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"Tale as Old as Time": the "Beauty and the Beast" Narrative as Vehicle for Social Resistance

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“TALE AS OLD AS TIME”: THE “BEAUTY AND THE BEAST” NARRATIVE AS VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL RESISTANCE

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MONICA WILLIAMS

ABSTRACT

While current criticism has discussed various versions of the “Beauty and the Beast” tale individually, none have traced any particular trends that have emerged within the tale as it has been revised over the centuries. One particular trend began in the eighteenth century, when Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont streamlined the tale from the oral tradition in order to utilize it for the moral education of young French girls. Along with this pedagogical goal, Beaumont also managed to critique Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* and the abuse Pamela often suffered at the hands of Mr. B by revising her Beast character to act much kinder to Beauty. Beaumont’s intentional revisions then set in motion a similar utilization of this particular tale by many later authors and even filmmakers: Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Jean Cocteau’s 1946 film *La Belle et La Bête*, Disney’s 1991 film *Beauty and the Beast*, and even Disney’s most recent live-action take on *Beauty and the Beast*. In each case, these versions not only revise advice to women about “beastly” men, but they each appear to resist other social elements, whether they be the expansion of the British Empire and the presence of the “other,” the trend towards realism in Post-WWII French film, hyper-masculine men of 1980s entertainment, or myriad ideologies and beliefs that still persist today. Essentially, Beaumont’s revisions of

the tale served as a catalyst for those who later revise the tale to employ it as a vehicle of resistance against contemporary people or events that they personally find “beastly.”

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Beauty and the Beast" is a recognizable tale that, even to this day, is incredibly popular and garners enough interest from audiences that Disney has premiered a live-action remake, *Beauty and the Beast*, of their 1991 animated film of the same name earlier in 2017.[1] The tale as a 21st century audience knows it today in entertainment and literature, however, derives from the eighteenth century. Though the tale can be traced back even further, most current versions rely upon the 1756 version, "Beauty and the Beast,' written by Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont. Before Beaumont's eighteenth-century version, the tale existed mostly in the oral tradition since the 2nd century AD, starting with the classical myth "Cupid and Psyche." Betsy Hearne notes that the exact origin of the "Cupid and Psyche" tale by Roman writer Apuleius is unclear, but that Jan-Öjvind Swahn, in his study of the tale itself, classifies "Cupid and Psyche" as tale type 425A (9; 15). According to Hearne, the broader tale type of 425 is known as the "Search

[1] Brooks Barnes, in an article for *The New York Times*, states that Disney released a trailer for the live-action remake, which "generated a record 92 million views in its first day online, leaving Hollywood slack-jawed – not even 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' had attracted as much interest" ("'Beauty and the Beast': Disney's $300 Million Gamble).

for the lost husband" and that "Beauty and the Beast" falls under this range as 425C (9).[2] She further notes that "versions of 425A focus on the tasks of the bride, while 425C emphasizes the beast and its transformation" (Hearne 10).

Despite this classical origin of the tale, Beaumont's version is directly based upon a romance novel written by Gabrielle Susanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve in 1740 – the same year as Richardson's *Pamela* was published (Hearne 2). In condensing de Villeneuve's version, Beaumont became the "most familiar version of 'Beauty and the Beast'" (Hearne 2). Beaumont's purpose, however, was to critique Richardson's novel, and, with de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" being published in the same year – 1740 – it is likely that Beaumont found the tale to be a useful vehicle for her intended critique. Marina Warner notes that Beaumont was aware of Richardson's works, and even "commented on Richardson and the problems his material posed for a woman concerned with other women's morals and the care of their spirit" (293). Beaumont then included "Beauty and the Beast" as one of many stories included in *Les Megasin des Enfants,* a book for governesses – like Beaumont was herself – to educate young girls in the eighteenth century. The message that she sends to these young girls about expecting better treatment than a character like Richardson's Pamela. B. According to Todd, Beaumont uses "Beauty and the Beast" to rewrite Richardson's Mr. B and his rakish, abusive treatment of Pamela, and, in general, the passive nature of women that Richardson and other eighteenth-century male authors had ascribed to their fictional women (Todd 123).

[2] Hearne pulls this specific classification from the Aarne-Thompson *Index of Tale Types*.

Later versions of "Beauty and the Beast" further utilize the tale to advise women on what to do when they encounter a "beastly" man; they have also evolved to resist society's "beasts," whether they be popular ideologies, social conventions and trends, or national movements. Along this line, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) certainly falls under the tale type of "Beauty and the Beast" since the novel provides advice to women regarding beastly men through Jane's abrupt departures whenever she felt her freedom was threatened. Brontë's novel changes the traditional tale once again since Jane has more liberty than previous heroines of "Beauty and the Beast" did; however, Brontë responds to another "beast" in British society though the novel. Aside from being able to leave beasts like Mr. Rochester, Jane leaves the "dangerous" idea of the British Empire expanding and how leads to encounters with the "other": racial minorities from the nations that were under British rule in the nineteenth century. Susan L. Meyer points out that Brontë, though the novel, "responds to the seemingly inevitable anaology in nineteenth-century British texts that compares white women with blacks in order to degrade both groups and assert the need for white male control" (251). Additionally, Sue Thomas mentions that Bertha Mason represents the "contaminant" "other" in white, British society – especially the landed gentry like Mr. Rochester (53). Brontë appears to utilize "Beauty and the Beast" as a way to not only encourage white British women to leave troublesome situations with threatening men, but also to show how she had anxieties about the role of Britain as an empire and the presence of the "other" within that empire.

Jean Cocteau, in his 1946 French film *La Belle et La Bête*, also relies specifically on Beaumont's version as his source, yet once again changes the advice for women when

they encounter a beastly, abusive man. Through the addition of a second romantic suitor for Beauty, Avenant, who is truly an abusive and controlling "beast" on the inside and serves as a contrast to the Beast, Cocteau's film suggests that true beauty is found on the inside. Cocteau's Beauty must choose between two beastly men depending on the beastly behavior each exhibits towards her. Through this film, Cocteau was also working against the "New Wave" trend towards realism in films in Post-war France by creating a film that was magical and full of fantasy. He was able to use "Beauty and the Beast" not only to continue the theme of advice for women, but to express his disdain for the serious atmosphere of film at the time. Therefore, his heightened elements of fantasy reinforce his resistance of such serious cinematic trends.

Disney's 1991 animated film, *Beauty and the Beast*, once again takes inspiration from the tale, Beaumont's critical approach, and borrows specific details from the Jean Cocteau film, as well – most significantly the addition of a second romantic suitor for Belle. Viewers can take advice from Belle's responses to the behavior of both the main beastly characters: the Beast and Gaston. The major difference in this film from previous versions, however, is that it provides a greater focus on the Beast's moral development, especially by providing a clear reason for his being cursed at the very opening of the film.[3] Through a detailed backstory for the Beast, viewers can feel sympathetic towards him and realize that he is kinder than what Belle and her father, Maurice, originally believe him to be. Disney also employs the character of Gaston to serve as a contrast to

[3] Here, the audience learns that an enchantress placed the spell upon him and his castle when he denied her entry to his castle (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). We also learn that the spell must be broken through learning to love someone and having her love him in return before the last petal of the enchanted rose falls (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale).

the Beast – much like Avenant did in Cocteau's film – yet also as a way to critique and resist the hyper-masculine characters present in the movies and TV shows of the 1980s. Susan Jeffords explains how Gaston represents these stereotypical male characters and that the Beast seems like a better option for Belle compared to him and his patriarchal and disrespectful behavior towards her and her love of reading (170). Disney therefore uses the plot device of having two suitors for Belle that Cocteau originally created to resist and critique the popularity of men like Gaston in entertainment and encourage women to find men they can reform by looking past their beastly exteriors.

In 1967, D. C. Muecke noted the connections between Richardson's Pamela and the "Beauty and the Beast" tale, claiming that "it is not altogether impossible that Richardson heard as a child a version of *Beauty and the Beast* that has not survived" (471). Arlene Fish Wilner, several decades later, then analyzes the links between Richardson's *Pamela* and "Beauty and the Beast" have discussed how Richardson's novel had "a deep influence on Mme de Beaumont" which she believed then later influenced the Disney film (530). Penny Brown explores Beaumont's reasoning behind writing her version of the tale, and Marina Warner describes Beaumont's view of how Richardson's text appears problematic for women (345-346; 293).

Susan L. Meyer, in discussing Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, focuses mostly on colonialism and the analogy of inferiority between white British women and the "other," while Jen Cadwallader mentions the novel's relation to the "Beauty and the Beast" tale, but only in nineteenth-century versions (251; 234). Sue Thomas also discusses the presence of the "other" in Brontë's novel and how Brontë may have viewed that presence as dangerous to British society (53). David Galef and Susan Hayward each discuss the elements of magic

and social influences that Jean Cocteau experienced when filming *La Belle et La Bête* (96; 44). Susan Jeffords only notes the difference between the Beast in the 1991 Disney film and the hyper-masculine movie characters of the 1980's, while Kathryn M. Olson strictly analyzes the Disney film and the problematic message it sends to viewers (167-170; 450).

None of these critics, however, discuss "Beauty and the Beast" as a continuing narrative tradition that flows through these individual versions, nor do they consider how each version is changed from those prior reveals a pattern of authors critiquing different elements of society. While Betsy Hearne offers a study of the changes in the "Beauty and the Beast" tale over time, she takes a historical approach to her study, rather than specifically analyzing any one pattern within the tale that emerges.

I therefore contend that each revised version produced of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale offers advice to young women about beastly, dangerous, abusive, and controlling men, always in a position of power, who can then prey upon various women as illustrated in the many versions of the tale that have been created since the eighteenth century. Additionally, the authors and filmmakers are able to resist contemporary attitudes that they each find beastly or equally as dangerous as the men they feature in their works by shifting away from those attitudes or directly critiquing them. Starting with Beaumont's 1740 version, and because of the way she streamlined the tale from its multitude of oral origins, each subsequent version offers advice through intentional revisions of the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative. "Beauty and the Beast" has been used and will continue to be used as a way for an author or filmmaker to suggest ways for women to resist "beastly" men, and suggest to their readers or viewers that there may be eighteenth-

century, male-driven ideologies about women, the expansion of the British Empire and the presence of the "other," realist film cultures, or hyper-masculine men of 80s entertainment that should be resisted as well.

