PASSIVELY EVER AFTER: DISNEY'S CINEMATIC ABUSE IN *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

by

Erin Michelle Lederer

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Director of Thesis: Dr. Eric Shouse

Major Department: Health Communication

This thesis examines the manner in which Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* cultivates stereotypes and gendered behaviors consistent with domestic violence and thereby encourages viewers to accept and tolerate abuse against women. Chapter 1 includes a literature review highlighting gender themes and the film's influence on children. I argue that due to the dangerous, constricting, and sexist gender roles encouraged by the Walt Disney Corporation, films like *Beauty and the Beast* prime young girls and boys to react to social situations and encounters in a way that mirror the characters' reactions. Because of the films' entertainment value, most of the characters' inappropriate, stereotypical, and often violent behaviors either go unnoticed or are passively accepted. The violence does not have to be blatant nor physical to have a detrimental effect. Passive and indirect acts of violence, such as bullying, ostracism, and criticism, pave the way for physical violence (Muscio, 2010). Therefore, a central argument of this thesis is that our culture desperately needs to broaden the way we conceptualize violence. The chapters that follow provide a unique feminist critical analysis that draws upon domestic violence literature to argue that *Beauty and the Beast* is an example of cinematic abuse. I propose that cinematic abuse occurs when viewers accept the dominant readings encouraged by films like *Beauty and the Beast* and are thereby coerced into entering into metaphoric domestic violence

relationships with Disney. As I dissect the themes and scenes within the film, Walker's (1979) book, *The Battered Woman*, is used to support the argument that cinematic abuse victims (viewers) and abusers (the film) mirror the behaviors and reactions of actual domestic violence victims and abusers.

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APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: _____
Eric Shouse, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Deborah Thomson, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Todd Fraley, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Michael Tierno, MFA

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION:

_____
Linda Kean, PhD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

_____
Paul Gemperline, PhD

“If I didn't define myself for myself,

I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.”

-Audre Lorde

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

One boring day, in the early months of 2010, I was browsing Facebook when I noticed a "fan page" titled, "Rihanna wants a rude boy...Didn't she get her ass whooped by one already?" My immediate thought was: "Why is this funny? Why is this a group?" I began reading the user comments, hoping there would be retorts about the offensive nature of the page (there were a few), but to my surprise, most people seemed to think the page was humorous. Even women were making comments about how funny the "catchy" title was and how Rihanna deserved the abuse she endured from Chris Brown in 2009. I was speechless. How are we supposed to even begin the fight to end domestic violence when other women not only condone it, but joke about it? I was left with a question that has shaped my current research agenda: Why do people find others' pain to be humorous?

I became a devoted advocate for the victims of domestic violence three years ago after taking a 16-week domestic violence course as an undergraduate. Throughout the years I have been faced with a lot of sad stories, resistance, and rejection. I've learned to disconnect my emotions from the actual acts of violence in domestic violence cases. As a result, I can handle a lot of messed up shit. I can understand the cognitive processes of women who take back their abusers. I've learned the psychological reasons men abuse women (power and control). But what I can't understand are all the other people—the people who turn the pain victims suffer into a joke, the ones who think abuse is tolerable. It's the coldness and bitterness I see from other human beings that baffles me. Seriously, even the abusers in domestic violence cases go through a "honeymoon" phase in which they feel regret for what they have done (Walker, 1979). The creators and members of this Facebook "fan page" don't even appear to feel that much. Do I find

domestic violence sad? Absolutely, but I find it even sadder that we have people who do not. We have people who validate the way an abuser already makes the victim feel: helpless, deserving of the abuse, undeserving of love, and trapped. Thus, it wasn't the direct acts of violence that inspired me to write about domestic abuse. It was the realization that the communication of "outsiders" can play a significant role in the cycle of violence that takes place in abusive relationships.

Scapegoating and victim blaming help to promote patriarchy by making domestic violence a woman's issue, and encouraging people to ignore the bigger problem of socially constructed masculinity. Therefore, any serious attempt to end domestic violence will require our patriarchal society to analyze its members' behaviors and attitudes, and the long-standing misogyny that exists within it. Muscio (2010) supports this notion of cultural evaluation when she notes, "Examining our culture/environment and understanding how and why we produce such individuals [abusers] is therefore key. Holding ourselves accountable for the violence we perpetuate goes hand in hand with this examination" (p. 71). There are many factors that contribute to our cultural and social scripts, but given the 120 percent increase in media depictions of violence against women, this thesis will focus on one element of the mass media's contributions to domestic violence (Muscio, 2010). The media influences our society, our attitudes, our gender development, and our behaviors—all of which consequently affect our language and views about domestic violence.

This thesis will focus primarily on film media because our cultural norms, stereotypes, and attitudes are deeply ingrained in film. Movies promote patriarchal myths and gender stereotypes on a regular basis. While there are hundreds upon hundreds of movies I could use as supporting evidence for the claims made throughout this thesis, I have chosen to focus on films

that help instill patriarchal values: Disney's classic animation films. The reason for this particular selection is Disney's target audience: children. Disney's characters teach children how to behave as an accepted female or male in our culture (Kuykendal & Sturm, 2007). In fact, I would argue that for many young Americans, Disney has become a rite of passage into adolescence. The nostalgic memories of growing up watching *Bambi, Dumbo, The Little Mermaid, Pinocchio,* and *The Beauty and the Beast* resonate in the minds of my generation.

My discussion of the relationship between Disney and domestic violence will begin with a literature review summarizing the work of some of the foundational theorists who have critiqued the gender roles presented by Disney, analyzed the genre's influence on children, and criticized Disney's patriarchal domination. In the analysis section, I will provide the research method, scope and significance of this study. Directly following, I will argue that due to the dangerous, constricting, and sexist gender roles encouraged by the Walt Disney Corporation, the classic animated films prime young girls and boys to react to social situations and encounters in a way that mirrors the characters' reactions. Because of the films' entertainment value, most of the characters' inappropriate, stereotypical, and often violent behaviors go unnoticed. The violence does not have to be blatant nor physical to be characterized as such. Passive and indirect acts of violence, such as bullying, ostracism, and criticism, pave the way for physical violence (Muscio, 2010). Therefore, a central argument of this thesis is that our culture desperately needs to broaden the way we conceptualize violence. The aforementioned forms of non-physical violence enable discussion about cinematic abuse as it relates to the characters and the gender roles they promote.

Female viewers can easily become entranced by the princesses' thin waists, big breasts, perfectly symmetrical faces, and sweet voices—character traits that seem to attract nearly every

male character in the films. Despite the lack of scholarly discussion in regards to the male viewers, they, too, may experience feelings of admiration for the heroes' muscular statures, defined jaw lines, dominant gazes, and hypermasculine auras. This was Disney's intent. The Disney characters are vehicles for traditional, sexist gender roles to be presented in a seemingly innocent fashion. The princesses and the heroes that save them epitomize the gendered behavior that creates submissive women and dominant men. By viewing those characters, young audiences see and learn problematic behavior, sexist gender roles, and dangerous decision-making skills. Whether antagonists or protagonists, the characters are seductive, adorable, and charismatic, which allows their stereotypical gendered behavior to fly under the radar. They have the power to persuade audiences to accept gender roles, sometimes even despite deeply held beliefs, goals, values, or attitudes.

In this sense, Walt Disney's characters *are* the passive violence. The animated, hand-drawn figures are nothing more than a mask for oppressive gender roles that encourage male dominance and female submission. Each time the audience sees a character locked away in a castle, cursed by an evil witch, or criticized for being different, they are experiencing passive violence. That passive violence then becomes cinematic abuse as the audience members learn to reject the behaviors and attitudes that lead the characters to experience any form of indirect aggression or isolation. For example, in *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle's love for books leads her to be ostracized by the whole town. As a result, young viewers may see academia and interest in scholarship as a potential cause of disparagement. When one exhibits the behaviors in question and internalizes the character's suffering and grief, he/she experiences cinematic abuse. The young female audience member who possesses the same love for reading recognizes the isolation

Belle experiences and may believe that she, too, must abandon her passion or ultimately face the same vilification.

Given that Disney has built a trustworthy reputation in our society, a relationship with children that has a strong bond, one could compare it to the relationship of a victim and the abuser. Despite the cinematic abuse, we return to Walt Disney time and time again. Essentially, each Disney princess and hero are the same; the specific, archetypal character traits shown in nearly every classic Disney film enable cinematic abuse. With each sequential film, the loved characters differ in hair color and costume, but rarely in behavior. Without the characters and the conventional, patriarchal messages they send to young children, cinematic abuse cannot exist.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Groundwork

Before diving into the literature on media effects, I will first introduce the foundational theories that helped set the stage for current media effects research. Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory explain the way in which viewers are affected by media and how those mediated depictions influence the audience's attitudes and behaviors. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura (2009) after the emergence of the cognitive psychology field, is a learning theory that claims people learn behavior vicariously through an intertwinement of behavioral, personal, and environmental factors. What makes this theory unique is that it breaks free from the unidirectional causation model that is often used to describe human behavior and, instead, suggests that those three determinants influence each other bi-directionally through their interaction with each other (Bandura, 2009). For that reason, Social Cognitive Theory works best when applied to human development, behavior, learning, and media violence/sex effects as it addresses the multifaceted elements that affect who we become

(Bandura, 2009). More specifically, cinematic abuse works though a film's utilization of social and environmental stereotypes; therefore, by using SCT for support, it allows a compendious analysis of film as it relates to a larger, guiding structure.

Moreover, SCT asserts we learn vicariously by observing others' behavior, whether it is through the media or direct contact (Bandura, 2009; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Because of life's limitations, we cannot experience everything in the world, so we can forego the troubles of trial-and-error by looking to others and media to define situations (Bandura, 2009). Because of their pervasiveness, the messages the media send society can be hard to separate from real life. As a result, individuals look to the media to define their roles and make sense of the world. Nabi and Clark (2008) expand upon this idea when they state, "by observing others' behaviors, including those of the media figures, one may develop rules to guide one's own subsequent actions" (p. 409).

However, the problem is not that society learns behaviors from media, but that we learn the same behavior over and over with little variation from the norm. Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner, addresses the echoing effect of repetitive, violent media depictions (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009). While Social Cognitive Theory focuses primarily on behavior, Cultivation Theory focuses on the attitudes of the audience. Gerbner argues that television is a dominant factor in shaping society's perceptions of reality and the degree of this influence is dependant on the amount of exposure to media (Morgan et al., 2009). Ergo, the more media an individual consumes, the greater the likelihood of it cultivating his/her thoughts (Morgan et al., 2009). Heavy viewers—individuals that watch four or more hours of television—are affected more than light viewers (Morgan et al., 2009). As a result, the heavy viewer may begin to see the real world through the eyes of the media due to "the continual

repetition of stories that serve to define the world and legitimize a particular social order" (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 36). Thus, media can present extremely distorted and limited views of reality and acceptable behavior. These generalized, dominant views are the "most general, functional, and stable mainstream, representing the broadest dimensions of shared meanings and assumptions" (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 41). More to the point, as this thesis will contend, those stories legitimize the dominant views of patriarchy.

Film, Children, and the Construction of Gender

Gerbner's Cultivation Theory claims that behavior emerges from learned mediated realities and that long-term exposure can lead to the internalization of societal norms as they are presented in the media (Morgan et al., 2009). This theory is particularly applicable in the case of young viewers who have not yet developed media awareness. Movies help to create gender schemas, models that tell the audience how to interpret the world and what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Thus, many of the stereotypes and gender myths in our culture are perpetuated by film. Moreover, the meaning cultures assign to biological differences in the genders is exaggerated in movies, especially in G-rated films (Smith & Granados, 2009). G-rated films cultivate notions about masculinity and femininity through inaccurate portrayals of what it means to exist within one's own gender (Smith & Granados, 2009). This can be particularly dangerous for young viewers who have not developed the cognitive abilities to resist the underlying themes.

According to Piaget's theory of cognition (1969), a child between the ages of 7-11 can only think logically about the ideas presented to him or her, but not abstractly. Smith and Granados (2009) draw on Huston's work (1981) when they state, "an individual's understanding of sex stereotypes may be particularly strong because gender is salient from a very early age" (as

cited in Smith & Granados, p. 348). Kuykendal and Sturm (2007) concur, claiming, "the development of a gender identity is integral to a child's self-perception" (p. 38). The magical and fantastical images presented by Disney allow children to step outside reality and into a world of dangerous cultural ideologies and stereotypes. Disney characters are animated with exaggerated features as a way to encourage the idea of fantasy and nothing more, so viewers are enticed to settle back and enjoy without questioning the messages that are presented.

Anything is Possible with Magic!

Disney encourages audiences to step away from the real world and to channel their imaginations into its films. This passivity has the potential to strip away agency as viewers risk losing their ability to make rational choices as they escape into the world of fantasy and animation. For example, Bell, Haas, and Sells (1995) mention four common arguments they notice from their own students about Disney films: "it's for children, it's only fantasy, it's only a cartoon, and it's just good business" (p. 4). Many spectators do not challenge the validity of the behavior depicted in these films because they dismiss it as mere "fantasy." As Bell et al. (1995) argue, "Disney capitalizes on its status to the point where criticizing Disney is a kind of secular sacrilege" (p. 3). Throughout the decades, Disney has become a part of our homes and families with the toys, amusement parks, and bedding, making it hard to separate ourselves as fans in order to critique or challenge Disney (Bell et al., 1995). Grioux contends, "Disney provides dreams and products through forms of popular culture in which kids are willing to materially and emotionally invest" (as cited in Lacroix, p. 213). They are not only encouraged to consume the products, but also the ideas (Lacroix, 2004). An audience's refusal to critically analyze Disney results in a refusal to analyze the culture as a whole (Rockler, 2001), which runs the risk of the stereotypes being further accepted. This is especially problematic because, as Towbin, Haddock,

Zimmerman, Lund, and Tanner (2003) note, “The Disney Corporation is one of the largest media companies in the world” (p. 19) and their films have been a primary source of children’s entertainment for over 60 years. Disney has taken over so much of the film industry that it has even become its own genre. But more importantly, because of its dominance, Disney has transformed fairytales into something darker than most audiences perceive.

The Dangerous Fairy and her Tale

Many Disney films are based upon Fairytales, a genre that has primarily been associated with children for two centuries (Jorgensen, 2008); however, fairytales were not initially intended for children; they were written by and for adults (Zipes, 1995). Fairytales are a powerful means of storytelling, but dangerous for children because they disguise messages about gender in insidious ways. The subtly could potentially make the messages more treacherous, especially because, as Parsons (2004) claims, the dismissive notions about fairytales undermine their pervasive authority. Indeed, fairytales *are* “powerful cultural agents” due to the “fairytale storylines [that] are specific to historical and cultural contexts, and because we ourselves are products of those contexts, we tend to accept the gendered discourse embedded in them as natural, essential, and conclusive” (Parsons, 2004, p. 136). Thus, the dismissal and refusal to dissect the messages further suggests that there is a truth within fairytales and as a result, children may not question the validity of the outcomes within each Disney fairytale film.

Fairytales provide distorted cultural messages about men and women, and they have always been “sites for the construction of appropriate gendered behavior” (Parsons, 2004, p. 135). They contain universalizing and culture-specific themes that contribute to the process of cultivating society’s children because fairytales encourage conformity to culturally sanctioned rules. These children’s stories are extremely useful in evaluating our cultural values (Baker-

Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). As Cultivation theory and SCT would support, "the cultural norms represented in fairytales play a large part in the socialization processes of the child who reads them. Contained within these cultural norms are the shared beliefs about gender roles held by the child's society" (Kuykendal & Sturm, 2007, p. 38). The gender roles validated through fairytales often reinforce disparaging, oversimplified images of females (Kuykendal & Sturm, 2007). And as Zipes (1995) states, "although the plots [have been] varied and the themes and characters…altered, the classical fairytale for children and adults [continues to reinforce] the patriarchal symbolic order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender" (p. 26). In other words, Disney's fairytales continue to promote an ideal female image that contains traits that the culture deems desirable, functioning as a standard and a goal for many viewers. In order to reach this goal, the viewer must alter their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs as he/she conforms to the ideas presented in Disney films.

Daddy Disney and His Patriarchal Lens

Walt Disney's name has become "virtually…synonymous with the genre of the fairytale itself" (Zipes, 1995, p. 28). Although other animators have drawn from fairytales for their films, Disney is the only one who "truly revolutionized the fairytale as institution through cinema" (Zipes, 1995, p. 31); he completely changed our way of understanding fairytales. As this evolution occurred, fairytales became less about a culture as a whole, and more about Disney himself and his patriarchal views (Zipes, 1995). As Towbin et al. (2003) argue, "Disney animated films often retell stories to fit into the dominant paradigm of our society, regardless of the story's original moral" (p. 39). The fairytales that were originally not intended for children due to their adult themes have now further retreated into an area not suitable for children's consumption. However, because Disney and parents embrace and encourage them across the

world, the dark messages fly under the radar, further masking the reality and implications of such behaviors and attitudes. For example, Hovdestad, Hubka, and Tonmyr (2009) point out a disturbing scene in *Pinocchio* (1940), "Pinocchio's 'grooming' by the villains who want to exploit him is framed by the film as a question of the moral development of the child, which contradicts abuse prevention practice and resembles victim-blaming" (p. 121). The take-away message for audiences does not revolve around the hidden motives—arguably pedophilic—of the adults responsible for Pinocchio's capture, but rather the young boys' inability to function without parental supervision on Pleasure Island. The Coachman never faces consequences for his behavior; instead the story suggests it is the boys' fault for engaging in such atrocious behavior. Unfortunately, these dark messages do not only exist within the scenes portraying risky situations and victim-blaming, but they are also found within the depictions of passive violence, restricting gender roles, and hazardous messages about what it means to be in a relationship or friendship—all of which serve as "gendered scripts" that "legitimize and support the dominant gender system" (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003, p. 711).

Most Disney codes speak to the patriarchal society and the inaccurate depictions of gendered behavior have been around for years (Lacroix, 2004). These scripts can distort a child's perception about what it means to be male or female (Smith & Granados, 2009). This is particularly dangerous because Disney's target audience is at an age when the tendency to stereotype is at its peak (Segel, 1983). As Smith and Granados (2009) argue, "viewing stereotypes may have serious consequences for children's information processing of and schema development for gender" (p. 356). The child begins to learn what is socially acceptable for each gender and they are only free to create their identity within the confines of the structures that define them. Gendered behavior then develops into series of learned and performed acts (Butler,

1990); it does not come from the child's own experiences, rather it is socially constructed and guided by powerful media institutions. Gender becomes something one does, not what one is (Butler, 1990). And, as a result, boys and girls and men and women are disconnected from their authentic selves and their gender—they are required to put on a mask. This act is self-silencing and requires a loss of self; it demands that individuals lose themselves in order to adapt to societal and patriarchal norms.

Love, Identity, and Wo(MAN)'s Happiness

Many Disney films appear to present a heroine and a hero, but the plots always revolve around the male character, lessening the female character, and transferring the audience's gaze onto the male hero. These films are cultural productions that "tell the story of masculinity" and women (as the Other) are "summarily erased in Disney mythos" (Bell et al., 1995, p. 12). In *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), the film appears to be about Belle and the Beast, but the entire plot revolves around Beast and the spell cast upon him—encouraging the viewer to feel for the Beast, not Belle. This is significant because when an audience shows sympathy for him as opposed to Belle, it has less ability to view the film with feminine eyes. Female viewers are encouraged to identify with the male authority character rather than an empowered female character (Sumera, 2009). Because of this, girls see their identity through a masculine lens, perpetuating the idea that a man defines a woman (Bell et al., 1995). Though there is evidence that female Disney characters have become more empowered in recent films, the independent heroine emerges only as "subversion to the patriarchy" (Sumera, 2009, p. 41). The heroines start off as seemingly strong characters, but eventually they require protection from a stronger, male hero (Towbin et al., 2003). In a content analysis of Disney's fairytales, Towbin et al. (2003) found that 7 out of 10 heroines required rescue or protection, in 15 movies women were shown in domestic roles,

and in only one movie (*The Jungle Book*) was a woman portrayed as heroic without the need of rescue. Girls are encouraged to be tender, submissive, beautiful, and domestic as they wait for their prince (Segel, 1983). The sexualization, domestication, and objectification of women are important to note because those roles keep the society patriarchal. If female roles are restricted, then women learn their intelligence and accomplishments are not important and the desire to set and achieve higher goals can more easily be eliminated.

If women are taught to devalue the importance of intelligence and accomplishment, they may look to more accepted gender roles to define themselves, like being a wife. The marriage myth, which continues to be perpetuated in Disney films, promotes the idea that a relationship is more important than a woman's aspirations. Her goals and desires belong on the backburner; what's really essential is that a female is domestic and follows traditional social roles (Sumera, 2009). As Sumera (2009) notes, "in the end, a good looking boyfriend remains the truest measure of feminine happiness and success" (p. 42). Disney films always encompass a love story and their "happily ever after" theme suggests that happiness exists in relation to a man and if a woman does not have one, she should find one, or she will never be genuinely happy.

The price of finding and keeping a man is quite high. In Disney films, a woman must be passive so as not to offend the hero or challenge his authority in any way. She must be domestic, because he is too busy being the hero to perform "womanly" chores. And she must need rescue so that he may assert and be reminded of his power. By constructing women as in need of rescue and men as rescuers, men assert their dominance over women. Ironically, however, it is not the protection of men that saves women: they must save themselves through oppression. In *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), the Beast is under a spell and only Belle's love can break that spell. In *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Ariel gives up her voice in order to become a human and only by loving a

man is she able to regain her voice. And in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) only a kiss of true love will wake the heroine from her sleep. By breaking the spell and oppressing themselves, Belle was able to marry her true prince, Ariel was able to become a complete human and be with her prince, and Sleeping Beauty was able to awaken and live her life with her prince. Patriarchy is restored when these characters give up central aspects of themselves in order to pursue romantic relationships (Sumera, 2009).

In their content analysis, Towbin et al. (2003) found four common themes in Disney films in regards to what it means to be a woman: appearance is valued over intelligence, women are helpless and need to be saved, they are domestic by nature and likely to marry, and overweight women are unappealing and unwanted. Together, these themes help to promote harmful, restricting ideologies to children under the guise of entertainment. Along with being submissive and domestic, Disney's female characters encourage girls to be mere beauties and nothing more. As Naomi Wolf (1991) suggested, "a girl learns that stories happen to beautiful women, whether they are interesting or not. And interesting or not, stories do not happen to women who are not beautiful" (p. 61). If a woman is not beautiful, then her story doesn't matter and she is silenced (Wolf, 1991). But beauty can silence women as well; just because a beautiful woman's story is heard, does not mean she exists in it. Sometimes she becomes a mere object within it. Because these fairytales always include a beautiful female character, she can never really be a main character or heroine (Sumera, 2009; Wolf, 1991). That would contradict the socially constructed meaning of beauty and femininity. Wolf (1991) elaborates, "Heroism is about individuality, interesting, and ever changing, while beauty is generic, boring, and inert" (Wolf, p. 59). The only option for females is to be beautiful; if a woman is not, then she doesn't matter, but, ironically, if she is, then nothing else about her matters.

Disney bolsters the male dominated society by objectifying female characters. In the contemporary mass media women's bodies have been getting smaller and men's bodies have been getting bigger. This subtle shift has symbolically stripped women of power at exactly the same time we have begun to most forcefully challenge male dominance and patriarchal culture (Wolf, 1991). Female bodies are reflections of social and patriarchal power. Belle, one of the main characters in the film *Beauty and the Beast*, is a beautiful, brunette woman with doe-like eyes, who only wears extraordinarily feminine dresses. She is almost like Barbie. Her tiny waist and large breasts are abnormally disproportionate to the rest of her body; a woman of these dimensions rarely exists in any place other than men's fantasies. Through storytelling and art, then, Disney consistently reinforces a limited social role for women. Unfortunately, as I will discuss next, this also holds true for Disney's men.

I am Man, Hear me Roar

The gender roles presented to men in Disney's animated films are based on an "extreme notion of masculinity that emphasizes toughness, physical strength and the respect gained through violence or the implicit threat of it" (Katz, 1999, in *Tough Guise*). Towbin et al. (2003) explain that mediated images of men fall into the categories of powerful, tolerant, violent, and strong. In Disney's cinematic universe, "the male hero is in a position of power, and that power is often exercised to dominate and rule others" (Parson, 2004, p. 40). Viewers learn that this is what it means to be a man, despite the fact that men are not inherently any of those things. These learned behaviors are socially constructed—masks of masculinity that men wear in order to match the norms conveyed by mediated messages. To maintain power, men must constantly prove themselves through displays of hegemonic masculinity. The less power they feel the more

masculine (or hyper-masculine) they must be, often resulting in exaggerated displays of power and control, such as violence.

Valenti (2009) notes one of the requirements of masculinity is for men to "dissociate from women and prove their manliness through aggression" which in turn "encourages a culture of violence" (p. 172). In their content analysis, Towbin et al. (2003) found three common themes in Disney films in regards to violence and what it means to be a man: men's emotions are shown through physical behaviors or not at all, men's sexuality cannot be controlled, and men are biologically strong and brave. Out of 26 Disney films, 12 movies showed the male characters as more likely to respond to emotional stimuli by way of physical and sometimes violent behavior, in 15 movies a male's ability to use reason and rationality was lost around beautiful women, and in 19 movies men were portrayed as protectors of women (Towbin et al., 2003). Gender roles hurt men just as much as they hurt women; many males struggle to express certain emotions for fear of being labeled "feminine." They must be strong so that they can protect their women, and they must be powerful and in control.

The 15 movies that depicted men as irrational when it comes to beautiful women encourage the idea that men should not be held accountable for their actions where beautiful women are concerned (Towbin et al., 2003). It is women, according to these narratives, who are to blame for disrupting the social order. Thus, female attractiveness and objectification is used to the male advantage, as a weapon against women's empowerment and advancement (Wolf, 1991). So to avoid or lessen the abuse, females should be beautiful, but as noted above, that same beauty becomes the cause of the violence. This victim blaming keeps patriarchy alive by making violence a women's issue; it allows society to ignore the bigger problem. To look at domestic violence holistically—as a significant societal issue—necessitates everyone analyzing his or her

own contributions to the problem. When Disney films refuse to hold the male characters accountable for their behaviors and instead lay the blame for violence on female characters, this subtly encourages members of our society to tolerate domestic violence.

Know Your Role

Bandura (2009) states that a child's lack of experience gives him or her a greater need to learn vicariously about appropriate gender behavior. As Disney movies are watched, a child begins to learn what is socially acceptable for each gender. The gender roles presented in Disney films exists in opposition to one another. Women are passive, domestic, and submissive and men are dominant, powerful, and aggressive. According to this schema an individual cannot possess qualities that are both masculine and feminine; he or she must choose one or the other. This sets up binary terms for men and women, polarizing the two genders. As a result, a "battle of the sexes" emerges. Through men's dominance and power, women are socialized into submission and helplessness, setting the stage for a power dynamic in which the male can exert whatever control he pleases, including violence. If women are viewed as passive and docile, then resisting or fighting back against the violence is not part of her role—it isn't "feminine" (Valenti, 2009). Thus, society's prescribed boundaries for men and women (boundaries that Disney films help to establish) eliminate leaving or fighting back as viable options for women. To leave her abuser and take power places a woman outside of her socially prescribed gender role that dictates her submission to male authority.

