might have been fine for Snow White to sing about her Prince coming along, . . . the girl who bets her identity on Prince Charming has made a bad wager" (Rivers et al., 1979, p. 83) for life in the real world means taking responsibility for one's self. All of these researchers argue that there can be no autonomy for a woman who remains enthralled with the possibility that Prince Charming will someday appear and take responsibility for her. Unless these women take the initiative and develop a belief in their own abilities to act independently of a man, they can never escape the web of dependency in which they are caught. And yet, breaking free of the myths perpetuated by our fairy tale role models is often difficult.

The contention of these researchers (e.g., Adams, 1990; Dowling, 1981; Stone, 1985) that adult women have been so negatively influenced by fairy tales seems further validated by a study conducted by Radway (1984) in which she interviewed women readers of romantic novels. While there may be differences between fairy tales and romance novels, Radway's (1984) conclusions and her insights into the link between women's texts and the maintenance of patriarchy are relevant. Radway (1984) found in her study that

women in romances, like mythical deities, are fated to live out a predetermined existence. That existence is circumscribed by a narrative structure that demonstrates that despite idiosyncratic histories, all women inevitably end up associating their female identity with the social roles of lover, wife, and mother. (p. 207)

Radway's (1984) conclusions coincide with Lerner's (1986) assertion that men, in particular, White, wealthy men, continue to control the very powerful public spheres of society. Radway (1984) argues that the romance leaves "unchallenged the male right to the public spheres of work, politics, and power [and] avoids questioning the institutionalized basis of patriarchal control over women" (p. 217). Significantly,

Radway (1984) found that the women in her study apparently did not perceive the underlying patriarchal messages found in romance texts. She posits that the women in her study never verbalized an awareness of this underlining patriarchal theme as they "accept patriarchy as a given, as the natural organization of sex and gender" (p. 10) and are, therefore, not actively conscious of its presence. She argues that the "romance's conservative ideology about the nature of womanhood is inadvertently 'learned' . . . and generalized as normal, natural, female development in the real world" (p. 186).

Radway (1984) argues that romance novels function as "active agents in the maintenance of the ideological status quo by virtue of their hybrid status as realistic novels and mythic ritual" (p.17).

Radway's (1984) findings seem to suggest that many adult females recalled and enjoyed fairy tales so much that they continue to look for these same themes and heroine characterizations in the novels they read as adults. Radway (1984) also conducted a textual analysis of several romance novels in combination with her interviews of romance novel readers. Her analysis of these texts found that while current day romance novels are more sophisticated and worldly than fairy tales, they contain many of the same themes. The heroine is almost always young and pretty and generally petite while the hero is typically strong and active and ready to save the woman from herself and the ridiculous situations in which she finds herself. While the heroine of these tales may be self-confident and capable overall, there is always one area in their lives in which they need a man to make things right. The man appears able to supply the missing ingredient. Radway's (1984) study testifies to the ongoing love affair many women seem to have with romance and the Cinderella/Prince Charming storyline.

If fairy tales are some of the first texts young girls are provided, it seems clear from the research cited that the role models presented in the fairy tales studied portray numerous examples of women conforming to life in a patriarchal society. These

patriarchal messages are found first in fairy tales during the formative years of childhood and again, as Radway (1984) argues, in various other texts targeted at adult women. While these messages may simply be a by-product of life in a patriarchal society, they are apparently powerful enough to exert influence over adult women many years after they first read the tales.

The Productions of the Walt Disney Studios

If it appears, then, that extensive research has already been conducted on fairy tale texts, one might ask, what more can we study and why? There are very few new fairy tales in existence today as some earlier, original version of these tales can almost always be found. The few legitimately new tales to be found consistently star animals as the main characters (The Rescuers, All Dogs Go To Heaven, We're Back!, Babe) and are not suitable, in my opinion, for this study as I feel children are more likely to model themselves after those main characters who appear in human form. Therefore, I am not examining a brand new text which has never been studied before. However, fairy tales have continually been modified throughout time by storytellers, publishers, animators, and writers who periodically change certain aspects of a tale to suit different cultures, generations, and times. Also because of a resurgence of interest in and popularity of fairy tales, Walt Disney's recent release of the animated features, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, and The Little Mermaid, provides a rare chance for researchers to examine new versions of these classic tales. While these films are not, by definition, new tales, film variations of fairy tales are one of the more common ways in which classic fairy tales may be updated.

While possibly hundreds of studies have been completed on fairy tales, this research is dated as the majority of these studies were conducted twenty-five years ago in the early 1970's. Because of this extended lapse in time in which fairy tales have gone unexamined and because Disney, as I mentioned above, has just released several of

these tales on film, a new study of these tales seems appropriate. In particular, I have chosen Disney's renditions of these stories as I believe there is tremendous power in the Disney name. Newsweek states "Disney's greatest strength, unique among modern-day studios, is its name. Audiences will flock to 'a Disney movie'" (Fleming, 1993, p. 58). The widespread outreach of Disney's films is further clarified when one realizes that the film Beauty and the Beast earned \$134 million in its studio release alone and that Aladdin has a combined total profit of \$227 million including a three day total of 10.5 million in video sales (Fleming, 1993, p. 58). The films created by Disney, then, must be examined as they appear to hold a significant market share in fairy tale productions. While I imagine the overall plot must remain consistent with other versions of fairy tales, supplying the inevitable "happily ever after" ending, these new films allow Disney a rare chance to modernize the settings and characters for present-day boys and girls. Consequently, these "new" tales may supply a stronger female heroine for young girls, providing a more balanced view of female roles to those girls who enjoy fairy tales.

Since the inception of this study, other researchers have also begun to examine the animated blockbuster films so recently released by the Disney studios. A few short papers have been written and presented by California State University students who touch also on the issues of gender and the patriarchal influences of the Disney films. However, Downey et al. (1996) argue that the current trend in rhetorical studies is "grounded in opposition . . . situating feminine and masculine rhetoric on poles divided against and far removed from each other" (p. 3). Their examination of the Disney fairy tales then looks to the transcendental nature of the tale in which the discovery of a "hidden narrative" brings congruity and commonalty to the tale rather than opposition and division. However, these student papers provide only a cursory examination of several Disney films rather than an in-depth analysis. Also, as I mentioned above, their

emphasis is on finding a common ground within the narrative rather than focusing on the division of female and male gender roles as they are portrayed within these features. I believe it is still important to determine to what extent the patriarchal bias remains in these films as this bias represents the broader cultural bias. We receive messages every day from our culture which inform us that we've come a long way, but just how far have we come? Are our children finding independent, active role models in this new batch of fairy tale heroines; are they finding heroines who display strong, level-headed tendencies? Disney certainly has the opportunity to provide examples of strong female role models each time they produce another fairy tale for the big screen.

This study asks, then, what, if any, changes have occurred in the portrayal of the fairy tale heroine over the last twenty years? Do the patriarchal themes documented in earlier studies of fairy tales remain or do these new films attempt to present the heroine and hero in a new light? I believe these questions are worth asking. Consequently, I believe a new textual analysis of the fairy tale text is required.

Textual Analysis

The importance of examining our cultural texts is rarely questioned. The study of dramatism and narrative has become increasingly popular as Littlejohn (1992) points out because "narrative theories focus on the ways in which people structure reality by telling stories. The story is not only a way of organizing a message but is also a common, some say universal, format for structuring interaction itself" (p. 177). In particular, narrative often plays an important role in the persuasive power of our texts. We, as Fisher (1984, 1987) points out, are storytelling animals. Before written language, early societies disseminated information, preserved history, and established cultural norms through the telling of myths, sagas, and folklore. In Fisher's (1984, 1987) work on narrative discourse and his discussion of the narrative paradigm, I found some ideas relevant to my own line of inquiry. I have pondered

Fisher's (1984) assertion that narratives do not merely recount amusing anecdotes but are also symbols "created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common" (p. 6). Other researchers have commented upon the power and purpose of narratives as well. Each, in his or her own way, has come to the conclusion that narratives do much more than entertain; they teach and persuade. Rybacki and Rybacki (1991) observed that narratives are used to "preserve history and interpret experiences" (p. 107). They contend as well that narratives "affirm new ideas . . . [and] reaffirm existing ideas" (Rybacki, 1991, p.109). Schrag (1991) goes so far as to state that "the stories we tell . . . have significant world-organizing power" (p. 313). It becomes clear, then, that the narrative has the power to shape our world view. Fairy tales are, perhaps, the ultimate example of the persuasive narrative at work. The narrative is aimed almost exclusively at children and makes use of illusion and imagery in a vivid and colorful fashion. I believe the power of narratives should not be underestimated.

Patriarchal narratives in particular may be accepted as completely natural to many individuals within our society as the reality within these stories simply mirrors real life. Is it any wonder, then, that young girls are vulnerable to the power of patriarchal narratives such as those found in the fairy tale genre when the narrative form itself is so appealing and persuasive? I believe that the fairy tale text, while certainly a collection of amusing stories, is also an example of literature which, perhaps inadvertently, helps to maintain the status quo. It may be that patriarchal messages transmitted through narrative texts typically go unchallenged due, in part, to the narrative form in which they exist. When our focus is upon the lovable animated animals and the magical castles, it is perhaps too easy to believe that the messages transmitted within these texts are harmless children's tales without ideological impact.

After all, children are told that fairy tales are only fantasy; monsters, trolls, and witches do not really exist. While many adults take care to convince children that the characters and places within fairy tales do not exist, it often seems that not quite as much concern is placed on the discussion of the models and narratives within these texts. It seems more likely that children learn to discount the fantasy aspects of the story (witches, gingerbread houses, and glass slippers) yet still accept the fundamental themes and roles found within each story (good comes to those who wait, beautiful girls always triumph in the end, a prince always arrives if one is patient). It is when we begin to examine these fundamental themes within the texts, themes hidden amidst the magic, that we may discover much more than an innocent children's text. With its combination of narrative appeal and an audience of young, impressionable children, the fairy tale may play an important role in the socialization of our children into a male dominated society.

While young children may not consciously absorb these sophisticated ideological messages, they are becoming aware for the first time that society has different expectations for boys and girls. Through these early glimpses into the land of make-believe, children are learning the first lessons of patriarchy, specifically, traditional gender roles. While we as adults may be able to separate the fantasy from the reality within the narratives we hear, our children are less likely to clearly understand where the magic ends and real life begins. Consequently, our attention must then be focused upon the values and role models these fairy tale texts perpetuate if we are to understand the influences such texts may have upon children's conceptual development as well as their ongoing development of an individual self.

As Lieberman (1972) points out, we cannot overlook the fact that societal messages are always present within any of our texts. She contends that concerned parents should realize that what our children are being taught is not always in planned,

formulated lessons but rather that "lessons" of one type or another are learned from all of the texts and cultural transmissions our children receive. She writes,

If we are concerned, then, about what our children are being taught, we must pay particular attention to those stories that are so beguiling that children think more as they read them 'of the diversion than of the lesson'; perhaps literature is suggestive in direct proportion to its ability to divert. (Lieberman, 1972, p. 384)

Literature, then, even in its most basic form such as that of the fairy tale, is often full of hidden messages and potential influences. One means of identifying these textual messages is through hermeneutics or the "study of understanding, especially by interpreting action and text" (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 222). Littlejohn (1992) notes that the process of hermeneutic analysis takes place through the researcher's focus first upon a general idea of the possible meaning of a text and then through specifics found in the text. The researcher, he points out, continues this process repeatedly, examining the text for both general and specific knowledge. By relating what one finds in the text to what one already knows of the text, a tentative interpretation results. As unaccounted-for details emerge from the text, the researcher then modifies his earlier interpretation, reexamines the text and hopefully comes to a clearer, more accurate overall rendering of the text. This use of hermeneutics seems especially appropriate to me as a method by which an analysis of the fairy tale text can be made. By using hermeneutic analysis, the emphasis is upon the pattern of the whole rather than upon individual elements. Most typically, researchers look for recurring themes or phrases to first begin the job of breaking the text down into manageable segments. In addition, the subjective interpretation of the researcher is welcomed. Rather than separating one's self from the analysis in search of objectivity, hermeneutic analysis encourages an "intimate interaction" between researcher and text. As Littlejohn (1992) points out that "the text itself always speaks to us, and the job of the interpreter is to figure out

what it is saying" (p. 224). In this study, I attempted to do just that by asking the following questions:

1. What are the attributes of female role models as found in the heroines of Beauty and the Beast and Aladdin ?
2. What, if any, patriarchal themes are present in these films?
3. What are the implications of these findings for the development of female gender roles and subsequent life choices?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Film and Character Selection

Extensive research clearly reveals the presence of patriarchal messages in such tales as Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty. This earlier research focused upon several central themes such as power, male/female roles, and character portrayals which were discussed throughout my review of the literature. Because I did not expect to challenge the findings of these earlier studies, it did not seem necessary or prudent to attempt to replicate these findings for this study. Rather, by focusing my attention entirely upon the new Walt Disney film releases and the role models presented by the heroines of these films, I hoped to determine whether Disney has made any changes to the standard fairy tale story and heroine which might send young female viewers less restrictive, i.e., less patriarchal, societal messages.