CHAPTER II

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: FRENCH ORIGINS OF "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

While various critics observe that Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" was inspired by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, none point out that she was specifically critiquing Richardson's problematic narrative that reinforced the popular element of female passivity in eighteenth-century fiction, which led to the abusive way Mr. B treats Pamela and almost coercing her into a "sham-marriage." Arlene Fish Wilner argues that Beaumont was an "admirer of Richardson's novels" and notes that many critics believe Beaumont, "having herself been forced to find work as a governess, might well have identified with the plight of Pamela" (533). On the other hand, one such critic that Wilner cites specifically, Marina Warner, mentions that Beaumont "was well read in the English novel, and commented on Richardson and the problems his material posed for a woman concerned with other women's morals and the care of their spirit" (293). Warner quotes Beaumont, who believes that Richardson's attempts to "foster love of virtue" in his readers "has carried into more than one heart the knowledge of vice" (293), which expresses Beaumont's concerns about how readers may have interpreted Richardson's messages about love and reform of rakish men. Beaumont's concerns expressed here discount the idea that she wrote her version of the tale as anything other

than a critique of the way Pamela was treated by a beastly and manipulative man, Mr. B, who had become common in the eighteenth-century literature created by popular authors like Richardson.

Beaumont's dislike for Richardson's passive females and licentious landed gentry is further suggested by Penny Brown, who states that Beaumont "expressed radical views on the question of the education of young girls" and "took serious issue with [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau's recommendations in *Emile, ou De l'éducation*, rejecting his portrayal of Sophie as a submissive and subordinate being who need only be educated to be a fit mate for a male" (345-346). Janet Todd notes that Rousseau's belief was that women, like Sophie, should be taught to "solace, please and minister to men" (117). Beaumont's rejection of the submissive role of women presented by Rousseau – another influential eighteenth-century writer whose passive characterization of fictional women mirrored that of Richardson's – further deems her rejection of Richardson's *Pamela* as highly possible since she expressed concern with what people would learn from the narratives these men created.

Wilner also notes how Richardson's narrative directly takes on the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative since Pamela must tame the gentry beast, "transforming him into a reflection of her own best qualities without diminishing his power" (535). She essentially believes that Richardson's narrative aimed to uphold social and domestic "tranquility" that was a major concern for the landed gentry in the eighteenth-century, especially since sexual violence towards female servants was commonplace enough for the public to lack concern for these crimes (Todd 116). It is possible that this attitude of the public may

have been yet another reason behind Beaumont's critique of Richardson's novel and the dangerous concept of reformation of an abusive and rapist gentry male.

One significant character change that Beaumont makes in her version of "Beauty and the Beast" is also in direct response to the focus on English landed gentry, since her Beast character is a monarch who seems to be trapped in his castle through the curse that has been placed upon him. Beaumont's Beast naturally has a genteel nature and expresses more kindness towards Beauty, which may be a result of him being a royal character who had received a proper upbringing. While Mr. B's social status would have provided him with a proper upbringing as well, it was still common for gentry like him to misbehave, especially to their inferior female servants. Beaumont's Beast's royal status, on the other hand, requires him to not physically threaten those below him – even if the curse has placed him outside public view while Beauty resides with him. This Beast does not need to be reformed, as he and Beauty can learn to love one another based upon mutual respect instead.

As Beaumont published her version of the tale in a collection of stories she would use as a governess, her audience of young French girls would experience a female character with much greater agency, who does not have to protect herself against a threatening male character. Rather, they are given a story that heralds a relationship founded upon trust and agency for Beauty, as Beast does not try to control her as much as Mr. B does in Pamela. Therefore, the differences between Richardson's novel and Beaumont's apparent pedagogical goals for her version of the tale suggest that she used "Beauty and the Beast" to respond to Richardson's disturbing novel of attempted rape

and domestic abuse and shape them into something she felt was better suited for the education of young, eighteenth-century girls.

Beaumont ultimately gives her heroine, Beauty, much more freedom than Richardson grants Pamela with in his novel. Though both women are held captive, the Beast is less threatening than the rakish Mr. B which results in Beauty being able to exercise her free will later in the tale. Beauty is free from any mental, emotional, or physical influence of the Beast when she requests to leave and eventually returns, unlike Pamela, who is constantly under attack by Mr. B, therefore rendering her incapable of making any decisions outside of his beastly behavior and influence. Beaumont uses her tale to create a less dominating male character, who, when Beauty first arrives at the castle, asks of Beauty if she will "give me leave to see you sup?" ("Beauty and the Beast"). When Beauty submissively replies "That is as you please," the Beast quickly replies that she is "mistress here; you need only bid me gone, if my presence is troublesome, and I will immediately withdraw" (Beaumont). Here the Beast grants Beauty the free will to command him to leave her presence and have complete control over her being at his castle. Richardson's Pamela, however, experiences very controlling treatment from Mr. B when, very early in the novel, he prevents Pamela from leaving when she suspects he may harm her virtue, and then tells her that she is "a little Fool, and know not what's good for yourself" – not to mention she is an employee of his and does not necessarily have the power to quit (23). Mr. B then grabs and kisses her, which resulted in her being "quite void of Strength, and he kissed me two or three times" (Richardson 23). When Pamela attempts to escape these undesired advances, she writes that "he held me back, and shut the Door" (Richardson 23). Mr. B prevents Pamela from

having any agency by assaulting her and then holding her captive. She is not "mistress here," and is therefore forced into a subservient role that Beaumont frees her heroine from when she critiques this beastly behavior since Beauty is not physically abused by the beast.

Beaumont also provides Beauty with agency through Beauty's request to leave, when she tells the Beast that she has "so great a desire to see my father, that I shall fret to death, if you refuse me that satisfaction ("Beauty and the Beast"). The Beast reluctantly agrees, stating that he will send Beauty back to her father, but that she "shall remain with him, and poor Beast will die with grief" ("Beauty and the Beast"). Since Beauty loves the Beast "too well" to cause his death, she makes to choice to return to him after one week with her father (Beaumont). Beauty admits her feelings for the Beast in this moment, and then dictates the terms of her leave, and, in both instances, practices her agency to decide her relationship and captivity without the Beast influencing her choices. Beaumont once again critiques Richardson here regarding female agency and, more specifically, the control that Richardson allows Mr. B to have over Pamela, since Pamela frequently requests to leave Mr. B and is denied every time. When Mr. B finally grants her permission to leave, he then has the coach take her to a farm he owns, while he prepares the house she will be going to, which he explains, in a letter to her, "shall be so much at your Command, that even I myself will not approach it without Leave from you" (Richardson 103-104). Although Mr. B's statement that Pamela will be in control is similar to what Beaumont has the Beast tell Beauty in her later version of the tale, Mr. B still exerted greater force over Pamela by preventing her from leaving him entirely. She is never given the chance to leave his influence to make her own decisions about her fate.

Beaumont responds by giving Beauty more agency in leaving the Beast. Of course, the advice for eighteenth-century women to practice more agency in their lives would have been wholly dependent upon men allowing them this agency, at least by not acting like Mr. B. Beaumont's attempt to educate young girls could perhaps convince them to *expect* they be treated the way the Beast treats Beauty. While we cannot know Beaumont's true goal in writing the tale and using it for educational purposes, it appears to be a response towards Richardson's Pamela and the treatment of women in Richardson's literature at the time.

With this expectation of how women should be treated in mind, Beaumont also made her beastly character act like a gentleman around Beauty – at least compared to the way Mr. B had treated Pamela. After their first dining experience together, Beaumont's Beast asks Beauty if she will be his wife, to which she simply replies after a few silent moments and her wondering if she will anger him, "no Beast" ("Beauty and the Beast"). The Beast's initial reaction was "to sign, and hissed so frightfully, that the whole place echoed" and then he leaves Beauty alone in the room (Beaumont). This reaction is described as frightful, but a few lines later, Beauty expresses "a great deal of compassion for poor Beast," therefore letting the readers know that she is not afraid of him and this burst of frustration towards her (Beaumont). The Beast does, however, ask this question every evening that they dine together, and, after a few months have passed, Beauty replies "I wish I could consent to marry you" and that she "shall always esteem you as a friend, endeavor to be satisfied with this" (Beaumont). Rather than expressing his anger again, the Beast accepts this statement from Beauty, by saying "I must… However, I ought to think myself happy, that you will stay here; promise me never to leave me"

(Beaumont). The Beast does not try to convince Beauty to marry him or influence her decisions in any way. Despite his request for her to always stay with him, her own request to go see her father occurs within this same conversation, so the Beast continue to allow Beauty the agency to deny him and create her own terms – that she is allowed to see her father and will return because she actually cares for the Beast – of their agreement. The Beast conducts himself in a way that allows a woman like Beauty to have more free will.

These scenes seem a clear response to critique Richardson's novels, since Mr. B continually abuses Pamela and does not conduct himself like a gentleman around her. Mr. B physically attacks and verbally abuses Pamela on numerous occasions. She encounters Mr. B in the house's entry, and she writes the he questions her about a waistcoat she was finishing for him and that he replies, "You might, says he, (very roughly indeed) have finish'd that long enough ago" (Richardson 48). Shortly thereafter, Pamela writes that Mr. B spoke about her badly to Mrs. Jervis, the housekeeper: "I believe this little slut has the Power of Witchcraft, if ever there was a Witch; for she inchants all that come near her. She makes even you, who should know better what the World is, think her an Angel of Light" (Richardson 49). He speaks "roughly" to her and then tries to turn other people against her, since she is a "slut" and a "witch." He does not conduct himself in a gentlemanly fashion towards Pamela, which results in her being manipulated into subservience towards him. Beaumont was clearly unhappy with this relationship dynamic in Richardson's writing, and depicts the Beast in stark contrast to Mr. B. The girls Beaumont educated with her tales would instead hear about a gentleman who allowed women to do as they wish, therefore setting the standard for what they should expect in

their own future relationships. Beaumont was certainly troubled by the abusive nature of characters like Mr. B and may have even been concerned about how those characters affected female agency and the lessons young girls may eventually learn about how they should act towards men. In order to address both "beasts" she found in Richardson's *Pamela* – Mr. B himself and the submissive nature women may learn to acquire – she depicts her Beast in the "Beauty and the Beast" tale to critique them.

As noted earlier, Beaumont's version of "Beauty and the Beast" serves as the source narrative for most major versions of the tale between the nineteenth century and the present, which has resulted in the continued use of the tale as a way to not only address women on what they should do or expect when the encounter a beastly man, but also to resist or critique other "beasts" that are present at the time each version is written. Beaumont's tale, and the way she crafted a more familiar version of the tale, not only changed the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative to resist the patriarchal control of gentry "beasts" of the eighteenth-century, but also set in motion the adaptation of this tale as a catalyst of social resistance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and even into the present.