In addition, Beres found that the gendered stereotypes in the media actually *romanticized* men's violence and control over women (as cited in Towbin et al., 2003). Women view the abuse as affection and a mark that they have a powerful man (Towbin et al., 2003). These themes work together to teach the audience several harmful and restricting ideologies about what it means to

be a man, and more importantly, they condition society to accept domestic violence and downplay its consequences. However, viewers don't evaluate Disney as "violent" because the acts of domestic violence in Disney films are cleverly coded, which allows this violence to fly even further underneath the radar.

As Belle is willingly abused back into a submissive position, female viewers are being socialized to accept this behavior, locking them further into their roles as the "lesser sex." Jackson Katz (2006) provides an example of this misogynistic socialization:

> You hear women explaining away men's bad behavior as a result of individual pathology all the time: "Oh, he just had a bad childhood," or "He's an angry drunk. The booze gets to him. He's never been able to handle it."…Men are the dominant sex and violence serves to reinforce this dominance. (p. 10)

If women are conditioned to accept the behavior, then men can maintain their power over women and the potential that they will resist patriarchal authority is reduced.

The Patriarchal Beast

It would seem that Disney's animated classics exemplify the very behaviors and gender roles that put us well on the path to becoming tolerant and accepting of domestic violence. As Bandura famously noted, "repeated exposure to violence can desensitize and habituate people to human cruelty" (2009, p. 109). Disney's "innocence" can make it hard to challenge the depictions of the female and male characters, but as this thesis will attempt to illustrate, we could be setting our children up for dangerous situations if we continue to overlook the way these films teach submissive gender roles for women and hypermasculine roles for men. As highlighted in this literature review, gender is a performative act that materializes from the roles ascribed to each sex; thus, Disney's gender roles both appropriate and restrict certain behavior. Submissive

women can only act within a submissive paradigm and hypermasculine men can only act within a dominant paradigm. This power dynamic and polarization of gendered behavior primes members of society to see men as superior and women as inferior, in turn allowing for the victimization of the feminine abused and justification for the masculine abuser.

For example, in *Beauty and the Beast*, the Beast's violence—and Belle's acceptance of it—is not just socializing girls to accept domestic violence, but it is also socializing them to accept it so that they cannot challenge patriarchy, just as battered women often do not challenge their abusers. In this sense, all women living under patriarchy are victims of abuse as they are told that they are not the dominant sex and they are powerless. As a result, women may begin to act toward patriarchal messages in a manner that is eerily similar to the way the victims of domestic violence act. Patriarchy controls women in the same way domestic violence controls its victims. Sparks, Sparks, and Sparks (2009) concur, stating, "As people's sensitivities to violence become increasingly dull, violent behavior may increase, in part, because it is simply not recognized any longer as a behavior that should be curtailed" (p. 279). Thus, audience members may not see the various forms of violence as negative, and coupled with dangerous gender roles, viewers may begin to make excuses for the male characters' behaviors in a way that draws a parallel to cases of domestic violence. This is cinematic abuse.

Methodology

Scope

After understanding the implications of gender roles presented by Disney, I am interested in identifying the impact that Disney films may be having on social values and attitudes towards domestic violence. Previous content analyses were noted because they illustrate that the aforementioned themes are not an isolated issue. They exist in many of Walt Disney's animated

classic films. To analyze each one discussed in the literature review would be impractical. Thus, I will largely focus on Disney's 1991 film, *Beauty and the Beast*. I have chosen to focus on this film because of the blatant manner in which it depicts (barely) coded violence. I argue that the violence (indirect and direct) found within the movie has the potential to socialize viewers to accept and tolerate domestic violence. This raises two important questions: how does the larger society (in this case, Disney films and cultural rhetoric) contribute to men's violence against women? And how do gender roles and socialization contribute to men's violence against women?

In the textual analysis of *Beauty and the Beast*, the themes found in the literature review will be expanded upon, tied together, and used to support a theory of cinematic abuse. This theory draws from the cycle of violence developed by Dr. Lenore Walker (1979) to claim that by consuming Walt Disney's films viewers enter into a metaphoric domestic violence relationship with the film. In order for viewers to break free and save themselves from the cycle of violence, they must further objectify themselves. If the female viewer embraces the oppression, then she doesn't see herself as oppressed, thus the cinematic abuse cannot hurt her. It is important to note, however, that this is not a physical freeing, but rather a mental escape. For example, trauma victims often note a phenomenon in which they "leave their bodies" as a means of getting through the pain. That behavior is similar to the aforementioned self-objectification in that victims of cinematic abuse must separate mind, body, and self—only then can the violence be seen as an injustice against a foreign object rather than against one's self. This disembodiment allows victims to free their minds as the abuse and oppression becomes dehumanized. In reality, discounting one's oppression may put the individual at further risk for physical violence because the objectification becomes part of the natural world in the eyes of the oppressed. As cinematic

abuse transcends into real domestic abuse, this self-objectification and condoning of oppressive gender roles materializes in the excuses victims provide for not leaving their partners. These excuses "emphasize patriarchal norms regarding gender roles" as they explain that leaving the abuser would result in a lack of economic financial support, a loss of a father figure, and often times, no alternative housing (Ben-Ari, Winstok & Eisikovits, 2003, p. 540). This rhetoric allows abuse, pain, and oppression to continue as it is considered a mere fee for stability, food, and life. Because the excuses prevent the victim from recognizing other options, the mind is free from decision-making, but the body will not escape the abuse.

Significance

There is an extensive body of research that has attempted to answer the question: Does violent media have an effect on the viewer? However, this thesis will differ from many of the studies in this tradition in that I will look at the relationship between mediated violence and a specific social outcome—domestic violence. I will argue that violent media creates a desensitized society in which we argue for the abuser, not the victim; it creates a society in which we downplay the seriousness of domestic violence; and it creates a world in which we indirectly contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence through our language and communication about it. I will argue that the way we discuss domestic violence subsequently impacts the occurrence and frequency of it, our tolerance and acceptance of it, and our laws and justice system's response to it. So, rather than looking at domestic violence directly, I wish to look retrospectively at the culture that discusses it. I will do so by evaluating how media can affect those privileged enough to never have experienced an abusive relationship, those who have, and how it can become the catalyst for creating the type of men and women that enter into relationships in which domestic violence takes place.

If we can realize one of the starting points of violence that we have the power to change, perhaps we can begin to reformulate our ideas about violence as a whole, and become more conscious consumers of media and film in the process. If we can break the control of the filmmaker and give it back to audiences, we will have formulated a model for how we might also stop the cycle of abuse in real cases of domestic violence by intervening in the communication surrounding it. However, this future will only come to fruition if audiences develop the combination of defiance and cognition necessary to oppose the cinematic representations that contribute to the production of abusers.

Furthermore, I think we all have a moral and social responsibility to acknowledge our partial role in domestic violence. The way in which we talk about violence bleeds into the attitudes we have about abuse cases. Our current societal response to the problem of domestic violence in America, which places the focus on the victim, doesn't allow for introspection. Instead, our societal rhetoric about violence almost ensures that no one is held accountable. To reduce the prevalence of domestic violence we must first become catalysts for change ourselves. If we change our victim-blaming language and start empowering the victim—not the abuser—then maybe we can stop the reoccurrence of victims returning to their abusers. After the cycle of violence ceases to exist, the abuser will have no choice to but to realize the negative consequences of his unacceptable behavior. However, our current cultural and social scripts limit the actual choices available by limiting acceptable modes of action (Ben-Ari et al., 2003). By using *Beauty and the Beast* as evidentiary support, I argue that Disney films play a role in generating acceptable modes of behaviors and the prescribed attitudes towards those behaviors. In other words, that Disney is responsible for cinematic abuse.

Method

Although *Beauty and the Beast*, a French fairytale, has existed in many art forms (oral, literary, theatre), this critical feminist analysis will examine the 1991 Disney film version. The scenes, themes, and oppressive messages hidden within the film will offer support for the claim that, despite the incorporation of a strong heroine and a theme of inner beauty, *Beauty and the Beast* reinforces dangerous notions about gender, relationships, and attitudes towards domestic violence. The literature review provided several important themes found in Disney films: beauty as a silencer, female bodies as a reflection of patriarchal power, men's inability to control themselves around beautiful women, victim-blaming, and romanticized violence. Each of these will play a part in my critical analysis of *Beauty and the Beast*. While viewing the film, the scenes that speak to each of the five themes will be noted in preparation for a detailed thematic analysis designed to illuminate the presence and the implications of submissive gender roles. I will argue that as a result of these gender roles and the behavior of Disney's characters, movies like *Beauty and the Beast* may be encouraging viewers to accept and tolerate domestic violence.

Domestic violence is traditionally characterized as a physically violent act, but for the purpose of this research, domestic violence will be defined as any type of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse that leads to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment experienced by the victim. I have taken this broad approach because cinematic abuse begins within the exploitation of audience members' minds and emotions, and emotional and psychological abuse is often a precursor of actual domestic abuse. The films do not have to depict real violence; Walt Disney's physical abuse exists in the hazardous and abusive gender roles he asks his viewers and characters to conform to. It exists in the mindset of the intimate

partners each time the abuser and victim abide by the dangerous gender roles by modeling the behaviors of Disney characters.

The violence found within *Beauty and the Beast* will then be broken into two categories: indirect violence and direct violence. Direct acts of violence take the form of explicit physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, isolation, entrapment, and any behavior that leads the victim to feel helpless, powerless, and trapped. Indirect violence differs in that the acts are subtle, manipulative, and less identifiable. In reality, the characters, gender roles, and direct or indirect violence are so intimately connected that they cannot be separated, but doing so allows us to see the complex web of power and dominance that passes in an instant. I will draw from two previous works in order to operationalize the term "indirect aggression". Coyne and Whitehead (2008) define indirect aggression as "any behavior that is intended to hurt another person by using psychological or social means" (p. 386). Muscio (2010) helps to extend this definition by providing examples of passive violence, a term that I will use interchangeably with indirect aggression throughout my analysis. Passive violence includes "creating hierarchies, bullying, judging, criticizing, sexism, scapegoating, social humiliation/rejection, and mean-spirited, unnecessary litigation" (Muscio, 2010, pp. 19-20).

The concepts of passive violence and indirect aggression have a strong resonance with Arun Ghandi's work in the area of nonviolent communication, in which he focuses on the importance of recognizing passive violence. Arun Ghandi explains, "We don't often acknowledge our violence because we are ignorant about it…we assume we are not violent because our vision of violence is one of fighting, killing, beating and wars—the type of things average individuals don't do" (as cited in Muscio, 2010, p. 17). Communication about domestic violence often includes passive acts of violence such as victim-blaming and scapegoating.

Society's acceptance of passive violence is one of the root causes of the epidemic of domestic violence. Ghandi goes on to state, "it is passive violence that fuels the fire of physical violence" (as cited in Muscio, 2010, p. 18). This passive violence partly arises out of our inability to recognize our own self-worth as human beings (Rosenberg, 2003). If we do not value our own lives, then we cannot value others' lives. It is the deep, subconscious feelings we have of inadequacy and insignificance as humans in such a populated world that lead us to see others in the same light (Rosenberg, 2003). I understand those feelings, I do. People are constantly told they aren't working hard enough, thin enough, attractive enough, healthy enough, rich enough, etc., and each time someone experiences the feelings associated with these criticisms, they reduce the value they see in themselves. So where is the motivation to make others feel more valuable? By recognizing our potential as human beings we will develop a respect for all life forms (Rosenberg, 2003). Perhaps then, we can stop the victim blaming and begin condemning the inappropriate forms of communication we use all too often in response to domestic violence.

The textual analysis of *Beauty and the Beast* will also support my claim that the film should be understood as an example of cinematic abuse. I propose that cinematic abuse occurs when we watch films like *Beauty and the Beast* because viewers are coerced into entering into a metaphoric domestic violence relationship with Disney and patriarchy, and in order for viewers (as well as real life victims of domestic violence) to break free and save themselves from abuse, they must further objectify themselves. Select themes from the film will be highlighted and applied to the cycle of violence, theorized in Walker's (1979) book, *The Battered Woman*. I will address each of the phases—tension, explosions, honeymoon—as they exist in the scenes of *Beauty and the Beast* in order to develop a theory of cinematic abuse that explains the relational similarities between abuser-victim interactions and Disney-audience interactions.

The way audiences read texts like *Beauty and the Beast* is important. Throughout this analysis, I will decode the scenes from a dominant reading standpoint (Stam, 2000). I make no claims that this is the only reading available; it is entirely possible for audiences to perform resistant or oppositional readings of the messages found within *Beauty and the Beast*. However, I am particularly interested in the consequences that may emerge when viewers conform to the dominant reading. It should also be noted that it is especially difficult for children to become active, resistant spectators because of their lack of experience in the world. As Stam (2000) explains, "Resistant readings depend on a certain cultural or political preparation that 'primes' the spectator to read critically" (p. 234). Without that preparation, children are left quite vulnerable. While it is true that some audience members may resist the film's dominant messages, the primary audiences for Disney's animated films (children) are not in a good position to do so. I make no assertion that oppositional readings do not and cannot exist amongst *Beauty and the Beast* viewers; however, I am more interested and concerned about the consequences and implications if viewers *don't* oppose the messages about love, gender and violence.

For the purpose of this study, cinematic abuse will be defined as the act of exploiting an audiences' vulnerability to "entertainment" by presenting images and behaviors that help to foster an acceptance of passive violence, domestic violence myths, and sexist gender norms. Cinematic abuse occurs when filmmakers distort the severity of domestic violence by showing abuse and violence without presenting realistic consequences. It can take many forms, such as feelings of inadequacy after seeing unrealistic portrayals of perfect bodies, societal roles, characteristic, and/or behavior. It can also evoke feelings of helplessness (media is, after all, a form of escapism, and we escape because we feel helpless and unable to deal with whatever we

are escaping from). Cinematic abuse conditions the audience to accept or reconceptualize various forms of violence as acceptable and successful modes of behavior. In the case of Disney, the pseudo-happy ending of each his films encourages viewers to not only return to Disney films, but also to return to the cinematic abuse that is an inescapable part of these films, much like the cycle of violence in domestic abuse.

When we see the happy endings, the cinematic abuse has already taken place, because we cannot recognize the negative consequences of the character's behaviors. And, as a result, we learn to accept those behaviors and place them in our bank of successful behavioral schemas (Bandura, 2009). The problem with this is that Disney films are constructed to entrap viewers in the overall dominant reading (the viewpoint of the filmmaker, in this case, Walt Disney) and limit resistant readings, which don't allow for escapism (Stam, 2000). To enjoy the movie viewers must accept the dominant message that conforming to traditional gender roles is a prerequisite to finding love. Following Dave Hickey (1997), I argue that audience members can be conceptualized as both spectators and participants. In brief, the female audience member that accepts the dominating reading is presented with two options. As participant, she experiences abuse symbolically through her identification with the female protagonist. As spectator, she becomes conscious of her spatial location outside of the film, which enables her to identify with the male hero and objectify the female protagonist. She does this because it allows her to negate the violence of the film and to concentrate instead on the potential for love and a happy ending. Which I why I argue that Walt Disney's false ideas of reality, love, gender roles, and beauty are not merely an ideology—they are cinematic abuse.

The concept of passive violence is especially relevant to this study because cinematic abuse breeds passive violence. And while passive violence and the depiction of it in film may not

immediately seem relevant to “real life” domestic violence relationships, as Muscio (2010) explains, acts of passive violence can appear “incredibly mundane and yet often carry over into physical violence of some kind” (p. 19). Moreover, every previously mentioned form of passive violence noted by Muscio (2010) and Arun Ghandi can be found in *Beauty and the Beast* and other Disney films. Belle’s imprisonment speaks to the power dynamic found in hierarchies, as does Arielle’s docile compliance to her father and his demands; the way Walt Disney draws his submissive, domestic female characters epitomizes sexism (i.e., Snow White’s duty of tending to the dwarfs and their shared home); the excuses Belle makes for the Beast’s violent behavior demonstrate scapegoating; and the town’s ridicule of Belle and her odd personality (along with many other examples in the film) certainly address the social humiliation aspect. Lastly, “mean-spirited, unnecessary litigation” is the passive violence that can emerge after we begin to embrace Walt Disney films (Muscio, 2010, p. 10). Such as when defense attorneys attack a real victim’s character, clothing, behavior, etc., reducing her down to nothingness, claiming that she deserved the abuse because she is valueless. Furthermore, this list doesn’t just exist within particular movies; it also exists within the cinematic abuse between the audience and Walt Disney.

Children grow up seeing characters they have come to idolize enacting passive and indirect violence in the very movies that are teaching them what it means to be a male or female. In a content analysis, Coyne and Whitehead (2008) found a considerable amount of indirect aggression performed by our loved characters. Young views may then use those images as models for appropriate behavior within their own lives (Bandura, 2009; Nabi & Clark, 2008). To take this notion of self-worth and apply it to *Beauty and the Beast*, from the opening scene to the closing scene, Belle never realizes her own value. This has the potential to prevent young

viewers from realizing their self-worth as well. It could be argued that the Beast finally realizes his value in the end when he is changed back into a prince. These are precarious messages to send to children, especially when you couple the current victim-blaming tactics in our societal communication about domestic violence with a movie that only shows the male character acknowledging his own value (but does not depict the female character achieving that same actualization). What ends up happening is we see a man as more valuable than a woman and we further flame the notion that the violence that takes place in the film is her fault because we do not recognize her as a valuable human being. Furthermore, when we cannot see direct acts of violence for what they really are, then we cannot find ways to stop them. If we label domestic violence for what it really is, then we can use that label to create negative language about it and find a way to prevent it.

Cinematic abuse is the legitimization of passive violence. We are abused into thinking domestic violence is acceptable due our inability to recognize myths that surround it and the consequences of passive violence. We cannot see it for what it really is, similar to the way in which a victim cannot see the cycle of violence for what it really is: continuous. This is why victims have trouble leaving, because they cannot recognize the violence as something that, one, will not stop, and two, is something they don't deserve.

In the forthcoming chapters, the main themes of oppressive gender roles, character behaviors, and portrayals of direct and indirect violence will be broken up and evaluated using Disney's 1991 classic film, *Beauty and the Beast,* as an exemplary model for cinematic abuse. Walker's (1979) book, *The Battered Woman,* will be used to support the arguments made throughout. The film analysis will follow a chronological format—with the exception of scenes

that support crucial arguments made about a synchronic theme—as that method will best illuminate the nature of the cinematic abuse and its cyclic properties.

CHAPTER 2

Beauty and the Beast opens by taking viewers back to a time when the Beast was a handsome prince. Static pictures are utilized to explain to the audience how and why the prince became a beast. One bitterly cold night, an old beggar came to the castle in search of shelter. In exchange, she offered the prince a rose for his hospitality. However, the prince was "repulsed by her haggard appearance" and denied her shelter (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The woman had previously "warned [the prince] not to be deceived by appearances" because "beauty is found within," but the callous prince was unmoved (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Magically, the old beggar suddenly transformed into a "beautiful enchantress" and it was only then that he tried to apologize (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). However, it was too late; the enchantress refused to accept his apology because she saw there was "no love in his heart" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). As punishment, she morphed the prince into a "hideous beast and placed a spell on the castle" with a magic mirror as "his only window to the outside world" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

There is a lot of interesting irony in this scene. The enchantress sets the tone for the plot of the film when she encourages the prince not to judge a book by its cover and tells him "beauty is found within" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The point seems to be to tell young viewers that exterior beauty is unimportant. Ironically, however, as the prince's punishment, he is cursed to the ultimate societal death sentence—ugliness—a spell that negates the earlier message of inner beauty. Furthermore, the spell also teaches audiences that the punishment for ugliness is isolation. The film goes on to state that the "magic mirror was his only window to the outside world" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Thus, it only functions as a window to the outside world that he has been banished from; not even the mirror (an icon of vanity) will show the Beast's true reflection, for his image is too ugly to reflect.

The rose offered by the beggar becomes significant after the curse is placed on the Beast, as it becomes a key component for the progression of the plot. The rose will bloom until the Beast's 21st birthday. Before the last petal falls, he must learn to love another and earn her love in return or he will remain a beast forever. It is no spoiler to announce that—just in the nick of time—Belle ultimately breaks the spell. It is important to discuss this early on, as it also addresses the contradictory messages about physical appearance. Notice that the Beast does not settle for just anyone as the object of his affection, but rather he selects the character that is "the most beautiful girl in town" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Viewers are being told that looks are not important, yet one can see the integral role physical attractiveness plays when finding love. Here we see the beginning workings of cinematic abuse. The audience wants to believe Disney's message of devaluing beauty; however, viewers quickly come to understand the superficial, pacifying nature of such a message. Young girls may hear the moral of the story and agree to it, yet, they internalize the paradoxical reality. This is not much different than when victims of domestic violence insist that the abuser "didn't mean to", "won't do it again", or perhaps even when they blame themselves for the abuse when they claim, "I shouldn't have pushed his buttons." However, whether consciously or subconsciously, victims *are* cognizant of the cyclic nature of the abuse and its repetitive tendencies, despite their verbal reassurances or justifications. Thus, just as victims claim the violence will end despite the fact that both parties recognize its cyclic nature, Disney claims beauty isn't important despite the fact that everyone in a patriarchal society knows that to be a lie. It is a denial of the facts that everyone knows are true. When you teach young girls that to have true love they must deny what is patently obvious, you create potential victims in real life.

Crème De La Crème

Audiences first come to know Belle through a song—her first speaking role—as the townspeople join in with her to sing about her characteristics. She begins by singing about the "poor provincial town" full of "little people" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). As she walks through town singing—with a book in her basket—she jumps at any opportunity to discuss her passion for literature with anyone who will listen. She breaks the song to answer the Baker when he asks her where she is going. Her answer provides audiences with Belle's most distinct and unique trait: her intelligence and love for books. She explains that she is off to the bookshop and as she begins to describe the book she just finished, the Baker quickly becomes bored and cuts her off to call for more baguettes. She shrugs off the Baker's dismissal and the song continues with two elderly women singing, "The girl is strange no question, dazed and distracted can't you tell?" Though the two women don't elaborate, the audience can quickly infer during a later scene that she is distracted *by* books and distracted *from* finding a male suitor—which makes her strange. In the first few scenes, Belle is characterized as almost asexual, maybe even a bit homosexual, in opposing men's advances towards her, as if she must be crazy to not want a man. So while, yes, Belle is depicted as intelligent (a new characteristic as compared to the previous Disney princesses), the other characters in the movie ostracize her for it. She is not accepted for being both attractive and smart while resisting the advances of male suitors; she is peculiar and an oddity. Young viewers may see that you can be smart and pretty, but at an age where children strive for acceptance, they will also notice through Belle and the townspeople's interaction that it's not socially acceptable to place education above marriage and love. To be accepted, love must come before anything else, especially books. Thus, her intelligence is a barrier to love (which is later reaffirmed when the importance of books falls out of the plot and we focus on her

and the Beast's relationship). In order to enjoy the film, viewers must objectify Belle and devalue her intelligent personality; otherwise, the movie cannot be enjoyed when Belle later gives up her feminist qualities and focuses on the Beast's spell. Likewise, when the female audience member is forced to objectify Belle, they must also objectify themselves, for her masculine traits have faced far too many negative consequences to be accepted. If Belle can only find love and happiness when she gives up herself, then audiences may act in the same way, leaving them with only their body as a tool for finding and acquiring love.

The song continues with feigned greetings both around Belle as well as directed at her. One scene shows an attractive woman buying goods from a man who is drooling at her abnormally large, perky breasts and she bats her eyes while asking, "How is your wife" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? The following scene depicts a mother, fumbling with her children requesting six eggs. The way the mother has been drawn is noteworthy. She is not portrayed as attractive and thin like the previous character, but rather obese and frantic. She is not a character the audience would want to indentify with. Why was the mother presented in such a way? Feminist author Jessica Valenti (2009) explains our culture's obsession with youth, virginity, and purity and the distaste for women who are "too womanly" in her in book, *The Purity Myth* (p. 75). The mother is not attractive because she is used goods, devoid of her youth, mystery, and purity. The young audiences may learn through these two juxtaposed images that a woman should be sexy, but not have sex, because that makes a woman unattractive. Thus, females can never really be in possession of their own sexuality.

As the song continues, the audience learns how "peculiar" and "odd" Belle is (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). A gentleman suggests that behind her "fair façade" she's actually "rather odd" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). While Belle is beautiful on the outside, on the inside she is odd due to

her love of books. Her inner beauty is being contaminated by her hobbies and passions as they relate to education. This goes back to Wolf's (1991) notion (mentioned in Chapter 1) that beauty supersedes intelligence, as that is the only positive story told about Belle. The same thing that made Belle a unique, empowered role model is simultaneously the cause of her ostracism. As a result, female audience members face a dilemma: they can either admire Belle because she loves books—despite the fact that her passion leads to isolation—or to conform to the views of the townspeople and reject intelligence as an acceptable trait for women. If female audience members view the rejection of Belle's intellectualism as a negative consequence, they will likely select beauty over intelligence, reinforcing misogynistic, patriarchal ideals (Bandura, 2009). In this sense, Disney (as an abuser) asks its audiences to make the same decision that batterers demand of their victims: to give up their favorite pastimes in order to make him happy and subsequently reduce the violence (Walker, 1979). In doing so, the ability to isolate his victim reaffirms his control.

Thus far, it seems as though no one in the film is interested in what Belle has to say, only what she looks like. Justifiably, Belle's desire to have more than "this provincial life" seems clearly oriented toward finding someone who will listen to her discuss the books that have captured her heart (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). She stops in the bookshop to exchange the book she borrowed for another. The book she wants to borrow is one she has read twice already. Belle explains to the owner, "Well it's my favorite! Far off places, daring swordfights, magic spells, a prince in disguise" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This scene at the bookshop and in the following scene when she stops to sit at the fountain in the middle of town are the first times viewers witness Belle not being silenced when discussing her books. Only the sheep and bookseller will listen to her speak about books, which provides the audience with a chance to finally to hear the

stories that so fascinate Belle. While in the bookshop and sitting at the fountain, Belle makes reference to "a prince in disguise" and "meeting prince charming" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This is extremely interesting, because the film encourages us to see Belle as an intelligent book lover, only to reveal that she isn't reading Emerson, Dickens, or Shakespeare. She's reading trashy romance novels—books about meeting a prince and falling in love. *This* is what has Belle so excited? Older audience members (such as parents or teens) may be safe from the cinematic abuse in this scene, but the younger audience member is still in the process of formulating their gender schemas that cognitively shape what it means to be a man or woman in the world (Bandura, 2009). As Walker (1979) argues, "Little girls and little boys learn these sex-role expectations through early socialization" (p. xi). The sex-role expectations in the aforementioned scene are found in the story within the larger story, which still follows Disney's tradition of emphasizing love and marriage as the most important aspect of life. In this case it is simply done less conspicuously.