In order to answer my own research questions, my first step was the selection of films. Two films were examined for this study. They were Walt Disney's Beauty and the Beast and Aladdin. I chose to utilize film versions of these tales rather than written texts as I contend that the film versions of these classic tales may represent, in reality, the form in which most children will now access these tales. With the advent of the video cassette recorder, written fairy tales may not remain as popular. Walt Disney's renditions of these fairy tales were chosen as these tales appear to be the most popular variations found in society today. Disney's tales were also selected because the Disney Studios are by far one of the most prolific producers of children's films. As I indicated earlier, I believe Disney's power and world-wide appeal make the examination of their films a critical aspect in the design of this study.

Although the title character, Aladdin, is, as might be expected, the primary character of that film, this research focused upon the heroine rather than the hero as the central character. Likewise in the film Beauty and the Beast, the heroine was my primary focus. While fairy tales may be read by both boys and girls, this study focused exclusively on the heroine within the tale for two reasons: (a) As I have argued throughout this paper, I believe that it is more likely the females, rather than the males, who experience limitations and restrictions in a patriarchal system; consequently, I am interested in the presentation of patriarchal themes for female rather than male viewers. (b) Little research has been done on the portrayal of male role models in fairy tale texts. In interviews conducted by Stone (1985), the young boys or men questioned (Stone concedes that the number of male respondents was very small) contended they could not even remember reading fairy tales or thought them so boring that they rarely requested them. From these interviews, Stone (1985) concluded that it was difficult to "know for sure whether boys consciously reject [fairy tales] because they are viewed as girls' stories, or whether choices were made on the basis of the passivity or aggressiveness of protagonists" (p.131). In any event, it becomes clear from Stone's (1985) research that young girls are the primary readers of these tales. Consequently, heroines were the primary focus of this study.

Next, identification of the heroine was necessary for each of the two films selected for this study. Consequently, Belle, the heroine of Beauty and the Beast and Jasmine, the heroine of Aladdin, were the main focus of this research endeavor. No other characters were studied unless they directly impacted upon the heroine and had to be included. Some study of other characters was unavoidable within each film as the interaction between characters revealed a great deal about the actions and beliefs of the featured character, the heroine.

Definition of Terms and Study Design

First, as might be expected, the central theme of this research study is patriarchy. I chose to utilize Lerner's (1986) definition of patriarchy as a basic definition of the term. Lerner (1986) defines patriarchy as the "manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (p.239). Operationally, any dialogue, action, or state of being (such as societal position) which gives male characters within the film authority or power over female characters was defined for my purposes as patriarchal. Examples of patriarchal influences are the use of paternal authority, legislative decrees such as laws which restrict women's choices, or basic physical control or intimidation. While my main concern was with explicit examples of these themes, symbolic or implied patriarchal messages were also annotated when found.

The unit of analysis for this study was a scene; a scene was defined as a period of time within the film in which no major changes in main characters, setting, or dialogue occurred. The entrance or departure of main characters or a significant change in setting signaled the beginning of a new scene. Likewise, a significant shift in dialogue, i.e., a change in topic, signaled a new scene thematically even though the actual physical location of the characters may not have changed.

My first step in gathering data for this study was to view each film once without notes in order to "get a feel for" the overall plot and characters within each film. This enabled me to more clearly understand the actions and dialogue of the characters as I subsequently viewed the films. Once this step was completed, several additional viewings of each film were necessary in order to identify which characters appeared at which times, for what purpose, and for what duration. I charted this data, enabling me

to quickly determine which scenes the heroine actually appeared in or directly affected, thus limiting my attention and subsequent viewing time to relevant scenes only.

Once I could determine when each heroine appeared throughout the film, the data analysis began. Charts and coding were my primary means of gathering and noting data throughout this study. In some instances, these charts provided a means of gathering quantitative data such as the number of times an action occurs while, at other times, a chart was used simply to note comparison data such as an analysis of the appearance of the two heroines—what they wore, how they appeared, how they wore their hair. In addition, I also kept track of the VCR counter in order to determine the amount of on screen time occupied by the female main character and the male main character in each film. This procedure allowed me to draw some inferences about the apparent significance of the male and female main characters to the overall plot of the film. I also created, by counter number, a simplified transcript of each film documenting who appeared at a certain time, what was said (with exact quotes, if pertinent), and what happened overall in that unit of time.

My analysis of these films focused upon the appearance and actions of each heroine as well as a brief examination of each heroine's share (percentage) of screen time. Study of the heroine's appearance included the overall attractiveness of the character, style of dress, body shape/weight as well as some analysis of the impact of the heroine's appearance upon others throughout the story. Obviously, my analysis of the heroine's appearance is subjective. This "measure" of attractiveness is a descriptive passage indicating what was worn, how the heroine appeared, and an overall impression of the character in terms of physical appearance. The inferences drawn from these impressions are qualitative in nature. I made no attempt to quantify the variable of beauty/attractiveness.

My second category for analysis was action. Certainly, the actions of any individual reveal a great deal about their capabilities, decisiveness, and motivations. However, action, as I defined it, is in the context of dependency, a learned behavior which was discussed earlier within this paper. For my purposes, I equated dependency with passivity. I define both traits as a willingness to suspend action, to wait upon others for assistance, and to defer to stronger individuals, typically males, as the doers and decision makers. Given the research on fairy tale heroines from earlier studies, traditional heroines are portrayed as passive creatures, more likely to be acted upon than to act (Lieberman 1972; Oliver, 1977). For instance, if Cinderella had made it to the ball on her own volition through the implementation of a plan rather than the assistance of the fairy godmother, I would be inclined to view Cinderella as an active participant within the tale rather than a helpless, dependent heroine who needs a fairy godmother and a prince to save her from a life she despises. With the exception of Goldilocks, and perhaps, Gretel, very few of the fairy tale heroines previously studied took any action to determine their own course in life.

While I believe that the ability to plan and prepare are also traits of an active, involved person, I chose, for this study, to concentrate most of my attention upon physical activity as a gauge of the heroines' level of action or passivity. I made the decision to focus upon the heroine physical action as I felt this design provided me with concrete, easily observed and counted examples of a personality trait that might otherwise be difficult to find and extract from the ongoing storyline. Therefore, any attempt on the part of the heroine to escape, fight, or save herself or others caused me to label that character at that moment in the story as an active participant. A heroine who tended, overall, to look to others, especially the hero, to make decisions and to take action on her behalf was labeled dependent. I was interested in the overall tendencies of the heroine rather than isolated incidents when assigning this label. However, I did

examine each scene in which the heroine had an opportunity to show independence or activity and counted those instances in which she either responded as an active participant or deferred to the hero or others for assistance. I coded this data as follows: I= Inactive, doing nothing physical, waiting; A= Active, physical activity is observable such as escaping or fighting; and D= Defer, heroine does act but follows suggestions, actions of others. This measure, then, is quantitative in nature. By counting the actual number of times the heroine either acted or waited (doing nothing concrete), the resulting percentages provided me with concrete data about the heroine's overall tendencies.

As an extension of the focus upon the heroine's appearance and level of activity, I felt it was necessary to examine the underlying narrative of each tale in order to determine the ramifications of decisions and choices made by each heroine. For instance, Aladdin's heroine, Jasmine, may reveal many positive traits such as intelligence and fearlessness, but it is my contention that while positive traits such as these are an improvement upon the portrayal of most fairy tale heroines, these traits alone are not enough, if in the end of the narrative, Jasmine is shown as a weaker character who must still be rescued by the man. A static chart of the heroine's traits cannot completely reveal the message of the film without some examination of the overall storyline and the outcome of the tale. Consequently, I developed an abbreviated outline of each film to assist readers in fully understanding the dynamics of the story and the relationship between characters.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Overview of Aladdin

Opening scenes focused upon the introduction of Aladdin and the history of the magic lamp. We immediately gather that Aladdin is homeless and steals whatever he needs from vendors on the street. Our first viewing of Jasmine finds her rejecting a suitor and we get our first indication that, according to the law, Jasmine must marry a prince before her next birthday.

Although our first few scenes of Jasmine find her crying and longing to escape palace life, this quickly changes as Jasmine acts upon her wish to leave the palace and escapes over the wall one evening. However, one comprehends immediately that life outside the palace is, in fact, foreign to Jasmine. While excited and fascinated by the life she sees outside the gate, Jasmine does not appear to understand the danger and everyday laws which govern those living within the city. Within minutes of leaving the palace, Jasmine nearly has her hand cut off when she takes an apple to give to a child and then finds that without money to pay for the fruit, she is branded a thief. If not for the timely arrival of Aladdin, who has been watching her for several minutes, Jasmine might have lost her hand—the penalty for theft within the city confines.

Because it is crucial to the plot of this film, it must be noted that another element is at work beyond the romance of Aladdin and Jasmine. Jafar, the king's evil advisor, has made several attempts to recover the magic lamp and the genie who inhabits the lamp as Jafar desires to rule and needs the power of the genie to accomplish his goals. However, Jafar has found that only one person can retrieve the lamp—Aladdin. These first few minutes of screen time for Jafar reveal to the audience a future antagonism between Jafar and Aladdin over ownership of the magic lamp.

Later in the story, Jasmine returns, rather is returned by palace guards, to the palace, when she and Aladdin are apprehended in the streets of the city. Jasmine believes that the guards are looking for her, when they are, in fact, following Jafar's orders to find Aladdin and bring him to the palace. Once she returns to the palace, Jasmine has a brief confrontation with Jafar about the whereabouts of Aladdin and is dismayed when Jafar informs her, falsely, that Aladdin has been beheaded as penalty for kidnapping her. Jasmine leaves the room in tears. Aladdin's adventure retrieving the magic lamp, meeting the genie, and making his three wishes becomes the crux of the story and consequently occupies much of the remaining film. Because these scenes do not include Jasmine and offer little additional data about Jasmine's character, a more elaborate discussion of this section of the film does not seem necessary.

Jasmine is not really seen again until Aladdin returns, disguised as a prince. After a few romantic scenes together, which I will expand upon later in my findings, Aladdin and Jasmine fall in love and tell her father that they will marry and fulfill the law.

In the meantime, however, Jafar has finally stolen the lamp from Aladdin and the power of the genie becomes his own. Through the genie, Jafar become sultan, banishes Aladdin, and makes Jasmine and her father his slaves.

There is a final showdown between Jafar and Aladdin which occupies the screen for the rest of the film. During this final confrontation between Jafar and Aladdin, Jasmine is seen only sporadically. At one point, she attempts to help Aladdin and ends up nearly dying. Consequently, Aladdin must outsmart Jafar and save Jasmine simultaneously. When Jafar makes his third wish to be an all-powerful genie, Aladdin is able to take command of Jafar and orders him to his lamp. Once there, Jafar is placed in the magical cave in the desert, locked away for thousands of years. Jasmine is saved as well at the last moment by Aladdin who finally tells her the truth that he is not a

prince but that he is instead Aladdin and he loves her. But rather than make his third wish to be a real prince and thus win Jasmine, Aladdin feels he can no longer pretend to be someone he is not. He makes his third wish, instead, that the genie be set free.

Jasmine's father has observed Aladdin's bravery, resourcefulness, and love for his daughter and determines, in the end, that as king he has the power to change any law. The king repeals the law that Jasmine must marry a prince and decrees instead that she may marry whomever she wishes. Jasmine and Aladdin embrace and are seen in the closing scene riding off on the magic carpet into the sunset.