CHAPTER III

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND BRITISH IMPERIALIST ANXIETIES

According to many critics, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* can be classified as a version of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale, most notably through the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Jen Cadwallader, for example, mentions the similarities between Brontë's novel and this tale, specifically through "the Thornfield episode" and the way that "Mr. Rochester… conforms in word, deed and look with the Beast" (235). Cadwallader's main argument, however, is that Jane's plainness stands as a social critique of fairy tales (235). Despite Cadwallader's observations about Jane, her argument also allows us a comparison Brontë's work to the "Beauty and the Beast" tale, since there are numerous similarities between Brontë's novel and the tale. Additionally, it is clear that Brontë was familiar with Richardson's novel, not only through her creating male characters in previous works that seemingly reflect Mr. B's behavior, but also since Richardson's novel is directly referenced as one of the works that Bessie would read to Jane and the Reed children when they were young (3).

Clearly aware of *Pamela* and the "Beauty and the Beast," Brontë then borrows the tale's narrative structure as a vehicle of social critique and as a method to provide nineteenth-century women – though only white, British women – with the advice to run away from a beastly man who threatens their agency and virtue. Brontë achieves this critique through making Mr. Rochester, and other men in the novel, act like a beastly and controlling character like other male characters in the tale's tradition and even as a reflection of Mr. B in *Pamela*. In doing so, Brontë shifts the focus back to a threatening gentry male, rather than the royal Beast in Beaumont's eighteenth-century version. Consequently, Brontë's novel also includes an element of reform once again, since Mr. Rochester is the dangerous "beast" who must be tamed of his bigamous intentions towards Jane.

However, this reform narrative, especially within *Jane Eyre*, makes patriarchal gentry seem less threatening than a secondary beastly character present in Brontë's novel: the "other." Brontë addresses nineteenth-century anxieties about expansion of the British Empire and how Britain would interact with these newly acquired nations. In a way, the threatening nature that Bertha Mason – the "other" – embodies in the novel appears more dangerous to Jane as a character, and even other characters, than Mr. Rochester does as a patriarchal member of the gentry. Brontë employs a reform narrative to show how Mr. Rochester is a beast that Jane can tame, unlike the dangerous presence of Bertha Mason.

Susan L. Meyer argues that *Jane Eyre*'s "ending betrays an anxiety that colonialism and the oppression of other races constitute a 'stain' upon English history" (251). She further suggests that Brontë's novel includes a "figurative" appropriation of the "other" to "signify not shared inferiority but shared oppression" between white

British women and the "other" (251). Meyer essentially believes that Brontë uses Bertha Mason as a representation of the oppression Jane experiences at the hands of white male patriarchy in nineteenth-century Britain, and that white women are not as inferior as the "staining" presence of the "other." Similarly, Sue Thomas contends that Bertha "is figured as a contaminant, rather than reformer, of Rochester's being and of upper-class morality" (53). Both critics agree that Brontë's includes the "other" – specifically Bertha Mason – in *Jane Eyre* because of anxieties over the "contaminating" "stain" that it seems to leave on the British Empire. As a result, the threatening gentry male, Mr. Rochester, appears less threatening to Jane as she can reform him and alter the oppression she experiences by him and the nineteenth-century patriarchy as a whole. Brontë uses "Beauty and the Beast" to encourage women to resist threatening men and run away until they are reformed, while altogether avoiding the even more threatening beast represented through the "other."

Given nineteenth-century readers would have been aware of Richardson's *Pamela*, it makes sense that this novel is in Jane's childhood readings (Brontë 3), and many pages follow that describe the Reed family's reactions to Jane's supposed bad behavior. Mrs. Abbot, Mrs. Reed's lady-maid, tells Jane, in reference to the Reeds, that "it is your place to be humble, and try to make yourself agreeable to them" (Brontë 7). This suggestion to Jane is strikingly similar to how Pamela is frequently addressed by the other servants and Mr. B himself, especially when she speaks up against the false allegations constantly lodged at her about being to blame for Mr. B's actions (Richardson 49). Similar to Pamela, Jane is blamed for any attacks that the Reed children make on her, and she almost never receives a chance to speak for herself while living at

Gateshead. As a child, Jane exudes much of the same resistant energy that Pamela in Richardson's novel has, especially when she tries to fight back about being put into the "red-room" after she is blamed for John Reed's attacking her. She calls him a "wicked and cruel boy" and tells him that he is "like a murderer… a slave-diver… like the Roman emperors!" (Brontë 3-5). Although she is powerless at Gateshead during any conflict with the Reed children, Jane is eventually able to act upon this energy and take some control over her own life choices after she is sent to Lowood.

Anxieties about expansion of the British Empire, and how the "other" – in the form of Bertha Mason – represent a secondary beastly figure within this novel, first appear is when Jane is getting acclimated at Lowood and she and Helen are conversing about their individual reactions to those who harm them. Jane expresses her disdain for any who dislike her without sound reasoning and that those people should be punished, claiming that, "when we are struck at without reason, we should strike back again very hard," therefore displaying her resistant energy that is crucial to her agency later in the novel (Brontë 50). Helen disapproves of this violent response to unfairness, since "heathens and savage tribes hold that doctrine; but Christians and civilized nations disown it" and "it is not violence that best overcomes hate – nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury (Brontë 50). When Jane asks what the proper response would be instead of striking those who have unnecessarily struck her first, Helen offers advice from the New Testament: "love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you" (Brontë 50). Conveying a traditional response to unfair actions, Helen's view suggests that Jane should learn to harness a submissive nature rather than taking an active role against people or ideas that attempt to suppress

her. Jane is chided for wanting to resist against others since the "heathen and savage" nations Britain currently had rule over behaved this way, at least according to people like Helen who may have believed the analogy that women should act as a passive, proper British woman because of their inferiority to white, male patriarchy as Meyer suggests was an analogy that Brontë employed in the novel. Brontë's advice here is for women to resist to these suggestions of how they should act and foreshadows Jane's actions later in the novel as she continues to resist most oppressive forces that pose a threat to her agency.

Jane may not be able to directly "strike back" at the beastly men and the "other" she encounters later in the novel, but she can and does choose to leave them behind instead. Although Jane's conversation with Helen about how women should behave when they are wronged may show Brontë encouraging Jane to behave like the "other," she is playing with the analogy between white British women and their shared inferiority with the "other" that Meyer speaks to. Meyer contends that Brontë's uses the "explosive race relations following emancipation in the colonies to represent the tensions of the gender hierarchy in England" (259). However, this analogous relationship may only prove to work as a stepping-stone for British women to fight the oppression that they experience since she believes they are not as inferior as the "other." Her motivations to strike back at oppressors – especially beastly men – only works positively for her agency and not for being sympathetic to the oppression of others, as Meyer suggests.

Before she can succeed in freeing herself from oppression, though, Mr. Brocklehurst, another controlling man, tries to make Jane the enemy of the other girls at Lowood. Mrs. Reed had provided misleading and slanderous account of Jane's behavior

before Jane was sent to school, and when Mr. Brocklehurst arrives at Lowood he decides to slander her in front of everyone as a result of the first impression he had been given of her (Brontë 59). Here, Mr. Brocklehurst is to Jane as Mr. B is to Pamela. Mr. Brocklehurst attempts to turn others against her with his words, in order to further manipulate her actions and force Jane to be an inferior to her peers. Essentially, men like Mr. Brocklehurst made sure that the poor orphan girls under his charge would not have control over themselves and would not get to enjoy frivolous activities and objects in life. He explains that he offers students at Lowood "plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits" (Brontë 28). This complete control over every aspect of the girls' lives can seem rather beastly to a nineteenth-century reader, and represents the type of situation a woman should escape from, at least according to Brontë.

Jane first experiences freedom when she decides to leave Lowood in order to seek a new position and a more lively existence than what she had been used to for the past eight years (Brontë 77-78). She advertises herself as a teacher that is looking for a home to reside at as a governess (Brontë 78-79). She came to this decision on her own, and there is nothing standing in the way of her making a life and career choice at this point in the narrative, especially since Mrs. Reed relinquishes any control over her and the board of the school makes no move to block her from leaving them (Brontë 81). Here, Jane differs greatly from Pamela, since Pamela never received a real opportunity to leave Mr. B. Jane makes the decision to leave Lowood – "now all I want is to serve elsewhere" – and quickly achieves this goal (Brontë 78). Pamela, on the other hand, repeatedly requests to leave Mr. B but is instead tricked and kidnapped to his other estate to remain under his control (Richardson 106-111). Beaumont's Beauty does not achieve this much

agency, since the Beast makes her feel bad about her leaving and she has to promise him she will return in a week ("Beauty and the Beast"). Jane believes she is able to leave whenever she wants, with no conditions about having to return, although she currently has no financial resources and she could be attacked on the road – perhaps even by a bull, as Pamela fears when she attempts to escape through the pasture, but encounters "that horrid Bull" that had earlier attacked a cook-maid (Richardson 152). Jane's statement of "I desired liberty," then actively seeking and attaining it, gives her a good deal more agency than the heroines of previous versions of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale (Brontë 77). Brontë gives Jane freedom and success in leaving undesirable situations with beastly men in the novel, specifically though her resistant nature and desire to personally better herself and her station. Brontë rewrites the confinements of prior heroines and their ability to escape their male oppressors.

After leaving Lowood, Jane encounters Mr. Rochester – the next beastly male she must face – and while some of her interactions with Mr. Rochester allude to past narratives of "Beauty and the Beast," Brontë still allows Jane more agency to resist any oppression in her new situation at Thornfield. The first conversation between Jane and Mr. Rochester, along with Mrs. Fairfax and Adèle, conveys Mr. Rochester as demanding and abrupt in his commands and responses to the other characters (Brontë 112-113). In a very Mr. B-like manner, he even blames Jane for his accident before his arrival at Thornfield, when he claims that "she began by felling my horse" (Brontë 114). His claim recalls Mr. B's constant blaming of Pamela for his passions and attacks on her virtue. Early in the novel, after attacking Pamela, Mr. B claims that "I was bewitch'd, I think, by her, to be freer than became me" (Richardson 35). Both of these manipulative men claim

that the women caused something to happen beyond their control. “Felling” a horse would only be likely if another were to startle, or perhaps even be “bewitch’d,” as Mr. Rochester claims Jane has done, which clearly aligns with the logic behind Mr. B’s claim of being “bewitch’d” by Pamela.