As Sumera (2009) points out, "Feminist defenders would say that these heroines mask independence as rebellious, or seek more than their immediate surroundings, only to later negate these desires to flee their constraints by reverting back to a patriarchy through marriage" (p. 42). Pseudo-feminist Belle is not immune to the forces of patriarchy; instead, Disney uses her as a Trojan horse in order to mask the genre's sexist ideas of gender roles, love, and the cinematic abuse. Her desire to find something "more than this provincial life" is now clear: she wants to find love (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Walker (1979) explains the danger in these types of gender role assertions, "It is entirely possible that sex-role socialization in young children leaves women vulnerable to becoming victims of men who are socialized into committing violence against them" (p. 16). By encouraging young audience members to place love above education, hopes,

and desires, Disney's gender roles set women up to be dependant on a man for happiness, in turn, abusing female viewers into accepting submissive roles wherein they must reprioritize what is considered important in life.

The Handsome Brawn

Nearly seven minutes into the film viewers are introduced to Gaston, the town heartthrob. The scene opens with Gaston successfully shooting geese in the sky as his sidekick, Lefou, states, "Wow, you didn't miss a shot, Gaston. You're the best hunter in the world…no beast alive stands a chance against you, no girl for that matter" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Gaston responds, "It's true and I've got my sight set on that one" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He then points to Belle, objectifying her like the animal he just shot. This scene cinematically abuses the audience through the intimidation tactic noted by the Power and Control Wheel, such as "abusing animals" and "displaying weapons" (See Appendix A, Pence & Paymar, 1993). By witnessing the violent capture of the goose followed by comparing Belle to the act of hunting, viewers can merely replace the image of the bird with Belle's character, subsequently taking the audience and film into phase two in the cycle of violence—the battering incident (Walker, 1979). The human-animal metaphor subtly conveys to viewers the idea that men are hunters and women are their "prey." Just as the goose has no way to avoid its untimely death, when Belle is juxtaposed with that image, audiences see her character as one to be found and conquered, consequently stripping her of all humanistic agency. Women are now the prey and the man is the predator; and like many animals of prey, no matter how much Belle tries to get away from Gaston, he continues to come for her. His flagrant egotistical and arrogant demeanor allows the audience to fear for the helpless Belle. We pray for her escape from the hunter. Ironically, it is the Beast's love that rescues her. It is because we don't want her to be with Gaston that we

accept the Beast and all of his faults; he is exalted. Now, with a higher anchor point for what is seen as acceptable behavior, the stark contrast of the Beast's behavior may allow audiences to see him as less of a predator (Gass & Seiter, 2011).

As young viewers witness this binary, adversarial hunter-prey relationship between men and women, they are being cinematically abused into learned helplessness (Walker, 1979). Walker (1979) describes the process of learned helplessness for victims of domestic violence: "Women are systematically taught that their personal worth, survival, and autonomy do not depend on effective and creative responses to life situations, but rather on their physical beauty and appeal to men" (p. 51). Later in the film, audiences will see Belle internalize her lack of control as she begins to use her sexuality to respond to perilous situations. I believe that leaned helplessness and the predator-prey metaphor create cinematic abuse. Disney uses gender roles, behaviors, and attitudes to create helpless victims and powerful abusers in real life scenarios—just as Walker has described above. What's more, the scene disguises Gaston's persistence as romantic and at times comical. This abuses audiences into thinking that his behavior and persistence is tolerable. His neurotic, stalker behavior is never addressed as unacceptable, which allows viewers to overlook it. Instead, Belle is framed as the one acting in an unacceptable manner as the townspeople criticize her for not accepting Gaston's advances. The lack of negative consequences for his stalking moves the cinematic abuse cycle from the battering phase into the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979). In this phase, abusers will typically apologize profusely, beg for forgiveness, or if the victim has left, beg for her to return. The lack of consequences and the incorporation of humor allow audiences to forgive Gaston and return to the enjoyment of the film.

Following Gaston's statement about having his eyes set on Belle, Lefou questions Gaston, "The inventor's daughter" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Gaston replies, "She's the one! The lucky girl I'm going to marry" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Lefou continues to question Gaston's selection, and though he is interrupted continuously, it is obvious Lefou's objections to Belle relate to her odd personality described earlier by the townspeople. Gaston goes on to explain that Belle is the "most beautiful girl in town" and "that's what makes her the best" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Note that she isn't the best because of her brains or personality, but simply as a consequence of her appearance. Clearly, Gaston's rationale is intentionally ironic; however, this comical transparency masks the Beast's initial rationale for keeping Belle as his prisoner, which was based solely on her looks.

Belle's beauty receives an inordinate amount of attention for a story that was sold to viewers as the tale of a "more empowered" Disney princess. Female viewers are subtly encouraged to try to replicate her looks, as her appearance is the only quality she possesses that is universally accepted and valued. At the same time, male viewers are subtly taught their goal should be to possess such a "creature." Even Belle's name—French for "beauty"—primes the audience to view her as the epitome of perfection and ultimate beauty (Merriam-Webster, 2012). This blatant use of language aside, upon first glance, young audiences can recognize that she embodies what it means to be attractive: big, doe-like eyes, thin waist, huge breasts, and perfect brown hair. Belle is always adorned in a "pretty" dress that wonderfully showcases all these features. The more mature viewer may think this notion of beauty seems silly, as most adults can recognize the flaws in the image. However, young children may not recognize that her body type is just as unattainable as the models on TV or the Barbies in the store. Children who are unsure of what it means to look like a woman may use Belle as a reference point, especially as she is

continuously referred to as beautiful. When society continues to see the same unrealistic body time and time again, it becomes harder to doubt its dubious nature. In turn, young girls may strive obtain a body that will never exist, distracting them from bigger issues and goals, and consequently placing them in a trivial, superficial realm. As a result, less time may be spent challenging the patriarchal status quo that discourages intelligent woman, as they are distracted by an overwhelming obsession to obtain a perfect body.

Through the passive violence described by Muscio (2010) in the earlier chapter, women are taught to devalue themselves by constantly being told that they aren't thin enough, pretty enough, and, therefore, aren't good enough. It is the media's passive violence that encourages consumers to feel bad about ourselves, devalue ourselves, push ourselves to achieve unrealistic, bodily perfection, all of which places individuals in a position to accept other forms of violence. And it starts with Disney and images like Belle. When films promote the importance of physical attractiveness, the viewers dissatisfied with their appearance are uncomfortably stuck between the characters' confidence and their own displeasure after seeing her body—again creating feelings of inadequacy allowing passive violence to exist as cinematic abuse. Furthermore, it's hard for children to reject the portrayal of the character's body, because if it's unrealistic, if it's just fantasy, then that means the movie isn't real and amazing things like "living happily ever" after can't happen in real life. Being realistic limits possibilities and notions of magical events. In this way, Disney uses animation and fantasy to cinematically abuse and control viewers into accepting an unrealistic beauty norm. Similarly, Walker (1979) notes the same tactic used by batterers, "One trait [batterers] do have in common…is their extraordinary ability to use charm as a manipulative technique" (p. 26). Not even ten minutes into the film, Disney has already used

the notion of prince charming, Belle's image/body, and fantastical occurrences (such as magical spells) as a manipulative tactic to distract viewers from the cinematic abuse.

Crazy Stupid Love

Though Gaston is extremely interested in the beautiful Belle, audiences soon learn of her disgust for him. However, that doesn't stop him, nor does the fact that she doesn't have any of the same interests as Gaston. In fact, Gaston actually despises her intelligence and hobbies, yet her beauty alone is enough to keep him attracted—it's the only thing that makes her desirable and Gaston relentless. It's clear that physical appearance is the determining factor for finding romantic partners in the Disney universe. Audiences are faced with a dichotomous choice: Do you want to have beauty and love or have brains and intellect? The choice is dichotic because audiences can see Belle's intelligence has caused her quiet a bit of bullying, discrimination, and now, has prevented her from finding love. Even the townspeople cannot understand why such a beautiful girl is so odd and entranced by books. Her mental state (intellect) and physical state (beauty) clash with one another, as they are not the cultural norm. The constant return to this dichotomy subtly tells viewers that intelligence is not a common nor acceptable trait for desirable women; otherwise, it wouldn't be such a conversation piece.

There is also a lot of criticism about Belle's refusal to be with Gaston. We see three very beautiful, blonde girls swooning over how "dreamy" Gaston is (screen shot). Though Belle resists his advances, the other beautiful characters in the film (who have not experienced the criticism or indirect aggression that Belle has) desire him. Furthermore, they cannot fathom why she would resist such an attractive man. When the audience sees the other women contradict Belle's disgust for Gaston, viewers may question her decision, and more significantly, her decision-making ability. It is a common tactic amongst abusers to use emotionally abuse their

victims into believing they are crazy, and thus, unable to make good decisions (Pence & Paymar, 1993). In turn, the abuse—both real and cinematic—is minimized.

One counterargument to this observation could be that it is actually Gaston's obvious egotistical behavior (obvious to the audience and not to the "dumb girls" in the film) that prevents Belle from loving him, not her odd personality. However, while the discernable message the film sends would agree that his egotistical, arrogant nature is the problem, the more covert message is that she, too, has a bit of an issue. More mature audience members may see the three love-struck blondes as iconic "valley girls", but the young target audience (likely children ages 5-9)—who, mind you, typically engage in play that is just as exaggerated as the dumb girls' mannerisms—may not recognize that stereotype. Older audience members recognize the dumb blonde stereotype because of their experiences—such as high school memories or even through viewing more mature films that have depicted the dumb blonde stereotype. Young children, on the other hand, are not likely to have encountered the "valley girl" stereotype in life prior to this film, and if they have, the may not recognize the behavior as a form of parody.

It is important to skip ahead a few scenes in order to fully analyze the way the film frames Belle's ability to make sound judgments, as it has a significant impact on her "independent" qualities. In the scene where viewers first meet her father, Belle asks him if he thinks she's odd, clearly a result of the mocking she just experienced in the beginning scene in the town. This question is significant because with it she sheds the cloak of confidence she has previously been wearing. Disney now demonstrates Belle's ability to internalize the townspeople's remarks, as she begins to seek validation. She goes on to say, "It's just I'm not really sure I fit in here. There's no one I can really talk to" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Her father then says, "What about Gaston? He's a handsome fellow" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). If the

audience agreed with Belle's assessment of Gaston prior to this statement, they may now begin to rethink the validity of it. Belle's father is featured as the only person who understands Belle in the town and he has now confirmed to the audience that Gaston is a viable suitor for Belle by mentioning him as such. Furthermore, the fact that the father references Gaston in the same scene that viewers first see her emotional vulnerability is critical. Even her father seems to doubt her judgment. One characteristic of battered woman is their low self-esteem, "Thus, the man's constant criticism of them in these areas adversely affected their judgment" (Walker, 1979, p. 32). Belle's judgment is criticized by nearly everyone in the town, and even (indirectly) by her own father. She responds by questioning her self-worth and value, evident when she elects to switch places with her father later in the film. As a result, it is difficult to see Belle as the strong, feminist character some film critics have argued she is. Instead, I argue, that, by this point in the text Belle's originally robust character has been transformed by the filmmakers into an insecure, passive girl who needs affirmation from a man.

I Will Have Her For My Passive Wife

Shortly after the hunting scene when Gaston's tells Lefou about Belle and his desire to be with her, audiences witness Belle and Gaston's first interaction. Gaston greets Belle on the street as she's walking and reading. He takes her book, throws it into the mud, and states, "It's about time you got your head out of those books and paid attention to more important things, like me" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The girls in the background swoon as she looks disapprovingly at them. He goes on to tell her, "It's not right for a woman to read" as she scoops her book out of the mud (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He continues his rant about women reading, "Soon she starts getting ideas, thinking…" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). In this scene, Gaston demonstrates characteristics of men who batter: he has low self-esteem (as evidenced by his need for constant

attention), is jealous, and possesses a "traditionalist" view of gender roles and a belief "in male supremacy" (Walker, 1979, p. 36). Gaston does not like Belle reading because it takes time away from him. Often times, abusers will insist that the victims give up favorite pastimes because the batterer sees them as a distraction from him. Low self-esteem goes hand-in-hand with jealousy, as the batter needs reassurance of his masculinity through the victim's unyielding attention to him and him alone. Gaston also abides by a traditionalist view of masculinity as he insists that women should not be reading or "getting ideas" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This patriarchal view tends to result in isolation for the victim. The power and control wheel gives some examples of what behaviors fall within isolation—one of which is "controlling what she does...[and] what she reads" (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The more intelligent Belle becomes, the more she challenges Gaston's intelligence, as she can begin to think for herself and "start getting ideas."

Intelligence, ideas, and independent thinking all limit a woman's ability to be passive, thus challenging the hypermasculine abuser, male dominance, and patriarchy. Thus, it is not at all shocking that Disney prevented Belle's character from wanting to read great works of art, and instead, gave her books about love, Prince Charming, and sword fights—all of which play on patriarchal views of male dominance. Katz (2006) explains the implications of the ideology underlying these sorts of narratives:

> One of the most important theoretical contributions of the battered-women's movement is the insight that men's abusive behavior in relationships is best understood as a manifestation of a masculinist ideology of power and control…it is the product of a belief system—itself deeply rooted in male dominance—whose central tenet is that men should be in control in a relationship… (p. 229)

This is yet another form of cinematic abuse, as Disney tells audiences what is acceptable for women to read—books about men. If the film can get female viewers to focus on men, it can stop the creation of independent, self-supporting women and replace it with women whose sole purpose in life is to seek out a man and live passively ever after.

The hints about a possible marriage proposal finally come to fruition roughly 18 minutes into the film. The scene opens with Gaston and Lefou huddling in the trees outside of Belle's house. It's creepy and stalker-like and reminiscent of abusers in the honeymoon phase. Belle has already tried to evade Gaston's advances once already, but that doesn't stop Gaston. Walker (1979) describes her personal accounts of the honeymoon phase, "I always knew when a woman's husband made contact with her by the profusion of flowers, candy, cards, and other gifts...By the second day, the phone calls or visits intensified…He usually engaged other in his fierce battle to hold on to her" (p. 66). Audiences see the townspeople working together to set up decorations for a wedding as Gaston and Lefou talk:

> Lefou: Oh boy, Belle's going get the surprise of her life, huh Gaston?!
>
> Gaston: Yep. This is her lucky day. (He turns to the townspeople.) I'd like to thank you all for coming to my wedding. But first, I better go in there and propose to the girl! (The townspeople laugh and he turns back to Lefou.) Now, you Lefou, when Belle and I come out that door…
>
> Lefou: (interrupting) I know, I know. (Lefou cues the band and they begin playing "Here Comes the Bride".) (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

Belle is in her house reading when a knock as the door suddenly interrupts her. She goes to open the door and Gaston barges in. The first defensive move she makes is when she puts a table in between her and Gaston. He informs her, "Today is the day I make your dreams come true"

(Trousdale & Wise, 1991). She asks him what he knows about her dreams, smiling almost endearingly and one thing he mentions is having Belle as his "little wife" rubbing his feet (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He tells her she should be his wife as he hovers over her, trapping her against a wall in between his arms. She dodges underneath his arms and throws a chair in between them—backing away. She then backs against the door across the room, places her hand on her chest, and with seductive eyes says, "Gaston, I'm speechless" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Though her previous body language tells audiences that she wants to evade him, the way in which Disney has drawn her facial expression as she states her speechlessness is seductive, very sexual in nature, and almost encouraging. Her eyes are very inviting, which can become confusing to the audience. Does Belle dislike his domineering attention or does she want him to continue? Gaston follows her to the door, knocking the chair over in the process, and again, traps her in between his arms as he leans again the door. She tells him, "I'm very sorry, Gaston, but I just don't deserve you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). As she is saying this, she then switches her facial expression from provocative to noticeably frightened. She reaches for the doorknob, attempting to get away from him. She opens the door, moves to the side, and he falls out into a pit of mud. Lefou greets him and asks how it went and Gaston replies tells, "I'll have Belle for my wife, make no mistake about that" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

First, note, he does not say he wants Belle to *be* his wife. Rather he says he will have her *for* his wife. The preposition Gaston has chosen speaks to his character's idea about what role a woman should play in courtship and marriage. Using "for" suggests a wife is merely an object one owns or possesses. This hinders the young viewer from seeing marriage as a two party, collaborative relationship. Her agency is stripped away by the language Gaston has chosen. Looking back at her response, its important to notice that she does not say she doesn't want to be

with him, instead, she blames the rejection on her own inadequacies, insinuating that he is fine the way he is, it is her that is the problem. In regards to victims of domestic violence, Walker (1979) notes, battered women lose by continuing to be victimized, "we all blame it on their own inadequacies and go on believing there is a right way but we have not found it yet" (p. xvi). Though there may be humor in the way Belle rejects Gaston, Belle now becomes the cinematic abuser as she role-plays as a battered woman—a victim of her own inadequacies and "shortcomings."

Disney continues the cinematic abuse by preventing Belle from being straightforward with Gaston. She does not explicitly tell him "No, I don't like you", instead she passively dances around the issue, as not to insult him. Belle doesn't say anything derogatory about Gaston until he leaves, after which she sings a song mocking him to the animals in the barn. She states, "No sir, not me, I guarantee it. I want much more than his provincial life" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This is the first time since his proposal that viewers hear *her* wishes. Before this, she stated that she didn't deserve him, but now she tells the audience—after his exit—that it is *he* who has the problem. Why did she not tell him this? Why was she so docile around him, yet so feisty after he was gone? In the same way a victim learns to silence herself around her abuser, the cinematic abuse here is the film's message to the female viewer that is it inappropriate to be pugnacious when interacting with men. Young girls especially are given the message that boys don't like aggressive, bitchy women who challenge their dominance or embarrass them. Furthermore, this may teach children that when an aggressive male makes an inappropriate pass, not to be direct and honest, but to be coy and nonchalant, and he will go away. In reality, it rarely works that way.

Gaston's stalking and aggressive behavior and Belle's response is another area of concern. Gaston assumes Belle will marry him before he even asks her, eerily similar to Rose's—a victim of domestic violence—experience with her abusive husband. According to Rose, "We never even talked about getting married, really. I just know he was telling people that we were getting married…. His cousins and friends and people were saying that they heard we were getting married" (Hattery, 2009, p. 134). The proposal scene ends without ever addressing the ridiculousness of prearranging the wedding before asking Belle. Though Gaston is understood (hopefully) as an arrogant character, this scene still has the potential to cinematically abuse the audience into thinking red flag abusive behavior is acceptable and comical, as it escapes scrutiny, criticism, and consequences. Furthermore, Gaston's aggressive behavior and Belle's response to it has the potential to create a disturbing reality. Gaston's use of his physical advantage over Belle teaches young male viewers that if a woman continues to evade you, you should be persistent. Do not let her get away and don't take no for an answer. In fact, an abuser's persistence is often the reason battered woman do not flee an abusive home; they fear the abuser will keep looking until he finds her (Walker, 1979). What's more, Belle's response to Gaston's aggression gives both genders a poor message about male-female relationships. Belle switches emotions very quickly, ranging from scared, to sexually seductive, and back to scared again. With images and gender messages like these, it is no wonder men are learning not to take "no" for an answer, as it is extremely difficult, even as an adult, to understand her responses. Is she playing hard to get? Does she like the chase? Through cinematic abuse, Disney actively participates in creating a culture wherein masculinity is defined as dominate, aggressive, and in general, everything not feminine, and because there is an "ongoing effort to paint men and women at opposites, men take on the role of sexual aggressor and women are expected to be

sexually evasive" (Filipovic, 2008, p. 20). Thus, Disney gives young boys the false impression that women like to be aggressively pursued—why else would Belle make those facial expressions? As a result, the available options to women who wish to reject sexual advances are reduced, as Disney uses Belle to demonstrate, a lady should never be abrupt when rejecting a man, and even when she says, "no," she might really mean, "yes."

The cinematic abuse in this scene also encourages an acceptance of domestic violence myths, "The prevailing belief has always been that only women who 'liked it and deserved it' were beaten…No matter how sympathetic people may be, they frequently come to the conclusion that the reason a battered woman remains in such a relationships is that she is masochistic" (Walker, 1979, p. 20). Belle must enjoy Gaston's behavior, because she continues to be cordial with him. Fowles (2008) demonstrates how this cinematic abuse materializes in other forms of media, explaining how BDSM (Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism) pornography also encourages viewers to "believe that what women want is to be coerced and, in some cases, forced into acts they don't consent to" (p. 121). Sadly, this is not the only way Disney frames Belle as a mythic, masochistic, battered woman. The film continuously allows her to be a source of stalking, demonstrating to the female audience that despite their efforts, male power, dominance, patriarchy, and abuse are inescapable. This is evident in Gaston's final remarks when he refuses to accept Belle's rejection, insists he will still marry her, and threatens audiences and Lefou to "make no mistake about that" (Trousdale &Wise, 1991). Again, although Gaston is presented as obnoxiously arrogant, the problem lies within the townspeople's acceptance of him. Gaston is a prominent figure in the town and is seemingly adored by everyone, while Belle, on the other hand, is disparaged and bullied by everyone but her father. Gaston's popularity (and the films use of humor) prevents the audience from fully developing the

magnitude of disapproval that is appropriate for a character that exhibits such horrendous behaviors.

By using Belle's isolation and lower social status as cinematic abuse, Disney (and Gaston) uses passive violence as a tool to create future domestic violence victims. Walker (1979) notes the same social battering tactic used by high-status abusers, "The use of social isolation and humiliation as a coercive technique in battering behavior generally involved psychological coercion. The threat of physical violence, however, is always present. These women get the message that if they do not obey orders, they will be seriously harmed" (p. 166). The Disney Corporation has become a media giant that many hold close to their hearts and memories, so close that the refusal to critique the company and films is overwhelming. Through cinematic abuse, Disney coerces audiences to abide by the messages and intended readings of the films by subtly using social battering (Belle's isolation as well as Disney's status in society) as intimidation.

Beauty and the Beast is not the first movie to depict unwanted contact, sexual harassment, and portray acts of aggression as an expression of love (Hovdestad et al., 2009). Unfortunately, it is all too common for the Disney princesses. As Walker (1979) explains, "A battered woman is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights" (p. xv). The Disney Corporation engages in cinematic abuse each time it portrays a Disney princess as a passive, domestic object. The genre has no concern for female empowerment; instead it promotes patriarchal views through the cinematic abuse that seeks to keep women complacent and submissive.

Nature versus Nurture[r]

The first scene in which audiences see Gaston and Belle interact ends abruptly when she tells him she must go to help her father. Short of being referred to as "the inventor's daughter," this is the first mention of Belle's father (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Before his appearance in the film, however, Lefou primes the audience for his introduction when he refers to Belle's father as a "crazy, old loon" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). After a large explosion followed by smoke emitting from the basement of her house, Belle scurries off to check on her father. Prior to any interaction, viewers may note that Belle seems to be responsible for taking care of her father, in part because she defends his reputation vehemently and there has been no mention of Belle's mother. She demonstrates somewhat masculine qualities both when she speaks about him in public and when interacts with him. We may see her as his "rescuer", which might suggest to viewers that gender roles are versatile and not static. However, if we look closer at female gender roles and Belle's behavior, her role as a rescuer is diminished, as she seems to operate as more of a caretaker than a genuine rescuer. For example, audiences first meet her father, Maurice, when he is in the basement working on his project for the science fair. He is frustrated that he cannot get his contraption to work and says he's ready to give up. Belle will not allow him to surrender, though, as she tells him, "Yes you will [get it to work] and you'll win first prize at the fair tomorrow. And become a world famous inventor" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). She is codling him and encouraging him in the same way a mother does a child. Maurice responds, "You really believe that?" and she responds, "I always have" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

Shortly before she goes to the Beast's castle, Belle launches into a song about wanting "adventure in the great wide somewhere" and "so much more than they've got planned" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). However, she never tells the audience what she means by

"adventure." Situated between those previous two lines, she tells viewers that it would be "grand" to find someone who understands (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). She switches between wanting an adventurous life and finding love quite frequently. So what does an adventurous life entail? She is very specific with her father; viewers know his dream is to be a great inventor, but *her* plans are much more vague. This seems deliberate on Disney's part. An individual's goals are dictated by gender roles because they allow one to understand what it means to be a man and woman. If an individual's goals don't fit into that performative behavior, they will be harder to accomplish. More specifically, Belle's vagueness doesn't allow audiences to fixate on her reaching a specific goal, because then, at the end of the movie, viewers might say, "But what about becoming a writer, did she do it?" Her "adventurous" life is vague and open to interpretation, which allows the Beast to fulfill it at the end of the film. When he does, audiences are told the chaotic life of abuse is adventurous, something many battered women note as a reason they stayed with their abuser so long (Walker, 1979).

Keep Calm and Carry On

On the way to the fair, Belle's father gets lost in the woods. Audiences see Maurice demonstrate another classic gender stereotype when he insists they aren't lost and they can just take a shortcut. The shortcut leads them further into the scary woods, and he asks his horse, Phillipe, "Where have you taken us" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? As bats fly out of a tree, scaring the horse, they race further into unknown territory. After a near death experience of almost falling off a cliff, Phillipe bucks, knocks off Maurice, and runs away, leaving him alone with a broken lantern. When he gets to his feet, he sees wolves and they begin to chase him. But as he is running, he trips down an embankment that leads him right to the Beast's castle. The tension builds as Maurice bangs on the gate, screaming for help, and the gate eventually opens just in

time for him to escape the wolves. Rain pours from the sky as Maurice runs to the castle doors, goes in, and asks if someone is there, explaining that he needs a place to stay for the night. It is not long until audiences finally understand the curse placed on the castle. As Maurice looks for the castle's owner, viewers can hear audible whispers, soon shown to be coming from a talking clock and candlestick. The candlestick, Lumiere, tells Maurice that he is welcome in the castle, despite Cogsworth's (the clock's) wishes. Cogsworth tries to warn Lumiere that the Beast will not like him being there, but Lumiere insists Maurice come in and get warm near the fire (in the Beast's chair).

Audiences can see by Cogsworth's worried behavior that the beast is someone to be fearful of. Interestingly, Cogsworth's mannerisms are similar to that of a victim of domestic violence when they fear an oncoming episode. For example, Walker (1979) explains, "Another behavior common among battered women is the attempt to control other people and events in the environment to keep the batterer from losing his temper. She makes herself responsible for creating a safe environment for everyone" (p. 34). Cogsworth is clearly trying to keep a safe environment. At one point, Cogsworth tells Lumiere, "Now you've done it…do you know what the master would do if he finds you here" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Finally, more enchanted, talking furniture and objects emerge, none of whom listen to Cogsworth. Cogsworth's behavior mirrors that of many victims of domestic abuse: it revolves around not making the Beast mad and his fear suggests that if the Beast sees the stranger, he will not only be mad at Maurice, but he may also take it out on Cogsworth. As Walker (1979) notes, victims recognize a situation that will upset the abuser and will "go to great lengths to control as many external factors as possible in order to prevent further battering incidents" (p. 58). This frames the Beast as a violent character, which later becomes important when Belle ventures to the castle to look for her father.