On Screen Time Analysis

Jasmine, the female main character of the film, Aladdin, is introduced within 7 minutes of the film's beginning and appears in 21 of the 43 scenes of the movie, exactly 1/2 of the total scenes. Jasmine appears on screen for approximately 35 minutes of the film, roughly 1/3 of the film's total 90 minutes of running time. Aladdin, on the other hand, appears in the film for nearly 65 minutes, nearly double the amount of screen time as that of Jasmine's character. We might explain this difference in screen time with the simple argument that Aladdin, not Jasmine, is the film's main character. Interaction between characters, especially antagonist and protagonist, is an essential element in film making, and thus partly explains the small amount of time Jasmine occupies the screen. She is neither antagonist nor protagonist; she is the love interest.

What is noteworthy, in my opinion, is the amount of time that Jasmine appears as the featured character (no other main characters share this screen time). There are only 7 minutes of screen time in which Jasmine appears alone as the featured character. Seven minutes seems an incredibly small amount of time for emphasis upon the heroine's character. If nothing else, these scant few minutes reveal to us how insignificant Jasmine, as princess, is to the plot. A possible explanation of Jasmine's apparent insignificance comes as further examination reveals that of Jasmine's 35

minutes of total on screen time, exactly 28 of those minutes are shared with Aladdin. In other words, Aladdin appears in every scene in which we find Jasmine minus the 7 minutes Jasmine appears on screen alone. Nearly 80% of Jasmine's screen time is shared with Aladdin. It is easy to come to the conclusion that as a character within the film Jasmine has no significant purpose without Aladdin. There is no justifiable reason then to allot her character more exclusive screen time; it would seem that Jasmine hardly exists outside of Aladdin's sphere. If this data does not prove to be indicative of the significance of this film's characters, it does, nevertheless, provide additional data on the overall layout of the film.

Appearance of Jasmine

My initial impressions of Jasmine are of a strong-willed and stubborn woman with a decisively feminine physical appearance. Jasmine is portrayed as beautiful, slender, and sensual. She has very long black hair and appears to wear eye makeup, darkly lined eyes and eye shadow. Her attire is a half-top which reveals her mid-section, silk pantaloons, and jewelry such as a bracelet and earrings. Remarkably, my first thought is that Jasmine's clothing is appropriate for the Middle Eastern culture to which I infer she belongs, and yet, on second examination, it strikes me that the outfit she wears is not the concealing garments typically worn by women within these cultures but rather her dress more accurately represents the way in which we in western cultures have portrayed Middle Eastern women in our movies and television shows. Jasmine's dress is more the attire of a belly dancer or a harem girl in our low budget movies. As a matter of fact, the clothing Jasmine wears in this film is almost identical to that worn by Jeannie in the 1960's television sitcom, "I Dream Of Jeannie."

Jasmine's beauty is the first thing that draws Aladdin's attention when he sees her in the market place. Not knowing who she is, he is unimpressed by her status or wealth, but he is immediately intrigued by her appearance. Likewise, his description of Jasmine to

the genie begins with a litany of her features, "those eyes . . . that hair." It is obvious throughout the film that Aladdin is keenly aware that Jasmine is a beauty.

For her part, Jasmine, too, seems aware that she is a beautiful girl. While there are no actual scenes in which Jasmine preens or comments on her beauty, she never seems to doubt that she can attract and hold Aladdin's attention. She also uses her appearance to her advantage when she attempts to distract Jafar in the final scenes while Aladdin retrieves the magic lamp. She in effect uses her "feminine wiles" to focus Jafar's attention upon her, moving in closer to his body and stroking his face. In these final scenes I also noted some subtle changes in Jasmine's appearance. Her clothing is more revealing and her pieces of jewelry are larger and bolder such as the gold dangling earrings she wears. These changes create an added degree of sensuality and reflect, no doubt, Jafar's own fantasy of female sexuality. In this same vein, Jasmine is now enslaved in chains, Jafar's way, I would imagine, of emphasizing her position as his prisoner and perhaps additional evidence of his own fantasies. Jasmine has become Jafar's "property" and he wishes her dressed accordingly.

Actions of Jasmine

As noted earlier, Jasmine does not have a great deal of exclusive on screen time. Of the 21 scenes in which we see Jasmine, I coded 7 as inactive including scenes in which Jasmine is weeping, daydreaming, or talking. There were also several occasions in which the activity was deemed insignificant such as brushing hair, petting a pet, or handing a child an apple. While this last action, handing a child an apple, precipitated a series of events which later become significant to the storyline of the film, the act itself is unimportant for my purposes here and consequently is not counted. After "weeding out" these insignificant acts, I found that there were 12 notable (supplying an opportunity for meaningful analysis) actions taken by the heroine upon which I focus the majority of my analysis of this character. Of these 12 actions, 4 are coded as

deference actions in which the heroine either acts with assistance from another character or follows the actions of another character. These four deference actions account for 1/3 of Jasmine's total significant acts. I think it is important to note that Aladdin is the character to which Jasmine defers in all four of these instances. She refuses to defer to her father when he tells her she must listen to him and wed as the law demands just as she refuses to defer to Jafar when he tries to convince her that she should marry him.

The first action Jasmine takes occurs within moments of her appearance on the screen when she climbs the walls of the palace and escapes into the streets of the city. This first act is significant as it is the only action Jasmine takes alone. Perhaps she acts alone on this one occasion because she has no other choice; she is alone within the palace walls except for her cat, Rajah. Or perhaps this first act is taken as a dramatic first step towards a freer, bolder self for Jasmine. She has attempted to convince her father that she will not marry simply to fulfill a law and finding that her words have no effect, she determines that if she is really to lead her own life and make her own decisions, she must leave the safety of the palace and strike out after a new life. This decision may represent Jasmine's willingness to face risk and danger and to rely upon herself for perhaps the very first time.

Of the Jasmine's 12 noteworthy acts, the remaining 11 are made with Aladdin at her side. Once Aladdin enters Jasmine's life, many of her subsequent actions are made as she either attempts to assist or protect Aladdin. These acts would include using her authority in an attempt to gain Aladdin's release from the palace guards and her confrontation with Jafar over Aladdin's safety. In both of these instances and in only these two instances does Jasmine reference her royal authority as a means of enacting her will. Ironically, she does not call upon her royal authority to free herself from the merchant but rather seemingly reserves this as a means of protecting Aladdin.

In her last action, Jasmine attempts to help Aladdin retrieve the magic lamp. As I indicated earlier, Jasmine utilizes her "feminine charms" to distract Jafar, a ploy I might normally not have considered active. However, I labeled this another active moment for Jasmine for two reasons. First, it seemed appropriate that Jasmine use whatever means she could to help save herself, Aladdin, and her father. Because she was in chains, there were few legitimate options. Also, at the end of this same scene, Jasmine does show physical action when she climbs on Jafar's back when he tries to attack Aladdin.

Overall, there are 11 instances out of a total 31 in which I have labeled Jasmine as inactive (7 occurrences) or deferring, waiting for others to lead (4 occurrences). These two numbers combined represent only one third of the occasions in which Jasmine appears within the film. Logically then we can deduce that for two thirds of the film Jasmine is active in some way. What we must consider, as I've pointed out above, is the context in which Jasmine is presented in her active moments of the film. Perhaps the defining difference is not in the number of actions Jasmine takes throughout the film but rather it is in the fact that Jasmine rarely acts alone; in nearly two thirds of her on screen time she acts in conjunction with Aladdin. While there are negative themes which must be factored into the portrayal of Jasmine which I will discuss later, I find that, overall, Jasmine is an involved and active participant in the film within the limited scope in which we find her, that of love interest.

Patriarchal Messages

Marriage as a woman's destiny.

There are certainly some strong patriarchal messages within this film. The first, and perhaps most crucial for the storyline of Aladdin, is the law which requires Jasmine to marry a prince before her next birthday. This is quite clearly an example of society's control of a woman's destiny through the use of legal rulings and laws. It is

also evidence of literal patriarchal control, Jasmine's father's rule over his daughter and her decisions.

Life in a protective shell.

Perhaps a more subtle but just as pervasive patriarchal message can be found in the protective sphere in which Jasmine seems to continually exist. The message is sent that women are unable to protect themselves and must live in special spheres designated by men, spheres supposedly provided to protect rather than ostracize women.

The portrayal of Jasmine's life within the palace represents a life lived within a protected environment. In the literal sense, the walls and guards of the palace provide a secure, nearly impenetrable barrier between Jasmine and harm. Likewise, Jasmine's constant companion, her pet tiger, serves as an additional protection against danger and injury from others as Rajah is apparently part of the reason the suitor in the very first scene stomps out; Rajah has taken a bite out of his pants. Likewise, Rajah is apparently protector of Jasmine's virginity, denying Aladdin access to Jasmine's room when he appears on the balcony one night. The huge cat places herself between Aladdin and Jasmine when Aladdin unexpectedly appears and makes it clear that he may not get too close.

Rajah's duties as protector end once Jasmine accepts Aladdin. Jasmine apparently exchanges one protector for another. Aladdin has already saved her from the loss of her hand when he intervenes in the market place. Then when he reappears at the palace, disguised as a prince, he reassumes responsibility for Jasmine's protection. In this role as protector, Aladdin confronts Jafar regarding his influence over Jasmine's father and again when he releases Jasmine and her father from Jafar's magical spell. Aladdin's protection of Jasmine is seen in concrete, tangible acts in which physical protection is paramount.

While Jasmine receives physical protection from Rajah, and then Aladdin, she is further protected by her position as princess. Her bewilderment as to the laws of her very own city is a real indication of how little she has experienced of everyday life. She has no need of money, earning it or saving it; she is unused to paying for what she wants or paying the price for breaking the law. When she sees the child in the market place and, perhaps rightfully, assumes that she is hungry, she simply reaches for the first food that she sees and hands it to the child. She is used to immediate gratification, living in a world in which she is waited upon by others.

Women as commodities.

The message here is that women have value as "property" and can consequently be traded from man to man as the men who "own" them see fit. Jasmine, as princess, has no understanding of the laws of her country nor is she aware of the issues which affect her people and the quality of their lives; this is evident by her actions when she enters the city. These issues are unimportant as Jasmine's future position as queen will be a token position without power, without the authority to rule. The responsibility for ruling the kingdom will be her husband's, following the death of her father. This law which requires females in the royal line to marry (even against their will) exists so that the kingdom can ensure a male successor. Jasmine is simply part of the package awarded to the man she marries; the future king receives wife, kingdom, and power through his marriage to the princess.

Several suitors arrive eager to marry her—sight unseen. We must assume, then, that there is something more than her beauty or intelligence or sense of humor that draws these men as they have apparently never met her until the day they arrive at court. While it is not verbalized during the film, it seems safe to assume that Jasmine's dowry and the chance to rule her father's kingdom make Jasmine quite a catch.

Jasmine's value to her kingdom is as a precious commodity to be bought and sold rather than an independent, contributing member of society.

Women and the romantic adventure.

Disney makes the distinction throughout this film that it is men who have the adventures and moments of great action. The message inherent in this distinction is that women may only experience adventure through their men. Throughout the film Aladdin is involved in one long adventure as he finds the lamp, meets the genie, returns with three wishes and the chance to woo Jasmine, and finally overcomes Jafar in order to win not only Jasmine but a new, improved life as future ruler. And yet, even before Aladdin finds the lamp, he experiences an adventurous life on the run in the city as he gleefully outwits palace guards and angry merchants.

Jasmine, on the other hand, has only three isolated chances at adventure. The first occurs when she climbs the palace walls in order to experience life outside her normal sphere. In this first situation, Jasmine's adventure is quite brief. Almost as soon as she enters the city and meets Aladdin, she is returned to the palace by guards. Along with the brevity of her adventure, Jasmine's foray into the city must also be classified as unsuccessful as it almost ends in the loss of her hand. The only positive aspect of her experience is her acquaintance with Aladdin and their subsequent romance.

Jasmine's second adventure occurs with Aladdin by her side as they travel on the magic carpet. The ride on the magic carpet allows Jasmine, for the first time, glimpses into life beyond the palace, beyond the small kingdom in which she lives. She sees the beauty of the desert and the wonders of other lands; yet it is her relationship with Aladdin which has made all this possible, not her own determination to experience life outside the palace. Without Aladdin's presence at her side, she would never have had the opportunity for such an experience on her own.