When Jane and Mr. Rochester eventually meet in the garden and discuss Jane’s desire to leave because of his engagement to Blanche Ingram, she tells him that Miss Ingram is the reason she must leave, to which he replies “No: you must stay!” (Brontë 240). He then insists Jane “don’t struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation,” to which she replies, “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you” (Brontë 240). Jane is cognizant of her own free will and is unafraid to act upon it in the face of an oppressor that tries to hold her captive. She refuses to be caged and this expression of agency foreshadows how Jane will free herself from both beasts at Thornfield: Mr. Rochester and Bertha Mason. As a side note, Jane’s desire to leave also relates to anxieties regarding the “other” since Blanche Ingram was described as being as “dark as a Spaniard” (Brontë 160). Jane considers this woman as an obstacle to her love of Mr. Rochester, and who, in this case, coincidentally resembles someone of Spanish descent rather than English. Jane refuses to remain with Mr. Rochester until he ends his relationship with Blanche and he then does so later in this scene since he asks Jane to marry him (Brontë 241-243). Jane, by resisting Mr. Rochester and his beastly behavior towards her, also resists his marrying of a “dark” “Spaniard” while she is employed by him. Brontë continually establishes that men like Mr. Rochester and the “other” are beasts that threaten white, British women like Jane.

The garden scene results in their engagement, however, so Jane ultimately does not act upon the agency she asserted numerous times in their discussion on why she wanted to leave. Shortly thereafter, when the nuptials are interrupted by Mr. Mason, Jane finally learns about another element of Mr. Rochester's beastliness: his plant to commit bigamy as he is already married to the woman locked in his attic. This woman, Bertha Mason, who "groveled, seemingly, on all fours" when Jane first sees her, serves as the catalyst for Jane's next major life decision: whether she is to stay at Thornfield or act upon the agency she has to go where she wants (Brontë 278). Bertha is the daughter of a West India planter of English descent and Mr. Rochester describes her behavior and intellect as savage and unrefined (Brontë 290-291). It is at this moment when readers could, once again, make a connection to Mr. B in Pamela because there is a reference to Mr. B having an affair with a woman named Sally Godfrey and we learn near the end of the novel that she currently resides in Jamaica and her child has come to be with him as "his niece" (Richardson 432-433; 477-484). Brontë again uses the narrative tradition of "Beauty and the Beast" to pull this element from Richardson's novel, further solidifying Jane's resistance to men, specifically when they try to enforce her inferiority through involvement with the "other."

After she realizes Mr. Rochester was attempting to trick her into a bigamous marriage, Jane abruptly providing the readers with her new intentions: "'Leave Thornfield at once'" (Brontë 282). Jane's desire to leave Mr. Rochester because of this ruinous situation he tries to ensnare her in also recalls Pamela's fears of being tricked into a "sham-marriage" with Mr. B (Richardson 226-228). However, Jane's choice to leave sets her apart from the main female heroines in previous "Beauty and the Beast"

narratives, including Pamela, since Pamela was never able to successfully leave Mr. B despite her fear of his intentions. Additionally, Mr. B inflicted upon Pamela and ultimately prevented her from leaving, which is what Mr. Rochester does to Jane when he tells her "remember, you leave me in anguish… cast a glance on my sufferings" (Brontë 303). Although he may have tried to convince Jane to stay, she does not buy his manipulation. Brontë liberates her female heroine from the binds of servitude, deals, and curses present in previous versions of "Beauty and the Beast," therefore granting Jane more of the agency that she perhaps wished for all women of the nineteenth century to have whenever they would find themselves in the hands of a beastly man. Brontë's advice to a woman who may find herself in such a position is to leave before any further damage can be done, and before she is oppressed because of her inferiority, like the "other" woman in a disgraceful marriage.

After Jane leaves Thornfield, she meets the next beastly figure, St. John Rivers, when she arrives at the doorstep of Moor House. Since Jane is desperate for new employment and St. John offers her a position as the mistress of a girl's school that he wishes to established in Morton, Jane is partially indebted to St. John by accepting a position he has created (Brontë 338-339). St. John eventually proposes to Jane and requests that she goes with him to West Indies as a "missionary's wife" which he claims is "not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (Brontë 384). Although she would be solely devoted to the Church, and this life would not allow Jane the agency she wishes to have, she does initially say she will accompany him, but only as a free person who is not legally bound to him as a wife (Brontë 387). She ultimately denies St. John, though, since he believes there is no way they can properly repair to the West Indies

together if they are not married first (Brontë 388-389). Through much of their banter on the subject, we see St. John trying very hard to convince Jane that she is "formed for labour, not for love" in order to persuade her in his favor (Brontë 384). Jane does not allow herself to be convinced, however, and she continues to enact her free will and decide her own fate by refusing him. Once again, Brontë gives Jane the opportunity to escape from a male who wishes to place her in an undesirable relationship, ultimately oppressing her agency. She would not be able to fight this oppression if she were a passive servant of the Church and therefore treated as inferior, while serving others.

The one complicating factor about Brontë's anxieties regarding the "other" is that Jane had recently heard news of her uncle's death and that he had left her a large sum of money, making her "rich – merely that – nothing more" (Brontë 364). Her uncle had currently been residing in Madeira and was on his way to Jamaica; therefore her inheritance comes from her uncle's dealings in other countries that are under British rule (Brontë 364). It may become problematic for twenty-first century readers to believe that Brontë would want a capable, nineteenth-century British woman to escape from an oppressive male that has connections with any aspect of the British Empire and the "contaminating" presence of the "other" when Jane accepts this money since this action seems to reverse Brontë's continuous rejection of the "other" throughout the novel. However, this acceptance is possible for Jane without completely reversing Brontë's intentions were because it ultimately frees Jane by giving her the necessary resources to do as she pleases. This inheritance brings Susan Meyer's argument full circle, since Jane had been rejecting the mixing with nations under British rule until this moment, when she

could use the money as a stepping stone to betting herself beyond the oppression a British woman may experience.

Despite this greater opportunity for monetary freedom, Jane eventually returns to Mr. Rochester after she believes she heard his voice, "and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily, urgently" (Brontë 401).[4] Jane, like other heroines in previous "Beauty and the Beast" versions, finds her way back to the manipulative man she left behind though she had no obligations through physical or verbal manipulation requiring her to return. Although Jane returns to Mr. Rochester in the end, Brontë depicts Jane taking control of the situation and using her agency to choose to return. It is also in this return, though, that Jane discovers that Mr. Rochester has been cleansed of the "contaminating" presence of Bertha because she burnt Thornfield Hall down to the ground, killing herself and severely injuring Mr. Rochester (Brontë 407-409). Jane's return becomes easier now that Mr. Rochester has been reformed from a beastly, threatening gentry male to a blind man who needs her care. Her return is also possible now that the "stain" of Bertha Mason on Mr. Rochester's home and the possible relationship between he and Jane has also been cleansed. While what critics state about the allusive nature of Bertha's "contaminating" presence and this cleansing at the end of the novel are true, Brontë also employs the "Beauty and the Beast" tale to strengthen her figurative use of characters. Essentially, Brontë uses the tale as a way to express the dichotomy between both "beasts" within the novel – Mr. Rochester, as representative of patriarchal control and Bertha Mason – and

[4] It is interesting to note that Jane has a dream about having to return to Mr. Rochester because he has been harmed, much like Beaumont's Beauty's dream about the Beast dying that compels her to return, as well.

how men like Mr. Rochester are less dangerous to English women, since they can ultimately be reformed, unlike the “other.”

CHAPTER IV

THE MID-TWENTIETH CNTURY: JEAN COCTEAU'S SURREALIST RESISTANCE IN POST-WAR FRANCE

Jean Cocteau, in the mid-twentieth century, once again transferred the "Beauty and the Beast" tale back to France as Beaumont did in the eighteenth century. In doing so, he once again restored the Beast character to royalty rather than landed gentry present in Richardson and Brontë's versions of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively. As post-war France had not seen a monarch since Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated in 1870, Cocteau's choice of a royal beast appears untimely; however, Cocteau's emphasis on surrealism in his films amidst a French film culture steeped in realism in the 1940s sheds light upon his cinematic choices to revise a popular fairy tale (Hayward 44). Cocteau was ultimately rejecting the atmosphere of realism in French film by crafting the surrealist *La Belle et La Bête* full of magical and imaginative images, as well as shifting back to a no longer existing monarchy instead of a more commonplace landed gentry. This shift further separates the film from the reality of post-war France through an unrealistic focus on royal characters that would have been unfamiliar to many during this time period.

Before the 1946 film, to immediately present the surrealist atmosphere of his film to his audience, Cocteau makes a request of his audience:

> Children believe what they are told and doubt it not. They believe that a rose that is picked can bring on trouble in a family. They believe that the hands of a human beast that kills begin to smoke and that this beast is ashamed when a maiden dwells in his house. They believe a thousand other very naïve things. I am asking you a little of this naïveté now, and to bring us all good fortune, let me say four magic words, the veritable "open sesame" of child-hood:
>
> "Once upon a time…" (*La Belle et La Bête*).

What may seem like an eighteenth-century introduction by an author telling a readership how to approach a given text, this request is Cocteau asking viewers to let down all barriers of reality and immerse themselves once again in the childhood wonder of hearing or observing a fairy tale and fully believing the magic and fantasy portrayed.

La Belle et La Bête is full of fantastic images and magical elements, from Beauty's dream-like arrival and exploration of the Beats's castle to her and the prince's final ascent into the heavens. However, this film is the first version in the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition to include such a large amount of magical elements.[5] David Galef agrees that Cocteau is asking the audience for "a belief in the improbable so necessary to the fairy tale" (96). Aside from offering this hand-written vignette as a way of watching and

[5] Richardson's *Pamela* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* have no magical or fantastical elements; Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" includes only minor fantastical elements through magic objects in the castle and a transformation at the end of the story.

enjoying his film, Cocteau is additionally asking his audience to step into this fantasy world in order to escape the recently war-torn atmosphere of France following the second World War.

Susan Hayward discusses this post-war France film atmosphere and how "realism was the order of the day and, more particularly, if film was to have any function at all during the very uncertain days of post-Liberation it was to help redeem the nation's shattered sense of identity" (44). Hayward explains that Cocteau had trouble getting his film produced and was rejected by Gaumont – a relatively notable French film studio – because "contemporary taste for films was towards realism" and a successful film had to "help redeem the nation's shattered sense of identity" (44), and Cocteau's film did not ascribe to either of these ideals. Hayward explains that this rejection by film houses was because Cocteau's "films were totally disengaged from the socio-political climate of the time" (44). It makes sense, then, that Cocteau intended to reject this film culture, and his inclusion of magical elements and a royal Beast stem from this rejection.