Viewers can hear the thematic music rise as a sudden noise in the castle makes the objects begin to shake in fear and hide. The audience finally sees the Beast in full form and the objects begin to justify Maurice's presence, taking the objects and the audience into phase one of the cycle of violence: the tension building phase (Walker, 1979). Lumiere pleads, "Master, allow me to explain…" followed by Cogsworth stating, "I was against this from the start" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Victims of domestic violence tend to respond to this phase in the same way, "She may become nurturing, compliant, and may anticipate his every whim; or she may stay out of his way. She lets the batterer know that she accepts his abusiveness as legitimately directed towards her" (Walker, 1979, p. 56). The Beast demonstrates his disapproval by emitting several loud growls during Lumiere and Cogsworth's explanations. Rarely do people get that scared of someone unless abuse is a legitimate fear or threat. Thus, one could assume the Beast has already demonstrated physical violence, which has given the objects reason to be scared, in turn suggesting to the audience they should be intimidated as well. The viewers are being told that the Beast is violent and should be approached with caution and hesitation. Finally, the Beast speaks, "Who are you? What are you doing here" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? As he backs away, Maurice explains his predicament and the Beast roars, "What are you staring at? Come to stare at the Beast, have you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Maurice begins to plead, "Please, I meant no harm. I just needed a place to stay…" but the Beast cuts him off as he picks him up by his shoulder and says, "I'll give you a place to stay" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The last sentence would most certainly resonate with battered woman. It perfectly mirrors the language batterers use just before the explosive outburst (phase three)—"I'll give you something to cry about" (Walker, 1979).

As mentioned, while it is Maurice who is the victim in this scene, the audience is also being taught to fear the Beast—a creature who rules his castle by means of threats and intimidation (Pence & Paymar, 1993). "Fortunately" the story gives the audience a way of coping with this fear. The viewers shortly thereafter learn that if they empathize with the Beast, excuse him ("It's the spell that made him a beast!"), and rationalize his behavior the same way battered women do for the behavior of their abusers, then the beast may be redeemed and the fear vanquished (Walker, 1979). Like Cogsworth, Belle will also later try to shield the audience from the abuse, which simultaneously encourages the audience to victim-blame. Belle does not allow the audience to see the Beast's wrath, because she changes her behavior in order to pacify him, bring out his "inner-prince," and in general, keep a safe environment for the audience.

As discussed in Chapter 1, society's refusal to critique Disney films is one of the major reasons Disney continues to engage in cinematic abuse. Audiences often say about films like *Beauty and the Beast*, "it's just entertainment, it's just a movie." Those excuses sound eerily similar to those of victims of domestic violence when they claim, "he didn't mean to, he was just having a bad day." Though one may argue that the audience has no reasonable fear of impending physical assault, I would argue that the abuse takes the form of patriarchy and sexism which ultimately legitimize domestic violence.

We turn now to the second phase of the cycle of violence as it pertains to *Beauty and the Beast*—the battering incident—viewers only see Maurice's shadow on the ground and the Beast's shadow hovering over him. The only characters directly shown during this violent episode are Mrs. Potts, the teapot, her son, Chip, Lumiere, and Cogsworth. All tremble behind a chair; some of them cover their eyes and the others look down in sadness. The door shuts, Maurice cries out, "No!" and the door closes (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This scene leaves

viewers to assume the Beast is being physically violent. The fact that the audience does not see the physical abuse again echoes battered victims' responses to violent episodes, wherein the incident is never addressed or mentioned afterwards, as not to upset the abuser again (Walker, 1979). Similarly, audiences enter into the final honeymoon phase with the film as the scene fades and Gaston's proposal distracts the viewers from adequately addressing the explosion that has just taken place. When the film finally returns to the castle a few scenes later, Cogsworth is lecturing Lumiere, "Couldn't keep quiet, could we? Just had to invite him to stay, didn't we? Serve him tea, sit in the master's chair, pet the pooch" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Lumiere has his hands crossed and defends himself by saying, "I was trying to be hospitable" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). It is significant that the Beast's anger is never discussed; it is apparently seen as natural and inevitable. Instead of having the characters discuss the Beast's act of violence, this behavior is comically framed as Lumiere's fault. The Beast isn't the problem; his behavior is exalted. It's Lumiere who is to blame. Cogsworth now *enacts* the cinematic abuse whereas before, he was a victim of the Beast. Equally noteworthy, is the lack of visual depiction and mention of the violence. Batterers often use a passive voice to describe their violence as a way to shift the focus away from themselves and their behavior (Katz, 2006).

Belle first realizes her father is missing when Phillipe and carriage run up and she demands that the horse take her to her father. Again, Disney seems to be breaking the mold of what is considered appropriate feminine behavior. Belle acts as a heroine and rescuer, going to save her father. However, audiences soon realize that such behavior leads to her imprisonment. (In other words, her deviation from female gender roles leads to a negative outcome.) In turn, the female viewers are cinematically abused, as they are less likely to use that behavioral schema now that it has been shown to have a negative outcome (Bandura, 2009). Furthermore, when

Belle operates within a masculine context, she faces masculine punishment. This is not at all different than many abusive relationships, as often times, when a victim steps "out of line," it results in abuse because she lacked the ultimate submission desired by the abuser (Walker, 1979).

At the castle gates, Phillipe starts to act scared and Belle comforts him saying, "Phillipe, please, steady" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This is a drastic change from her previous language and aggressiveness when Belle first saw Phillipe and exclaimed, "Where is he, Phillipe? What happened? Oh, we have to find him, you have to take me to him" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Her authoritative language and posture has quickly changed. After calming Phillipe, Belle bravely goes into the castle to look for her father. Some of the objects are in awe and disbelief that a "girl" is in the castle. Clearly, she is not viewed as a "stranger" in the same sense as her father. She brings about enthusiasm, not fear. Lumiere gets excited, stating, "Don't you see? She's the one! The girl we have been waiting for. She has come to break the spell" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! This is a significant declaration—Disney has now positioned Belle's character in a place of obligation. She has been cast as the one to break the spell, and it's now her responsibility. In framing the spell in this manner, audience members see the Beast's behavior as excusable and resistant to blame while placing the responsibility for rehabilitating him squarely on Belle. This is not much different than in cases of domestic violence where the abuser blames the victim and she comes to see herself as responsible for the abuse. This message socializes young girls into submissiveness by indirectly telling them it is their job to socialize the Beast (read: abuser) and bring out the prince charming that is hiding underneath the violence. But more importantly, it tells young girls not to give up, to persevere, because if they can just tolerate the abuse, soon it will stop and their prince will emerge.

Furthermore, the framing of the spell allows audiences to see the Beast's abusive behavior as outside of his control. Batterers often describe their abusive episodes as a result of losing control, claiming, "I just lost it" or "It was like I couldn't control it" (Walker, 1979). Thus, the mythos of "the spell" suggests to young male audiences that the abuse isn't the batterer's fault. Those men are not Beasts. They just have a temper, and they really are "good guys" deep down. In regards to cinematic abuse, framing the Beast's behavior in the context of a spell allows for redemption because spells can be broken. That is what keeps the audience engaged, and it is also what allows it to enter into the cycle of cinematic abuse from the very first scene, because it gives viewers hope that the cycle of violence is something that can be cured. However, as this chapter has attempted to illustrate, that is rarely the case.

To Be Continued…

As Belle bravely wanders through the castle, she finally finds her father in what looks like a prison cell with bars at the bottom of the door to prevent his escape. Upon hearing Belle, Maurice reaches for Belle's hand and in between coughing, he says, "Belle, I want you to leave this place…you must go NOW" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). She ignores him and says, "I won't leave you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Just as the words leave her mouth, we see a hand grab her shoulder as she is picked up and whipped around. The camera shows her terrified face as it swings out of the frame and it is only after the violent encounter that we see the Beast's face. Her defiance, bravery, and refusal to listen to her father (a male) has resulted in physical punishment. These rescue scenes also have strong resonances with the cycle of domestic violence. Prior to finding out about her father's absence, Belle was laying in a field, singing, and picking dandelions (representing the honeymoon phase). As Phillipe runs up without Maurice, she then becomes scared for her father and demands that Phillipe take her to him, which likely makes the

audience anxious and concerned about the outcome (representing the tension phase). Finally, her behavior results in isolation and imprisonment (representing the battering incident phase). Thus, while Belle was shown to be brave, her adoption of masculine behavior resulted in negative consequences and Social Cognitive theory would suggest viewers will, therefore, be less likely to adopt a similar behavior in the future (Bandura, 2009). Walt Disney has now controlled the audience's future behavior in the same way an abuser grooms and controls his victim's future behavior. The female audience member is also further affected by the cycle of abuse because she is strongly encouraged to identify with the male authority character, the Beast, due to the loss of Belle as the empowered female character (Sumera, 2009). The implications of the cinematic abuse noted in this chapter can be explained through Walker's (1979) statements about abusive relationships, "While we do not normally think of such restrictions as battering behavior, they result in the same kind of social isolation, dependency, and loss of individuality that physical brutality produces" (p. 166). Just as abusers limit the victim's activities by defining what is acceptable through male privilege (Pence & Paymar, 1993), Disney uses gender roles to enact the same sort of restricting limitations of female agency that enable and help to rationalize battering (Walker, 1979). As a result, viewers who accept the dominant ideology of the film and identify with the Beast are at grave risk of losing their individuality and independence.

CHAPTER 3

The Beast's violent attacks against Maurice and Belle are never directly shown. This is important because when violent acts are only hinted at rather than graphically depicted audiences are better able to distance themselves from the abuse. Therefore, like victims of domestic violence, they may learn to help the abuser cover his tracks. As Walker (1979) explains,

> There is also a sense of distance from the actual attack. Some women say that it was as thought they could stand back and watch their disembodied selves being thrown against a wall or down a flight of stairs. This dissociation is coupled with a sense of disbelief that the incident is really happening to them. (p. 62)

Female viewers are taught to be better victims when they learn to ignore obvious signs of violence. Likewise, male viewers learn that if they can construct something real as something invisible, there will be no consequences for their actions. This tactic is employed by many batterers, who frequently struggle to remember their acts of violence, claiming, "I blacked out" (Hattery, 2009).

Prisoner of Rescue

As the Beast picks Belle up by her shoulder and throws her to the ground she asks, "Who's there? Who are you?" and he responds in a growl, "The master of this castle" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). There is only a hint of fear in her voice, but for the most part she is oddly calm for someone who has just been assaulted. She explains that her father is sick and could die, but the Beast coldly and possessively states, "Then he shouldn't have trespassed here. There's nothing you can do. He is my prisoner" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Upon hearing this, Belle loses her defiant feminist gaze and instead puts on a submissive, pouty, face. Though she is still playing the "victim in distress" role, her gaze looks somewhat loving towards the Beast, as if he

is the one who can rescue her, not the one causing the distress. Her eyes are definitely a focal point in this scene, where each blink and doe-like gaze is exaggerated. She conveys a peculiar mixture of excitement and helpless that is somehow oddly stimulating. It seems Belle is using her femininity/sexuality to her advantage, and exploiting herself in the process. Her independent qualities diminish in these scenes, as she transforms into another stereotypical princess whose submissive visage mimics previous Disney princesses. What sets Belle apart from the other film princesses is that they direct that look at the Prince Charming when they need to be rescued from an evil force. But the evil force that Belle needs rescuing from is the Beast, and coincidentally, he is the only one who can rescue her from himself. He becomes the rescuer—the Prince Charming—as well as the villain. The complex role the Beast plays seems designed to create a degree of anxiety in the audience members' minds, thus transitioning them into the tension phase of cinematic abuse.

Returning back to the film, barely a minute and a half after being forcefully thrown to the ground, Belle makes the impulsive suggestion that the Beast take her and let her father go. She does not seem sad about taking her father's place, she is almost hopeful—it's suicidal in a sense, which will eventually carry viewers into the battering phase of the cycle of cinematic abuse. Belle begins to shed her cloak of confidence, demonstrates her low self-worth and value through her sacrificial decision, and takes on a submissive, stereotypical role. As Butler (1990) would explain it, she is playing the masquerade, a performance that women do "in order to participate in a man's desire, but at the cost of giving up their own" (p. 64). All Belle's dreams and goals of wanting more than her "provincial life" disappear in the name of placating patriarchy.

Physical Attractiveness: The Trump Card

As Belle begs, “Take me instead!” the Beast replies in disbelief, “You? You would take his place?” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Realizing her agency and choice in the decision to switch places, his grimace fades and briefly we see the Beast’s hard shell begin to soften. He appears extremely sad; you see the pain deep within him. This persuades the audience to sympathize with the poor, lonely Beast thus quickly taking them into the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979). Even from a critical perspective such as mine, his sadness makes it very difficult not to sympathize with him. However, this somber state is short-lived and he agrees under the conditions that she stay in the castle as his prisoner forever. Belle stops to consider this stipulation and realizes neither she nor the audience has seen the Beast in the light, but rather only shadows, glimpses, and the glowing of his eyes and teeth. Therefore, before answering, Belle requests that the Beast step into the light so that she may see her captor. It is odd that the Beast’s appearance would factor into her decision to put herself in an abusive situation. Unfortunately, we live in a society where physical appearance is valued so highly, that some women are willing to die to have an attractive partner.

The Beast steps into the light. The camera begins at his foot and slowly pans up his body until finally reaching his “hideous face”. I use the quotations in a cheeky manner, as the Beast isn’t as grotesque as the film has primed us to think. He is drawn in an almost handsome manner: his face is perfectly symmetrical, his fur well-kept, his teeth straight and white, and his blue, human-like eyes, are capable of conveying a wide array of emotions. In fact, minus the fur, horns, and (arguably) overbite, you wouldn’t know he was a Beast at all. This image is what allows audiences to feel compassion for him. Despite his relative good looks, Belle actually looks terrified, as her eyes grow wide; she cups her mouth, gasps and attempts to shield her eyes.

(It is important to note that Belle sees the Beast as a hideous creature, as it will come into play at the end of the film.) She then tightly closes her eyes and leans in towards her father, which is one of the few times she has acknowledged him since being introduced to the Beast. Maurice begs, "No, Belle, I won't let you do this" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Ignoring him, she gathers her composure, stands up, and in almost a virginal sacrifice posture states, "You have my word" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). In an odd twist, the story that was supposed to be about the Beast needing to learn the power of inner beauty has become a story about Belle's quest to find beauty within the Beast.

Fault is in the Eye of the Beholder

Her willingness to imprison herself communicates much deeper messages. The psychological and cinematic abuse Belle has endured thus far demonstrates that, regardless of how kind she is, she has no control over the inevitable abuse, so why not switch places? Her imprisonment is a manifestation of her inner self. Her intelligence and independent qualities are prisoners of her physical beauty and the film's misogyny. She cannot free her mind without enduring passive or direct abuse. Whether it is the townspeople, Gaston, Disney, or the Beast, Belle is going to be abused; so allowing herself to be a prisoner is an attempt to exert a degree of control over the inevitable abuse (Walker, 1979). This holds true for domestic violence victims, as well. They often will provoke a battering incident as a means of lessening the utter helplessness they feel (Walker, 1979). Yet, when individuals outside of abusive relationship—in this case the audience—see this, it can appear as a masochistic attempt to victimize oneself (Walker, 1979). That takeaway may reaffirm the seductive, sexual faces Belle offered in response to Gaston's stalking and violent behavior, all of which further promote the myth that battered women are masochists who like the abuse (Walker, 1979).

If victims—like Belle, the audience, and battered woman—can control the time and place of the abuse, they can justify their belief that the inevitable abuse is something they deserved because they incited it (Walker, 1979). This both helps the abused audience and further hurts them. To elaborate, Fouts, Callan, and Piasentin (2006) explain, "Feature-length movies likely foster a greater sense of familiarity and identification with the characters, thereby creating a situation in which the happenings, emotions, and potential lessons in a movie may have a greater impact on children than any other medium" (p. 16). When viewers feel a sense of identification, their sense of self becomes symbolically tied to Belle's characteristics and personality. Doane explains this cinematic phenomenon, "There is a certain naïveté assigned to woman in relation to systems of signification, a tendency to deny the process of representation, to collapse the opposition between the sign (the image) and the real" (as cited in Dolan, 1993, p. 109). As a result, in blaming Belle for the abuse, the female audience must also blame themselves and internalize the character's decision to give up her freedom. Viewers' ability to value women is greatly reduced if they see the abuse as something she deserved. On the other hand, when the audience sees the imprisonment and abuse as Belle's fault, they are also offered the same aspect of control she had in the matter. The Beast didn't have to physically force Belle to stay; she willingly imprisoned herself, which allowed her to enter the storyline as a potential mate for the Beast. Everyone wants the story to end happily, so seeing the abuse as something Belle brought upon herself allows viewers to accept the scene and move on from it, rather than questioning the morality of it. This tactic enables audiences to scapegoat Belle (and women more generally) for the sins of the Beast and Disney. As Walker (1979) states, "By perpetuating the belief that is it rational to blame the victim for her abuse, we ultimately excuse men for the crime" (p. 15). It

allows the misconceptions and myths that already surround domestic violence to thrive, and in this symbolic environment male-dominance remains unchecked.

I Now Pronounce You Beast and Property

After having revealed himself for the first time since the spell was placed upon him, it is clear the Beast is embarrassed and humiliated over Belle and Maurice's response to his appearance. In this sense, he shares similar characteristics of low-self esteem that batterers feel; he feels vulnerable and disgusting (Walker, 1979). This causes him to go back to his wrathful, cold demeanor as he seals the deal with Belle and storms off to let Maurice out of the castle. The Beast drags Maurice out as he begs, "Please, spare my daughter," but the Beast responds, "She is no longer your concern" and throws him into a carriage that takes him home (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Following her submissive decision, the Beast treats Belle as if she is property or a dowry of a sort that the two men had bartered over.

This concept of woman as property is not much different than a popular tradition that exists today. During wedding ceremonies, the father walks his daughter down the aisle and "gives her away" to the groom and the ceremony ends with the single statement, "I now pronounce you man and wife." The man retains the notion that he possesses an unassailable self while the woman becomes his property, his wife. Clearly wedding rituals do not create domestic violence by themselves, but they do provide a rhetorical environment in which women can be seen as a man's property. And it is no coincidence that Disney has always done likewise with his princesses. As Mulvey (1975) explains,

> She [Belle] is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualized. But as the narrative progresses, she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalized sexuality, her show-girl connotations;

her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too. (p. 13)

Within the context of cinematic abuse, this means that because we cannot identify with Belle, we both *acknowledge* and *discount* the abuse she endures. Viewers acknowledge it because they realize the rewards of identifying with the more powerful character, the Beast, because he possesses the control. Female viewers may see that they will be setting themselves up for failure if they choose to identify with Belle—they will be cinematically abused like her. This works especially powerfully when Belle is stripped of all her agency; the audience can see that "femininity does not exist, but is only a mask to cover the woman's lack and her desire to appropriate the authority of masculinity" (Carlson, as cited in Sumera, 2009, p. 40). Belle's assumed femininity is merely the inverted reflection of the Beast's masculinity—she is the Other. This is what allows her to become an object in the film rather than an active character the audience might have previously related to. If the film can get the spectators to see her as such, it can abuse them into solely identifying with the Beast, and if Belle is seen as the Beast's property, then she is also the audience's property.

However, the abuse is also potentially discounted because if we identify with the Beast, we cannot feel sympathy for Belle, thus we cannot see the violence for what it is. Additionally, if an audience identifies with the Beast they are able to possess the female character by adapting the male gaze created by the newly formed admiration for the stronger character (Mulvey, 1975). The audience may come to know women as something to be possessed and owned, and when they return to the real world, they may carry that understanding with them. It becomes the normalized expectation, be it from guilt for what we have turned Belle into or from the cultivation of a repetitive pattern that has become a Truth in the minds of the young children who

grow up watching Disney. When a batterer sees his victim as a possession (like the Beast does Belle), he will also see her as something he can rightfully use and abuse at his discretion (Hattery, 2009). Likewise, Disney encourages young girls to identify with the Beast, so that they, like Belle, might become Disney's property. The corporation grooms them to be passive consumers of its wardrobe, vacations, and attitudes about gender roles and romance. This is how the genre gathers its fan base and keeps the abuse going; it turns them into the gendered stereotypes it endorses and gets them to promote those same ideals.

Both the Beast and the Disney princess genre possess traits that mirror real life abusers. According to Walker (1979), "Another staple characteristic is the batterer's possessiveness, jealous, and intrusiveness. In order for him to feel secure, he must become overinvolved in the woman's life" (p. 37). This is evident when the Beast locks Belle away and controls her actions. It is also true for Disney, who has become so entrenched in our experiences of childhood that it has become difficult to imagine growing up without him. He possesses his audiences' memories, intrudes on our attitudes about gender, and is so over-involved in our culture that claims of never having experienced Disney World as a child elicit pity. To avoid this cultural shame, girls must accept the cinematic abuse and become good little passive princesses.

Dr. Beast and Mr. Prince

After having sent Maurice away, the Beast storms back up to the tower and Lumiere stops the angry Beast and suggests that he offer Belle a more comfortable place to stay since she will be "staying with [them] for a quite some time" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast responds with only a growl as he walks away. Lumiere then offers some comic relief and prevents the audience from realizing the severity of the situation when he states, "Then again, maybe not" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He is attempting to ease the tension for the audience and

prevent them from being harmed just as Cogsworth attempted to do in the earlier thesis chapter. The Beast walks into the cellar and Belle sobs, “You didn’t even let me say goodbye. I’ll never see him again. I didn’t get to say goodbye” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Placing the audience back in the honeymoon phase, the Beast’s anger diminishes as he recognizes that his callous behavior has hurt Belle. It seems very hard for the Beast to let down his guard because though his face seems genuine and remorseful, he turns away from her. Continuously, the Beast has impulsively transitioned between feelings and expressions of anger and remorse, and each episode is so sporadic his emotions seem capricious. Like victims of domestic violence, no matter how many times the Beast’s moods flip-flopped, the audience can never predict when the next explosion will be.

The Beast’s erratic mood changes in this section’s scene analysis will accelerate the cycle of cinematic abuse at a rapid pace. Each angry explosion can be understood as the acute battering phase of cinematic abuse, the remorse that follows equates with the honeymoon phase, and the times in between should be seen as the tension phase, as the audience and Belle can never be sure of what will set him off next (Walker, 1979). Many battered women note that this form of psychological torture is the most difficult to deal with (Walker, 1979). Of the battered women Walker (1979) interviewed, “[They] all described their batterers as having a dual personality, much like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He can swing back and forth between the two characters with the smoothness of a con artist” (p. 26). But it is not just the Beast that exhibits this cliché dual personality—the Disney Corporation is guilty, too. Children are provided with magic, happy endings, theme parks, bed sheets, and all things fun and happy. But they are also provided with stereotypes, sexist, limiting gender roles, and cinematic abuse in between. During *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney is Dr. Jekyll, but then, in the end, he becomes Mr. Hyde by providing a

"happily ever after". This dual personality is maintained with each Disney film that is watched, keeping the audience in the cycle of cinematic abuse. I know this to be true because I grew up watching Disney films. I named my first dog, Tod, after the Disney film, "The Fox and the Hound;" my mother has numerous pictures of me in various Beauty and the Beast outfits; and I slept on Pocahontas bed sheets for perhaps longer than what is considered socially acceptable. While writing this thesis, I am faced with the hypocrisy of my earlier love for Disney and my rejection of it now. To denounce my previous love is like erasing all the memories I have tied to Disney, but to accept that youthful adornment is to acknowledge my vulnerability and participation in the cinematic abuse. I would imagine readers of this thesis might be experiencing the same. It's conflicting; the Disney Corporation exists within a state of paradoxical thoughts, forcing us into our own awkward Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde moments.

Cinematic Stockholm Syndrome

Though the Beast did not respond to Lumiere, he heeds his advice and gives Belle another room. The castle is filled with gargoyles and statues that scare Belle and cause her to cry. Lumiere sees this and tells the Beast to say something to her and he mutters "I…uh, hope you like it here" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This is the most compassionate act the Beast has performed. Lumiere urges him to say more and the Beast continues, "The castle is your home now, so you can go anywhere you wish, except for the West Wing" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). In the honeymoon phase, victims often feel less threatened and reassured that the loving behavior will keep them safe, if only for a short period (Walker, 1979). This phase allows Belle to feel less resigned and docile. As she begins to question what is in the West Wing, the Beast quickly angers and cuts her off by yelling, "It's forbidden" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! By stepping out of her submissive role, she leads herself, and the audience, back into the acute battering phase,

which she responds to by fearfully drawing her body away from the Beast. Realizing her fear, and acknowledging Lumiere's disapproval, the Beast again returns to his tender disposition and softy explains, "Now if there's anything you need, my servants will attend you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Throughout the previous scene, Lumiere desperately tries to place Belle and the Beast in a position that is conducive to romance so that Belle can break the spell. He suggests to the Beast that he invite her to dinner. True to his unpredictable character, he again angers for no apparent reason and tells Belle, "You will join me for dinner. That's not a request" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). During this explosion, Belle's face is emotionless and she lowers her eyes as he yells at her. She seems to be trying to escape by leaving her mental location. The scene ends with the Beast slamming the bedroom door shut as Belle flings herself on the bed and begins to cry.

Much like the rescuer-villain paradox mentioned earlier, the schizophrenic traits the Beast exhibits for the larger part of this thesis chapter set him up to be both the protagonist and the antagonist. He is allowed to be the sweet Prince and the evil Beast on a whim. The danger in this representation is that it provides the audience with reoccurring opportunities to honor the Beast and vilify Belle. The viewer is nearly forced into victim-blaming, and in doing so, re-enacts the abuse of Belle and, if they are female, themselves. This potentially causes a lot of tension for the audience—particularly women. Borrowing from Dave Hickey's (1997) notion of spectatorship, it might be said that *Beauty and the Beast* encourages its female audience to simultaneously play two different roles: as a spectator of the film and as a participant within it.

The female participant recognizes Belle, the female character, as a reflection of herself and as what it means to be a woman. Young female viewers are so involved in the identification process that, to a degree, they cannot extricate themselves from her image because they "can assume neither disengagement nor aesthetic distance from the image" (Doane, as cited in Dolan,

1993, p. 109). Who Belle is and what happens to her tells the female audience who they are, what they should tolerate, how they should act, and what will happen if they do not. The abuse Belle endures is internalized by the audience and allows them to create meanings and retain the behavior that did not lead to abuse. Unfortunately, Belle's behavior faces the most consequences when it steps outside of the stereotypical box of femininity allowed by Disney. Because young girls are likely to identify with Belle, they are not able to demonize Belle without demonizing themselves (in the end all good girls are princesses themselves, after all).

The female spectator, however, exists outside of the film and the source of her cinematic abuse is the film itself. As a spectator, there is a weaker bond between the characters and one's self. The spectator feels happiness, tension, and abuse directly from the interpretations of and emotions felt during the scenes. When the Beast is cruel to Belle, she draws back, submits, and disconnects from him. Similarly, when the film is cruel to Belle, the female audience member is likely to draw back, disconnect, and disassociate from her in order to avoid the abuse she experiences. Impulsively, the Beast responds with remorse for upsetting Belle, but quickly acknowledges the possible consequences for his vile behavior: she will flee and the chance of her breaking the spell is lessened. The possibility of a not-so-happily ever after creates a tension in the audience member's mind, too. We want the film to end in happiness. The Beast reacts to this fear with more anger, which explains his fleeting and reoccurring feelings of anger, sadness, and tenderness. The audience also reacts to this fear with conflicting and ever changing feelings towards the Beast and Belle—no matter who they identify with initially. When the Beast is cruel, the audience may become disappointed with him or Belle for ruining the chances of happiness. When he is sweet, they may feel reaffirmed, relieved, or distressed if they recognize the transient nature of his moods.