And last, Jasmine has the chance for adventure in the final scenes when Aladdin and Jafar battle for the lamp. As I have pointed out earlier, Jasmine does her part to save herself and those she cares for, but this adventure, if we can call it that, is a dark adventure almost entirely beyond her control. Jafar holds her captive first in chains and later imprisoned in the hourglass and the difference between success and failure in this adventure is life or death for those she loves. At the end of this scene it is Aladdin rather than Jasmine who finally bests Jafar and who ultimately experiences any thrill of victory or self-satisfaction.

Overview of Beauty and the Beast

Aptly enough, this film begins with the familiar fairy tale introduction "once upon a time" as we are introduced to the Beast and the circumstances surrounding his enchantment. However, within two minutes of this opening scene, Belle takes the screen, complaining of life within a "poor, provincial town." We find that Belle has accompanied her father, an inventor, to this town while he completes his latest "great" invention. Belle spends her time reading the few books she can get her hands on in the town and appears to be a bit strange to the townspeople. Belle continually longs for freedom and adventure in these first opening scenes, complaining that there must be more than this life that she has now.

While the character of Belle is developed, we are also introduced to Gaston, the town's hunter, bully, and resident egotist. Gaston shares almost as much screen time as do Belle and the Beast as he is the antagonist for the Beast and helps create a romantic triangle for the film. Gaston, however, wishes to marry Belle as she is the "most beautiful girl in town," almost as "beautiful as me" he sings at one point. Gaston is portrayed as handsome and vain and more interested in impressing Belle with his looks and his brawn than his intellect. In fact, when Belle tells him he is "primeval," he is unsure of the word and accepts it as a compliment. When Gaston proposes marriage to

Belle she looks for an inoffensive way of saying no, simply replying that she is not worthy of Gaston. Gaston determines that he will have Belle as his wife at any cost. He then begins to plot how he might wed Belle.

Belle's father must be noted at least briefly as he is the reason that Belle and the Beast eventually meet. Other than that, he has no real purpose in the film. When the father finally perfects his invention and heads off to the fair to reveal it, he makes a wrong turn and ends up a prisoner of the beast. Belle, naturally, searches for him when his horse and wagon return home alone.

Once Belle finds her father locked in a cell within the Beast's castle, she agrees to stay with the Beast in exchange for her father's freedom. Her father is then sent home where he attempts to convince the townspeople of the Beast's existence and his need to rescue Belle. Thinking him insane, the townspeople laugh and throw him out where he aimlessly wanders until he falls ill and lays helpless in the snow.

While the father is attempting to gather help to rescue Belle, Belle has decided to go exploring in the west wing, the only part of the house expressly forbidden by the Beast. In doing so, she enrages the Beast who loses his temper to the point that he frightens and offends Belle and she runs out of the house, announcing she will not stay despite giving her word.

The next few scenes are some of the most suspenseful from the film. As Belle leaves the Beast's castle on her father's horse, they encounter a pack of wolves who chase Belle on horseback until they frighten the horse and dislodge Belle. Belle must then attempt to fight the wolves off with a large branch she finds in the snow. At just the last moment before it appears the wolves will attack, the Beast suddenly enters and begins fighting off the entire pack single-handedly. In the end, the Beast is able to beat off the wolves but he is also wounded and collapses to the ground. Belle somehow

manages to get the unconscious Beast on her horse and returns to his castle where she thanks him for saving her life and renders first aid to his wounds.

The next portion of the film centers around the growing friendship between Belle and the Beast and her efforts to "civilize" him. She begins showing him the proper way to eat—even if one is a Beast—and coaches him on ways to befriend the wild birds in his yard. A friendship appears to be forming as they play in the snow and sit by the fire, reading.

Certainly, one of the greatest appeals of the film for young viewers must be the numerous "servants" within the castle who have all been affected by the spell cast on the Beast and who now are objects rather than people within the house. The butler, for instance, is now a clock and the housekeeper has become a teapot. Much of Belle's on screen time while at the castle includes these servants turned possessions.

The film reveals that the spell on the Beast and the other inhabitants of the castle can be broken if the Beast can find someone who is willing to love him as he now is and who he learns to love in return. Consequently, everyone within the household sees Belle as a way to break the spell and they encourage the romance between Belle and the Beast. Unfortunately, as the Beast is about to declare his love for Belle, Belle finds that her father is very ill and needs her. The Beast agrees to release her and she returns to the village to care for her father, taking with her a magic mirror which allows her to view anything that she desires.

As Belle attempts to nurse her father back to health in their home, they find that Chip, a magical teacup from the castle, has stowed away in Belle's bag. Just then, Gaston and the director of the asylum arrive, indicating that Belle's father must be committed. They cite his rambling on and on about a wild beast as proof of his insanity. Gaston reveals to Belle that he might be able to clear up this "misunderstanding" about her father if she will agree to marry him. Rather than accept Gaston's offer, Belle uses the

magic mirror to prove that the Beast truly exists and to convince the crowd that her father is not insane. Once the townspeople see the Beast, Gaston convinces them that he is dangerous and that they must kill the beast before he finds their village and kills them. Belle tries to convince the townspeople that the Beast is harmless and that he has become a kind and gentle creature. Gaston is concerned that Belle has fallen in love with the Beast when he hears these words and whips the crowd into a frenzy. Gaston locks Belle and her father into the cellar as the crowd goes off to kill the Beast.

As the villagers arrive at the Beast's castle, the enchanted inhabitants of the castle rally together to protect their home, fighting off the intruders. In the meantime, Belle and her father escape the locked cellar when Chip uses the father's invention to break the door down. Belle then hurries to the castle to warn the Beast.

As the townspeople are bested by the inhabitants of the castle and flee, Gaston goes in search of the Beast. Gaston sees the Beast as another trophy for his wall, and the Beast, so saddened by Belle's departure and his fading chance to break the spell, seems resigned to dying. He makes no attempt to save himself until Belle arrives at just the last moment, urging him to save himself. The Beast then fights Gaston but spares his life when Gaston pleads for mercy. In the end, however, Gaston is killed after he falls from the castle wall after mortally stabbing the Beast.

Belle begs the Beast not to leave her as she declares her love for him and the spell is finally broken. The Beast becomes a handsome prince, the other household members take on human shape again, and Belle and the Beast are apparently wed. As the film ends, Chip, now a small child, asks his mother if Belle and the Beast will live happily ever after. His mother replies, "of course, my dear, of course."

On Screen Time Analysis

Except for the first few minutes of the film's opening when we are told of the legend of the Beast, Belle appears on screen immediately. Belle is, in fact, on screen for

a total of 50 minutes and 40 seconds of the film's total 84 minutes of running time. Belle appears in 84% of the movie's total minutes. Belle actually appears in a larger percentage of the scenes than does the Beast, the film's male main character. Perhaps this is simply because the Beast is not introduced until the second half of the film when Belle goes in search of her father. The Beast is on screen only 29 minutes, 47% of the film's total.

While Belle's total on screen time is impressive, especially given the significantly lower numbers and percentages discovered in my analysis of Jasmine's on screen time in Aladdin, I think it is important that we delve further to determine what percentage of time Belle is cast as the featured character, appearing without another main character in the scene. This heroine does, in fact, appear as the featured character for 29 minutes or 48% of the time. Again, this number is quite a departure from the data found in Aladdin. Belle is on screen without a male counterpart four times longer than Jasmine's brief 7 minutes. Belle is featured for a full 1/2 of the film.

What, though, do these number tell us? Again, these results cannot be verified until a comprehensive analysis of the heroine is completed; however, it seems fair to assume that Belle is a more substantial character in this film than was Jasmine in Aladdin as Belle occupies 3/4 of the film's running time. Such emphasis upon one character is surely indicative of that character's significance to the tale. The question is whether Belle's fair share of featured screen time is indicative of a more equal representation of the heroine. To find an active and involved heroine occupying such a huge percentage of the film would certainly be a departure from expectation. A more detailed analysis of the quality of her on screen time will require examination of other dimensions of the character.

Appearance of Belle

Belle is quite modestly dressed with long sleeves, a skirt that extends to her calves, and hair pulled back in a bow at her neck. Her dress is simple and unrevealing and is often covered with an apron. Admittedly, Belle is beautiful, but whereas Jasmine's beauty was of a sultry, sensual kind, Belle's beauty is portrayed as genteel and understated. Perhaps one of the least obvious references to Belle's beauty is that of her name, which is French for beauty. Belle has large brown eyes and delicate features and a slim physique beneath her simple dress. The physical features which I came to associate with Belle were her eyes and her hair and the one lock of hair that continues to escape its band to fall into her eyes, suggesting that Belle has a casual indifference to her appearance. Belle is continually brushing at that lock. Just as surely, Belle is portrayed with a book in hand. Within her very first scene, we find her headed to the bookstore to exchange books. I mention Belle's books within this section on the heroine's appearance as it strikes me that this emphasis on her stray lock of hair and her absorption in books aids Disney in its portrayal of Belle as a bookworm. Belle is the first heroine who reveals an intellectual side of her character. Belle's character is not a femme fatale or a royal princess which may account for Disney's decision to downplay her beauty and to emphasize this bookish side of her character.

The focus on Belle's beauty comes from the other characters within the film. I believe the following verse of song sheds some light on the way others see Belle:

"Now it's no wonder that her name means beauty, her looks have got no parallel.
But behind that fair facade, I'm afraid she's rather odd, very different from the
rest of us is Belle It's a pity and a sin [that] she doesn't quite fit in, but she
really is a bonnie girl, a beauty but a funny girl..."

For the townspeople, Belle's beauty and her actions apparently are contradictory. It is almost as if they believe that a beautiful girl should have better things to do than read and spend time alone. This belief is verbalized by three young girls who note that Belle

is crazy when she refuses to spend time with Gaston. For these characters, Belle represents an oddity, a departure from the acceptable patriarchal norm. Perhaps in our culture we find this same mentality in the dumb blonde jokes which insinuate that a beautiful girl cannot be an intelligent girl.

Likewise, the character Gaston describes Belle as the "most beautiful girl in town" which appears to be the only reason that he wishes to wed her. It becomes apparent from their interaction that they have no other common interests or dreams. Gaston sings "from the moment when I met her, saw her, I said she's gorgeous and I fell. Here in town there's only she who's as beautiful as me" Gaston equates beauty with being the best, effectively relegating Belle to the category of a beautiful prize to be won. For Gaston, Belle represents yet another trophy, someone who makes him look good. While Belle appears totally unconcerned with appearance, Gaston is completely taken with appearance.

Even the Beast is caught up in Belle's beauty as one who fears he can never win her because she is so beautiful and he is so ugly. He says of Belle, "She's so beautiful and I'm, well look at me . . . I'm just fooling myself; she'll never see me as anything but a monster." While Gaston feels sure that he can win Belle because he is so beautiful, the Beast is equally sure that he cannot win Belle because he is so disfigured. Each of them is initially drawn to Belle's beauty; however, it is the Beast who eventually grows to love Belle for much more than her appearance. Gaston never makes any attempt to see Belle as anything but a beautiful girl worthy of him.

Actions of Belle

While Belle appears in 31 of the total 52 scenes of the film, approximately 60% of the scenes, she has occasion to act or not act a total of 67 times. For instance, Belle is ordered by the Beast to leave the castle when she first comes looking for her father. She has the opportunity at that time to leave and return with assistance in freeing her father

but instead she acts immediately and offers herself as a prisoner in return for her father's freedom. She had the opportunity, then, to either act or flee and she chose to act. Another example of this is found when the Beast orders Belle to stay in her room. Belle could choose to follow this command and to fall asleep crying but instead she leaves the room and tours the castle. Again, she chooses to act rather than remain passive. Of these 67 occurrences, I have labeled Belle an active participant in 48. This number reveals to us that Belle is active 72% of the time. Conversely, there were only 16 occasions coded as inactive and a scant 3 occasions labeled as deference actions or those actions in which the heroine follows the lead or suggestions of another.

I noted that the three actions labeled deference actions were the type of actions one might expect from anyone in normal circumstances. In other words, the heroine within this film does not exist in a continual state of deference; when she follows others, it is because it is the logical course of action rather than because it is the patriarchally acceptable course of action. For instance, in her first deference act, Belle follows the Beast as he leads her to her room when she first arrives and agrees to take the place of her father as prisoner in the castle. Not knowing her way around the castle, following the Beast is a natural and expected course of action.