Cocteau's film also establishes the idea of how beauty is often found within which is represented through the Beast and his contrast to another male character, Avenant. Avenant is Cocteau's addition of a secondary beastly male who is vying for Beauty's love and wishes to marry her, as we see in their very first encounter that results in Beauty's rejecting him as she seems to have done numerous times before (*La Belle et La Bête*). Despite his seemingly handsome physical appearance, we quickly learn that he does not necessarily have the inner beauty to match this exterior. He manhandles Beauty after she rejects his proposal to marry him, only to be intercepted by her brother, Ludovic (La Belle et La Bête). This scene alludes to Mr. B's physical assaults towards Pamela,

including when he grabs her, kisses her, and she then "struggled and trembled" under his attack (Richardson 23). Conversely, while Cocteau's Beast's initial appearance frightens Beauty's father, and later Beauty, he still treats Beauty with kindness and respect throughout the film. The only moments of physical violence viewers see in the Beast are after they assume he recently killed a forest animal to eat, as evidenced by his smoking claws (*La Belle et La Bête*). This dichotomy between the two male characters – the Beast and Avenant – represents the theme of beauty being found within, and suggests to viewers that Beauty must look deeper into these two beastly men to find out which is the *real* beast. Additionally, Marina Warner discusses Cocteau's film as well, and mentions that the film, "for all its delicacy and dreamlike seductiveness, concentrates on awakening Beauty to consciousness of the Beast's goodness" (295). Rather than relying upon a reform narrative like others in the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition had in previous centuries, Cocteau chose to present two beastly figures, with one that is a true beast and the other who has inner beauty. Through this contrast, combined with his rejection of realism, Cocteau uses Beaumont's streamlined "Beauty and the Beast" narrative to present a surrealist version of the fairy tale, while encouraging women to seek men who are truly good on the inside, despite a beastly, hideous, or frightening exterior.

Cocteau continuously establishes the surrealist atmosphere throughout the film, especially through the scenery and dream-like moments that viewers can experience. When Beauty arrives at the Beast's castle and begins to explore, Cocteau includes a significant scene where Beauty appears to float down the hallway towards a doorway, with window curtains billowing behind her (*La Belle et La Bête*). This moment is

incredibly dream-like, and the camera angle allows the audience to feel as though they are drifting along with her. Additionally, this dream-like moment may also be Cocteau playing on the actual dreams that Beauty has in Beaumont's version, where she dreams that she is back at the castle after she has returned to her father ("Beauty and the Beast"). This dream does not directly relate to Cocteau's Beauty exploring the Beast's castle, but Cocteau may have still been inspired to include a dream-like element in place of his Beauty actually having dreams. Ultimately, this scene results in a further separation from reality for viewers, since Cocteau attempts to visually pull them into the mystical world that Beauty is entering. In Beaumont's version, Beauty finds that she has an assigned apartment, and she then opens a book which magically lands upon the lines that tell her she is in charge here ("Beauty and the Beast"). In Cocteau's film, however, Beauty ends up in front of a door that tells her that this is her room and the mirror inside her room also speaks to her, saying "I am your mirror, Beauty! Reflect for me, and I will reflect for you," and then shows her her father (*La Belle et La Bête*). Cocteau not only includes the magical moments that Beaumont's Beauty experiences in terms of receiving and reading messages directed towards her, the objects themselves speak to Cocteau's Beauty. Cocteau's inclusion of these magical moments also shows how the Beast intends to treat Beauty with kindness, as a beastly man may not always offer her a room and invisible attendants.

Later in the film, as Beauty prepares to leave, Cocteau increases the magical elements and the number of magical objects within the tale. When Beaumont's Beauty goes to leave her Beast, she receives a magic ring that can transport her to her father's home and then eventually back to the castle, as well as a "trunk full of gowns, covered

with gold and diamonds" ("Beauty and the Beast"). Cocteau's Beauty, however, receives the Beast's "five secrets of power" – The Magnificent, the mirror, his glove, the piece of jewelry for her dress, and the key to Diana's Pavilion where all his magic comes from (*La Belle et La Bête*). Previous versions of the tale did not have such a large amount of magical objects, especially Richardson's *Pamela* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" does have a few magical objects – the trunk of clothing and the ring that Beauty may use to transport herself to her home and back to the Beast – but they do not seem to hold as much powerful significance as the objects in Cocteau's film do. Cocteau's surrealist intentions with the film are reinforced in this case, and viewers are able to see Cocteau's rejection of reality through the frequent screen time that surrounds the magical objects.

An example of how this increased screen time involving the magical objects in this film is when Beauty's sisters intercept The Magnificent and the magic mirror, which the Beast had sent for Beauty to use upon her return (*La Belle et La Bëte*). They decide to hide the mirror from her, and, as a result, end up "fooling" around with the mirror to determine if there is anything special about it. When Adelaide looks into the mirror, she sees an old woman looking back at her, which prompts her to force the mirror into Felicity's face (*La Belle et La Bête*). When Felicity looks into the mirror, she sees a small monkey, and when Adelaide asks what she sees, she replies with a very prompt "nothing" (*La Belle et La Bête*). The scene serves a comedic purpose, since the mirror reveals the possible true nature of them. It is only through the magic of the mirror that Cocteau is able to do this, therefore equating fantasy with comedy. He continues to take the audience away from the serious reality and instead enjoy the magic, wonder, and humorous

moments that he includes in the film. This scene also relates to the theme of beauty being found within that Cocteau includes as the advice to women in post-war France. The sisters may be attractive, but they are both very cruel to Beauty and the rest of their family. The mirror gives them and the audience a glimpse into how they truly act, regardless of how unrealistic and comedic their reflections may be. Cocteau added these comedic and magical elements to further resist the realism that was expected of French film during the twentieth century. Instead of focusing on reestablishing the identity of France after the war, as Hayward notes many films were trying to do, Cocteau attempts to provide comic relief through magical, improbably, and even silly moments like this scene with Beauty's sisters trying to figure out the mirror the Beast sent to her.

Aside from this rejection of reality, Cocteau sets up the scenery relating to the Beast's initial appearance to leave viewers wondering if he can truly be a good person on the inside, "setting the stage" for Beauty's *learning* that the Beast has inner beauty. Early images of the castle when Beauty's father stumbles upon it show him walking over animal bones, certainly conveying the idea that the Beast is a carnivore that at least eats other small animals (*La Belle et La Bête*). The bones, combined with his very monstrous appearance and requesting that he only be called "the beast," make it difficult for viewers to not believe that the Beast is hideous inside and out (*La Belle et La Bête*). At this point in the film, the audience certainly cannot see any traces of previous beastly characters, like Beaumont's gentlemanly Beast.

On the other hand, Avenant continues to display his beastly interior in claiming that he will "kill the beast" after Beauty's father tells them what has happened to him and that either he or one of his daughters must return in his place (*La Belle et La Bête*). He

then strikes Beauty's sister, Felicity, at the end of the same scene since the two had gotten into an argument (*La Belle et La Bête*). Avenant continues to act as a beastly man who threatens Beauty's freedom, the Beast, and the physical safety of all the female characters. Avenant can also serve as a reflection of Mr. B in Richardson's *Pamela* since both these male characters appear handsome to the other female characters present yet have incredibly violent and abusive actions towards them. Viewers can see that Cocteau may have been using this connection of Avenant to beastly males in the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition, like Mr. B, to suggest that he is the true beastly character instead of the Beast himself.

This is not the only instance of Avenant trying to assert control over Beauty, since he tells her she "cannot" go when she offers herself to go to the Beast in place of her father (*La Belle et La Bête*). Avenant continually tries to infringe upon her agency, despite her frequent rejections to completely belong to him through marriage. However, Beauty does reject his commands, as well as those of her father, since she sneaks away without their knowing on "The Magnificent" – the magical white horse the Beast supplied to Beauty's father upon leaving him – in order to sacrifice herself (*La Belle et La Bête*). Although Beauty had earlier expressed her love for her father and her wish to remain with him, her agency to leave on her own reflects the freedom that heroines of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale had, like Brontë's Jane Eyre leaving the controlling men she encountered. The difference, however, is that Beauty is not willingly exchanged to the Beast like Beaumont's Beauty was, or Richardson's Pamela was through servitude to Mr. B. Beauty's leaving without his consent separates Cocteau's film further from versions like Beaumont's where the father does not fight strongly against his daughter being taken

away and held captive by the Beast. Beauty rejecting the control of these men is what eventually leads her to accepting that the Beast is not as controlling or harmful as Avenant; she is able to see the Beast's true inner beauty as a contrast.

When Beauty then encounters the Beast, she is struck with fear and faints,[6] resulting in the Beast carrying her back to her room (*La Belle et La Bête*). Additionally, the fear that the Beast evokes within Beauty still continues later that evening, when the Beast requests – instead of demands – that she have dinner with him that evening. To quell Beauty's fears, however, the Beast tells Beauty that she is the master of the castle now, and that "everything here at your command," yet she still expresses her unease about being around him in this scene (*La Belle et La Bête*). As with most of the other versions that come before this film, the Beast character must prove himself as a gentleman to Beauty before she can trust him and feel comfortable around him. Cocteau's Beast attempts to do this by saying, "my heart is good, but I am a monster" (*La Belle Et La Bête*). This statement sets Beauty's sympathy for the Beast in motion since she starts to believe that he has a better inside than what she can see in front of her (*La Belle et La Bête*). In these exchanges, the Beast reinforces the agency that Beauty can have, at least within the confines of his castle, and he ultimately offers her more agency than Avenant does since tries to control her throughout the whole film. The Beast does not force himself upon Beauty or become violent when she does not respond to him the way he wishes she would, unlike Avenant's actions in the very beginning of the film. Through this scene, Beauty can start to learn and see the Beast's inner beauty.

[6] This instance seems to reflect Richardson's Pamela and how she often fainted when Mr. B would make attempts against her virtue (32).

On the other hand, the Beast tells Beauty that he will ask her nightly if she will marry him, and when she says no the first time, he dejectedly leaves (*La Belle et La Bête*). Instead of manhandling her like Avenant upon being rejected, the Beast accepts Beauty's refusal. Here, the Beast continues to prove that he is the true gentleman, compared to Avenant, since he tries to treat her decisions and free will with as much respect as he can. Although the visible disappointment in the Beast's demeanor can be considered a response to the way Mr. Rochester verbally tries to guilt Jane into staying with him after she learns about Bertha Mason or how Mr. B frequently blames Pamela for his passions and her refusing to be with him, the guilt is not as ruthless since the Beast never verbally abuses Beauty. Regardless of his leaving in an upset manner after being rejected, Beauty begins to trust the Beast more after this first dinner scene, as she appears to understand that his beastly exterior does not completely display everything facet of his personality and behavior. Cocteau encourages his Beauty character to slowly become more sympathetic to the male character who is truly kinder than those who appear to be nice and pleasant on the outside. Beauty understands she should not judge the Beast by appearance only.