An audience that is desperately clinging on to the hope of better days, the hope of the honeymoon phase, will desperately search for a way to create a happy ending—both mentally and cinematically. Thus, I believe many young girls, to prevent themselves from being emotionally abused each time Belle's character is hurt or further objectified, likely make the unenviable decision to identify with the Beast and to blame the victim, Belle, in an attempt to regain the "scopophilic pleasure of voyeurism" (Dolan, 1993, p. 109). If the spectator cannot enjoy the film or becomes angry at it because the characters continue to risk breaking the spell in time, then cinematic abuse can seriously escalate. However, the spectator differs from the participant in that she realizes "the character in the story can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 13). It would only make sense to identify with the stronger, more dominant character. Identifying with the Beast will keep the female spectator in the tension phase much longer than a continued identification with Belle. Therefore, I believe in order to reduce, prevent, or delay the cinematic abuse, many female viewers will feel compassion for the Beast and blame Belle for her own imprisonment.

In domestic violence, victims attempt to remain in the tension phase in the same way, "She [will] not permit herself to get angry with the batterer…She denies to herself that she is angry at being unjustly hurt psychologically or physically" (Walker, 1979, p. 56). This is where self-objectification comes into play as a major component of cinematic abuse. In order for the female audience member to break free from the abuse, she must further objectify herself (in ways Disney has not) in order to agree with the oppressive and objectifying gender roles presented by Disney. Only then can she prevent herself from acknowledging the anger felt when a favorite character, such as Belle, is unjustly hurt. (Belle also does this when she precludes herself from being angry at the Beast's poor behavior and her imprisonment.) If the female audience cannot

re-establish identification with Belle's character after she loses her feminist personality, two things happen: the female audience sees Man as more powerful/worthy and Belle can only be accepted for her feminine beauty—Belle becomes property, an object to be gazed upon. The only trait of hers that didn't face scrutiny is her physical beauty. As a result, young girls are encouraged to look like her, but learn not to identify with her "inner beauty"—the only thing that set Belle apart from the other Disney princesses. This results in an audience of young males who are groomed to see women as objects for consumption, and young females who become accustomed to reinterpreting their self-worth as solely the product of their bodies.

Victim By Proxy

Belle's physical, visual properties lead into another danger of encouraging an audience to see the Beast as both a hero and villain. The film's visual elements of imagery and animation allow viewers to personally witness the Beast's anger *and* remorse/tenderness and internalize/interpret it. The audience is both a spectator to and victim of the abuse portrayed in the film. This is a rare opportunity, as it is uncommon for domestically violent episodes to occur in public (Walker, 1979). As Walker (1979) notes, "It seems reasonable to conclude that the men know their behavior is inappropriate, because they keep battering such a private affair" (p. 61). Disney also recognizes the film's inappropriateness and keeps the cinematic battering private in two ways. First, it is cleverly coded and obscured by portraying Belle's acceptance of the abuse and the Beast's sweet behavior after. The battering between Belle and the Beast is not always blatantly obvious to the audience, thus its privacy allows it to subtly enter our subconscious without invitation. The Beast and the film know the violent behavior is unacceptable because it is not shown on camera, it is only implied. Examples of this were touched on earlier, such as the first castle scene when we only see the two men's shadows and the scene abruptly ends with

Maurice screaming, “Nooo!” or when Belle is thrown to the ground and all the audience sees is her face fly across and out of the frame, as if some magical force did it.

Secondly, cinematic abuse is private in the sense that the relationship between a spectator and a medium like film is always inherently personal, undisclosed, and concealed. There is the obvious dimension of privacy in which most Disney films are watched on DVD’s in the relative seclusion of our own homes. But whether we watch the films with other individuals around or not, the interactions between the film and the audience still exist primarily within our own minds. We only have to reveal our thoughts about the movie if we want to. Thus, through the privacy of cinema, Disney isolates viewers from understanding the movie from a resistant standpoint and many viewers may come to assume cinematic abuse is normal. Though applied to a different form of abuse, Walker (1979) noted that abusers often utilize the same tactic: “Because these women were isolated from other women, they were not always aware of the bizarreness of their sexual relationship. The batterer attempted to provide the reality checks for his woman, and she had trouble distinguishing what was real for the rest of the world and what was real for just them” (p. 118). Disney’s targeted audience is at a vulnerable age that relies on peer acceptance and bonding. What is real for the young audience and what is real for the adult world is never questioned or addressed, because that would isolate the child or children from social interaction, bonding, or from the notion of “happily ever after.” Instead, the inaccurate portrayals of Disney are *reinforced* though peer-interaction and play without outwardly acknowledging the stereotypical and normative behavior (Baker-Sperry, 2007). After conducting reading groups with 50 first grade students (ages 6-7) Baker-Sperry (2007) found that the children “found social power or acceptance in the retelling of the tale” and “prove[d] their femininity through sharing components of the tale” (pp. 721-722). This explains how the larger

structure outside of the film promotes the acceptance of cinematic abuse within it. Young girls striving for acceptance demonstrate their femininity by abiding by the guidelines and gender roles set forth by Disney, proving themselves by accepting the stereotypical ideals. While adults likely do not seek out the same form of acceptance, we still may carry those nostalgic, dominant, and normative readings with us as we grow older. The readings are not likely to be challenged later in life because the film's relevance no longer fits into our bigger life issues, like our careers, family, friends, education, etc. As a result, the cinematic abuse remains deep in our hearts and minds, only emerging when we seek out a romantic partner or define what is love and what is not.

Gaston: The Pseudo-Abuser

As the camera pans out of the castle window into the snowy night, the audience is taken back to the town tavern. The scene opens with Gaston and Lefou talking and drinking in the town's tavern. Gaston angrily states, "Who does she think she is? That girl has tangled with the wrong man. No one says 'no' to Gaston," and Lefou agrees, "Darn right" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Gaston's language revolving around Belle's rejection is frightening and it insinuates that he has intentions of harming her for what she has done to him. Gaston continues to complain, "Dismissed. Rejected. Publically humiliated. Why, it's more than I can bear," and Lefou tries to console him with another beer (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). However, Gaston doesn't want another beer, as he insists it will not make anything better or resolve his disgrace. Clearly, he isn't upset about unrequited love; he is upset that he was embarrassed and humiliated. He is intentionally presented as an abuser; however, Disney gives him an egotistical personality that is unable to love or feel romantic emotions, which is rarely the case for abusers. It is a stereotypical representation based upon domestic violence myths (Walker, 1979). Though abusers may react

violently if the woman embarrasses them due to their low-self esteem, this depiction is only partially representative of batterers. Often times, abusers are described as incredibly charismatic, fun, sensitive, and loving when they are not abusive (Walker, 1979). In fact, the reason abusive relationships take on a cyclic nature is because the abuser is able to win the victim back by being loving and sweet. The same goes for Disney's cinematic abuse; viewers forgive him or overlook the patriarchal, sexist messages in the films because they continue to offer a loving, happy ending. Wolf (1991) raises an important point about romance, "Men think coercion happens mainly through physical violence, but women see physical suffering as bearable compared with the pain of losing love" (p. 259). Thus, audiences may deal with the cinematic abuse to get to the "love" Disney films always offers in the end. Furthermore, it is inaccurate and manipulative for Disney to paint an abuser as being as detectable as Gaston. He merely serves as a Trojan horse for the real abuser—the Beast, and consequently, Disney. Disney so blatantly paints Gaston as a hyper-masculine would-be abuser so that they cannot see the Beast for what he really is. Gaston and the Beast quite literally serve as prototypes for the myths and reality of batterers—with Gaston being the mythical representation and the Beast being the accurate representation. Disney abides by stereotypical myths about batters in order to enforce them and mask the cinematic abuse occurring in the scenes with Belle and the Beast.

Gaston Pt. 2: Burly, Brawny, and Romantically Violent

Back in the tavern, Lefou breaks into a pandering song about how great Gaston is in an attempt to boost his already overly inflated ego. Within the first few lines, he grabs Gaston's cheeks and Gaston punches him in the face hard enough to send him flying a few feet back onto a table. Unfazed, Lefou continues happily with his song. In fact, no one even seems to have noticed the assault. He tells Gaston, "There's no man in town as admired as you. You're

everyone's favorite guy" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Throughout the song it appears as though Lefou is mildly attracted to Gaston considering he exhibits the same fawning behavior as the three blonde women did in the beginning of the film. Eventually Gaston (and all the patrons in the tavern) join in and Gaston's behavior quickly switches from pouty to arrogant. Lefou gets riled up and accidently spills beer in Gaston's face, and again we see him pull back his fist and punch Lefou, except this time is more severe than the first. This clearly excites Gaston and he begins assaulting the other patrons in the bar as he sings, "No one fights like Gaston, no one bites like Gaston" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The three blonde girls see this and appear aroused as they join in, "There's no one as burly and brawny" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

Gaston picks up the bench they are sitting on and the girls squeal with excitement. This is an extremely dangerous portrayal, despite the satirical purpose Gaston serves. They see his violent and obnoxious behavior as attractive, and as discussed in the earlier chapter, the girls also were used in the film to highlight Belle's peculiarity and lack of good judgment. They are the "popular" girls and at an age where the young viewers strive for acceptance among their own peers, they may not question the girls' romanticization of violence. Despite the characters' antagonist or protagonist role in the film, when aggressiveness and hyper-masculinity is shown as something worthy of arousal or excitement, the audience may accept this idea and seek out similar partners later in life. As Katz (2006) notes, "The more that abusive behavior is rationalized as normal and expected, the more likely it is to occur" (p. 87). Thus far, both the villain and hero have acted violently and never faced severe consequences for it. It does not matter who the audience (male or female) chooses to identify with, the lack of negative consequences for the character's bad behavior can very easily lead to an acceptance and toleration of said behavior (Bandura, 2009). This is cinematic abuse at its finest. In fact, many of

the characteristics Walker (1979) uses to describe men who batter are eerily similar to the characteristics of the men in the Disney universe who "do not believe violent behavior should have negative consequences" (p. 36).

The lack of consequences for violent behavior is evident as Gaston drops the bench of girls he was just holding over his head onto Lefou. The girls never once break their smile, despite the severity of the fall. The rest of the scene continues with Gaston acting aggressively and violently while the townspeople continue to sing about his greatness, undaunted by his ridiculously violent behavior. Furthermore, he is shown as a prominent figure in the town, which prevents the townspeople from challenging his poor behavior. Battered women involved with influential, well-known figures in their community regularly note the difficulty of seeking out assistance (Walker, 1979). They are often not believed, not supported, or undermined by the batterer's profession (Walker, 1979).

The Insane and the Excusably Insane

The tavern song concludes with cheers and laughter, but is quickly interrupted when Maurice barges in crying for help. He explains that Belle is locked away in a castle, urging everyone to move quickly to free her. However, he is interrupted by Gaston, who mocks him and smiles as he asks, "Who's got Belle locked in a dungeon" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? He explains that a "horrible, monstrous beast" has Belle and everyone in the tavern begins to laugh at him and follow along with Gaston's mocking (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Maurice looks dejected and silenced as the cronies at the tavern push him in his face and Gaston says, "Alright old man, we'll help you out," throwing him out into the snow (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Walking back inside, the cronies laugh about Maurice and his assumed craziness, which suddenly gives Gaston an idea. Gaston launches into another song about wanting to marry Belle

and using Maurice's "insanity" to his advantage. As he whispers his plot to Lefou, the audience is not immediately informed as to the specifics of the plan, but one can infer it is malicious and immoral based on only a few lyrics, such as "No one plots like Gaston, takes cheap shots like Gaston, plans to persecute harmless crackpots like Gaston" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). While the message is likely obvious to adults, it needs to be said that the lyrics are filled with words not typically found in a young child's vocabulary. Thus, while Gaston is presented to adults as an evil person, it is mostly done so through song and satire, which can easily slip under the radar of Disney's primary audience—children. In fact, humor is an abusive tool used by Disney in most of his films. When used immorally, laughter has a unique way of distracting an individual from the real issue. Many of the violent scenes in *Beauty in the Beast* are followed by comic relief provided by the minor characters. The comedy takes audiences from the acute battering phase into the honeymoon phase in flash.

It is important to note the town's labeling of Maurice's as insane. He calls the Beast a "horrible, monstrous beast," yet no one believes him or takes him seriously. This rejection of Maurice's interpretation of the Beast is significant. What viewer would want to support a relationship between a sweet princess and a horrible, monstrous beast? If the entire tavern had suddenly risen to their feet and took action, the audience would likely have a different perception about the severity of Belle's imprisonment and the Beast's temper. The reaction of the townspeople to Maurice enables the audience to continue to feel pity for the Beast. We want him to be a prince deep down, so if the townspeople in the tavern doubt the seriousness of the Beast's evil behavior, then we can be a little more comfortable identifying with him. Maurice's "craziness" also works in tandem with Gaston's popularity in the town to promote an obedient and submissive acceptance of violence. His cries for action are shrugged off as no big deal,

because after all, Maurice is crazy. The film treats Maurice in the same way victims have been treated when seeking outside help. A victim interviewed by Walker (1979) describes a similar experience; when she told a friend about her husband's abuse, the friend responded:

> I really do think you have very serious problems. I don't know whether this is true or not, what you're saying. It sounds too bizarre to really be that way. Somehow I just can't see him doing that to you. I know him very well. He just wouldn't do it. I know you've been under a lot of strain, Maureen, lately. Don't you think it's part of the strain? (p. 176)

The friend's response frames the violence as a delusion in the same way Maurice's story is framed. The audience has seen the Beast's temper diminish as the film has gone on and they may see Maurice as overacting or exaggerating, too. Disney abuses the audience into overlooking the violence by playing upon our acceptance of the Beast coupled with the town's labeling of Maurice as crazy. We want to shrug off the urgency of the matter, too, because now as cinematic victims, we would feel helpless and lost without the presence of Belle and the Beast's budding relationship. We don't want her to be rescued, because then, there can be no happy ending. There is no other suitor in the film that can lead the main female character to happiness.

The fear of being alone (without Belle and the Beast as a couple) is another cause for the cycle of violence, "Both the batterer and the battered woman fear they cannot survive alone, and so continue to maintain a bizarre symbiotic relationship from which they cannot extricate themselves" (Walker, 1979, p. 43). In *Beauty and the Beast*, the Beast will remain a beast forever if the spell is not broken, so in a sense, he—as the batterer—is framed as an individual who cannot survive without Belle—the battered woman. The primary audience for the film is at an age when they are forming their ideas about love—because Disney promotes submissive, dependant gender roles for females in which marriage is presented as the most important thing in

a woman's life—without a romantic ending, viewers may feel lost if they are not provided with the successful behavioral schema that can lead them to love later in their own lives. In other words, it is exceedingly difficult to One cannot remove oneself from the abusive relationship with Disney because without him, there is no Prince Charming—we are alone, helpless, and incomplete.

Bravely Let Go of Your Dreams

After seeing Maurice wander the town circle alone, the scene fades and the audience is taken back to the castle, where Belle is still crying in her room. Mrs. Potts knocks on the door to offer her tea and within moments Belle is introduced to the enchanted objects and furniture in the castle. Confused, she struggles to understand the plausibility of such fantastical things such as talking teapots and armoires. Mrs. Potts son chimes in, "I told you she was pretty, Mama, didn't I" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? The objects begin to talk to her as if they were not strangers at all:

> Mrs. Potts: That was a very brave thing you did, my dear.
>
> Wardrobe: We all think so.
>
> Belle: But I've lost my father, my dreams, everything.
>
> Mrs. Potts: Cheer up, child. It'll turn out all right in the end, you'll see. Oops! Look at me, jabbering on when there's a supper to get on the table (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

Amazed and amused with the enchanted objects, Belle even begins to smile a bit while talking to them. Yet, the messages that are being sent to the audience in this scene are far from something to smile about. They are hazardous and abusive on many different levels.

First, Mrs. Potts framing of Belle's self-imprisonment as "brave" is a manipulative tactic used by Disney to promote and obscure his abusive and precarious notions about gender and love. What she did was not brave by any means, but because the happy ending requires one to

overlook everything she gave up, it must be promoted as a good and honorable decision. In reality, Belle has given up not only her freedom, but her original feminine self. Belle's femininity becomes like a mask, "worn to gain authority, or power, or respect, but underneath all that, a set of patriarchal codes remains unmasked" (Sumera, 2009, p. 41). The authority, power, and respect is what Disney hopes audiences will give to him for providing a strong female character; however, underneath that mask lie ideas about gender roles that promote and maintain the patriarchal status quo. In reality, the only times Belle truly did act bravely were the times she faced the most abuse. But if the film can get viewers to modify their definition of what bravery is, then it can sell submissive behavior as adventurous and benevolent.

Secondly, when Belle expresses sadness over giving up everything in her life, Mrs. Potts minimizes it and promises that it will be okay in the end. Without her "everything", Belle's existence disappears and the female viewers lose themselves in the process. Without an existence in the film, female viewers are forced to find cinematic pleasure wherever they can, in this case, in the hope that sometime in the future there will be a happy ending. Dolan (1993) explains that the female spectator "already has nothing to lose" due to the "originary lack," which makes them vulnerable to accepting and caving into the cinematic abuse (p. 109). Thus, like battered women, the female audience must give up their everything to find love.

Unfortunately, this scene is one of the last times we will hear about Belle's dreams. The audience is encouraged to forget about Belle's passions, goals and desires outside of romance—as well as their own—as the plot now revolves around the Beast's dilemma. Additionally, the female audience is asked to give up their investment into Belle's character and redirect their energy when the story becomes about the Beast's redemption. This is similar to the way many women in abused relationships will quit their jobs to placate an abuser: "no matter how

important her career might be to her, she is ready to give it up if it will make the batterer happy" (Walker, 1979, p. 33). In this sense, Disney acts as a batterer in that he has a "need to possess his [women]" causing us to reprioritize what is considered important in our lives, and abusing us into submitting to an abuser (the Beast, Disney) in order to find love and happiness.

To Be Continued…

Mrs. Potts' assurance that everything will get better in the end is obviously foreshadowing the end of the film when the spell is broken and the couple lives happily ever after. The audience's anticipation of better days mirrors that of a battered woman's hope for the cessation of violence. Victims believe, as Walker (1979) explains, "If she waits it out, she reasons, the situation will change and bring an improvement in his behavior towards her. The reasoning unfortunately does not bring an improvement, only a postponement of the second phase of the cycle, the acute battering incident" (p. 57). By continuing to watch the film, the audience agrees to wait it out. In part, this is due to Mrs. Potts' reassurance. She acts towards the Beast the same way that a community acts towards abusers who are prominent figures. When the Beast's servants and society defend an abuser, they "become an accomplice to his violence" (Walker, 1979, p. 167). Furthermore, her promise of hope brings the audience into the honeymoon phase and the abusive relationship between the film and audience becomes idealized. As Walker (1979) promised, the battering phase is in fact postponed; in the end, Belle "repairs" the Beast and his behavior improves, and consequently, so does the film's behavior towards Belle and the audience. However, the third phase of cinematic abuse does not vanish, it exists outside the film, in the minds of the young girls who believe they should give up their dreams in pursuit of love and in the minds of young boys who think women should do just that. For young girls this acceptance is borderline suicidal. As Walker (1979) explains, when women

give up the essence of who they are to placate and abuser, “At best, the violent assaults are reduced in frequency and severity. Unassisted, they simply escalate to homicidal and suicidal proportions” (p. 29). The suicide for the female audience occurs when they give up themselves, abandon their life goals, and in turn, objectify themselves to ease the pain caused by the cinematic abuse. Due to the company’s global media conglomerate status, no matter what we do, it is increasingly difficult to disentangle Disney from our lives, memories, and culture, thus the possibility for termination of the cinematic abuse seems miniscule.

CHAPTER 4

Mrs. Potts and Chip hurry off and leave Belle in her room with the wardrobe. Still unfazed by Belle's remorse over losing everything, she asks, "Well now, what shall we dress you in for dinner" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Wardrobe rummages through her stash and eventually pulls out a pink dress and exclaims, "Ah! There, you'll look ravishing in this one" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). (It is unclear why the Beast has women's clothing in his castle.) Belle graciously declines and explains that she will not be attending dinner. Wardrobe's facial expression quickly transitions from merry and cheerful to worried and anxious and she says, "Oh, but you must" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! Based on the earlier scene when the enchanted object's fear foreshadowed the Beast's violent assault on Maurice, one could assume Wardrobe's sudden mood change is related to her fear of abuse. Cogsworth interrupts the two and announces that dinner is ready. The scene cuts to the Beast, who is pacing back and forth in front of the fireplace, clearly upset about how long Belle is taking to come down from her room. Lumiere and Mrs. Potts are sitting on the mantle and the Best growls, "What's taking so long? I told her to come down. Why isn't she here yet" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)?!? The Beast's pacing and impatience illustrates the tension phase in the cycle of violence. In this phase, batterers typically look for justification for the explosion they know is about to come, "often recit[ing] a great many petty annoyances that occurred during phase one" (Walker, 1979, p. 60). The Beast is obviously annoyed that Belle is late to dinner and his anger seems to be steadily increasing. On a deeper level, however, these sorts of annoyances are never the real cause of physical abuse, rather it is the lack of control the abuser feels in the situation (Walker, 1979).

Mrs. Potts tries to encourage the Beast to be patient and explains that Belle has lost her father and her freedom, something that she had previously dismissed when speaking with Belle.

The Beast doesn't respond and Lumiere changes the subject to the spell. Again, this quick transition in the conversation may prevent the audience from fully recognizing the immensity of what Belle gave up. Lumiere asks the Beast, "Master, have you thought that, perhaps, this girl could be the one to break the spell?" to which the Beast roars, "Of course I have. I'm not a fool" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast is becoming more and more impatient, irritable and frustrated, yet he seems unable to properly express those feelings, which further exacerbates his anger. As Lumiere fantasizes about becoming a human by midnight that night, Mrs. Potts explains, "It's not that easy, Lumiere. These things take time" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Similar to the Beast-Gaston contrast, this is another example of the film using the contrast principle to encourage the audience to re-evaluate the speed in which a relationship should progress. When Lumiere proposes such a ridiculously short timeline for falling in love, then the actual length of time it takes Belle and the Beast to fall in love doesn't seem as far-fetched. However, masking the short-lived courtship between the two could be setting the audience up to expect the same from their future relationships. As they seek out partners, they may look for lovers who move as fast as the Beast. Unfortunately, this behavior should be read as a warning sign that the individual in question is a potential batterer.

Fake it 'Til You Make it

Exasperated by the limitations of the spell, the Beast says, "It's no use! She's so beautiful and I'm so…well, look at me" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! Lumiere and Mrs. Potts look at each other desperately searching for something to say; they aren't able to argue against the inference that he is unattractive. Mrs. Potts tries to ease his frustration, "Oh, you must help her see past all that" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). It's clear that the Beast is referring to his appearance, so when

Mrs. Potts tells him, “You must help her see past all that” one could assume “all that” is referring to his monstrous looks. Lumiere and Mrs. Potts give him pointers:

> Mrs. Potts: Well, you can start by making yourself more presentable. Straighten up; try to act like a gentleman.
>
> Lumiere: Ah yes, when she comes in, give her a dashing, debonair smile. Come, come, show me the smile. (The Beast bears his fangs in a comically scary way)
>
> Mrs. Potts: But don't frighten the poor girl.
>
> Lumiere: Impress her with your rapier wit.
>
> Mrs. Potts: But be gentle.
>
> Lumiere: Shower her with compliments.
>
> Mrs. Potts: But be sincere.
>
> Lumiere: And above all...
>
> Lumiere and Mrs. Potts: You must control your temper! (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

The Beast’s initial statement was: “She is so beautiful and I’m so…well, look at me” but as the conversation continues, the focus on appearance dissipates (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Lumiere and Mrs. Potts’ suggestions imply that the Beast’s behavior is the real problem, and that it is not just his outer appearance that prevents the beautiful Belle from loving him; clearly it is his horrendous behavior as well. However, because the conversation emerged in response to the Beast’s mention of physical appearance, the audience is less likely to critically evaluate the Beast’s behavior. Mrs. Potts wants Belle to see past the Beast’s barbarous behavior—yet codes it as his physical appearance—so she can release the prince deep within. This insidious coding uses the Beast’s body as a tool to excuse his behavior: it subtly suggests the abuse as coming from a spell that inhabited the prince’s body and mind. Thus, the film tries to convince us, despite what

we were told earlier, that the Beast is merely the material image of the spell, not a reflection of the prince deep within. Decoupling the abuse from the abuser is a common practice amongst domestic violence victims. One battered woman interviewed by Dr. Walker (1979) explained that moment before a particular battering situation her husband's eyes "just looked like they belonged to someone else" and "his whole body began to change" (p. 91). In other words, her abuser morphed into a "beast" who could not be held responsible for his actions. After all, this was not her "real" husband.

The specific behavioral changes Lumiere and Mrs. Potts suggest are also significant. They are all the same tactics a batterer uses in the honeymoon phase to manipulate a woman into coming back (Walker, 1979). None of them actually relate to an internal change within the Beast; rather, they are performances that will charm Belle. Debonair smiles, excessive compliments, and impressive wit, all rhetorically disguise the abuser deep within the Beast. "Debonair" is defined as suave, meaning "smoothly though often superficially gracious and sophisticated" (Merriam-Webster, 2012). "Wit" can be defined as "reasoning power" (Merriam-Webster, 2012). And, perhaps most telling is "rapier", which when used an adjective is defined as "extremely sharp or keen," but when used as a noun means "a straight 2-edged sword with a narrow pointed blade" (Merriam-Webster, 2012). These definitions all relate to deception, power or control. To evaluate this scene's rhetoric from a chronological standpoint, it seems to suggest that if the Beast can first seduce Belle with his smile, then he can then gain power over her with his charismatic personality. Lumiere and Mrs. Potts guidelines for getting Belle to overlook the Beast's hideousness mirror an abuser's "extraordinary ability to use charm as a manipulative technique" to keep a woman in a relationship with him despite the abuse (Walker, 1979, p. 26). Just as the Beast must provide a positive counterbalance to his ugly exterior, batterers must

provide a sweet, loving side to counter their abusive outbursts. This allows the victim to recall the batterer's positive attributes, which then gives her the opportunity to weigh the good against the bad and ultimately provides a rationale for returning to her abuser. As Belle is successfully manipulated to see the Beast's hideousness (including, his violent behavior) as a minor flaw compared to his otherwise sweet demeanor, young female viewers are socialized to overlook, ignore, and excuse dangerous behavior and to see honeymoon behavior not as a warning sign, but as the prelude to romance.

The Beast also mirrors a batterer's engagement of others "in his fierce battle to hold on to her [Belle]," consequently making Lumiere and Mrs. Potts accomplices to the abuse (Walker, 1979, p. 66). Though Mrs. Potts originally seemed to have been sending a good message to the audience by abiding by the "inner beauty" moral of the story ("You must help her see past all that"), Lumiere and Mrs. Potts following suggestions encourage naïve ideas about love that make the audience vulnerable to becoming victims of abuse later in life. But because the minor characters predominately function in the film as humorous, consequence-free diversions for when the scenes get too serious, it is easy to adore them. They offer an escape from the cinematic abuse by providing bite-sized honeymoon phases (funnier, happier respites from the abuse). The honeymoon phase is arguably the most crucial phase in the cycle of violence, as it provides victims with "a glimpse of her original dream of how wonderful love is. His behavior is reinforcement for staying in the relationship" (Walker, 1979, p. 67). Unfortunately, *Beauty and the Beast* not only teaches its young audience how to successfully enter this phase, but the film also simultaneously demarcates what our dreams about love should be—both working together to create future batterers and battered women.