Belle's other actions are a strong and positive departure from the actions of other fairy tale heroines. First, Belle tends to be a more physically active heroine, almost from the start. On her way to the bookstore, we find Belle hopping on the back of a wagon as she nonchalantly hitches a ride and again, in the bookstore, when she jumps on the ladder and slides the length of the bookcase in another carefree act. Belle is also one of the few heroines to be found in an actual adventure scene in which she performs with bravery, intelligence, and common sense rather than simply standing by in a state of panic or distress. In the scene where Belle is chased by wolves and then has to fight them off single-handedly, she reveals a woman who will fight for her life until the very

end. She is not one who simply accepts her fate; she does everything in her power to change her situation and to protect herself. We find her an experienced horseback rider as she forges a river and maneuvers through the pack of hungry wolves. While Belle is ultimately saved from the wolves by the Beast, who arrives at just the last minute, Belle has shown herself to be a brave and resourceful heroine who protected herself rather well despite the odds. And although the Beast is the one who saves Belle here, it is Belle who somehow gets the wounded Beast on her horse and safely returns him to the castle.

It is also Belle, in the end, who saves the Beast's life. This is simply unheard of in the Disney genre of fairy tales. What other heroine physically saves the hero? Yes, other heroines save the hero in a metaphysical sense through their unconditional love and commitment, but it is practically unheard of for a heroine to save the hero from physical harm, let alone death, as Belle does. As the Beast climbs the castle wall to the roof, he is struck from behind as Gaston stabs him in the back with a large piece of pierced metal. Gaston then loses his balance and begins to fall backwards, taking the Beast with him as he clutches the Beast's clothing. Just as the Beast is about to fall backwards towards certain death, Belle reaches out and grabs him, pulling him back to the safety of the tower roof. Belle, with this action, has perhaps made fairy tale history.

On the opposite side of this portrayal, I found 16 occasions (24% of total occurrences) in which I coded Belle's responses or lack of responses as inactive. These 16 occurrences included actions such as reading, talking, crying, and daydreaming as well as some miscellaneous activities. Belle is coded as inactive, then, 1/4 of the film, based upon my definition of terms and my coding system. This percentage is still acceptable in my opinion as it means conversely that Belle has shown herself an active heroine in the remaining 3/4 of the film.

Patriarchal Messages

Women in traditional roles.

Some of the most pervasive patriarchal messages found in this film are expressed through the apparent beliefs and the statements of the character Gaston. One of the most obvious patriarchal messages sent by Gaston is that women must hold traditional roles such as wife and mother and that these traditional roles should bring ultimate satisfaction and happiness to a woman. Gaston, as the bearer of these patriarchal themes, is himself a traditional figure--masculine, virile, and handsome. Gaston wants a traditional girl who chooses wife and mother over all other roles. Gaston wishes to marry Belle because she is "the most beautiful girl in town." Likewise, he doesn't want her reading as "it's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas, thinking" Gaston wants a "little woman" who stays home and has his children and cares exclusively for his needs. When Gaston describes the ideal wife to Belle, he talks of someone massaging his feet, cooking his latest kill, and tending to his brood of 7 or 8 children. Belle appears to understand only too well what Gaston expects from a wife and rejects immediately any suggestion that she could be that wife. She sings at one point, "Madame Gaston, his little wife No sir, not me, I guarantee it. I want much more than this provincial life "

Unlike Jasmine, Belle suffers no threat of a forced marriage; marriage is not an issue in this film at all except for Gaston's schemes to marry Belle. While Gaston presents his views on traditional roles for women, he is the sole conveyor of this message. Belle's father is, for the most part, apparently unconcerned about Belle's marital status and thinks little of her "odd" lifestyle; perhaps because he too is an oddity and lives a life quite different from the general populace. As an unsuccessful inventor, he seems to be used to a certain amount of ridicule and yet he continues to work on his

inventions. He may be partly responsible for Belle's strong sense of self and her ultimate belief that it does not matter how one appears on the outside; it is what is on the inside that counts. After all, he represents a role model who follows his own dreams despite the reaction from others.

Likewise, the Beast and the enchanted servants of the castle seem to have no real concern for the marital status of Belle or the Beast. The servants are concerned with the two falling in love in order to break the spell, but they represent a select few in the fairy tale world who do not naturally assume that marriage follows love. In fact, it is never really verbalized at the end of the film that Belle and the Beast wed. We must assume that this is so as the last scene shows the two wearing crowns, but there is no climactic scene in which the two declare themselves eternally bonded.

Women and the romantic adventure.

Although there is little emphasis upon marriage within this film, there is quite a bit of emphasis upon romance. The Beast is advised by his "servants" that he must woo and romance Belle if she is to ever fall in love with him. Comically, his French servant shares with the Beast his belief that flowers and candy and insincere promises are the way to win a woman's affection. The Beast is also instructed that courtesies such as "please" and "thank you" are imperative if he is to gain approval. In essence, his servants provide comprehensive instructions on the etiquette involved in romancing a woman.

There is a series of images of the two having candlelit dinners, dancing in the moonlight, and reading by an open fire. There is also a scene in which the two play in the snow and from which we get our first impression that Belle is falling in love with the Beast. Admittedly, there also seem to be some shared interests between the two such as a love of books, but suddenly Belle, who is eager to find adventure and to travel to far off places, exchanges these dreams for a seemingly isolated life with the Beast in his

castle. Belle apparently becomes completely focused upon her relationship with the Beast.

Women and self-sacrifice.

While Belle appears content with her life with her father, we discover almost immediately in the first scene that she is deeply unhappy about living in such a provincial town. While we have no information about Belle and her father's earlier residences or lifestyles, it seems certain that Belle is used to following her father around while he works on his latest invention. They are obviously newcomers to the town, there only until her father perfects his invention. It seems safe to assume then that Belle has been asked before to sacrifice her own preferences for those of her father. Obviously, it is not her preference to live in this town; she has made that clear. And it is a certainty that Belle has not been able to pursue her own dreams of adventure as long as she allows her father to follow his dreams of fame. Belle is apparently schooled in the ways of self-sacrifice, choosing her father's happiness over her own.

Perhaps this is why, upon finding her father imprisoned by the Beast, she immediately assumes the only way to save her father is to take his place. The Beast does not offer to exchange Belle for her father; it is Belle's own suggestion. Belle apparently never considers any other options. She could have easily returned with the townspeople to storm the castle or she might have offered something else in exchange for her father's release. Belle is forced, perhaps not so much by the Beast or by circumstances, but rather by her own sense of familial duty to give up her dreams for the freedom of her father. Her father's safety is paramount to her own. In making this choice, she in fact chooses a life far removed from the one of which she has dreamed. Her desire to find "adventure in the great wide somewhere" is traded in for life as a prisoner in the Beast's castle. In this one act, Belle makes the ultimate sacrifice, sacrifice of self.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Appearance of Jasmine

In the results section I pointed out the discrepancy between the reality of women's dress codes within a Middle Eastern country and the appearance of the character, Jasmine, within the film. I believe that it is significant that this discrepancy exists. Even if we can concede that Disney's expertise in film making is in their creation of beautiful and magical animated characters and worlds, we are left to wonder whether the presence of beautiful heroines and handsome heroes is perhaps a prerequisite in the entertainment field. That is certainly one of the contentions of Naomi Wolf's (1991) "beauty myth." Perhaps it simply never occurred to Walt Disney to create a heroine who wasn't beautiful. After all, if they are to follow the existing trend in fairy tales, our fairy tales testify to the fact that all heroines are beautiful; that's how we immediately identify who's who in the story. The beautiful girl must be the heroine while the ugly characters must as surely represent the witches and the evil stepmothers and the jealous siblings. Anyone who has read enough of these tales knows this to be true.

Then what can we glean from this continued practice of portraying our heroine as the most beautiful girl within the tale? First, we can probably infer that appearance continues to be an important ingredient in the portrayal of women in our society. Just as Wolf (1991) posits, the measure of a woman's value increases incrementally with her beauty. It would appear that our culture has not been enlightened adequately enough to risk creating a heroine who is less than beautiful, indeed a heroine who might more realistically represent the average woman within our culture today. However, one

aspect of Jasmine's appearance is noteworthy. Jasmine is one of the first fairy tale heroines to represent a woman of color; Jasmine represents the Hispanic or Latino culture with her exotic looks and almond-shaped eyes. While Jasmine's coloring, her black hair and eyes and darker complexion, is racially consistent, I noted that Jasmine did not have an accent and her coloring seemed to be minimized as if Disney did not want to create a heroine who strays too far from her predecessors—white, English-speaking beauties with classical features. What Disney has given us is exactly what we still expect— a beautiful, feminine heroine. Apparently, our expectation of how a heroine looks is no different today than it was fifty years ago when the characters Snow White and Cinderella were created. These first heroines were just as slender, beautiful, and appealing as Jasmine with the same flawless skin and shiny hair. We identify with beauty. I contend that it would be unnatural for us within our beauty conscious culture to create or accept a heroine who was plump or unattractive, to want someone who was, in fact, anything less than perfect.

Actions of Jasmine

Throughout my analysis of Jasmine's actions, I often found that what she said yielded some valuable insight into the reasons behind her actions. Beginning with her first scenes alone in the garden of the palace and then again with Aladdin in the streets of the city, Jasmine stresses her desire for freedom. She indicates that she has "never done a thing on my own" and expresses a wish not to be a princess anymore if it means being shut away from life. When she does escape the palace, she leaves declaring that she "can't stay and have her life lived for her." Likewise, in her scenes with Aladdin after they first meet, she tells him that she doesn't feel free to make her own decisions; she feels trapped. In fact, Jasmine feels an immediate affinity with Aladdin for that very reason; Aladdin reveals that he too feels trapped in the life in which he finds himself. As they talk, Aladdin and Jasmine find a similar bond in their desire to find a new life. Yet,

we have already seen that Aladdin goes on to actively pursue a new life, finding a career (future ruler), a home (palace), and a wife (beautiful princess) as a result of his actions. Jasmine, on the other hand, escapes briefly and then returns to the life she apparently so desperately wanted to leave, gaining only a husband as a result of her excursion into the city. It becomes obvious that while Jasmine expresses the desire to be free and to explore the world outside of the palace, her actions inevitably lead her back within the palace walls. Since the primary reason Jasmine left was to avoid marrying, we find that there is a notable difference between what Jasmine says and what she does.

I have concluded that the incongruity we find here is symptomatic of an internal conflict within Jasmine. She longs to do something thrilling, something different. And she does take some risks. Her decision to leave the safety of the palace and to go into the city alone is a decision to try something new, to go on an adventure, and to determine what else there is in life. Likewise, her attempt to distract Jafar while Aladdin steals back the lamp is potentially very dangerous. She has already witnessed the power Jafar possesses through the genie and she knows to anger him will only bring more punishment; however, she makes one last attempt to do her part to change the situation in which she finds herself. Although, perhaps inevitably, Aladdin is the one to finally best Jafar, Jasmine, for her part, has not perpetually stood by wringing her hands while the man saves the day. And while Jasmine's trip into the city proves less than successful as I have indicated, at least she takes the chance. In both situations, Jasmine does not ultimately succeed and there is perhaps a message being sent there that men succeed where women fail, but Jasmine has at least made the attempt. What message would we be sending to young girls if they learn that the only risks worth taking are those that lead to success? Unlike her earlier heroine peers, Jasmine does take some

action rather than standing by in a perpetual state of passivity throughout the entire film.

Perhaps the clearest action Jasmine takes is in her acceptance of Aladdin. Jasmine strenuously objects to her father's insistence that she wed a prince before her next birthday. She says in several places that she wants to marry for love and that the law is wrong if it means she has to marry someone she doesn't love. In one of her first scenes, we find that she has rejected a suitor who she deems, an "overdressed, self-absorbed prince." She is apparently not blinded by appearances or wealth. When she does make her choice, she chooses out of love rather than materialistic gain or even societal pressure. While marriage is an inevitable conclusion in fairy tales, Jasmine apparently weds Aladdin because he possesses the qualities and characteristics she desires in a mate. Unlike Cinderella and Snow White who choose the first prince who happens by, Jasmine has many choices and chooses only when she feels the right one has come along. Jasmine overrides cultural expectations as well as the wishes of her father and acts as she wishes in this instance, making the choice she feels is most appropriate for herself. While this choice may not be one many feminists would applaud, it is a choice consciously made and carefully considered. We have no way of knowing if Jasmine later regrets giving up her chance to live a different, freer life or if she lives happily ever after as is the right of all fairy tale heroines. Nevertheless, in this final act, Jasmine reveals a decisiveness and an independence too rarely seen in fairy tale heroines.