The Beast still exhibits behavior that makes Beauty's seeing his inner beauty difficult, though, especially when he looks for Beauty in her room and quickly becomes frantic, violently tearing about the room because he does not know where she is (*La Belle et La Bête*). Along with his previously smoking claws – which means he has recently killed something – the frightening imagery the Beast is portrayed through continues in this scene (*La Belle et La Bête*). Even though Beauty had slowly begun to feel more comfortable around him, she manages to spy on him as he enters her room, and it is likely

that she, and perhaps even the viewers, have lost some trust in the Beast after seeing him become frantic (*La Belle et La Bête*). After the Beast calms down, Beauty enters her room and questions why he is there (*La Belle et La Bête*). He claims that he only wanted to bring her a gift, and then magically assembles a piece of jewelry in his hand (*La Belle et La Bête*). After he leaves, despite her visible anger at his behavior throughout the scene, she is shown fondling the piece of jewelry and appears to even be admiring it (*La Belle et La Bête*). Despite the Beast's violent reactions to not finding Beauty in her chamber, and his lying to her to cover up his anger and actions, the scene still ends with Beauty seeming less mad than she had been when she originally confronted him in her room. The Beast also appears to have been more ashamed than angry when he leaves her room, after she demands he leave several times (*La Belle et La Bête*). Rather than appearing to be an abusive male who frequently displays anger more than other feelings, he allows Beauty – and the viewers – to see the range of emotions, including sadness, he may feel when rejected. This complexity further shows how Cocteau may have believed that rich men who initially appear hideous and beastly may still be able to redeem themselves through their actions, and that this is a "lesson" – as Marina Warner terms it – that women can learn.

Any happiness that Beauty experiences through her relationship with the Beast, another challenge occurs when Beauty becomes briefly ill, which she blames upon her father being ill as well, and then requests to leave (*La Belle et La Bête*). The Beast replies that he is not ready to grant her the power to leave just yet (*La Belle et La Bête*). She continues to ask to leave on several occasions if can leave and the Beast eventually asks if she will marry him after she returns if he does grant this request (*La Belle et La Bête*).

When he does finally agree to her leaving, the Beast asks that Beauty return within a week, by use of one of the five magical objects he entrusts her with, the key to Diana's Pavilion, and mentions that she can have all of the riches inside of the Pavilion if she does not return in time and he dies (*La Belle et La Bête*). Beauty's frequent requests to leave and the Beast initial denial of these requests is much more reminiscent of how Pamela continually asks Mr. B if she may leave to either go with his sister or back to her parents, rather than other versions of the tale where the heroine asks to leave and is granted permission very soon after – albeit with conditions of a return. This is also the first instance where the Beast makes a request in return: that Beauty will marry him. His request makes him seem slightly more manipulative than perhaps Beaumont's Beast because this is a way to almost force Beauty into saying she will marry him in order to see her father again. Although Cocteau's Beast had been respectful towards Beauty up until this point, his actions regress the opinion that viewers, and maybe even Beauty, may have about him. He wishes to add conditions to Beauty's leaving rather than just awarding her the agency and freedom to leave.

The Beast further grants Beauty agency and even solidifies his trust in her when he willingly gives Beauty all of the magical objects that are the secret to his power. The Beast's strong sense of trust in Beauty once again changes the way she feels about him and his beastly behavior. This change in Beauty's feelings is especially true when Beauty reunites with her father, and shows viewers that she may not have felt that manipulated. She tells her father that she is "no longer afraid and could sometimes laugh, but his eyes are sad and make me want to cry. He has made me feel no fear" (*La Belle et La Bête*). Through this explanation of the Beast and her situation to her father, Beauty appears to

express at the very least a general liking of the Beast, and a trust in him that he is good and would never intend to harm her. He has fully convinced her that he is a true gentleman trapped in the visage of a beast.

In contrast, when Beauty returns home, Avenant continues to prove that he is truly the beastly male who threatens her agency. He asks Beauty if she loves the Beast, showing that he still believes that her affections belong to him and that the Beast is a threat to his gaining those affections (*La Belle et La Bête*). More of Avenant's violent nature and his wish to control Beauty surface when he and Beauty's brother are discussing the situation in a pub. He mentions that they must take the Beast's treasure and plan to kill him, which he even tells Beauty later on in an attempt to woo her back in his favor through emotional manipulation (*La Belle et La Bête*). In doing so, Avenant becomes similar to Richardson's Mr. B who tries to play with Pamela's emotions and convince her that he is the man she should trust and marry. Cocteau uses Avenant as a warning to women who believe that a man's handsome or attractive exterior matches his inner personality and behavior towards others, especially women.

Cocteau employs the method of transformation for the Beast at the end of the film to resolve the contrast between Avenant and the Beast. Avenant and Ludovic go to break into the Beast's castle and they stumble upon Diana's Pavilion. They decide that they will not enter through the main door with the key they stole from Beauty, but rather, Avenant plans to break open the glass top and drop down into the pavilion (*La Belle et La Bête*). As he hangs from the frame of this overhead window, the scene pans to a cherub-like statue aiming an arrow at him (*La Belle et La Bête*). The statue shoots, hits Avenant in the back, and causes his physical form to change into exactly what the Beast looked like

(*La Belle et La Bête*). The scene then turns back to Beauty – who was kneeling over the dying Beast moments earlier – and a prince standing before her instead of the Beast (*La Belle et La Bête*). It is clear to viewers that Avenant, upon being killed, was transformed into the Beast so that the Prince could return to himself before he was transformed. Avenant, who had proved to be the true beastly character, finally took on the form that matched his behavior. The Beast, on the other hand, proved himself to be a gentleman worthy of Beauty's love and therefore was restored to his princely form. Cocteau employed a fantastic transformation in this scene to further resist realism in his film. The scene also reinforces the idea that people may act in a beastly way no matter how nice they may look, and perhaps Cocteau believes that, until this problem is to change, women should be wary of a love interest until they can see through their exterior and fully understand what their true nature is like.

After the Beast has been transformed into the Prince, Cocteau melds together the surrealist elements of his film with the now "beautiful" Prince who matches the inner beauty that he had exemplified throughout the film as the Beast. The Prince tells Beauty that "my parents did not believe in magic" and that "love can beautify ugliness" (*La Belle et La Bête*). This line mentions both the belief in magic and the transformation of a seemingly beastly person if they are given the chance to show that their current appearance is not their true selves. Now that the Prince and Beauty are together, both the nonbelief in magic which lead to his curse has been changed and he has become the prince that his actions and personality represented all along. Cocteau, with these lines, shows the viewers that they should allow magic into their lives and to continually beware of beastly people hidden under an attractive exterior.

He also ends the film with one final dream-like scene, when the Prince and Beauty fly/float up into the sky in order to return to the Prince's "kingdom" (*La Belle et La Bête*). This moment leads the audience to believe that the Prince either has control over a great deal of magic or is actually some mythological figure. By not allowing the audience to see them land somewhere, Cocteau gives his audience an ultimate moment where they must believe in magic and perhaps even other worlds to feel closure. Cocteau completely rejects the idea of reality, and the realist atmosphere of post-war French film at the time, by creating this ending to the "Beauty and the Beast" tale.

CHAPTER V

THE LATE TWENTIETH CNTURY: DISNEY'S FAMILY-FRIENDLY TALE OF REFORMATION

In 1991, Disney created an animated, family-friendly version of the tale, *Beauty and the Beast*. The movie resembles Beaumont's eighteenth-century version in a number of ways, yet now viewers learn exactly why the Beast has been cursed, there are a number of enchanted objects, and there remains a secondary love interest for Belle like the Cocteau film had. In this film, Disney continues to provide advice for women when they encounter a beastly male, by having Belle be incredibly vocal and willing to argue with the Beast, much like the previous heroines often did in response to their own beasts.[7] Belle's actions, especially with the help of the enchanted castle objects, show her trying to reform the Beast since she originally thought he was "mean, and he was coarse, and unrefined" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Rather than just expecting to be treated well or running away from a beastly man, Belle tries to change the Beast for the better,

[7] Pamela often resisted Mr. B's abuse by trying to argue against him, though usually to no avail; Jane Eyre was never afraid to talk back to the people in her life who she felt were oppressing her; Cocteau's Beauty would sometimes yell at the Beast if she felt his conduct was below what she expected.

which sets her apart from the previous heroines who all resisted their beasts entirely instead of working with them to make a better mutual relationship. Additionally, although the Disney film does not shift away from the royal Beast character that both Cocteau and Beaumont created in their own versions of the tale, the film does return the tale to a reform narrative. It is likely that the element of reform was still necessary in this version since there is, once again, a secondly "beastly" element aside from the Beast as a character: hyper-masculine men found in 1980's entertainment.

Susan Jeffords writes a great deal about 80s entertainment, especially cinematic trends that stem from the Reagan presidency and shifts in male characterization in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Jeffords indicates that father-and-son stories that struck a balance between continuity and change became popular in film during this decade because this balance was a "qualification of the Reagan ideology" – the desire for change while returning to and maintaining traditional values ("Hollywood and Reagan's America" 208). Seventeen years earlier, Jeffords had also discussed this ideology and how the "hard-edged masculinity that had been so closely affiliated with the foreign policies of the Reagan era" greatly influenced the equally masculine movie characters of the 80s ("The Curse of Masculinity" 161). She suggested that many 90s films shifted away from this masculinity and to a greater focus on the family and the "true internal feelings" that a man's body contained ("The Curse of Masculinity" 164). This is true given the more detailed backstory for the Beast and the newly family-friendly spin with numerous musical numbers that Disney put on this animated version of the tale.

Jeffords also discusses Gaston – "the stereotyped image of male beauty, the hard body that populated 1980s films" – and how he serves as a contrast to the Beast ("The

Curse of Masculinity"170). She then claims that, "Belle's choice to love the Beast could only be made reasonable and effective by visualizing a worse man she could have chosen" ("The Curse of Masculinity" 170). Belle's choice to love the Beast, however, comes more from his eventually being kinder and truly less of a beast than the hyper-masculine caricature, Gaston. Belle resists Gaston in every attempt he makes towards her, and even the Beast initially refuses to engage in Gaston's level of violence during the final fight scene at the castle since he sets him down and tells him to "get out" instead of throwing him off the parapet (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). While Jeffords focuses mostly on the Beast and how he is different from the male characters that preceded him in films a decade before, but the emphasis of her argument seems to be more on Gaston as the "stereotype" contrast to the Beast and how Gaston makes Belle's choice between the men easier.

The Disney film does not wholly focus on the Beast, however, despite Jeffords' claim that Belle is just there to solve the Beast's "dilemma": the curse that has been placed upon him and the search for his inner emotions and goodness ("The Curse of Masculinity" 167-168). Considering narrative tradition of "Beauty and the Beast" since the eighteenth century, the Disney film grants Belle enough agency to exist as a character that is equally as present and capable of development as the Beast is. Although the return to a reform narrative in the Disney film may support Jeffords' contention that Belle is simply there to help the Beast, Belle is still an active participant in the relationship she and the Beast form with one another. Essentially, Disney used the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative – via Beaumont's 1756 narrative revisions – to reject the hyper-masculinity of

80s entertainment through Gaston's characterization and encourage women to take an active role in reforming a beastly man.