The Evil Love Spell

The jiggling of the door handle interrupts the conversation between Lumiere, Mrs. Potts, and the Beast. Eagerly awaiting Belle's entrance, they soon find out it is only Cogsworth, who has come to explain that Belle will not be attending dinner. The Beast roars, "WHAT!?!" and sprints out of the door and up to her room, growling the along the way (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). His anger is unlike anything we have seen in the film thus far. Prior to this scene, although the Beast was cruel and abusive, he possessed an aura of control—his movements were calculated and intentional. While his anger and rapid mood swings may have occasionally seemed unrestrained, he always conveyed a deeper sense of collectedness. For example, when Maurice wandered into the castle, the Beast did not come running after him. Instead he slammed the door open and used his temper as an abusive tool, only progressing to violence when he locked him away. He was rational enough to gather the answers he needed from Maurice before making the decision to imprison him. However, upon hearing about Belle's absence, the Beast snaps and runs after her without hesitation or thought, finally taking the audience out of the tension phase and into the acute battering phase.

Characteristic of the cycle of violence repetition, the degree and severity of the Beast's anger increases over the course of the film, (Walker, 1979). As highlighted in chapter 1, Disney *often* portrays male characters as unable to control themselves around the beautiful female characters (Towbin et al., 2003). On a deeper level, it seems as though it is because of the Beast's growing affection for Belle that makes him lose all control. This is a common framing for a batterer's descriptions of an abusive episode. As one man explained, "I feel my adrenaline, and it feels so hard and so fast, and it over-, it just overtakes me, you know? … There's a change that's so dramatic and so intense that I feel like I'm powerless over it" (Reitz, 1999, p. 157). By

framing himself as a prisoner of his own anger, this individual attempts to suggest he should not be blamed for the violence. Abusive attacks are often described by abusers as "not them"—as an external force stronger than the abuser could control (Reitz, 1999). *Beauty and the Beast* mythologizes the batterer's excuses by suggesting the Beast's abusive behavior is a result of the unjust spell placed upon him. The spell allows the victim to find forgiveness because if the abusive episode "can be blamed on outside factors and not on the batterer, it is easier for her to deny her anger… If she waits it out, she reasons, the situation will change and bring an improvement in his behavior toward her" (Walker, 1979, p. 57). Belle does just that and her patience is rewarded with a Prince Charming, giving the audience unrealistic notions about love and violence. Unfortunately, obviously, this is not how it works for battered women.

The Beast quickly reaches Belle's room and he bangs his fist on the door so hard that it shakes everything within the camera frame; it seems as though the entire castle rumbles in response to his pounding. Acknowledging this as the battering phase, Lumiere, Mrs. Potts, and Cogsworth have a distinct and inconsolable sadness in their eyes. He screams, "I thought I told you to come down to dinner" and from inside the room Belle responds, "I'm not hungry" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Belle has made the right choice to stay locked away in her room, "According to reports from the battered women, only the batterers can end the second phase. The woman's only option is to find a safe place to hide" (Walker, 1979, p. 61). With his anger rising with each second, he struggles to even speak, "You'll come out or…I'll...I'll break down the door" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Belle's recoiling and the Beast's escalating anger is typical in abusive relationships. Walker (1979) observes, "Exhausted from the constant stress, she usually withdraws more from the batterer, fearing she will inadvertently set off an explosion. He begins to move more oppressively toward her as he observes her withdrawal" (p. 59). It is a Catch-22

for battered women. If they don't withdraw, they are more likely to do something to set the batterer off and if they do, the batterer often reacts to his fear of losing her with abuse. Ironically, female audiences face a similar Catch22 in relationship to the film. In an attempt to avoid cinematic abuse, female viewers are encouraged to give up their individuality, abandon higher aspirations, and accept stereotypical gender roles. Yet, when we reject the sexist messages, the film demonstrates the consequences: isolation, ostracism, and a no hopes of finding a Prince Charming.

True to his purpose, Lumiere offers a comedic break in the violence by joking, "Master, I would be wrong, but that may not be the best way to win the girl's affections" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The other characters join in and tell him to be a gentleman, to which he angrily responds, "But she is being so…difficult" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast's excuse communicates a very real myth about battered women. Walker (1979) explains, "The myth that battered women provoke their beatings by pushing their men beyond the breaking point is a popular one. It is assumed that if only they would change their behavior, the battered could regain his self-control" (p. 29). The Beast insinuates that it is Belle's fault that he cannot control his temper; if she wasn't so difficult then he could act better. Walker (1979) also notes the implications for the this type of rationalization:

> Blaming women for causing men to batter them has resulted in their shame, embarrassment, denial, and further loss of self-esteem…It perpetuates his notion that he should beat her because she did something to make him angry. What gets lost in this victim precipitation ideology is the fact that such violence is not acceptable behavior. (p. 15)

However, even if audiences do reject the myth and acknowledge his behavior as unacceptable, the spell works to further prevent the Beast from being held accountable for the abuse. Of course, this may be a positive outcome for those emotionally invested in the "passively ever after" ending. We don't want him to be an abusive asshole; we want him to be Prince Charming. Thus, the only parties left to blame are either Belle or the spell. When these become the only viable options, the audience is placed in another situation in which they are forced to vilify Belle and/or excuse the Beast. If it is seen as Belle's fault, then the abusive behavior is rationalized and excused. If it seen as the spell's fault, the abuse is not only excused, but it is seen as something that can be fixed, changed, or broken. No matter which of the two the audience decides to place blame on, it will result in cinematic abuse, as we are coerced into tolerating and accepting the Beast's abuse in the name of love.

If I Can't Have Her, No One Can

Standing at Belle's bedroom door, and with Lumiere, Mrs. Potts, and Cogsworth's encouragement, the Beast is able to feign composure as he asks, "Will you come down to dinner?" and again Belle says "No" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He grapples with his anger and he tries again, "It would give me great pleasure if you would join me for dinner" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). When Belle replies with the same answer, we again see the Beast's rage in raw form. He is furious and threatens, "You can't stay in there forever" to which Belle disagrees, "Yes I can" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). It would seem as though Belle is provoking the Beast, another common myth about abusive relationships. However, as Walker (1979) explains, battered women have a rationale for such conduct: "Although she appears to be masochistically setting up her own victimization, such behavior may well be a desperate attempt to exercise some control over her life" (p. 50). Both Belle and the battered woman are attempting to ease

their feelings of helplessness when they exert control over the inevitable abuse. The Beast explodes, “Fine! Then go ahead and STARVE! (To objects) If she doesn't eat with me, then she doesn't eat at all” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He then runs down the hallway and slams a door shut so hard that pieces of the ceiling fall onto Lumiere’s head. (Clearly, this scene has taken the audience into the battering phase.) This violent explosion is not addressed, though; no one tends to Lumiere, he simply brushes off the debris and its existence disappears from the scene.

The Beast is willing to let Belle die rather than to change his behavior or reassess his rationale for exploding. His concluding statement to the objects is especially disturbing, as it mimics the age-old batterer cliché, “If I can’t have her, no one can.” This puts Belle in a position wherein her survival is dependant upon her submission to the Beast. Herman (1992) explains the consequences of these types of restrictions:

> Terror, intermittent reward, isolation, and enforced dependency may succeed in creating a submissive and compliant prisoner. But the final step in the psychological control of the victim is not complete until she has been forced to violate her own moral principals and to betray her basic human attachments. Psychologically, this is the most destructive of all coercive techniques, for the victim who has succumbed loathes herself. (as cited in Williamson, 2010, p. 1417)

Truly, Belle experiences all of these forms of psychological abuse: terrified of the Beast, rewarded with her own room after her decision to be his prisoner, isolated from her family and passions, and now, forced the be dependant on the Beast so she doesn’t starve. As a result, she must lose the last bit of identity she has in order to survive—both psychologically and mentally. Likewise, the female audience also experiences this same abuse: terrified of the Beast and his abusive behavior and terrified of losing love and acceptance by admiring Belle’s intelligent,

feminist qualities, we, too, are encouraged to betray our inner desires and identity. Yet, by conforming to the sexist notions in the film, we are occasionally rewarded with humor, short-lived honeymoon phases, and glimpses of hope. If we accept the film's restricting gender roles, then the film has successfully transformed us into real life representations of the imprisoned, submissive Belle. Women often come to believe that we too must objectify and dehumanize ourselves in the same way we have done to Belle, in order to achieve our own "happily ever after" ending.

The Honeymoon Phase: Dinner, a Show, and Sex

Back in his room, the Beast looks into the magic mirror and witnesses Belle telling the Wardrobe that she wants nothing to do with the Beast. Feeling discouraged, another petal falls from the rose as he says, "I'm just fooling myself. She'll never see me as anything...but a monster. It's hopeless" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The scene fades with the Beast holding his head in his hands. His depressed, solemn state quickly takes the audience is back into the honeymoon phase. His pity party makes it hard not to empathize with him and is a common manipulative tactic used by batterers. The honeymoon behavior is so powerful that victims sometimes even recall it *during* or shortly after a violent assault. Walker's (1979) interview with Madeline serves as a prime example, "I felt so sorry for him. He was so charming, so talented, but so insecure. It was tough for him to give love" (p. 86). She explains this directly after describing a battering incident where her batterer abused her and called her a pig. Very similar in form, the film has just shown audiences how gruesome the Beast can be and then immediately follows it up with his feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and frustration with not being able to "give love" to Belle. The Disney genre also struggles to give its audience "love." Only after an

hour of barriers, obstacles, and being subjected to direct and indirect aggression do the princesses live happily ever after.

Later in the night, with the Beast sequestered in the West Wing, Belle creeps out of her room, presumably to finally get something to eat. She walks past a red curtain that is illuminated by three spots of light. The curtain rustles and we hear Lumiere and what we soon learn is Featherduster's voice:

Featherduster: Oh, no!

Lumiere: Oh, yes!

Featherduster: Oh, no!

Lumiere: Oh, yes, yes, yes!

Featherduster: I've been burnt by you before. (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

The two emerge from behind the curtain and we see Lumiere trying to embrace and kiss Featherduster. Despite her previous resistance, she gives in and smiles in his arms. Much like Gaston's marriage proposal scene, this scene dangerously encourages behaviors and attitudes that have strong resonances with acts of rape. Lumiere's victorious persistence tells the male audience not to take "no" for an answer; if they are relentless enough, eventually a woman will give into them. Unfortunately, Featherduster's surrender further validates the idea that "no" doesn't really mean "no"—it's just a game. Additionally, female viewers may learn that a woman's "no" is irrelevant and it will not be respected. These two messages foster a form of rape that often escapes legal consequences. This is evident in consensual sex legal defenses, in which rapists will often claim that even though the woman said no, she did not fight back and they interpreted that as either part of the chase or as a change of heart. In the victim's mind, however, she may not have fought back because she knew that her "no" would never be accepted and it

wouldn't matter what she did. So she does what she needs to do to stay alive. Unlike Featherduster, Belle isn't even given the option of saying no, she willingly puts herself in a dangerous situation when she switches places with her father.

Shortly after Lumiere and Featherduster's encounter, we see Mrs. Potts and Cogsworth in the kitchen, arguing about who is to blame for the Beast's angry explosion. Cogsworth coldly states, "Well if you ask me, she was just being stubborn. After all, the master did say 'please'" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Belle halts the argument when she walks in and says she is hungry, which further aggravates Cogsworth. He reminds everyone in the kitchen what the Beast said and Lumiere disapprovingly says, "Cogsworth, I am surprised at you. She's not our prisoner. She's our guest. We must make her feel welcome here" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). (Wait, what, she's not a prisoner?!) The film then launches into the legendary "Be Our Guest" song—a song that covers over the fact that Belle had no choice in the matter (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). One line states, "You've won your own free pass to be our guest, be our guest, be our guest" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! I'd hate to be the recipient of that prize, but the happy ending requires viewers to want it. This Belle-as-guest notion plays upon yet another cultural myth about abusive relationships: the victim has the choice to leave. What's more, I argue that Disney films play a significant role in creating—or at the very least, perpetuating—this myth, "In a society where women are culturally indoctrinated to believe that love and marriage are their true fulfillment, nothing is lost by pretending that they are free to leave home whenever the violence becomes too great" (Walker, 1979, p. 29). Lumiere's recasting of Belle as a guest is vital for the progression of the plot and the happy ending. It encourages the audience to re-envision Belle as a willing, autonomous visitor, not a forced prisoner, because otherwise, the spell cannot legitimacy be broken. If audiences buy into Lumiere's claim that Belle is a guest rather than a prisoner, they

will struggle to see an abusive relationship differently. Unfortunately, this myth often works because of the honeymoon phase, in which the woman, wooed by her charming prince, "chooses" to take her batterer back. It only takes a few turns in the cycle of violence for battered women to realize the pattern, but the abuser's passionate behavior obscures her ability to internalize that reality. Likewise, the sensational imagery during the song attempts to distract viewers from acknowledging the consequences of calling Belle a guest. Indeed, the song is really quite catchy, as are the synchronized dancing and breathtaking props. Not even Cogsworth can resist enjoying the amazing Broadway-like performance. After the song's grand finale, Belle is so entranced by the enchanted objects that she forgets her hunger and requests a tour of the castle, never once eating.

A Lesson Finally Learned

Cogsworth becomes a tour guide as he leads Belle through the castle, demonstrating his extensive architectural knowledge along the way. As they venture down a long hallway, not even the suits of armor can resist turning their head to get a glimpse of the beautiful Belle. Preoccupied with his lecture, Cogsworth doesn't notice Belle slip away towards the West Wing. She is climbing the stairs when Lumiere, Cogsworth, and the Footstool finally catch up to her. The objects attempt to block her path and she asks what is up there. Without thinking, Cogsworth reveals that it is the West Wing, "Where? Up there? Nothing, absolutely nothing of interest at all in the West Wing. Dusty, dull, very boring" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This is a place Belle knows she is forbidden to go; yet her overwhelming curiosity seems to take over. Luckily, Lumiere unknowingly hits her weak spot when he suggests they visit the castle library instead. Upon first hearing this Belle becomes very excited and asks, "You have a library" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)?! Wound up over their successful diversion, Lumiere and Cogsworth respond:

Cogsworth: Oh yes! Indeed!

Lumiere: With books!

Cogsworth: Gads of books!

Lumiere: Mountains of books!

Cogsworth: Forests of books!

Lumiere: Cascades...

Cogsworth: (finishing Lumiere's sentence)...of books!

Lumiere: Swamps of books!

Cogsworth: More books than you'll ever be able to read in a lifetime! Books on every subject ever studied, by every author who ever set pen to paper. (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

Lumiere and Cogsworth's dialogue really is quite funny; however, their humor could easily distract the audience from noticing Belle's diminishing enthusiasm. As they rattle on, she places her hand on her chin, deep in contemplation as to which place is more desirable. The Belle we meet in the beginning of the film would have undoubtedly selected a visit to the library over the West Wing, but because she has given up that piece of her identity, not even books can persuade her anymore.

Belle slips away and wanders up the stairs and down a dark, frightening hallway until she reaches a door with handles in the shape of a beast's face. She is about to grab the handles to open the door, when she hesitates and pulls back. As she looks over her shoulder, we see her expressions of concern, fear, and perhaps doubt about her decision to go off alone. She replaces these emotions with a rebellious look as she opens the door and walks into a room so dilapidated you would think a tornado just touched down. When she sees a bed, it seems as though she

finally realizes that this is the Beast's room. Belle gasps and quickly turns around (for no apparent reason) and the audience finally gets a glance of the Prince prior to becoming a beast. Though it seems quite obvious, we are not told whether or not Belle knows this is the Beast. It is torn to shreds and just as Belle is about to lift the shreds and show us his entire face, a glowing red light distracts her. It is the infamous rose floating above the petals that have already fallen. She lifts off the bell jar that is protecting it and as she is about to touch it, a shadow falls over her body. The Beast, who was out on the terrace, sees her near the rose and quickly runs over to put the bell jar back over it. He asks her why she came there after having been warned not to and projects his body over her in a very intimidating fashion. Belle leans back, terrified and apologetic. Suddenly, he snaps, and true to its cyclic nature, his violent reaction is more severe than before. He begins to advance towards her, smashing, slashing, and destroying furniture in the process. Petrified, Belle shrink backs against a wall and begs, "Please, stop! No!" as he demolishes the furniture that is not even a yard away from her (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He screams at her to get out and she runs out, down the stairs, and out of the castle. Yet again, her bravery and masculine behavior has produced negative, abusive consequences.

The violence in the scene is arguably worse than when the Beast threw Belle to the ground, because we are able to witness the episode in its cinematic/semiotic entirety. We are not prevented from seeing the Beast's rage like the earlier scene and it is absolutely terrifying. But his anger subsides as quickly as it developed and he again holds his face in his hands, realizing he ruined all chances of breaking the spell. The events in this scene need no explanation—adult viewers have seen it before. In the nightly news, television and movie portrayals, video games, and perhaps in real life, we know this is not just a disturbing scene in a kid's movie; this is a reality for victims of domestic violence. Unfortunately, the young viewers may not be aware of

the chilling symbolism and so they must decipher it in accordance with their desire for a happy ending. This is especially true for female viewers:

> Since male desire drives representation, a female [viewer] is given two options. She can identify with the active male and symbolically participate in the female performer's objectification, or she can identify with the narrative's objectified female and position herself as an object. (Dolan, 1993, pp. 108-109)

To apply this to *Beauty and the Beast*, to blame Belle or to excuse the Beast requires the female **spectator** accept myths about domestic violence, in turn stereotyping her own gender. Dolan describes this as a "trap whereby her subjectivity becomes synonymous with her objectification" (1993, pp. 109-110). The female **participant**, however, is unable to see herself as separate from Belle, and so she is silenced in a "representational space" in which she "has nothing to lose" (Dolan, 1993, p.109). She gave up her physical spatiality when she invested in the search for love, and as a result, the female participant feels vulnerable, guilty, and fearful. Blaming the Beast is not an option for her; she has seen the consequences of Belle's defiance time and time again, thus she must obediently victimize herself in an attempt to destroy the cycle of violence. There is, however, a path less taken, such as the position I write from in this thesis; but it is uncommon for young audiences to reject the mythology of the narrative in this film.

At First I was Afraid, I was Petrified…

After exclaiming, "Promise or no promise, I can't stay here another minute!" Belle runs out and jumps on Phillipe (Who has been feeding him?) and rides off into the woods (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). It isn't long until the horse begins to buck and rear back as wolves come out from behind the trees. Snarling and baring their teeth, the pack of wolves chase Belle and Phillipe deep into the woods and eventually onto a frozen, iced-over lake. The ice shatters under

the horse's weight and the pair falls into the water. Being the animal lover that I am, I particularly hate these types of scenes, but my anxiety settles when Phillipe successfully swims to hard ground, leaving the wolves to presumably drown in the frigid water. Unfortunately, this relief is also temporary as more wolves surround the horse. He bucks, knocks Belle to the snow (which somehow releases her hair out of its ponytail), and in the process, twists his reins in a tree branch, preventing him from running. Belle grabs a stick to beat off the dogs, but they quickly chew it to pieces, leaving her defenseless. One wolf drags her to the ground by the corner of her cloak and the other wolves begin to move in on her. Finally, as a wolf leaps to attack her, a muscular arm comes into the frame and grabs the wolf just in time.

Seconds later we see the arm's owner: it is the Beast; he has come to rescue Belle. He protectively hovers over her body as the wolves draw closer. However, because of the two animals' similar features, it looks more like the Beast is marking his possession, trying to show ownership, as alpha male dogs often do. He is no match for the large pack of wolves, though. They begin to attack him, one right after another, and he is able to tolerate the substantial wounds he has received just long enough to fight them off. As they remaining wolves retreat in fear, the Beast turns toward Belle, looks up at her despairingly, groans, and collapses on the ground. Unaffected, she turns to mount her horse to continue her escape and we see a triumphant smirk flash across her face, but it is instantly replaced with guilt and followed by sadness. Her conscious won't allow her to leave the Beast to die. She rushes over to him, places her torn cloak around him and the scene ends with the Beast draped across Phillipe's back as Belle leads the horse back to the castle. Though she initially wanted to continue on her journey back home, and rightly so, she has become such a weak character that she cannot even fathom the idea of letting her abuser suffer.

Belle is never given a fair chance to get away, even when the Beast is unconscious. When she is in the castle, she is in danger, and when she flees, she faces even more danger. It is as if the film is warning its future victims of the consequences for trying to flee from a man. When she subverts her "proper" gender role, Belle faces serious repercussions, which she is only able to escape with a man's assistance—the same man she was running from, thus reaffirming her abuser's power. Belle's successful rescue socializes women into thinking they are always in need of a man, even if he is abusive. Because without him, she cannot survive, she is helpless. Walker (1979) explains, "Both the batterer and the battered woman fear they cannot survive alone, and so continue to maintain a bizarre symbiotic relationship from which they cannot extricate themselves" (p. 43). Belle and the Beast not only fear they can't survive alone, the film confirms this myth. This learned helplessness is what keeps many battered women and Disney audiences in relationships. Unfortunately, whether at the hands of the townspeople, Gaston, the Beast, or wolves, Belle cannot stop the cycle of cinematic abuse anymore than the audience can. Walker (1979) makes an important distinction that can be applied to active spectators and passive participants:

> Most women in a sexist society experience similar battering incidents. The difference between most women and battered women is that the battered woman is more prone to the learned helplessness syndrome; she has learned that she is powerless to prevent the rest of the cycle from occurring. (p. 58)

This is why Belle and most audience members identify with the better of two evils: Disney and the Beast, because these forces of nature rescue and protect her. The Power and Control Wheel lists a few emotionally abusive insults used against women, such as "putting her down", "making her feel bad about her self," and "humiliating her" (Pence & Paymar, 1993). As Walker (1979)

explains, “While we do not normally think of such restrictions as battering behavior, they result in the same kind of social isolation, dependency, and loss of individuality that physical brutality produces” (p. 166). This is what Belle has endured from the beginning of the film and it has finally taken its toll. The film’s passive violence is used to assert power over the Belle by making her feel as though no one will truly ever love her, and as a result, she is less likely to leave an abuser, especially if it’s a situation that she already feels trapped in to begin with (Walker, 1979). By depicting Belle as having no control over the events she encounters throughout the film, “women are systematically taught that their personal worth, survival, and autonomy do not depend on effective and creative responses to life situation, but rather on their physical beauty and appeal to men” (Walker, 1979, p. 51). Had the Beast not been attracted to her, he would have never come to save her. Her beauty is what really saved the day.

The representation of Belle needing protection romanticizes men’s control over women, because in order to rescue her, the Beast had to prove himself physically against an evil force. Valenti (2009) notes, one of the requirements for masculinity is for men to “dissociate from women and prove their manliness through aggression” which in turn “encourages a culture of violence” (p. 172). The romanticized power that is established through these acts of aggression can later become dangerous if the control is acted out in other arenas of a woman’s life. And why wouldn’t it be? If the Beast’s dominance won Belle’s affection, it would make sense that it could also be used to keep her, or worse, control her. Unfortunately, we see the romanticization of love and control all the time. Remember the tweets that begged for abuse in the earlier chapter? Our language is a strong indicator of our attitudes about romance. Even our metaphors about love and gender are laden with violent terminology, such as “Love is a battlefield”, “Battle of the sexes”, and “Love is war.” These are not just words strung together; these metaphors speak to how we

understand and experience love and gender. They are a rhetorical representation of romanticized violence in our society—a society in which we think jealousy is "cute;" we think a man standing outside a girl's home all night with a boom box is devotion; we think persistence and resistance is part of the chase game. For many women, these behaviors don't raise red flags, but battered women often recount similar behavior when describing the courting phase of their battering relationship, behavior they wished they had recognized as problematic (Hattery, 2009). Like most women, battered women "reported that this attention made them feel like a princess. They felt swept off their feet" (Hattery, 2009, p. 131). Unfortunately, Disney has transformed what it means to be a princess. Apparently, in the Disney universe, being a princess requires an equal combination of beauty and masochism. Which is odd, when you consider the reality wherein First Lady, Michelle Obama, couldn't even give former-princess, Queen Elizabeth, a *hug* without the news media going berserk. I'm just guessing, but I imagine Queen Elizabeth doesn't take kindly to stalkers outside her home playing sappy Peter Gabriel songs, either.

I argue that the acceptance of such language and behavior is, in part, a result of the sexist gender roles that are perpetuated in our culture through children's films like *Beauty and the Beast*. Belle has been encouraged to lose her strength and her independent personality and the only thing she wasn't criticized for was her beauty. In giving up her self, audiences are encouraged to focus on the shell of her former self: her body. When cinematic abuse forces viewers to see a woman's accepted existence as only a submissive object in need of rescue, we dehumanize her. This socializes men into thinking violence is not severe, a demonstration of love, and an innate display of masculinity and it socializes women to accept and tolerate these ideas as well as the abuse. Walker (1979) explains it best when she states, "Love and violence do not go together in our minds; yet for violent couples they do" (p. 125). After the film's cinematic

abuse, we return to a culture that reinforces the same ideals, and as a result, viewers and abusive couples alike may find it difficult to disentangle notions of violence and love. Besides, without the Beast's violence (which in response to fear that someone he loved was being harmed), Belle would have been killed. The cultural takeaway is not that violence harms women; it is that violence *saves* women.

I Could Never Live Without You By My Side

After their journey back to the castle, we see Belle sitting in front of the fireplace, pouring hot water out of Mrs. Potts into a bowl. She soaks a rag in the steamy water as the Beast groans and licks the wound on his arm. Wringing out the excess water, she shuffles on her knees over to the Beast and says, "Here now. Don't do that" while trying to get him to stop licking the wound. He pulls his arm out of her reach and growls at her, baring his teeth. The objects that are gathered around step back, scared of his anger, and for some odd reason, Belle remains calm and unafraid as she tries to grab the arm he is trying to keep away from her. She says, "Just…hold still" and places the rag on his arm, which elicits a roar of pain from the Beast. He gets right in her face and says, "THAT HURTS!" and she boldly responds, "If you'd hold still it wouldn't hurt as much" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! Belle was never half this daring when the Beast would explode with rage, so it's odd that she can jump back in his face and argue with him and the Beast not react violently. They continue to argue:

> Beast: Well if you hadn't run away this wouldn't have happened!
>
> Belle: Well if you hadn't frightened me, I wouldn't have run away!
>
> Beast: (He opens his mouth, but struggles to argue against her point.) Well you shouldn't have been in the West Wing (pleased with himself)!
>
> Belle: Well you should learn to control your temper! (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

The interaction between them has grown even stranger. The argument seems to be somewhat playful and competitive; they go back and forth trying to top one another. Each time one of them makes a point, a smug, victorious look goes across his or her face. An abusive relationship such as Belle and Beast's would never allow this type of behavior; the abuser would feel challenged in his power and subsequently in his masculinity. How is she able to snap back at him whereas before merely asking what was in the West Wing evoked a verbal assault? In fact, The Beast pouts in defeat after her last response. Again, this contradicts everything the audience knows about the Beast's temperament thus far. He has become submissive and further demonstrates that when Belle tells the pouting Beast, "Now hold still, this may sting a little" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He begins to growl in pain again and when Belle sees him in pain, she says, "By the way, thank you…for saving my life" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Upon hearing this, he looks taken aback and his growling fades, as he responds (in a father-like way), "You're welcome" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The scene ends with Belle on her knees cleaning his cuts as he sits in his throne looking down at her.