In the end I found Jasmine to be a contradiction. She never "saves the day" although she does make the effort to do so. She never follows through with her escape to a different lifestyle although she appears happy enough with her final outcome. She does not escape marriage although she freely chooses to wed Aladdin. It is difficult to determine whether Jasmine is simply unsure of her own wishes or if meeting Aladdin

redirects her desires. In either instance, Jasmine probably acts much as anyone else would. Circumstances come along which force us to amend our initial decisions, to make changes in our plans. And just as surely, we often find something more attractive or desirable which causes us to yet again change our original intent.

Patriarchal Messages

Life in a protective shell.

Just as the walls and the guards are there to protect Jasmine from intruders, it would appear that keeping outsiders from coming too close to the princess is also one of Rajah's primary responsibilities. Jasmine may now, consciously or unconsciously, use these protections from the outside world as a shield against intimacy. I imagine intimacy at any level is difficult if one needs to contend with a fiercely protective tiger at all times. Jasmine has obviously used the cat as a means of ridding herself of unwanted visitors; there is at least the one scene in which a rejected suitor flees the garden after Rajah "plays" with him. However, with the arrival and acceptance of Aladdin, we find that these earlier forms of protection (walls, guards, and tiger) are no longer needed. Jasmine exchanges these forms of protection for the protection of a man.

Throughout the film, Aladdin is the male protector who swings into action whenever needed. While Aladdin quickly and competently saves Jasmine from having her hand cut off in the market place, Jasmine is portrayed as horrified and shaken and apparently unable to protect herself from the impending catastrophe. And when Aladdin must again save Jasmine from death in the final scenes of the film, we have the message of man as protector yet again. Jasmine is portrayed as a helpless female always in need of protection and salvation from someone stronger and smarter, in particular, a man. Yet this portrayal is realistic when we realize that Jasmine's decision to escape the palace is made without preparation. She takes no time to truly plot her course, to plan an escape. She impulsively vaults over the wall one day without money or destination.

Consequently, we find her in need of rescue within minutes of entering the city. Perhaps if Jasmine had been sheltered less in the confines of a palace, she might be more prepared to deal with these problems and find within herself the abilities needed to take care of herself.

In some ways, Jasmine's status as princess has provided the ultimate protection; her role protects her from the real world. Jasmine is protected from the realities, indeed the harshness, of life but more than that, she has been isolated within the palace and is consequently unacquainted with the issues which affect the people outside the palace walls; issues such as hunger, homelessness, and fear. She is a prime example of the girl Rivers et al. (1979) speak of who has enjoyed a prolonged childhood protected by men. As much as she longs for it, Jasmine is afraid of the unknown world outside of her protective enclosure.

Perhaps she is less afraid of what she will find out "there" than of what she might discover about her own inabilities and insecurities. Jasmine's venture into the city has already revealed the hardships of a life on one's own. Jasmine has found that surviving outside the protection of the palace walls is much more than she anticipated; suddenly the initial excitement of exploration has taken on a new and scary light. To truly be on her own, Jasmine must do without all of the things she once took for granted—food, shelter, luxury, and safety. And she will need to call upon internal strengths she has never required of herself before. Likewise, to embark upon this path means estrangement from her father, her only family. Accommodating to this new role as explorer means giving up everything that is familiar and safe. There is certainly some assurance in knowing the path one is expected to take, no matter how disagreeable; fear of taking the wrong path and thus taking sole responsibility for the way one's life turns out is often a greater deterrent than any external obstacle.

Marriage as a woman's destiny.

While we can perhaps justify the marriage custom portrayed here as simply in keeping with the customs of the represented culture, the message is sent that ultimately a woman is meant to marry; it is the natural order. Jasmine's life choice centers around who she will marry—not if she will wed but when and to whom. Likewise, at no time during the film are we told what other choices Jasmine may have if she does not abide by this law. This omission is significant. It signifies that there are no other choices. Jasmine does not seemingly have the luxury of sifting through her options to determine what it is she wants from life. She is to marry a prince. I feel certain that young girls viewing this film will not comprehend the omission of choice nor Jasmine's lack of options but instead will envy Jasmine's chance to marry Aladdin, a handsome, adventurous man who would do anything to win her. It is doubtful that young girls viewing this film will understand the implications of this message, but surely exposure to these types of messages, messages that place no censure on customs and beliefs which allow men dominion over women, help set the stage for acceptance of similar messages as they come along throughout life.

Women as Commodities.

If we take these conclusions one step further, it becomes clear that it is the role(s) one assumes which determines what an individual knows, who she knows, and perhaps ultimately, the person she will become. In many ways, it is the societal role that Jasmine assumes which determines who she is. Jasmine is never allowed to leave the palace and her role as princess whether for her own protection, which I discuss, or because others feel she has no place in the world outside that clearly defined role. Jasmine's value within her culture is as a princess in search of a prince, someone who can rule her father's kingdom after his death. No thought is given to Jasmine's value as a

person, who she is or what she could become. She is merely part of a parcel; a beautiful extra in a trade among men. As princess, Jasmine is a "token" of the kingdom, representing the place and the mode by which man can rule. If, however, Jasmine lived in a society which valued men and women equally, Jasmine would be the future ruler of her father's kingdom. In the role of ruler, Jasmine would by necessity become a different person. She would immediately take on a higher value within her culture, receiving the respect accorded to those who possess power and authority rather than the token "respect" she is shown as a member of the royal household. Likewise, her needs would most certainly change. She would need to become an active participant within her life rather than a passive bystander. As a princess enclosed within the palace, she had no real need to understand the protocols and responsibilities inherent in the role of ruler. As ruler, however, her need to know how her city functioned and how she as ruler affected the lives of her servants would take on paramount significance.

Women and societal roles.

If we further extend these conclusions to women today, we find it remains true that the role a woman plays in society does determine to a large extent who she is. For example, those women who assume the role of stay-at-home mother may have no pressing need to understand the stock market or the latest computer software. For those women, other needs take precedence such as child rearing practices. But at the moment such a woman enters the workforce, her new role as employee requires an understanding of things once considered unimportant or unnecessary. Perhaps then, understanding the latest computer software determines if she will remain employed; her new role creates new needs. Likewise, the new role may initially be awkward and unsettling for both the woman and those around her. Friends and family may feel left behind as she moves into a new world; male co-workers may feel threatened by a new competitor or resent her intrusion into their world. Jasmine is nothing more than a nuisance to Jafar until she

attempts to leave the role of princess and involves herself within the affairs of the palace, Jafar's affairs. While she remains the dutiful daughter, she is doted upon and granted her every wish. Once she reveals that she will not obey and marry a prince as the law requires, she suddenly finds that even her loving father becomes less than pleased. It is once she ventures out that she becomes a threat to the men in her world and to their "business as usual" lifestyle.

Perhaps the warning Jasmine, and women in general, receive from this film is that women's incursion into areas deemed "men only" is perceived as a threat to the men in their culture. Jafar doesn't want Jasmine to leave her role as princess; he certainly doesn't want her to realize how completely he controls her father and how much authority he has within the kingdom. Aladdin, with loving concern, is equally determined to return Jasmine to her role as princess, and ultimately wife, and just as surely pushes her back within the confines of the palace. Even knowing Jasmine's hunger for a freer, bolder life, Aladdin never suggests that they flee together and start over in a brand new place. Aladdin wants Jasmine, but just as surely, he wants to experience life as a prince in a palace. Aladdin's needs are reflected as more important than Jasmine's needs.

While women may no longer receive overt messages that they are restricted to certain, predetermined spheres, it is not as easy to control the attitudes of individuals or groups of men who send the message to "stay out" every time a woman executive earns less money for the same job; every time a woman is denied a deserved promotion; and every time an advertisement portrays women as objects, trinkets, if you will, merchandise. This insidious message to stay where one belongs is a reality for too many women within our society today.

Consequently, women who take on new roles and enter new spheres may experience a longing for the old role and the safety found there. While the stresses of the

new role may initially create this yearning for a return to the familiar, it may be, in actuality, the "not welcome" message sent from those within the new sphere that makes accommodation of the new role impossible. Lerner's (1986) assertion that men and women are expected to function in different and separate spheres is justified by this film. If, as she contends, a woman's sphere is comprised of the personal and private aspects of life such as romance and relationships, a whole other world is left unexplored. Young girls who buy into this myth of separate worlds and separate actions for men and women must necessarily limit their options. And yet, it is in the act of venturing out, leaving the protection of "home," that a woman finds new challenges. While women may encounter threat in the new role, more importantly, they may also encounter adventure.

Women and the romantic adventure.

Perhaps Jasmine's decision to marry Aladdin is as much from the romance and the newly found wonder she experiences with him as from the belief that she is now ready to cast aside her earlier reservations and marry. Aladdin's decision to take Jasmine on a magic carpet ride is perhaps significant. This ride signifies Jasmine's first taste of magic and romance. None of the other suitors had the advantage of such a romantic, magical ride to woo the girl. They apparently never got beyond the walls of the palace, a place Jasmine was all too familiar with already. Her longing for adventure and freedom was fulfilled in Aladdin. Jasmine would have never been able to experience the magic carpet ride or the genie and the lamp without Aladdin. With his permission, Jasmine is able to sample a bit of the life Aladdin has as an adventurer. The implication is that women are not expected to have adventure in a "man's world" without special invitation and protection by the man and that women can find the adventure they need through their men.

This sentiment is echoed by Radway's (1984) study of romance novels in which she found that the heroines of these novels apparently experience ultimate enrichment

and happiness through their care of and attendance on the man in their lives. The myth is perpetuated in this fairy tale that romance is a woman's ultimate adventure. Perhaps this myth is accepted by so many women because the socialization process for women has fostered the belief that men, as I noted earlier, are freer to explore their surroundings, even as toddlers. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to experience adventure through their relationships with men rather than on their own. All too often, then, women are left dependent upon men if they are to access places beyond their familiar "palace" walls. What a sad existence one might have in such a life of perpetual waiting, ultimately missing one adventure after another under the false impression that life cannot fully begin until one is found by a man.

This belief in adventure through romance becomes an effective means of controlling what women will do and what worlds they will explore if the only access they believe they have to other worlds is with a man at their side as guide. This male guide then has the power to dictate what spheres can be entered, when, and for how long. Women who buy into this myth are not likely to explore alone, never developing the talents and traits necessary to be a successful explorer, traits such as determination, self-reliance, and autonomy. Jasmine is a prime example of such a woman as she never goes exploring again, at least, never on her own. All her future journeys are at Aladdin's side. Aladdin and whatever adventure she might experience in her life as his wife became an acceptable substitution for her own exploration.

Jasmine as Role Model

The ideal image.

Disney's portrayal of this heroine simply perpetuates the belief there is an ideal shape and an ideal image for which we must strive. Jasmine is portrayed in revealing clothing even when it sharply contrasts the clothing women wear within the culture represented. As might be imagined, Jasmine does not represent a strong role model in

this area. As I discussed in the section on body image, young girls feel tremendous pressure to attain the same perfection as that offered by the role models they find in magazines and television, a quest which is largely unattainable for most young girls (and women) in our society today. Rather than utilizing these early years as a time of growth and exploration and a time to perfect one's natural talents and capabilities (the pursuits of most young boys in our culture), our little girls are focusing their efforts on ensuring that their appearance is acceptable to the society in which they live. Little girls as young as eight and nine claim they feel the need to diet if they are to measure up to society's expectations.

While I cannot say in actuality what message the little girls watching Jasmine will receive, they will almost certainly identify with her as there are no other female role models in the film. If, however, they are to make this identification based upon appearance, they are embarking upon a long and potentially dangerous journey as it will take an enormous effort on their part to develop and sustain the ridiculously slender physique portrayed by Jasmine here. Likewise, those young girls who cannot attain the same type of beauty as this character will all too likely feel some sense of personal failure and disappointment when they find that not everyone can be the "sultry" beauty. Jasmine is perhaps the only heroine within the Disney films who can represent the Middle Eastern or Latino cultures with her darker complexion and almond-shaped eyes. Disney not only perpetuates the myth of the ideal woman, but we find as well that this message of feminine perfection apparently crosses all cultural boundaries. As a consequence, young girls of many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds will look to Jasmine as a role model. This is regrettable as Jasmine's appearance represents an image most young girls should not strive to attain.

Women as a weaker sex.