Early in the film, Belle is given a good deal of free will, especially since she wants "adventure in the great wide somewhere," and does not appear to care that the people in her "provincial town" believe she is strange for her independence, beauty, and intelligence (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). This yearning for a more exciting life sets the pace for the independence that Belle will assert throughout the remainder of the film, as well. When she encounters Gaston after she finishes singing the film's opening song, she is very resistant to his advances towards her, especially when he tosses her book into the mud and then says that she should be paying attention to more important things: "Like me!" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle brushes Gaston off, telling him she cannot join him in going to the tavern, and her facial expressions throughout the entire scene can clearly be read as disgust and annoyance towards Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). During this scene, however, Gaston even goes so far as to tell Belle that "it's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas and thinking…" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Despite Gaston's domineering presence and expectation that all women swoon over him, Belle refuses to be a passive woman who allows overly-masculine men like Gaston control her and her "ideas" she may have from reading and being independent. Viewers can infer from this scene that a women should not even provide someone like Gaston with the attention he seems to demand from her, therefore resisting any beastly man's control over her agency and free will. Rather than responding and fighting back, it is not worth a woman's time to argue with a character like Gaston.

Belle's next instance of asserting her freedom comes after she goes to the Beast's castle to rescue her father. Leading up to this scene, Belle's father travels to a fair, becomes lost, and then stumbles upon the Beast's castle, which follows the narrative and plot structure of previous versions of the tale, but this version has Belle coming to the castle to rescue her father, rather than his returning and her offering to go in his place during a family deliberation. Much like Beauty in Cocteau's film choosing to sneak away and give herself to the Beast as a captive, Belle here encounters the Beast and demands he let her father go and that she can remain in his place (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Disney film allows Belle to make this choice on her own, without her father explaining the situation or even consenting to her choice, which was the case in Beaumont's version, when Beauty and her father go to the castle together and her father does little to argue against her staying ("Beauty and the Beast"). In the Disney film, Belle willing make a choice to take her father's place at the Beast's castle, further exercising her agency and independence when facing a beastly male.

Regardless of how frightening the Beast had seemed when Belle first agrees to remain with him, viewers also see the first element of reform early on. The enchanted objects – the enchanted candelabra, Lumière, in particular – believe that Belle may be the girl who has come to "break the spell" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). As a result, the objects had been bathing the Beast and trying to teach him how to smile in a way that may charm Belle, although his frightening, awkward, teeth-filled attempts to do so were not successful (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Once he realizes that Belle will not be coming down for dinner, though, his anger quickly surfaces and results in him storming upstairs, banging upon her door, and growling "I thought I told you to come down for

dinner!" to which Belle forcefully replies "I'm not hungry" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). After he threatens to "break down the door," Lumière, offers the first reformative suggestion to the Beast by saying that this yelling and threatening "may not be the best way to win the girl's affections" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The scene continues with Belle and Beast arguing, however, as, this early in the film, the Beast is not able to completely control his "temper" for which the enchanted castle attendants frequently scold him about (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). On the other hand, this initial argument further displays Belle's independent nature, since she will not give into the Beast's demands and threats, even replying "Yes, I can!" in true snarky fashion to the Beast's arguing that she cannot remain in her room forever (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle once again refuses to let a beastly man control her and Disney allows her to assert this independence without much further interference by the Beast.

The next small argument that Belle gets into with the Beast follows his rescuing her from wolves that attack her after she ran away from the castle. The argument takes the audience backwards through the events that led to his saving her, since she initially ran away from the Beast when he lost his temper towards her upon finding her curiously exploring the "forbidden" West Wing and disturbing the enchanted rose that resembles the timeframe of his curse (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). After the wolf attack, Belle is sitting with the Beast by the fire and is dressing the wounds he received while fighting off the wolves (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). They quickly go back and forth, each flinging blame at the other for the events that had transpired:

Belle: "If you hold still, it wouldn't hurt as much!"

Beast: "If you hadn't run away, this wouldn't have happened!"

Belle: “If you hadn’t frightened me, I wouldn’t have run away!”

Beast: “… Well you shouldn’t have been in the West Wing!”

Belle: “Well you should learn to control your temper!” (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale).

Belle is not afraid in this scene to equally lodge the blame for these events at the Beast as he does the same for her. Rather than being passive, like Pamela who suffered from a good deal of verbal abuse at the hands of Mr. B, Belle forces the Beast to recognize that he did not help the situation. Like Jane Eyre, Belle is willing to “strike back” as much as she has to against the Beast until he has changed his behavior towards her, therefore reinforcing her agency and the Beast’s reform through her actions.

The Beast’s reformation is almost complete later in the film, leading up to and during the ballroom scene. After the fight that he and Belle have about who is more to blame for the events that resulted in the wolf attack, the Beast starts to change his behavior towards her, especially through the continued help of the enchanted objects. There are several scenes following this argument that show Belle and the Beast eating dinner together and, at first, the Beast sloppily eating his food like a dog and making a mess (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). After Belle gives him a rather disgusted look that seems to even express embarrassment for him, she sets down her spoon, and lifts the bowl to her mouth in order to drink out of it; an action that the Beast quickly follows in order to eat more like a gentleman and less like a “beast” (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Here, Belle continues to reform the Beast’s behavior by offering an improved way to eat instead of his “unrefined” way.

Following this scene, Belle and the Beast are outside playing in the snow, and sing about how they are starting to notice that there "may be something there that wasn't there before" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle starts to see that her reformation has been working, as do the enchanted objects. As the Beast stands off to the side of the snowy courtyard in which that had been playing in, he tells Lumiere, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts that he would like to give Belle something, which, as viewers see in the following scene, is the multi-story library full of what appears to be thousands of books (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle is surprised and incredibly pleased by this gift, which additionally shows that her reformation had so far been successful enough for the Beast to not only want to give her a gift, but also one that he knows she would thoroughly enjoy (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Beast's actions in both these scenes display the drastic change that he had experienced in his behavior, especially towards Belle, and is very clearly through some of the efforts to reform him by both Belle and the enchanted castle objects. Here, the Beast begins to exude the gentlemanly behavior of both the beasts in both Beaumont's version of the tale and Cocteau's film.

As the Beast's reformation continues, Gaston, however, remains an example of hyper-masculinity. As he is moping Belle's frequent rejections of him in the village pub, LeFou, his "side-kick" that always defends him, tries to boost his morale by singing a song about how "every guy here'd love to be you, Gaston, even when taking your lumps" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The song continues, with LeFou singing: "No one's neck's as incredibly thick as Gaston's / For there's no man in town half as manly! / Perfect, a pure paragon!" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). LeFou continues to outline

how Gaston is "manly," but to such extremes that the song certainly comes off as comedic. This is especially true when Gaston interjects to sing his own verse:

> "When I was a lad, I ate four dozen eggs,
>
> Every morning to help me get large.
>
> And now that I'm grown, I eat five dozen eggs,
>
> So I'm roughly the size of a barge!" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale)

Flexing his grandiose muscles while singing these lines, Gaston's extremely unrealistic methods of being a "large" man lead viewers to not take him very seriously, since he acts as a critique of men who are proud of their manliness – especially those that Jeffords outlines in the beginning of her article, like Arnold Schwarzenegger as John Kimball in *Kindergarten Cop* (161-163). Those who helped write and produce this Disney film clearly believed that characters like Kimball were too "beastly" and therefore created Gaston as a way to satirize hyper-masculinity that Jeffords believes became popular in 1980's entertainment. Compared to Gaston, then, the Beast – especially as he is reformed – certainly looks more like a gentleman. Additionally, Gaston almost seems to allude to a beastly man like Richardson's Mr. B, aligning Disney's critique of such a character similar to Beaumont's critique of Mr. B: both seem to pose a threat to women.

The Beast's final moment of reformation happens during the iconic ballroom scene, as he is able to sit down to have dinner with her as viewers briefly see, and then gracefully lead her around the ballroom as they dance together (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). He is respectful towards Belle and displays refined behavior that viewers would not have thought he could, based upon his behavior earlier in the film. After

dancing, Belle and the Beat sit on a balcony off the ballroom, where the Beast asks if Belle is happy living in his castle, and Belle expresses that she misses her father – as all the "Belles" had done in earlier versions of the tale (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Beast brings her his enchanted mirror – that can show anything the viewer desires – and Belle learns that her father is in trouble at the hands of Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Beast then tells Belle that she should go and he tells her she is "no longer my prisoner," without Belle even requesting to leave beforehand, which, at first, may seem as if he is further controlling her by almost commanding her to leave; however, the Beast actually appears to be giving her more agency that the heroines that came before her, as they each had to request to leave – often multiple times – before they were allowed to go (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Beast had ultimately been reformed into someone willing to grant Beauty the freedom to leave, and gives her the mirror as a gift so she can remember him, which allows viewers to understand that she has been released without the Beast believing that she will return at all, which is why he gives her the magic mirror as a "way to look back, and remember me [the Beast]" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). This moment shows how Belle's attempts at reforming the Beast succeeded, even to the point that the Beast is willing to relinquish any control over her by setting her free out of love for her. A far cry from Richardson's Mr. B, who never allows Pamela to leave his control, Disney's Beast no longer displays the "unrefined" behavior that Belle, and viewers, saw in him at the very beginning of the film, when Belle goes to rescue her father from the castle.

When Belle returns to the village, however, Gaston is still acting as a manipulative and abusive man, since he is planning to send Belle's father off to an

asylum (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Maurice had been talking about the Beast and asking for help to rescue Belle after she agrees to stay at the castle, but Gaston pretends that he is crazy and then acts upon this notion to force Belle to marry him by "rescuing" her father from the asylum (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle confronts Gaston, which results in her trying to prove the Beast's existence by using his mirror to show everyone (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). This plan backfires, however, since Gaston plays up the fear of the villagers to rally them against the Beast (Beauty and the Beast, Trousdale). It is only in this moment that Belle comes to the realization that her reformation had worked, as she tells Gaston: "He's no beast, Gaston. You are!" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle now understands that Gaston is the true "beast" that she must avoid, and that the Beast is a gentleman who she actually cares for. Disney aligns the beastly male character that all versions of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale often warn against with the beastly image of hyper-masculinity.