This scene is perhaps the most crucial of them all, as it is the turning point of the Beast and Belle's relationship. After his near-death experience at which point Belle was required to save *his* life, the tension and explosive anger faded and transformed into tenderness and understanding. It was as if the spell was broken during the wolf attack in the forest, hence breaking the cycle of violence as well. Critics may argue that the source of his behavior change was the thought of losing the woman he loved. However, I would argue that the spell's importance is in and of itself responsible for the role reversal. After being rescued, Belle is able to reconsider her previous ideas about the not-so-evil Beast; in part, perhaps due to feelings of indebtedness towards the man who saved her life. In order to live Passively Ever After, Belle

must play the role of the nurturer and the Beast must appear capable of love and capable of being loved if the film's ending is to seem at all believable. Of course, in the real world, batterers rarely learn to control their anger so easily.

Disney supporters may also argue that because the Beast ended up needing rescue, too, the film *is*, in fact, portraying Belle as a strong character. However, this is also a problematic reading, and one that overlooks the film's recurrent themes that strongly resonate with domestic violence. As previously mentioned, Belle does not rescue him because of her strength; she rescues him because of her weakness, her learned helplessness. She has learned to victimize herself through the gender roles she was abused into abiding by. Each time she acted outside of a woman's prescribed behavior, she was punished for it. Each time she acted outside of normative behavior, she was passively and socially battered. And each time she internalized the abusive objectification, she was forced to psychologically abuse herself. Belle has come to understand that playing the part of the victim is a natural part of her helpless existence. To say she is a strong character for "rescuing" the Beast does not correlate with what society says about other abused women when they remain in abusive relationships. Instead, they are blamed for their own abuse when they do not leave. The strong characters are the battered women who persevere through nearly fatal attacks, who go to work the next day, who fear for their lives yet continue to find ways to survive the abuse. To clarify the difference, a battered woman's perseverance during the battering incident largely comes from her survival instincts, and when she is not in the honeymoon phase, it is highly unlikely that she would save her batterer as Belle did. In fact, that is how most experienced battered women escape; they kill their abuser because they see no other way (Walker, 1979). Belle is a mythic representation that exists in the mind of an abuser, as the plot doesn't even give her enough strength to get away when she has a prime opportunity.

Furthermore, Belle's sympathy and rescue of the Beast mirror an abuser's goals during the honeymoon phase: to generate sympathy and ensure the victim's return. Unfortunately, society is more willing to argue for a stereotypical pseudo-heroine than for the millions of battered women across the globe.

To Be Continued…

Belle demonstrates Walker's (1979) notion of learned helpless during her time in the castle. She was defiant and resistant towards the beast; however, she quickly realized that in order to change or alter the outcome of a situation, she had to change her response to it (Walker, 1979). Many times in domestic violence, victims are psychologically aware of the importance of the response-outcome model. Walker (1979) explains, "To check whether or not we have actually had control over a particular situation, we choose to make the same response the next time, and if that outcome happens again, we verify our ability to control it" (p. 44). Belle first tried to control the abuse with her original strong-willed, feminist personality, but that only made the abuse worse. So both Belle and battered women quickly learn that if they avoid a certain response, then they can sometimes avoid a particular outcome related to that response (Walker, 1979). It is only when Belle begins to emotionally warm up to the Beast that he becomes less violent. Unfortunately, battered women do not get the option of the response-outcome model like Belle. If it were as easy as simply changing her behavior and being "extra sweet" to her abuser, the cycle of violence would not exist. In such a world there might be a bunch of oppressed, stereotypical women, but at least their learned response would effectively change the outcome of abuse.

The truth of the matter is that often times victims develop a sense of learned helplessness because they acknowledge that their responses have very little to do with the outcome (i.e., the

batterer's abusive behavior). This realization leads victims to assume they have no real control over the situation. After Belle realized her rebellious and spunky response would only result in negative consequences, she tried to control the abuse by being more submissive, but that didn't stop the Beast's abuse either. Then she tried withdrawing from the Beast and his abuse only intensified. Her behavior in the scene after the wolf attack should not have worked; she had already unsuccessfully attempted that response once. The fact that it works the second time around conveys the false message to the audience that victims really can control an abuser's anger if they just keep trying.

CHAPTER 5

After Belle tends and nurtures the Beast's wounds, there is a short scene involving Gaston, Lefou, and D'argue (the asylum owner). The three plot to throw Maurice in the asylum, and to tell Belle they will only arrange her release once she consents to marry Gaston. Luckily, Maurice decides to set off in search of Belle alone just moments before Gaston and Lefou arrive at the cottage. The film then returns to the castle, where we see a depressed Belle walking Phillipe around the courtyard. The horse recognizes she is feeling down and playfully nudges her, trying to make her smile, which she does. As the Footstool bounces around like a cute puppy, the Beast looks down from the terrace (accompanied by Lumiere and Cogsworth) with a preoccupied expression on his face. My first inclination was to interpret the Beast's sadness in this scene as resulting from his realization that Belle missed her home. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

The Beast tells Lumiere and Cogsworth, "I've never felt this way about anyone" and suddenly he gets an idea and declares, "I want to do something for her. But what" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? The Beast seems unable to demonstrate his feelings verbally, so he must resort to other displays of affection. (This is not surprising. Given that he is only able to express anger with violence, it makes sense that he also cannot verbally communicate other emotions, such as love.) Furthermore, his desire to "do something" for Belle parrots a batterer's desires in the honeymoon phase, wherein he feels he must "convince everyone concerned that this time he really means it. He will take action to demonstrate his sincerity" (Walker, 1979, p. 66). The Beast desperately wants to show Belle his remorse and rehabilitation, but he frames it in the context of wanting to show his affection. This, too, is common for batterers; they do not like to overtly apologize for the abuse, because that would require an admittance that the abusive

behavior was wrong and unjust; so instead, they will make up for it by showing love rather than remorse and sorrow.

Cogsworth suggests to the Beast, “Well, there’s the usual things: flowers, chocolates, promises you don’t intend to keep…” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). These are the very same gifts an abuser gives during the honeymoon phase, especially the last suggestion (Walker, 1979). Moreover, “promises you don’t intend to keep” is exactly what the film gives its viewers. *Beauty and the Beast* gives us promises of love, enchantment, and happy endings in exchange for conformity, objectification, and acceptance of gender roles and cinematic abuse, only to break those promises after the film is over and we are forced out of the honeymoon phase and back into the real world.

Still on the terrace, Lumiere disagrees with Cogsworth’s suggestion, explaining that it has to be something very special, and then suddenly he gets an idea. The scene then cuts to a hallway that leads to two large double doors at the end. When Belle and the Beast reach the doors he says, “Belle, there is something I want to show you. (As he is about to open the door, he stops and closes it.) But first, you have to close your eyes” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). His voice is soft, tender, and innocent; it sounds eerily similar to the way some young couples will engage in “baby-talk” with one another. Quizzically, Belle raises her eyebrow at his request to close her eyes, but sweetly agrees when he explains that it’s a surprise. Waving his hands to make sure she has them closed, he takes her into the castle library, opens the curtains so the sunlight can illuminate all the books, and then tells her to open her eyes. The amount of books and size of the library is indescribable; I can’t even be certain that my university library can compare. Astonished, Belle exclaims, “I can’t believe it. I’ve never seen so many books in my life.” And the Beast responds, “You-you like it” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? It sounds as though he is

looking for affirmation, which Belle provides when she replies, “It’s wonderful” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Excited and pleased, he smiles as he says, “Then it’s yours” and she graciously thanks him (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

“There is always an element of overkill in the batter’s behavior…The same is true for his generosity. During his loving periods, he showers the woman with affection, attention, and gifts” (Walker, 1979, p. 37). Throughout the film, the Beast isn’t just abusive during the battering phase, he goes to the extreme: he imprisons her, threatens to starve her, and even destroys his home to prove his power. However, he is just as extravagant in his honeymoon phase, giving her a library that low-income counties could only dream of having. As evident by their Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personalities and quick involvement tendencies, batterers like the Beast often lack the ability to demonstrate temperate emotions and actions. The Beast cannot give her a book; he must give her a library. He cannot have a conflict-oriented discussion; it must become a screaming match. Walker (1979) notes the extreme polarity in their behavioral schemas, “The batterer can either be very, very good or very, very horrid” (p. 26). This is likely related to the extreme traditionalist view about gender roles shared by most batterers that demands women be stereotypically submissive so as to not challenge their hypermasculinity.

There is no middle ground in this film, in general. Belle could have easily been promoted as a unique Disney princess, as she still maintained enough femininity to be attractive, but enough independence to be a role model for young girls. But as the film progressed, that personality turned out to be just as fleeting as the honeymoon phase in the cycle of violence. A true batterer cannot preserve a controlled composure, and neither could this film, as a cinematic abuser, allow Belle retain her initially nuanced personality. It is said that during the honeymoon phase a batterer truly believes he can control himself and can stop his violent behavior (Walker,

1979). Unfortunately, his inability to control his extreme feelings eventually becomes too powerful, which is why the cycle of violence is perpetual. Perhaps, the creators of *Beauty and the Beast* initially intended make Belle an empowered, unique character, but the Disney genre's extreme notions of patriarchy and male-dominance took over and eventually prevented Belle from retaining her more feminist-oriented characteristics. This is why a battered woman cannot change a batterer's abuse; she can change her behavior just as Disney can modify the princesses, but in the end, no matter how hard each party tries, the abuse will not stop until the batterer changes *his* attitudes and views about women. As Walker (1979) states, "My feminist analysis of all violence is that sexism is the real underbelly of human suffering" (p. xi). Until gender inequality is vanquished, the superior-inferior dichotomy that promotes male power and control will continue to fuel the flames of domestic violence.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Upon seeing Belle's reaction to the library, the enchanted objects become energized and encouraged as the possibility of love becomes stronger. They gallivant away to tend to their chores in the kitchen. The chores in the kitchen, as we soon find out, were in preparation for Belle and Beast's breakfast date later that morning, during which the Beast demonstrates his terrible table manners by devouring his oatmeal with his face in the bowl. After breakfast, they go to feed the birds and Belle launches into a song: "There's something sweet, and almost kind. But he was mean, and he was coarse and unrefined. But now he's dear, and so unsure, I wonder why I didn't see it there before" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This song is telling, as batterers are often described as loving, sweet partners when they are in the honeymoon phase ("there's something sweet, and almost kind"). Clearly, her second set of descriptions refers to the battering phase. But what's most interesting is her accuracy in the third set of descriptions. Walker (1979)

notes, in the honeymoon phase, “the battered woman realizes how frail and insecure her batterer really is…[they] sense their men’s desperation, loneliness, and alienation from the rest of society” (p. 68). After the violent wolf scene, Belle finally sees his the source of her batterer’s aggression—his low self-esteem—and then tells the audience about it. Cinematic abuse works to encourage these realizations, attempting to guilt the viewer into thinking the Beast needs Belle to nurturer, help, socialize, and love him. The film’s tactic is no different than an abuser’s, as they both encourage their victims to pity the abuser. This *is* the honeymoon phase, both within the film and outside of it. Unfortunately, due to the film’s atemporality, Belle and the Beast will live passively ever after within the honeymoon phase.

As Belle sings, the Beast tries to shove birdseed at the birds, which she finds amusing. Belle goes to help him by placing a trail of birdseed that leads to his hand. Obviously, she is still playing the role of the nurturer by socializing him into his “proper role” as Prince Charming. Excited and overjoyed when a bird comes into his hand, the Beast looks up at her and joins in on the song: “She glanced this way, I thought I saw. And when we touched, she didn't shudder at my paw. No it can't be, I'll just ignore, but then she's never looked at me that way before” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This song lyric is also of importance, as it speaks to the Beast’s role in the relationship change. Notice, he does not discuss any type of change within himself; rather, the change occurs within Belle. Despite the curse placed on the cruel prince, in the end, it is Belle who had to find the beauty within the Beast; she was the one who had to learn not to judge a book by its cover. This is odd, because she was the only character in the film who *didn’t* judge. Even during the scene where she switches places with her father, she only agreed to stay after having seen the Beast in all his glory, and remained despite his supposedly hideous appearance.

The look the Beast mentions in the last line is in reference to Belle's flirtatious, "come-and-get-me" eyes as she ducks behind a tree, almost like a game of cat and mouse.

As noted, this is a typical behavior for her, which has landed her in trouble many times before. I've discussed the dangerous message this sends the male audience member, but I need to elaborate on the harm it does to the female viewers, as well. Like many battered women, Belle is using her attraction and sex appeal to respond to situations in the film because she has been taught that everything else she does is futile. When female viewers pick up on this repeated behavior, they may adapt it as acceptable, leading to a multitude of problems. By playing upon their sexuality rather than their personalities, they may attract unwanted attention, be taken advantage of, or attract dangerous lovers. How can the young girl who watches this film eventually find someone who loves—as Disney would put it, her "inner beauty"—if she only uses her body and sex appeal to respond to men? Furthermore, as many famous legal rape case defenses have demonstrated, a woman's sexuality will be used against her if anything happens to her. This form of objectification *assists* men in their victim-blaming, much like when a victim takes back her abuser. Walker (1979) explains, "I believe that society, through its definition of the woman's role, has socialized her into believing she had no choice but to be such a victim" (p. 14). Belle's objectification, loss of self and dreams, and submissive, nurturing role further promote a gender ideology that enables victimization. Every time Belle acts in a manner that doesn't conform to Disney's traditionalist gender roles, she is punished; thus, to avoid abuse, she has no other option but to conform. Unfortunately, for young audience members who may be persuaded to adopt these roles, this conformity doesn't prevent abuse—it fosters it.

Belle looks happy before she hides behind the tree, but as soon as the Beast can no longer see her, a look of concern falls over her face. She sings, "New and a bit alarming, who'd have

ever thought that this could be? True, that he's no Prince Charming, but there's something in him that I simply didn't see" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Halfway through those lyrics she changes her expression again, to a look I can only describe as coming from someone who is utterly in love. These lines summarize the experience of a battered woman. In the battering phase, she is remorseful and cannot understand why she didn't see the signs. However, once back in the honeymoon phase, while she admits he's no prince, she feels conflicted because she realizes there's something about him that keeps her in the relationship.

To answer Belle lyrical question, "Who would have ever thought that this could be?": battered women. Battered women spend the whole abusive relationship hoping and dreaming for their abuser's spell to be broken. Promoting the idea that abusive men can be reformed by love cultivates a young audience to not only tolerate abuse, but to abide by sexist gender roles in an attempt to avoid it. Unfortunately, these gender ideologies are the ones abusers and victims subscribe to. The film's fixed honeymoon phase coupled with traditional gender values helps to perpetuate a hegemonic culture wherein stereotypically dominant men look for (and often find!) stereotypically submissive women, enabling a smooth transition into abuse.

Give a Little, Get a Little

As Belle and the Beast have a short, romantic snowball fight and then read a book by the fire, the objects conclude the song and Lumiere sings, "And who'd have guessed they'd come together on their own" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Lumiere has been really pushing the audience to forget how Belle "came together" with the Beast in the first place. This message is reinforced so often because the audience must believe Belle had a choice in the matter if the spell is to be broken and happy ending is to ensue. But on a deeper level, it works to re-teach young audiences what it means to have a choice in something. If viewers begin to see coercive behavior as

something that is voluntary, they may excuse male control and victimize the women who are controlled by it. As I've argued throughout this thesis, the myth that a woman can choose to leave an abusive relationship is flawed (Walker, 1979). It doesn't acknowledge the intricacies of the psychological effects of domestic violence, but instead, it intensifies them by overlooking a battered woman's learned helplessness and an abuser's manipulative techniques during the honeymoon phase.

After coming in from outside, the Beast washes up and prepares for dinner, Lumiere tells him that tonight is the night he must tell Belle he loves her. Though he says he cares for her more than anything, the Beast is hesitant. As the scene cuts to the grand staircase, it appears the Beast has redecorated during his free time; the castle has been completely transformed. Belle walks down the double staircase in a beautiful yellow ball gown and waits for the Beast at the landing. He is wearing a Victorian-era royal blue suit, complete with a wrapped cravat. Arm in arm, they walk down the stairs towards the dining area and Mrs. Potts looks on as she sings. The song is essentially the same as every other song in the film, but two lines stick out in particular: "Tale as old as time, true as it can be. Barely even friends, then somebody bends unexpectedly" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Mrs. Potts' tune ironically encourages the audience to accept the validity of this myth at the same time she points out an awkward fact: the couple barely knows one another. The only experiences they have shared are instances of abuse and coercion. As Hattery (2009) notes, most women who rush into relationships with their batterers were just looking for something better in life (and Belle is no exception). Because Gaston's character is compared unfavorably to the Beast, audiences may see her "relationship" with the Beast as Belle's best option. Batterers often (intentionally or not) attempt to seduce women via contrast—presenting themselves as extremely charismatic and romantic in comparison to typical men (Gass

& Seiter, 2011). The abuse then becomes almost acceptable to some women due to the extreme love and sensitivity they experience in the honeymoon phase. Thus, when the audience buys into the Beast and Belle's relationship, they mirror a battered woman's acceptance that this is the best she can do; at least he loves her. This is how the film teaches young girls learned helplessness and psychological battering, both of which work to the abuser's advantage.

Lastly, Mrs. Potts positions the rejuvenated relationship between the two as emerging due to "someone bend[ing] unexpectedly" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). We aren't told whom, and while I acknowledge there can be many different reading of this line, the obvious interpretation is that Belle was the one to bend. The Beast was consistent in his violence, it was only when Belle brought him to the castle, nursed him back to good health, and reverted back to her pseudo-bold personality that everything changed. This "bending" is unrealistic. If anything, it will lead to more abuse; not just because it encourages submission, but also because it simultaneously encourages battered women to get sassy with their batterers. If this were a real life situation, the batterer's injuries would likely lead to him feeling more vulnerable and less masculine. And if a battered woman were to further add insult to injury (pun intended) by stepping out of her submissive role and encroaching on his masculinity, it would almost certainly not end well for her. The real tale that "is as old as time" is Mrs. Potts' lyrical suggestion that it the victim who is responsible for abuse. When Belle "bended unexpectedly" everything changed for the better. This encourages audiences hoping for a happy ending to engage in the same victimized thought process that battered women develop: "She has internalized all the cultural myths and stereotypes and assumes the guilt for the batterer's behavior. She agrees with society's belief that the batterer would change his behavior if only she could change her behavior" (Walker, 1979, p. 33). When Belle assumes the new role of the nurturer and socializes the Beast, his behavior

changes and he becomes a sweet, bird-feeding, library-giving, creature. Unexpectedly, she reevaluates his anger and audience see her coldness and her desire to escape from his castle disappear. She changes her behavior in order to help bring forth the prince the Beast has always been deep down.

During dinner, Belle gets the urge to dance and the couple goes into the ballroom and performs Disney's computer-specialized version of the waltz, though the film never explains how a man who cannot eat with silverware has suddenly learned a ballroom dance sequence. They look at each over lovingly as they dance into the night to the song that began in the grand staircase. Moments before the scene ends, Mrs. Potts' sings two more lines that are interesting: "Bittersweet and strange, finding you can change, learning you were wrong" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). This song lyric could be read in several different ways, all of which are abusive. "Bittersweet and strange" *could* be referring to the relationship, but it could also be referring to the Beast as bittersweet and Belle as strange. After all, Belle has been described as "strange" throughout the film (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). In this case, "learning you were wrong" would most likely reference Belle's role in the relationship transformation (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). However, even if we were to suppose that these lines were written not exclusively about Belle—if we were to give the text the maximum benefit of the doubt and assume the song was meant to convey the idea that both characters needed to realize they could change and they were wrong—this interpretation still places some of the blame on the victim, Belle. She shouldn't have to take blame for the Beast's poor and abusive behavior, nor should she have to change. Unfortunately, all too often, this is what a battered woman truly thinks. Furthermore, if you interpret the lyrics as speaking to the relationship, it suggests that "bittersweet" domestically violent relationships can change for the better. Lastly, one could argue the lyrics speak to the Beast; however, it would

be contradictory to suddenly argue the song is about the Beast, as the film depicts him as a victim of the spell and his abuse is rarely addressed.

A Modest Proposal?

After their dance, Belle and the Beast go out on the terrace for a breathe of fresh air. Belle is coyly looking down at her dress and the Beast takes her hands in his as he anxiously asks, “Belle, are you happy here with me” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? His insecurity and desperation is heartbreaking. Belle replies, “Yes” as she sadly looks off into the starry midnight sky. Belle explains that she misses her father and wishes she could see him again. The Beast seems remorseful, but then gets an idea, telling her, “There is a way” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast still doesn’t seem ready to let her go. Although he allows Belle to see Maurice, it is only through the magic mirror, not in person. In the mirror, we see Maurice in the woods, still on his journey to come rescue Belle alone. He coughs and then collapses in fatigue. Belle becomes very upset and says, “Papa. Oh no, he’s sick, he may be dying. He’s all alone” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast turns his back to Belle and looks at the wilting rose with a dismal look on his face, knowing what he must do and what the repercussions of that will be. He makes the selfless decision to release Belle and says, “Then you must go to him…I release you. You are no longer my prisoner” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). (Apparently Belle transitions between being a willing guest and a prisoner when it’s convenient for the plot.) She responds, “You mean…I’m free?” and upon his confirmation, she thanks him (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast tells her to take the magic mirror and softly caresses her nape as he says, “Take it with you, so you’ll always have a way to look back and remember me” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Even as a graduate student, this scene almost had me in tears. (Although, I must admit I am a bit sensitive.) Which begs the question: if this scene can evoke that kind of emotional response from an adult

who disapproves of the film's messages, how might it make children feel? The film makes it nearly impossible not to sympathize with the Beast. However, this is a dangerous game because sympathizing with the Beast encourages us to accept a message that abusers' accomplices often tell a battered woman to guilt her into returning to her abuser: "She was his only hope; without her, he would be destroyed" (Walker, 1979, p. 66).

Cogsworth, oblivious to what just happened, walks in and says, "I must say everything is going just peachy. I knew you had it in you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast stops him and sadly says, "I let her go" and Cogsworth responds,

> Cogsworth: Haha, yes, splend—You what? How could you do that?
>
> Beast: I had to.
>
> Cogsworth: (dismayed) Yes, b-b-but why?
>
> Beast: Because…I love her. (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

The idea that the Beast would suddenly decide to allow Belle to leave is simply not realistic. Batterers rarely let go of their victims because of their feelings of dependence and claims of immense love. Additionally, an abuser's extreme need to control and possess his victim would not allow such a "release" to occur. Such an act would negate the abuser's rationale for the violence. In reality, both the battered woman and batterer typically feel as though they cannot survive without one another. Walker (1979) explains, "The batterer would rather die or kill his woman than voluntarily leave her or let her leave him" (p. 221). Letting a victim go goes against the very nature of the cycle of violence and the purpose of the honeymoon period. Walker (1979) explains the reality of the honeymoon phase: "The couple who live in such a violent relationship become a symbiotic pair—each so dependent on the other that when one attempts to leave, both lives become drastically affected" (p. 68). The low self-esteem, traditional views about marriage,

and over-reliance shared by the batterer and battered woman are so paralyzing that leaving is usually the last resort. Thus, the notion that an abuser like the Beast would let Belle go is laughable. And encouraging young girls to buy into this mythology only sets them up for their own imprisonment. However, should they do so, tragically, they will not have the option of leaving once they have committed to the violent relationship.

As the Beast watches Belle ride off on Phillipe, he roars out in pain and the scene ends. Belle finds her father laying face down in the snow and takes him back to the cottage to nurse him back to health. When Maurice wakes up, he is amazed and overjoyed to see Belle. He asks her how she escaped and she reveals the truth. Her father responds in shocked disbelief. He says, "The horrible Beast?" and Belle explains, "He's different now. He's changed somehow" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). While explaining this, she has a distant, reminiscent look on her face. Belle's assertion is common in the honeymoon phase, "The battered woman chooses to believe that the behavior she sees during phase three signifies what her man is really like. She identifies the good man with the man she loves. He is now everything she ever wanted in a man" (p. 68). Belle desperately wants to believe the Beast's sweet demeanor is indicative of the fact that deep down he is a genuine prince. And because of the spell, the audience will likely agree with Belle. Now, he is different.

The conversation is interrupted by Chip, who has fallen out of Belle's satchel. When she sees Chip, she isn't alarmed. If Belle truly had no intention of going back to the castle like the film encourages the audience to think, she would be more put off about having to return Chip to his home. But she just giggles and calls him a stowaway. There is another interruption—a knock at the door; it is D'arque and the townspeople, come to take Maurice away in the Asylum de Loons wagon parked behind him. Lefou explains that they are taking him away because he was

"raving like a lunatic" in the tavern and everyone heard him (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Belle becomes enraged, but the townspeople ignore her and encourage Maurice to explain his "crazy" story about the Beast. After doing so, the townspeople laugh at him and he is thrown into the wagon as he cries out for Belle. Luckily, with the magic mirror, Belle is able to corroborate her father's story by showing them the Beast. Unfortunately, however, Belle didn't think about how the town would react and they become fearful. She tries to calm them by telling the mob of townspeople that he isn't dangerous, "He'd never hurt anyone. Please, I know he looks vicious, but he's really kind and gentle" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Gaston becomes jealous and says, "If I didn't know better, I'd think you have feelings for this monster." To which Belle angrily replies, "He's no monster, Gaston. You are" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)!

This is the second time Belle has defended the Beast to the individual's outside of the relationship. Belle, like battered women, truly believes the abuse has stopped for good and the other two phases of domestic violence have been completely eradicated (Walker, 1979). She also has not breathed a word of the abuse, because if she were to do so, her love for him would not be accepted. In a research study with battered women, Ben-Ari et al. (2003) found that those who chose to stay typically presented the relationship as stable and picture-perfect. They also tended to minimize the abuse or any other incident that might tarnish an outsider's perception of the relationship. Walker (1979) helps to explain these findings: "If [the battered woman] has been through several cycles already, the knowledge that she has traded her psychological and physical safety for this temporary dream state adds to her self-hatred and embarrassment. Her self-image withers as she copes with the awareness that she is selling herself for brief periods of phase-three behavior. She becomes an accomplice to her own battering" (p. 69). This is the victim's way of justifying her love and framing the relationship in a way that makes her look strong to make up

for her feelings of helplessness within the relationship. This applies to audiences who experience cinematic abuse as well. After the loss of Feminist Belle, we trade our independence and autonomy for the promise of love. We sell our dreams and available gender roles for the brief honeymoon phases found at the end of each film. And with each new film, we return. We argue for the traditional gender roles and characters we love, both of which previously made us feel unsure of ourselves, unsure of our bodies, and unsure of the appropriateness our own gendered behavior. These refusals to critique Disney are an act of self-objectification, self-victimization, and self-battering.