Jasmine does not portray a role model that attests to a woman's ability to protect herself. While physical protection may not always be possible for a woman against a man, the implications made within this film are that women are unable to function outside "appropriate" roles, indeed, outside familiar walls. Jasmine does not seem prepared to use any resources to save herself when needed. In the city when she is about to lose a hand, she doesn't seem to have the presence of mind to declare herself princess and save herself. Yes, she is in the process of escaping from the palace, but surely escape becomes a lesser goal when threat to one's safety is involved. Aladdin, on the other hand, has the presence of mind to swing from his perch on the rooftop, stop the lowering of the knife, and save the girl with a hastily concocted story all within the same amount of time.

This example of the difference between Aladdin and Jasmine is more than that of a princess and a boy of the streets. There is the implication that the male is necessarily street smart with quick reflexes honed by getting out of situations in which the odds were against him. The female, on other hand, is portrayed as unprepared to deal with tense situations, seemingly unable to act even in the case of self-preservation, and in desperate need of protection. There is a message here that women cannot be expected to take care of themselves and why should they have to when the men in their lives can more than successfully take on that role. Men as the "stronger" sex are able to care not only for themselves but for their women as well.

True to one's self.

Jasmine's determination not to wed simply to fulfill the law and please those around her presents her in a more positive light. She reveals a strength in this instance that encourages young viewers to remain true to their values and beliefs and not to allow

societal pressure to force them to do something that they believe is wrong for themselves. While it is perhaps unfortunate that Jasmine shows this determination and strength only in the area of marriage, it may be that young girls can carry this example over into other aspects of their lives. With the extraordinary amount of peer pressure young people experience today, Jasmine is a true role model of the importance of being true to one's self and making one's own decisions. While this message emphasizes the importance of knowing one's deepest desires and standing steadfast against cultural influences from significant others within one's sphere such as peers, family, and institutions, its importance is diluted by the ultimate outcome of the film when Jasmine does in fact marry Aladdin. As I indicated earlier, although Jasmine does ultimately marry, she does so to please herself and she chooses whom she will wed. However, young girls viewing this film may not understand the fine distinction made here. The issue of choice and the freedom to choose may not be a message as clearly received as the message that marriage is an inevitable end result.

Appearance of Belle

I found the portrayal of Belle as an intelligent, brave, and active heroine, who also just happens to be beautiful, a positive departure from the earlier Disney films. Whereas I argued that young girls viewing Jasmine in Aladdin were presented with an unrealistic image of the ideal woman's body and a perhaps unhealthy sense of self in comparison, Belle's appearance teaches that one can be both beautiful and intelligent, both beautiful and strong, both beautiful and active. It is my hope, then, that beautiful young girls may come to the realization that they can be more than a pretty face, that they should be equally concerned with gaining knowledge and focusing on the complete person rather than the exterior person. Likewise, those young girls who cannot meet

the ideal standards of beauty may be reassured through Belle of the fundamental truth that it is what a person is within that truly matters.

Disney makes no attempt to portray the heroine within this film as anything but an intelligent girl who just happens to be beautiful. In this film, Disney redeems itself through its portrayal of the heroine as more than a pretty face. As I noted in my analysis of Aladdin I felt Disney disregarded the norms of the represented culture in order to portray Jasmine in a scantily attired costume which emphasized her femininity and figure. However, Belle is modestly attired and represents a different type of heroine, at least as far as appearance goes. Yes, Belle is beautiful and I have yet to find a Disney heroine who was not, but at least with this film, Disney has chosen to portray Belle as an intelligent girl with much more going for her than her social standing or her appearance. I received the impression from the film that Belle is unconcerned with her appearance as is evident by the stray lock of hair we so often see and her apparent indifference to the whispers and glances of the townspeople who talk of her beauty and charm. Belle appears to be unconcerned with appearances in general. She does not swoon at Gaston's feet simply because he is handsome and virile. Likewise, once Belle overcomes her natural fear of the Beast, she looks beyond his appearance to the person within.

Actions Of Belle

In what appears to be an act of rebellion or perhaps stubbornness, Belle makes the decision to investigate the west wing, the forbidden wing of the house, on her own. There are several things I find significant about this action. First, Belle has already experienced the anger of the Beast and knows of his insistence that she not go into the west wing. It seems remarkable then that she is apparently unafraid of the Beast or the consequences of angering him. She comes across as quite self-sufficient and willing to take a risk to quench her curiosity. She has been given the freedom to investigate all of

the castle except for this one wing. Perhaps this is her way of announcing that she will do as she pleases and will not be bullied. Belle chooses to explore the house and to have an adventure despite the possible negative consequences. This act, which began as an act of deference, ends in the portrayal of Belle as a determined and confident explorer, a characterization rarely, if ever, seen in Disney heroines. All in all, this one action reveals a persistence on the part of Belle not to allow potential fear to rule her actions. Whereas Jasmine abandoned her dream of freedom and adventure when she allowed fear of the unknown to take over, it would seem Belle's natural curiosity and obstinance help her to overcome this same fear in order to experience a bit of adventure—just as any fairy tale hero would.

The noteworthy aspect of some of Belle's earliest actions such as hitching a ride and sliding on the library ladder is that there is a carefree, happy quality to her movements. Belle appears free and unrestricted and happy with who she is. While she tells us immediately that she is not happy with her life in an "unprovincial town," she appears happy enough with the way in which she lives her life. Her actions tell us that Belle is a heroine who does as she chooses even when those actions are labeled odd by those around her. While the townspeople find her love of books and her more solitary lifestyle odd, it does not seem to impact Belle's actions. She continues to behave in the same way each day. Belle does ask her father at one point if he thinks she is odd. Her father, an outcast himself, is amazed that anyone would think his daughter odd. While I did not include an analysis of his character in my study, it is worth noting that his reaction to Belle's question is to immediately ask about Gaston and any possible relationship Belle might want with him. He suggests through this response that Belle might be happier if she made an effort to fit in, to find a man. Belle accepts her father's reassurance but does not let his response or that of the townspeople's change who she is, how she acts, or what she does with her life.

Belle has spent time with the Beast confronting him, teaching him, and caring for him; in essence, Belle has "tamed" the Beast through her actions. Her focus seems to include both the emotional and the social aspects of the Beast's character. These actions include nursing the Beast, teaching him manners, and instructing him in the art of compromise and self-control. Most of these actions are stereotypically female in nature and seem to symbolically suggest the division of traditional male and female attributes. The Beast, as are men in general, is stereotyped as typically unconcerned with many of the social codes of conduct while Belle is seen as more skilled in expressing emotions and caring for others, typical female stereotypes. I will discuss women in the role of caregiver in more detail in the themes section of this chapter; however, for now, it seems that Belle and the Beast are contrasts, portraying opposites in the world of male and female roles.

Patriarchal Themes

Women in traditional roles.

Disney's portrayal of the Gaston character does by its very sense of exaggeration and brutish mannerisms manage to cast Gaston in an unflattering and archaic light—as if he holds views that are no longer fashionable. Perhaps Disney allows the Gaston character to express all of the old-fashioned, patriarchal views as they have no need, then, to defend the messages he sends when it is clear from their portrayal that Gaston is a villain. I have come to the conclusion that it seems likely that young viewers, while not completely understanding the attempt to portray Gaston as boorish and unenlightened, will understand at the root of the film that Gaston is a "bad guy" and will hopefully comprehend that his actions and values do not ultimately win him the girl.

While the message from Aladdin was that of women as commodities to be traded in a marriage, there are some important differences in the messages from this film. First, in Aladdin we found that the heroine's only choice was the traditional choice of

matrimony; marriage was the sole destiny of the heroine and the focus of the entire film. As my discussion of that film revealed, Jasmine was treated as a commodity, a possession to be traded from one man to another. However, in this film, Belle is seen as a commodity only by Gaston who views her as yet another trophy for his ego. The only real similarity between these two films is that in both films it is the men who advocate marriage as an inevitable and expected role for women. In Aladdin Jasmine's father seemed to represent an entire culture in his belief that Jasmine's destiny was to marry. Jafar is equally concerned with Jasmine's marriage to him as he hopes to gain more total control and power through his marriage into the royal family.

Women and the romantic adventure.

While Belle focused upon adventure and travel as a means of escaping her life in a provincial town, perhaps what she really dreamt of was romance. Earlier in the film Belle talks of her favorite book, one she's read over and over, which talks of far off places, magic spells, and a prince in disguise. She even indicates that her favorite part is where the girl "meets Prince Charming." While outwardly, Belle desires freedom and adventure, internally, her dreams seem more traditional. It almost seems as if the Beast fulfills both dreams in Belle's eyes. Life with the Beast in the enchanted castle would certainly be an adventure, complete with magical spells and unbelievable creatures. And it would certainly be a novelty; I doubt Belle would be able to travel anywhere else and find a life more exciting. Just as Jasmine found adventure with Aladdin, magic carpet rides and visits to unbelievable worlds, Belle experiences adventure not only through life in an enchanted household but also through her "taming" of the Beast.

What if the greatest adventure for Belle came in taking a hideous, angry Beast and helping him to become the "perfect" man? It is possible that deep down Belle sees

the possibility of a "prince in disguise" just as her favorite book describes and takes on the challenge of molding the Beast as her ultimate adventure. Such a decision is not unheard of even in modern times. It seems too often women fall in love with the rebel, the one man in their lives who is detached and seemingly unattainable; such a man is the proverbial challenge for a woman. Likewise, victims of spousal abuse far too often indicate that they excused the abuse always believing that their spouse would change, that with enough love and care from them as wives, they could create the needed change within their husbands.

Women and self-sacrifice.

I have already pointed out how several of Belle's acts are those of caregiver and teacher; Belle spends most of her time with the Beast attempting to change him and better him. In many ways, the Beast and his servants already see Belle as their savior; she can break the spell. But more than that, Belle can save the Beast from himself. Just as I indicated that Belle physically saves the Beast, she is also responsible for spiritually saving the Beast. Belle is the harbinger of hope for all who live within the castle. The Beast is unloving and unlovable until Belle teaches him to love. In fact, the spell upon the Beast and his castle is a direct result of his inability to love and care for others. The spell cannot be broken, so we're told, until the Beast can learn to love and be loved in return. Perhaps Belle sees her ultimate adventure in saving the Beast.

While this film does promote the values of self-sacrifice and love for others that outweighs one's own happiness, the theme of self-sacrifice is found in our culture much too often in women's decisions rather than men's. While it is important, in my opinion, that all children, male and female, learn the values of love and caring and self-denial, the message is sent here that it is Belle's duty as a good daughter to sacrifice herself. I doubt that a son would have offered himself as the solution to his father's imprisonment. I imagine a man would have battled the Beast for his father's release or returned to the

village to enlist aid from the townspeople. This same theme of self-sacrifice was found in a lesser degree in Aladdin. When the palace guards corner Aladdin, Jasmine's first instinct is to gain his freedom by revealing herself as princess. And yet, in revealing herself at that moment, Jasmine gives up any chance she had to escape her restricted life— all for a man she has only known for a few minutes. What a potentially damaging message these heroines send with such an action. Young girls receive the message that sacrificing all in the name of love is both heroic and romantic.

However, this willingness to give up one's dreams and plans seems unnecessarily final. Surely, there were other actions Jasmine and Belle could have taken to gain the freedom of Aladdin and Belle's father. If not, we are then forced to face the conflict between taking care of one's own interests and leaving others to care for themselves. Women are so routinely the caregivers in our society, asked too frequently to tend to others at the expense of self. Or perhaps as is the case often, women take on the role of rescuer even when it is unnecessary and unwise because that is a familiar role, a role that fits. Even in the short amount of time Jasmine has known Aladdin, it should be clear to her that he is quite resourceful in his own right. He has outwitted and outrun anyone who threatened him before. However Jasmine considers none of these things when she denies her own dreams in order to save Aladdin. Likewise, Belle sees herself as the answer to her father's predicament. Both heroines are too quick to offer themselves as the only solution to the problem at hand. Fostering the growth of others is certainly admirable until it begins to interfere with the personal growth of the individual. These two heroines both sacrifice all at the expense of self. In Beauty and the Beast, Belle doesn't attempt to storm the castle later with the townspeople to free her father. Nor does she try to persuade the Beast to let her father go for other reasons. She immediately offers herself as the only possible answer to the problem. Surely, it is not necessary for her to sacrifice all in order to win her father's freedom. In agreeing to

stay with the Beast, Belle sacrifices not only her freedom and perhaps personal safety, she sacrifices her dreams as well.