Gaston realizes his original plan to manipulate Belle into marrying him is flawed because of her feelings for the Beast, so he switches tactics. He exploits the townspeople's fear and insists they kill the Beast before he comes for them and their children. Belle tries to stop Gaston, but he tells her, "You're not for us, you're against us" and throws Belle and her father into their cottage cellar (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The song Gaston and the townspeople launch into claims the Beast will eat the town's children and "wreak havoc on the village" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Although the Beast is violent and abusive, the song hyperbolizes his behavior to such a degree (the Beast has never actually eaten babies nor wreaked havoc on an entire village), that Gaston's claims about the Beast are obviously intended to be interpreted as unreasonable. Furthermore, Gaston's insistence that the townspeople kill the Beast seems more than a little out of place in a children's tale.

Kill the Beast and Take His Woman

When the mob of townspeople reaches the castle and begins to attack, Mrs. Potts tries to warn the Beast, but without Belle, he seems to have lost all will to live. She begs, "What shall we do, Master?" and he responds, "It doesn't matter now, let them come" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991).

It is important to recognize that the Beast's refusal to fight has nothing to do with Belle, though it may appear that way. Everyone in the castle has been acting as though they are going to die if the Beast runs out of time. However, those were not the terms of the original spell. Unless my interpretation of the opening scene is wholly inaccurate, the spell simply stated that unless the Beast learned to stop judging a book by its cover he would remain a Beast. If that interpretation is correct, that means the Beast would rather die than remain a Beast, despite the fact that Belle already accepted him as such. In other words, with roughly ten minutes left in the film, the Beast *still* has not learned the importance of inner beauty.

The townspeople burst into the castle and the brutal murder suggested by Gaston turns out to be a battle scene of chaos and slapstick humor, which is no surprise. Luckily, the town mob is no match for the enchanted objects who force the townspeople to flee the castle. There is still one intruder left, however. While the battle downstairs is occurring, Gaston sneaks upstairs to the West Wing. He walks into the Beast's room and draws back his arrow and gets ready to shoot. Upon hearing him enter, the Beast turns around, solemnly stares at him, and looks back away; he is the poster child for depression. When he turns back to look out the window, Gaston shoots the arrow in his back and the Beast groans in pain. The Beast refuses to fight back, allowing Gaston to kick, hit, and punch him. Gaston shoves him out the window and onto the terrace and then roundhouse kicks the Beast onto a roof column that seems no wider than 10 feet across. The Beast maintains his stoic expression as Gaston laughs and provokingly says, "What's the matter, Beast? Too kind and gentle to fight back" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? He goes to grab a jagged, club-like piece of the roof column when suddenly Belle, Maurice, and Phillipe appear on the bridge. Belle yells at Gaston to stop. Upon hearing Belle's voice, the Beast appears rejuvenated; he whispers her name. She says, "No, Gaston, don't." Gaston predictably ignores

Belle and is about to swing a club-like weapon when the Beast reaches up and grabs it (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He growls in anger now, not fear, and begins to fight for his life. Clearly, the only way for the Beast to avoid death is to become violent, because otherwise, he is powerless. Skipping over the constant tug-of-war that is their battle and the continuous location changes on the roof, the Beast seems to be tiring and Gaston says, "It's over, Beast! Belle is mine" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). The Beast responds to this statement with unfettered fury and rage, grabbing Gaston by the throat and holding him over the rooftop ledge.

This fight scene has several implications within the larger context of cinematic abuse. It is yet another example of romanticized violence, but this time much more graphic and evocative, as the violence is directed against another human. The Beast's possessive stance over Belle during the wolf scene and his revitalization and subsequent fight for Belle in this scene both send very disturbing messages about women. As Hattery (2009) explains, "Just as we are justified in shooting a prowler who attempts to enter our homes, [a man may] feel justified in reacting violently if [he] think[s] another man is about to 'steal' his woman" (p. 136). The wolves and Gaston threatened the Beast, not because of the danger they posed to him personally, but because they were trying to steal his "possession." Before Belle arrived, the Beast had no desire to fight Gaston, but after seeing her and hearing Gaston's claim of ownership he lost it. His desire to protect Belle (his property) elicited the violent reaction. This not only encourages audiences to view love and violence as intertwined and to think of women as the cause of violence, but it also suggests women are chattel.

For a long time in U.S. history, it was considered legal for men to beat their wives and this acceptance emerged from the notion that the woman, the wife, was a man's property. That sense of ownership allowed batterer to justify his "right" to hit his woman (Hattery, 2009). She

was not an equal partner in the relationship, but rather something he owned and could use, mold, and abuse at his will. Thus, the abuse of women was seen as a property crime, not a human crime (Hattery, 2009). As discussed previously, marriage rituals that still exist today (e.g., a father "giving away" his daughter) enable this tradition to continue. And the Disney genre is no different; at a young age we are pushed towards all things Disney so much so that the corporation quite literally owns our youth and our memories; we are Disney's prized possessions, just as Belle is the Beast's. Furthermore, romanticized violence, as discussed in the previous chapters, can lead to an acceptance of domestic violence. Both victims and abusers alike rationalize the battering incidents by claiming they were done out of love. For the man, it was his way of "expressing love and concern for [his] female partner" and for the woman, it was out of love, because if he didn't hit her then "she would not [feel she was] worth hitting" (Hattery, 2009, p. 147). Similarly, when both parties are asked why they don't leave, they often respond with claims of love and destiny (Hattery, 2009). This is very similar to the way in which when Belle returns to save the Beast we are encouraged to believe the story has played out that way because the two were destined to be together.

Helpless Love Conquers All

As the Beast dangles Gaston over the cliff in a chokehold, Gaston realizes he could die and, in a voice we've never heard before, he begs to the Beast to spare him. The Beast reflects for a moment and the anger transitions into compassion as he places Gaston back on the ledge. On a tower balcony above the landing that the Beast and Gaston are now standing on, Belle comes out and cries out, "Beast!" and he responds with a buoyant smile, "Belle" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)! He climbs up the rooftop shingles to her and takes her face in his hands as he smiles and exclaims, "Belle, you came back" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). Suddenly, we hear an

odd noise and the Beast roars and writhes in pain. As he begins to fall back, we see Gaston laughing maliciously after having stabbed him with a large knife. However, Gaston loses his grip on the wet balcony ledge and falls thousands of feet to his death in the river below. Before the same happens to the Beast, Belle grabs onto his shirt and pulls him onto the balcony.

The Beast is exhausted and he lies down on the balcony floor and Belle caresses his face with concern. After being shot with an arrow, kicked, punched, and stabbed, the Beast's last bit of energy was used to fight off Gaston and he is now struggling to stay alive. He uses his last moments to speak with Belle.

> Beast: You came back.
>
> Belle: Of course I came back. I couldn't let them…Oh this is all my fault. If only I'd gotten here sooner.
>
> Beast: Maybe…(pausing to breathe) it's better this way.
>
> Belle: Don't talk like that; you'll be all right. We're together now. Everything's going to be fine, you'll see.
>
> Beast: At least I got to see you one... last...time. (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)

With tears welling up in her eyes, she grabs the Beast's paw and presses it against her cheek. It's interesting that she blames herself for the Beast's predicament. Why would this be her fault? Yet again, Belle mirrors the behavior and attitudes of a battered woman in the honeymoon phase. Walker (1979) explains:

> It is during phase three, when the loving-kindness is most intense, that this symbiotic bonding really takes hold. Both fool each other and themselves into believing that together they can battle the world. The sense of overdependence and over-reliance upon

> each other is so obvious in each phase of the cycle. The bonding aspects of it, however, are laid down during phase three. (pp. 68-69)

Belle and the Beast have experienced a lot together and the other characters of the film have treated them very similarly (as societal outcasts). As a result, Belle and the Beast feel as though they are the only ones who understand one another. Belle could not stay away from him, because without him, she was helpless and lost. The aspect of learned helplessness is a key component of Disney's cinematic abuse. Belle's return is very common for battered women. As Walker (1979) explains,

> Once her social isolation has become complete, a woman begins to suffer from extreme feelings of helplessness…after a period of such total helplessness, even if a woman is literally guided step by step out of the relationship, she is still paralyzed and unable to act on her own. (p. 174)

Even with the Beast's encouragement, Belle could not stay away from her batterer. This dependency developed when she was locked away in the castle for so long that the isolation and lack of control over the Beast's abusive behavior led to feelings of powerlessness. The problem, however, is that the Beast suddenly stopped battering after the scene in the woods. Walker (1979) notes the flaws in this Disney message, "Although she can often manipulate him to some degree, she has, in truth, little control over his behavior" (p. 33) It only takes a few turns of the cycle of violence for a battered woman to realize her lack of control and as a result "the motivation to try to respond to such events when they are repeated will be impaired" (Walker, 1979, p. 45). Belle and victims of domestic violence share a common learned helplessness as they become cognizant of the lack of impact their responses have on the violent explosions of their batterers.

Viewers also see they cannot change the Beast's behavior (or the predetermined outcome of the plot) anymore than Belle can, or than a battered woman can change her abuser. Thus, Disney promotes learned helplessness in audiences and increases young children's tolerance and acceptance of domestic violence by presenting it as an issue that is not in *anyone's* control. The film encourages female viewers to reject the response-outcome model at a very young age, priming their female audience to be vulnerable and subservient. And while learned helplessness varies from person to person—some may be able to preserve longer than others—once an individual believes he or she cannot control what happens, it is difficult to alter that mindset (Walker, 1979). Furthermore, when Disney's stereotypical and patriarchal gender roles are combined with teaching young children learned helplessness they create a model for later abusive behavior (a powerful form of cinematic abuse).

The Superficial Resurrection

Belle never gets a chance to respond to the Beast's last line. The paw that Belle placed lovingly on her face slowly drops out of her hands and the Beast's eyes roll back as his head falls to the floor and his eye close. Belle cups her mouth, knowing what has just happened. Next comes the most important utterance in the film, Belle weeps, "No, no! Please, please! Please don't leave me. I love you" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). As she reveals her love a tear falls from her eye onto the Beast's white shirt. However, it's too late, as we see the last rose petal fall from the wilted stem. (It's still unclear as to whether the Beast died due to puncture wounds and internal bleeding or if the spell killed him; and it will remain a mystery.) Belle is lying on top of the Beast crying when colorful light beams begin to come from the sky, stopping her tears and causing her to draw back in confusion. Before everyone's eyes, the Beast transforms into a handsome, muscular, red-haired prince. Belle, supposedly unaware of the spell, is a bit taken

aback and scared. It is only when she looks into his blue eyes that she believes it is the Beast and the two passionately kiss. This sets off fireworks, which rain down and morph the exterior of the castle back into a land of happiness and love. It is strange, however, that after the wolf attack, the Beast's behavior completely changed, as did the castle's interior aesthetics. However, it wasn't until the spell was broken that the exterior of both the Beast and the castle were transformed. The spell seemed to have been broken in the woods after the wolf attack. Everything was completely different after that: his anger, Belle's submissiveness and withdrawal, and the gloomy castle. Everything on the inside, that is. However, total transformation could only occur after the spell was broken; only then could the superficial beauty of the Beast and the castle be restored.

The objects follow suit and begin to morph back into their previous human bodies, with Mrs. Potts bearing a striking resemblance to Paula Deen. The film ends with a celebration, as all the castle employees, Belle, and the artist formally known as Prince Charming, gather in the ballroom. Belle, in the same yellow dress, and Prince Charming, in the same blue suit, dance around the ballroom. As they dance, the secondary characters conclude the film with playful bickering (Lumiere and Cogsworth), sexual suggestions (Lumiere and Featherduster), and potential love (Maurice and Mrs. Potts). Chip provides the final line of dialog as he asks his mother, "Do I still have to sleep in the cupboard" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? Ha ha ha, oh Chip, yes, yes you do. But that is a story for another day (See Appendix B).

Conclusion

Abusively Ever After?

What is perhaps the most interesting incident of cinematic abuse discussed throughout this analysis are the implications of the spell and the chain of events that led to its destruction. As a quick recap, the spell was placed upon the Beast because the enchanted beggar saw the Beast

"had no love in his heart," and she told him he must find "the beauty within" for the spell to be broken (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). He would remain a beast forever if he did not find or and earn love in return before the last petal fell from the enchanted rose. Luckily, the Beast was able to imprison the most beautiful girl in the town and through cyclic abuse and learned helplessness she "learned" to love him. After the scene with the beggar, the movie began with the question, "Who could ever learn to love a beast" (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)? The question itself illustrates the contradiction of the broken spell. The Beast was never required to find the Beauty within; instead, it was Belle who had to learn to overlook the abuse and his ugly appearance in order to find beauty within the Beast. Had a less attractive character broken the spell, this argument would be invalid, but the fact remains that he was given (or rather, he captured) a beautiful girl and forced her to love him. Belle's feisty and book-loving personality made her an outcast in the town, which predisposed her to find solace in the castle with the Beast. However, her unique qualities also enabled her to be the woman to break the spell. All the other superficial characters in *Beauty and the Beast* value looks above all else, but Belle differs in that she is genuine and mature. I cannot make the claim that Disney, aware of this timeless fairytale ending, intentionally created Belle as a pseudo-feminist for the sole purpose of breaking the spell, but I do think the film writers realized that their previous princesses would have never loved a creature as "hideous" as the Beast. Furthermore, if the purpose of the spell was to discourage shallow judgment, why did the Beast need to morph back into a handsome prince? Belle had already accepted the Beast as he was because of his sweet demeanor (after the wolf scene). Norwood (1985) explains this paradox:

> Remember in the fairy tale, Beauty had no need for the Beast to change. She appraised him realistically, accepted him for what he was, and appreciated him for his good

> qualities…Because of her acceptance, he was freed to become his own best self. That this true self just happened to be a handsome prince (and the perfect partner for her) demonstrates symbolically that she was rewarded greatly when she practices acceptance. (as cited in Beres, 1999, p. 199)

Thus, Belle loses her strong, empowered characteristics because she must become the student, as the Beast *teaches* her to find his inner beauty. Had she judged the Beast, she would have missed out on the chance of love, perhaps resulting in her inevitable surrender to Gaston. She seems to have been the only character to learn from the beggar's spell and was rewarded for her acceptance, which leads to the next problem with the broken spell.

Repercussions of the Spell

The implications of the spell are much more severe than just promoting beauty under the pseudonym of inner beauty. Despite the fact that the Beast is abusive and cruel to Belle, she takes it upon herself to socialize him into the sweet prince he supposedly is deep down. During this socialization and nurturing process, the Beast's insecurity and vulnerability is illuminated and the audience is repetitively encouraged to empathize with him. They must also victimize Belle by promoting her socialization of the violent Beast, which subsequently results in their own victimization, as they become more accepting and tolerant of not just the Beast's abuse, but also domestic violence. Unlike Belle, the audience is very aware of the spell and it is because we so desperately want a happy ending that we root for behavior that enables the progress of the plot. But when coercive and abusive behavior is rewarded, as is Belle's behavior toward the Beast, it only leads to a higher acceptance and utilization of violence (Walker, 1979). The Beast's violence is ultimately rewarded with a beautiful, submissive girlfriend. Similarly, Belle's acceptance of the abusive Beast is rewarded with a handsome, violence-free prince, and a

permanent honeymoon phase. This is rarely the case in domestic violence relationships, although sometimes a battered woman's acceptance of the abuse is rewarded with a brief period of sweetness and peace (Walker, 1979). When a victim agrees to the honeymoon phase as opposed to leaving, she is merely rewarding the batterer and demonstrating that his abusive is an effective tool of control because she did not leave him for it. This is what enables the cycle of violence to continue.

Through the interweaving of the aforementioned factors, the film socializes viewers to tolerate abusive behavior in hopes of eventually soliciting the prince deep within an abuser. We struggle, then, to see the Beast as an abuser; he is a prisoner of the spell and the abuse he enacts is really just a result of the spell. The film does what most abusers do in the honeymoon phase, it "threat[ens] that he will destroy his life if she does not forgive him" (Walker, 1979, p. 68). Audiences feel compelled to accept the abusive Beast as a viable suitor for Belle because no one else has been presented as such and the plot revolves around the destruction of Prince Charming if Belle does not forgive the Beast and transform him before his 21st birthday. Therefore, audiences coerced into internalizing myths about domestic violence in order to rationalize the "happily ever after" ending. We must agree that the Beast's violence is not his fault. It is Belle's responsibility to stop it. And if she didn't really want to break the spell, then she could leave. But Belle can't leave the Beast anymore than most of us can leave the film, as we have given up our investment in Belle's original personality, given up our feminine gaze to focus on the Beast's spell, and given up our values in order to victimize Belle and tolerate cinematic abuse.

With each turn of the cycle of cinematic abuse, the audience is more likely to develop learned helplessness. We see we cannot do anything to change the film and we just have to wait it out until the abuse stops. It's important to recognize that the battering phase in the wolf scene

led the audience into a permanent honeymoon phase, which allowed us to restructure our ideas about the Beast and transform him into a protagonist. But the permanency of the honeymoon phase in domestic violence simply does not exist; domestic violence is cyclic. Walker (1979) explains one reason for this: "It is during this phase [the honeymoon phase] that the battered woman's victimization becomes complete" (p. 65). It is complete because battered women accept themselves as such by forgiving their abusers, thereby allowing the abusive behavior to continue. Ironically, though the film takes the audience into a permanent honeymoon phase, when the spell is broken and the film ends we are automatically taken back into the cinematic battering phase. Because when the spell is broken, it suggests to the audience that the abuse will stop, allowing them to tolerate abuse and play out the same behaviors Belle did in search of an end that will never come. Walker (1979) explains, "Relationships that have been maintained by the man having power over the woman are stubbornly resistant to an equal power-sharing arrangement. Thus, even with the best help available, these relationships do not become battering free" (p. 29). However, for no apparent reason, the Beast *does* stop his abuse and the couple *does* reach a power-balance, evident when Belle is able to argue with the Beast and not face abuse or create tension. Furthermore, the Beast's poor behavior is framed in the context of a "spell" which insinuates that once the spell is broken, the battering/behavior will cease to exist, which gives young viewers a dangerous and inaccurate idea about what it means to be in a volatile relationship.

This is why cyclical violence exists: it never has an end, yet the search for an end never stops. The honeymoon phase works so well because couples actually believe in the myth of the spell outside of Disney; women believe the abuser when he promises it won't happen again. According to Walker, (1979), the only way to stop learned helplessness is to "persuade the

battered woman to leave the battering relationship or persuade the batter to leave" (p. 53). However, Disney doesn't portray this realistic suggestion, the film teaches young girls and boys that violence is acceptable, blameless, dependant on a woman to change, and capable of being stopped by a woman's love.

Gender

The gender roles in *Beauty and the Beast* play a major part in the cinematic abuse. The sexism and patriarchal ideals that are promoted by the character's gendered behavior are a form of passive violence that provides an anchor point for cinematic abuse. The feminism exhibited by Belle's character has been a highly contested topic. Craven (2002) argues that the educational aspect of the film seemingly discourages traditional gender roles; however, upon further investigation, *Beauty and the Beast* merely promotes a "cunning domestication of feminism" (p. 124). Regardless of whether or not we believe Disney seriously intended to promote an empowered princess, the idea itself is ludicrous. As if portraying a beautiful girl who likes books is truly going to solve all of societies problems with sexism and misogyny? Phelan (1993) points out the inconsequentiality of such a claim: "If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running the Western culture…Gaining visibility for the politically under-represented without scrutinizing the power of who is required to display what to whom is an impoverished political agenda" (pp. 10-26). Thus, it's important to acknowledge the film's underlying motives for presenting Belle as independent when, in actuality, she is operating within the same sexist gender roles as the previous Disney princesses.

These gender roles limit and encourage certain behavior that fosters the acceptance and utilization of violence. Walker (1979) explains, "It is my contention that the very fact of being a woman, more specifically a married woman, automatically creates a situation of powerlessness.

This is one of the detrimental effects of sex-role stereotyping" (p. 51). Disney promotes the same couple in every film: submissive women and dominant men whom both romanticize violence and emphasize gender differences. It is important to clarify that I do not think society's sexist beliefs about gender roles impact one sex more than another; I think we harm both men and women with the dominance-submissive binary. Men are taught to be tough, because when they are not, they are "pussies" or "wimps"—especially if they are not successful in the hypermasculine arenas we have ascribed to men. If a man cannot play baseball, he "throws like a girl." If he cannot win a fight, he "fights like a girl." If he shows any indication of fear, then he is "acting like a pussy." All these insults portray femininity as a bad thing for men, thus they may think they need to embrace hypermasculinity to avoid facing these sorts of repercussions. What's even more troublesome, however, is the fact that women perpetuate these notions, perhaps not realizing what it means for their own gender. In my personal experience, I have heard my girlfriends state that they do not want a man who is smaller then them, shorter than them, weaker than them, weaker than other men, and so on. Why? Because it makes *them* feel too masculine (not to mention we have been socialized into thinking a *real* man is one who is capable of demonstrating hypermasculine behavior). Our sexist gender roles are so powerful, that when we think we are outside of the norm, we quickly become embarrassed and insecure. I recognize that the area of gender studies is a well-explored field, but I cannot discuss our ideologies about love and violence without noting the infrastructures that have created them.

Spectatorship, Intertexuality, and Film

Spectatorship is defined by Balides as "a focus on film as a cultural form involving modes of engagement between text and spectators…spectating rehearses the formation of subjectivity for a spectator conceived as a post-structuralist subject, split through language use

and articulations of the unconscious" (Balides, 1996, pp. 248-249). Spectatorship is such an integral component of cinematic abuse because it explains how the spectator reads the film and thus how cinematic abuse is possible. Spectatorship allows the viewers to have agency and actual thoughts. It breaks the control of the producer and gives it to the viewer, but this power only exists for spectators who have the capacity to oppose the dominant themes of a text. The problem is that most mainstream films are constructed to seduce viewers into accepting a dominant reading and to limit resistant readings by promoting the dominant reading as most enjoyable. *Beauty and the Beast* and similar Disney films make it extremely difficult to deny the messages, because doing so requires us to forego alluring possibilities of love and magic. In this sense, the mental tension created by the decision spectators face can be considered as a form of cinematic abuse. Wolf (1991) explains, "The threat of lovelessness has been used far against women rather than against men as a form of political crowd control" (Wolf, p. 259). This control works extremely well with young audiences that "rely heavily on traditional normative structures to make sense of the world, [as] they often accept gendered expectations of truth" (Baker-Sperry, 2007, p. 718). Because *Beauty and the Beast* repeatedly promotes the idea that love and violence are inseparable, resistant readings become difficult for anyone who values love. The consequences for uncritical viewers include a greater acceptance and toleration of domestic violence later in life.

Cinematic abuse practically provides a handbook for "successfully" becoming an abuser or a victim later in life. As Katz (2006) has noted, "The values and beliefs of men who become batterers and rapist in their twenties and thirties typically begin to take shape when they are much younger" (p. 230). Films like *Beauty and the Beast* provide these values and beliefs in a very subtle way, without ever labeling the violence for what it truly is. The film's ambiguous

rhetorical strategy is common in violent households as well. Walker (1979) observed, "Many incidents of battering thus take place in a family situation which neither party is willing to label as battering behavior" (p. 147). In turn, a child's tolerance for abuse is heightened. When coupling this assertion with Cultivation Theory, one could see the impact violent media depictions can have on a child, especially when the violence is not coded or addressed as violent.

Essentially, every Disney movie is a remake of all the previous Disney movies. The motifs are always the same. If you like one Disney movie, you will almost assuredly like them all. This is why Disney's repetition of the same plots and gender roles are so dangerous: "Multiple exposures to these films (especially in the context of parental involvement, approval and, and enjoyment) likely increase their impact on children's attitudes and understanding of the world" (Fouts et al, 2006, p. 16). Repeated viewing of the Disney genre *is* the cycle of cinematic abuse. Throughout this analysis, I have attempted to point out the important themes that shape those attitudes and understandings: victim-blaming, romanticized violence, learned helplessness, domestic violence myths, sexist gender roles, spectatorship, Disney's domination, and the phases of the cycle of violence. Each theme speaks specifically to cinematic abuse, and they all work in conjunction to perpetuate an acceptance and tolerance of domestic violence. Furthermore, like many batterers, Disney films do not attempt to change the cinematic abuse; they continue to portray the same archetypal characters, sexist and stereotypical gender roles, romanticized violence, and patriarchal notions: "The batterer, spurred on by her apparent passive acceptance of his abusive behavior, does not try to control himself" (Walker, 1979, p. 57). Disney continues to cinematically abuse the audience with each film produced, and like battered women, the audience continues to return for further abuse.

The Search for Happiness

The Disney genre's intertextuality allows the entire collection of the classic animated films to share the same features—features that are now interwoven throughout history, time, and childhood memories. The similarities shared between films like *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, and *Sleeping Beauty* brought forth a question that constantly dominated my thoughts during this analysis: Why did Walt Disney choose this fairytale genre? What was it about these stories that intrigued him? The answers I found are perhaps the most helpful (and sad) in understanding why cinematic abuse emerged in Disney films. Walt Disney had a very traumatic childhood. His father, Elias, a strict, religious conservative, was very hard on Walt and his three brothers, perhaps because he, too, had a difficult childhood. Walt's father was once beaten for sneaking off into the woods to play his fiddle; his mother called it the devil's instrument (Pinsky, 2004). A product of his environment, Elias enacted the same abuse on his children. Pinsky (2004) noted that he would beat or whip Walt and his brothers when "he caught them reading 'frivolous books' instead of the Bible" (p. 16). Eventually, Walt's three brothers took off, leaving him to face his father's wrath alone. Disney's Magical Kingdom is a result of these experiences. Pinsky (2004) explains, "A 1966 Disney promotional brochure described Walt as 'a man—in the deepest sense of the word—with a mission. The mission is to bring happiness to millions'" (pp. 19-20). I believe Disney created his empire in response to his abusive childhood. He loved fairytales ("frivolous books") and wanted to use them as the basis for his films and plots because he was denied the opportunity to enjoy such stories as a child. He didn't want children to have to experience the same miserable upbringing, and if they already were, at least his films could offer an escape into the wonderful world of Disney. The cinematic abuse was a learned behavior, passed down from generation to generation. And if we refuse to

acknowledge its existence, we will only continue to pass down the cultural acceptance and tolerance of domestic violence to our youth.

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APPENDIX A

DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

APPENDIX B

Mrs. Potts' sexuality has raised some questions amongst film viewers, however, this is a vanilla observation as compared to the negligent child abuse and homicide she's guilty of.

Evidence

Exhibit A. Just *how* do you think her son, Chip, got that chip? I'm not buying that "Oh, he fell" bullshit.

Exhibit B. Regardless of how, there's still the fact that she CALLS him "Chip". It's like a mother nick-naming her physically disabled child "Cripple". Emotional abuse, party of two?

Exhibit C. She pimps Chip out to anyone who wants tea. "Oh, you want some tea, here, take Chip...please" Tea, tea, tea, all the damn time. When is this kid going to school, playing, or socializing with friends?

Exhibit D. Where the hell are Chip's previously mentioned "brothers and sisters" after the spell is broken? Oh, that's right; they're still in the cupboard as CUPS. You know why they didn't transform back into humans? BECAUSE SHE MURDERED ALL OF THEM. You can't turn back into a human if you were killed while you were a cup.

Exhibit E. As a human, Chip asks if he still has to sleep in the cupboard and she laughs, but never gives an answer. But we all know where he is sleeping right now: with his dead siblings in the cupboard.