Belle as Role Model

More than a pretty face.

Overall, I found that Belle is portrayed as a free entity with a strong sense of self and a strong sense of value. Belle is not swayed by peer pressure. This fairy tale heroine represents, perhaps for the first time, a whole person rather than a beautiful girl. She thinks, she acts, and she is instrumental in the design of her own life. Fate or a fairy godmother does not intervene to fulfill her wishes. The prince does not have to come looking for her; she finds him and saves him in the process. Belle is not dependent upon society's approval; she determines the type of woman she wishes to be and never wavers from her true self. While there are a couple of areas, as I have mentioned above, where Belle is a less positive role model, she does still manage to represent a realistic and healthy model. In 50+ minutes of on screen time, she is consistently successful in portraying a heroine of which we can be proud.

An astute judge of character.

What a person is within is perhaps the single most important truth of this film. All of the characters within this film teach us in some way that appearances are misleading. Not all who appear beautiful are good and not all who appear in monstrous form are bad. Belle, for instance, sees beyond Gaston's handsome exterior to the selfish and vindictive person within. Belle rightfully determines that Gaston is the true monster based upon his actions rather than his appearance. She chooses instead to look beyond the Beast's outward appearance and to find the goodness and gentleness within. While her child-like dream is of a handsome Prince Charming, she apparently releases that romantic notion and comes to accept the Beast as he is. She sings, "true, that he's no Prince Charming, but there's something in him that I simply did not see." Belle

epitomizes one who consistently sees the deeper truths within a person rather than relying upon the outward appearance as a guide. Belle is consequently an astute judge of character and a positive role model in this regard.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

In each of these fairy tales, we find that the heroine has the potential to be a strong role model. Jasmine never quite lives up to that potential. With one shaky step, she ventures beyond the palace walls only to run, disillusioned, back to the safety of her protected world. She is not strong enough to yet cope with the reality of life outside the protected role of princess. Perhaps she never really wished to be more than princess; she simply wishes to find her own mate—which she does. However, Jasmine is limited by her fear of the outside world and lacks the determination to succeed in a new environment. Perhaps for Jasmine it was as Dowling (1981) suggests, "when the first thrill of freedom subsides and anxiety rises to take its place, they [women] begin to be tugged by that old yearning for safety: the wish to be saved" (p. 70). Fear, and the wish to be saved, effectively prevents Jasmine from living the life she wanted.

Belle, on the other hand, seems to always live up to her potential. She understands herself and her wants much more clearly than Jasmine and she has an internal strength of character to guide her steps in that new, unfamiliar world. Rather than shrinking from the unknown, Belle embraces it. I think the one defining difference between the two heroines is Belle's strong self-esteem. Belle trusts her instincts and acts each time it is necessary. Belle believes that she knows what is best for her own destiny and shapes that destiny rather than waiting for a man, a fairy godmother, or anyone else to magically create a place where she can belong. She finds a way to belong, to be true to herself, wherever she finds herself.

Dependency and passivity are alien to Belle's nature. As Adams (1990) points out there is a tremendous difference between passivity and receptivity. Passivity is all about waiting, standing by, hoping for something or someone to come along to free self. "Receptivity is readiness to possibility" (Adams, 1990, p. 22). Everything has the

possibility to expand our world, our ideas, our selves. In other words, everything that comes along in a life has the potential to be a positive influence. Belle lived her life in this manner. Rather than hiding in her room, a prisoner in the Beast's castle, Belle chooses to explore this new world that she finds herself in, open to the possibilities around her. Rather than giving in to fear, Belle sees imprisonment in the castle as a challenge, an opportunity to discover something new and exciting. Belle is confident of her ability to navigate in the world she finds herself; thus, she can afford the luxury of exploring the "great, wide somewhere."

Just as Dowling (1981) and Adams (1990) suggest, women's dependency can be crippling, negatively influencing the choices and decisions women make. Jasmine's growing dependency upon Aladdin prevented her dreams of a different, freer life from becoming a reality. By pinning all of her hopes and dreams upon her relationship with Aladdin, Jasmine not only forsakes her earlier dreams, she influences her future decisions and choices as well. Once Aladdin entered her world, Jasmine's decisions and the choices she made became dependent upon Aladdin's presence, Aladdin's strength. Aladdin will now rule the kingdom and make the laws. It seems inevitable that Jasmine will once again find herself alone in the garden, perhaps with children to care for or a dinner to plan, but we can only wonder if Jasmine will ever receive a second chance to become a strong, independent woman who finds herself treated as an equal, shouldering many of the same responsibilities as Aladdin in the care and maintenance of a kingdom. Or will the relationships in her life be enough to sustain her present happiness? For a relationship is all Jasmine gains from venturing out into the world.

Future Implications

I undertook this study with great fear that I would be unable to contribute significantly to any academic discussion of an issue as complex as men and women's gender roles and the continual interaction of these roles as they are defined and redefined

in our society today. With the innocence of a beginner, I chose to focus my attention upon certain dimensions of the heroine's character, believing these components would reveal much about the fairy tale heroine and the overall role model she presents to young girls. With the completion of this study, I feel it is necessary to point out at least one important limitation I have since become aware of in my study.

I found that my definition of action as a physical occurrence ignored the heroine's use of voice as an effective means of involving herself and solving problems. This "flaw" was especially profound in my analysis of Jasmine as I found she was a much less physically active heroine and was perhaps, as a result, more prone to use her voice in her attempts to protect and fight for herself and her needs. Ignoring the times when Jasmine used her voice as a means of controlling her fate meant ignoring important scenes in which verbal interaction was the only way in which the heroine attempted to act. A prime example of this occurred each time Jasmine had a conversation with her father about the issue of an arranged marriage. First, she tries to reason with him; next, she attempts to coax him into letting her do as she pleases; and finally, she expresses her decision to outright defy him if he continues to push the issue. Because there was no physical action taking place in these instances, I noted these occurrences but did not chart them or allow for them in the overall analysis of the heroine. My design, in effect, left unexplored the entire issue of voice and the means by which women use this as an extension of self and in the resolution of conflicts. Gilligan's (1982) work on voice would be just the beginning of such an analysis.

The entire issue of voice as an expression of who a woman is and how she works within as well as outside of her cultural boundaries also involves other symbolic forms of action which would further expand the notion of appropriate and healthy role models. I believe an important future study could reexamine these same two films from other perspectives. Appearance as I used it within this study leaves untouched the symbolic

nature of a woman's dress and grooming habits within a culture and what those habits express about the culture. Likewise, this study leaves unexplored the racial and lesbian influences of our society. As I pointed out in my introduction, this study represents the perspective of a White, middle class female and was consequently conceived from that perhaps limited world view.

I would be particularly interested in how one of Disney's newest releases, Pocahontas, fares in its portrayal of the heroine in so much as Pocahontas represents an actual historical person. One would hope that the historical aspects of the tale would be preserved so that the characters within this story act appropriately, true to the real-life people they portray. It would be especially interesting to focus upon any changes Disney made in the overall portrayal of the woman or in the overall plot of the film. As we saw in Aladdin, there was a departure from the cultural norm in Disney's portrayal of Jasmine's attire. A study of Pocahontas would also allow another opportunity for focus upon race and culture and communication. As Pocahontas and John Smith do not even speak the same language, at least initially, much might be discovered about the symbolic nature of communication and communication that crosses cultural boundaries.

The message of this paper may seem somewhat hopeless to many who are concerned with these issues. Clearly, we have not advanced nearly as far in our liberation of women as we might have thought or as others might have wanted us to think. In nearly every aspect of life, women are still struggling for equality. While the researchers cited within this paper found ample evidence of the negative influence of patriarchy, many supply as well possible solutions to some of these obstacles. They argue that many women today, much like Jasmine, are caught between the need to be independent and the desire to be cherished and protected as a fairy tale princess is cherished and protected. Buying into the myths perpetuated by fairy tales and romance novels, many women find it hard to shake the subtle longing they encounter which makes

life seem not quite realized, not quite enough. Not living the fairy tale life, they have a nagging sense that something is missing, that there is something magical that is supposed to happen . . . eventually. Freeing their psyche from these romantic paradigms as Rowe (1979) suggests is critical, yet difficult.

Dowling (1981) argues, however, that women can work through the internal conflict they feel, the conflict between dependency and independency, if they are really willing to change. She contends that

the conflict between wanting to be free and wanting to be enclosed and protected is insidious because it carries with it a hidden gain. Conflict allows us to stay exactly where we are. The condition we admit to wanting—independence—acts as a cover for something we want just as much but can't admit to: dependence—the need for delicious, primal security. With these two opposite wishes driving us, we get to stay in limbo. Limbo has its advantages. It may not be very hot, but neither is it very cold. It isn't exciting, but neither is it quite the same as being dead. (Dowling, 1981, p. 208)

How then can we resolve this conflict? Adams (1990) believes that to free themselves from the "Sleeping Beauty syndrome," women must rewrite the myth, replacing the ending of the fairy tale with an acceptable, real-life conclusion.

When you rewrite the myths you live by . . . and create new metaphors that speak to the capable, adult woman you are today, something magical [does] happen; you move the power to create the life you want from outside to inside of yourself. (Adams, 1990, p. 26)

Yes, this may be an avenue of change for adult women who now wish to become the independent, autonomous women they have always known they could be. But how can our children avoid the illusions of the fairy tale narrative before they become sold on the fantasy of a protected life complete with a storybook ending?

There are so many ways in which we can strip the fairy tale of its hidden power. The most obvious is to instill in young girls a strong sense of self, to teach them that fairy tales are nothing more than entertaining stories which are in no way connected to life in the real world, and to reveal to them the internal power they possess when they take responsibility for themselves and learn to make strong, intelligent decisions,

despite the messages they receive from the society around them. Pipher (1994) argues that young girls need to realize all their possibility and in order to do so they need to read more stories about strong, intelligent women; they need to see more women in a variety of roles; and they need to find their true self and stay true to that self no matter what. I'd like to think that these changes are possible.

In the very beginning of this paper, I focused upon the continued oppression women still face in our society today, how the legal system has failed us, how the old boy network has continued to thrive underground, and how the glass ceiling remains nearly as impenetrable as it was the day the first woman entered a male dominated workforce. But all around us there have been positive, if small, changes in the ways in which men and women interrelate. We are now more aware of the joint construction of gender in which men and women together determine what is appropriate within their own lives and within their own households. Many of the stereotypical boundaries of gender roles have also been blurred, if not obliterated. Homosexuality has assisted in the redefinition of male/female roles and traits and has overturned our once linear view of sexuality and the balance of power within sexual relationships. These changes have not occurred overnight and represent years of struggle and oppression. Yet, I am hopeful that in breaking down these boundaries we break down all boundaries including those that still work to the disadvantage of women, that still work to the disadvantage of the poor, and that still work to the disadvantage of all who are different.

I am hopeful as I see changes in the fairy tale heroine, changes which provide acceptable role models for little girls. I am hopeful as I see new tales being written for little girls to replace the old fairy tales, tales which place girls in adventures and mysteries, allowing the girl, not the boy, to save the day. I am hopeful as I see the cover of the June 3rd issue of People magazine which focuses upon the issue of celebrity role models and the image they provide of the ideal body, the perfect body, and the dangers

inherent in such a message. I am hopeful when I hear female vocalists questioning the myths in the songs they sing. Surely one of the most appropriate verses I have recently heard is found in a song by Susie Bogus which asks the question:

"Hey, hey, Cinderella, what's the story all about?
Maybe I lost a page or two somehow.
Oh, Cinderella, maybe you could help us out.
Does the shoe fit you now?"

This song questions the fairy tale illusion of life and confronts the differences in life as Cinderella lived it and life as normal, real women live it everyday. It asks why is it that our lives have not turned out as Cinderella's did. But rather than question how we went wrong, it asks instead if perhaps Cinderella found that the role of fairy tale princess was not the role she most desired. Did she in fact find that glass slipper began to pinch, too tight for the life she ultimately wanted to live? Susie Bogus' song asks the questions a generation of women have begun to ask. This song gives me hope that the Cinderella fairy tale (and all the others like it) have begun to lose their appeal as we begin to question just how high a price it is for us as women to live the fairy tale life and how good a fit it really is in the glass slipper after all.

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