The final battle between Beast and Gaston also alludes to the ending of Cocteau's film, especially since Disney continued the element of transformation he introduced. Gaston rallies the villagers to follow him in attacking the castle so they can "Kill the Beast!" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Gaston instantly resorts to extreme violence in order to go attack the Beast, and this is especially evident when he sneaks up to the West Wing and shoots the depressed-looking Beast in the back with an arrow (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Throughout the rest of this scene, Gaston continues to harm the Beast and insults the Beast as he refuses to fight Gaston in return, by menacingly asking "What's the matter, Beast? Too kind and caring to fight back?" echoing Belle's description of the Beast back in the village (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). The Beast

reacts to Gaston's violence by just trying to escape his attacks rather than harming him in return, further representing his reform and kinder nature that does not make him engage in the violence of a hyper-masculine character. When the Beast finally gets tired of Gaston's attacks, there is a moment where he grabs Gaston and holds him over the side of a castle ledge, threatening to drop him into the incredibly deep and rocky crevice below (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). A rapid change in emotion and anger occurs through Beast's facial expressions, though, and he sets Gaston down and forcefully tells him to "Get out" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Instead of acting violent in a revengeful fashion, the Beast relies on his inner beauty that Belle has seen in him by this point in the movie to spare Gaston's life. Gaston manages to stab the Beast in the back, however, but Gaston then falls backwards and off the castle to his death, and the Beast appears to be dead after he climbs onto the balcony Belle had been standing on (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle then expresses her love for the Beast and he, like Cocteau's Beast, transforms back into a Prince (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Belle's reformation of the Beast is finally complete, after he has granted her the agency to return on her own out of love and by his not resorting to the violence embodied in Gaston.

Essentially, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* encourages a woman that she may be able to reform a beastly male if true beauty is found within their "beastly" exteriors, as Jeffords suggests is true of 90s movies as a shift away from 80s masculine characters. As a result, Belle takes greater action in improving the relationship she has with the Beast, instead of trying to run away like Pamela, or successfully running away like Jane Eyre. Conversely, Kathryn M. Olson, however, argues there is a problematic nature of having a reform narrative within this film between Belle and the Beast. She believes that the

"Beauty and the Beast" tale has relied upon partner violence in its narrative history and that "Belle's 'lesson' is not greater self-awareness, but about how to appreciate a partner in spite of his rages and selfishness and to coax beauty from his beastliness" (Olson 457). Ultimately, Olson expresses the concern that, in the film, "problematic adult relationships are made meaningful and less threatening for inter-generational audiences, educating immature community members and reassuring adults that troubled romantic partnerships have meaning and merit the hope inspired by traditional, idealized romantic beliefs" (460). The concern that such a wide audience could misinterpret the advice given to women, or any romantic partners, in the Disney film are certainly warranted for a modern audience, but also shows that no single version of the tale will be entirely perfect in what the author intends to convey through those versions. Additionally, the Disney film shows Belle rejecting the much more beastly character of Gaston, who physically harms people like LeFou, her father, and the Beast, which shows she would not be willing to suffer such abuse from a man. The Beast, on the other hand, does not harm Belle in any way, although they have their handful of arguments with one another. Rather than being too hopeful about their "troubled romantic" relationship, Belle continually fights back, and does not realize she cares for the Beast until after he has expressed great kindness towards her and she is able to leave his control entirely before deciding to return.

As Gaston represents the true beast, Disney eliminates him at the end of the film, much like Cocteau's Avenant is killed and essentially *replaces* the Beast. Metaphorically speaking, this might represent Disney trying to kill off the hyper-masculine characters of 1980's entertainment, in order to make room for characters like the Beast, who are more complex and kinder to the women they encounter – and certainly easier to reform. Disney

was resisting male characters like Gaston, through the way Beaumont crafted her narrative in her "Beauty and the Beast" version combined with the addition of a secondary male love interest for Belle. Ultimately, Disney utilizes the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative to suggest that women can fight against beastly men until their true inner beauty comes out, while rejecting the idolization of hyper-masculine, abusive men hiding under an attractive façade.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: MODERN REVISIONS OF "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

For several centuries, the "Beauty and the Beast" tale has proved useful for social critique and revised advice for women when they encounter threatening men, starting with Beaumont's 1756 version and the narratological changes she makes in condensing and combining elements of oral and written versions that predate the eighteenth century. Additionally, the way Beaumont streamlined her version from the numerous elements of the tale has provided authors and writers with a recognizable narrative that allows them to make changes that fit their intentions in revising the tale. Since many newer versions of the tale are cinematic in nature, Beaumont's tale has also been as easily transferrable across mediums and formats as it has across time periods.

Modern revisions of the tale frequently occur still, and these versions, regardless of medium, seem to remain incredibly necessary for exposing the various "beasts" that exist today, while encouraging women to escape or fight back. From "grabby," *beastly* men being elected to governing offices of power to social ideologies that oppress the personal rights of others still in existence, using a fairy tale that is so familiar to resist

current social beasts is not only smart, but follows a tradition of resistance against what is apparently the "norm" and considered beastly by those who utilize the tale. For instance, Disney remade their 1991 animated *Beauty and the Beast* film as a live-action film that recently came out on March 17th, 2017. Although Disney kept the narrative structure fairly similar to the 1991 animated version – with some visually stunning updates in scenery and effects – obvious changes are in how Emma Waston intended to play Belle and that LeFou is a closeted gay character who is attracted to Gaston through most of the film.

When the movie resurfaced, so did critics discussing the supposedly abusive nature of the relationship between Belle and the Beast – criticism that Watson she does not think "fits" the tale (Breznican, Anthony). It is difficult to tell how far back Watson's range of knowledge about the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition goes, but it is clear that she had greatly researched the 1991 animated Disney version in order to provide a fresh interpretation for the studio's new version. A piece on Watson in *Vanity Fair* offers her discussion of some of the direct changes from the animated film she wanted to make, including Belle being a "creator in her own right" instead of merely an assistant to her father, and Belle's wearing more practical clothing, since "bloomers were created and Belle's first pair of riding boots" to make horseback riding much easier (Blasberg, Derek). Additionally, in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Watson further discusses the agency and independence that she instills into Belle and the expectation that Belle should be treated well since "…she gives as good as she gets. He bangs on the door, she bangs back. There's this defiance that 'You think I'm going to come and eat dinner with you and I'm your prisoner – absolutely not" (Breznican, Anthony). Watson

believes that Belle is willing to "bang back" – reminiscent of Jane Eyre's "strike back" – at the Beast's terrible actions in order to prevent any mistreatment, which allows for their relationship to grow mutually.

Belle's independent nature in the new Disney film begins early, as she rejects Gaston just as Belle did in the animated film and then goes to rescue her father at the Beast's castle (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). Belle finds her father locked in a dungeon, encounters the Beast, and learns that her father must remain there forever, to which Belle initially agrees to once her father pleads with her to leave him behind and enjoy the long life she still has ahead of her (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). After she has been allowed into the dungeon to say goodbye to her father, Belle then pushes her father out of the cell and slams the door shut, therefore trapping her inside and essentially telling the Beast that she will remain in his place (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). Rather than her father consenting to her staying with the Beast, or even having an opportunity to further argue against her choice like Maurice does in the 1991 film, Belle willingly sacrifices herself. Later in this scene, Belle's still acts upon her agency as she tries to escape and also expresses the true willingness she has to fight for herself. When Lumière, once again an enchanted candelabra who advises the Beast, opens the cell door for her and begins speaking, she throws a wooden stool at him (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). Belle is unafraid to physically fight back as much as the 1991 Belle was unafraid to verbally fight back against the Beast or anything else she believes may threaten her.

Additionally, the element of reform does not exist as much in this film, since Belle just fights back and demands to be treated well, instead of hoping to coax a nicer Beast from his beastly exterior. She tells him that he has to control his temper – even

through the same, word-for-word argument as in the 1991 film when Belle is dressing the Beast's wounds – but there seems to be less of an emphasis on Belle and the enchanted castle objects telling him to do so. In the 1991 film, there are numerous scenes where Lumiere, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts are attempting to help the Beast clean up to see Belle or suggest a present that he may give to her (*Beauty and the Beast*, Trousdale). Conversely, scenes that mirror these moments of suggested behavior and appearance reformation for the Beast do not exist in the new Disney film, as the enchanted castle objects have few moments where they can chide the Beast as much as they do in the animated film.

A final moment of Belle's actively fighting for herself against the Beast is her response to the Beast's asking if she is happy at the castle with him is different than it was in the animated film, however, when she asks "Is anyone truly happy if they are not free?" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). Overall, Belle, as played by Emma Watson, exudes more agency and willingness to actively fight for herself than did any of the heroines of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale before this version. Disney's new take on the tale once again updates the advice for women by telling them they should "strike back" against beastly men who threaten their well-being and freedom.

Aside from this updated advice directed towards women, Disney's new *Beauty and the Beast* film seems to have taken on another beast: closed-minded ideologies. According to the *New York Times*, Bill Condon, the director of the 2017 live-action remake, told a British magazine called *Attitude*, that Josh Gad, who plays LeFou, has "a nice, exclusively gay moment" in the film (Barnes, "'Beauty and the Beast' Director Talks"). Although Barnes notes in another article seven days later that Disney as a

company "never publicly commented on LeFou's sexuality" ("'Beauty and the Beast': Disney's $300 Million Gamble"). Regardless of what Disney may actually say of their intentions about LeFou's sexuality, there are still moments in the film where he seems to be a little too physical with Gaston and pining for his attention (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). Disney and Bill Condon were comfortable including a character to represent a specific group of people in society, who often experience oppression at the hands of a majority. As a result of these moments, however, many people were in an uproar and had negative reactions to LeFou – some as extreme as a drive-in theater in Alabama pulling the film for including a gay character and censors pulling the film from *all* theaters in Kuwait because the movie was deemed "offensive by the Ministry of Information's censorship department" (Barnes, "An Alabama Drive-In Bans"; Raghavan, Sudarsan). These extreme cases of censorship display the exact mindset that the film may have been resisting by including a character that others may deem "offensive."

Aside from including a gay character in the film, the Disney movie appears to have a more diverse cast than what viewers could expect for a film set in eighteenth-century France. In fact, Audra McDonald, who plays Madame de Garderobe, the enchanted wardrobe that dresses Belle, "credits her involvement [in the film] with a push on the part of the producers to make diversity a priority" (vanKampen, Stephanie). The film includes a number of minority cast members, from many of the enchanted objects in the Beast's castle, to the bookseller in Belle's provincial town. This "push" may have been Disney also trying to resist the Hollywood film culture that currently fosters a startling imbalance between white and minority and male and female cast members, according to the "2015 Hollywood Diversity Report" from the Ralph J. Bunche Center

for African American Studies UCLA ("Diversity Sells"). However, these cast members obviously do not receive as much screen time as the main characters – Belle, Beast, Gaston, LeFou, Belle's father – and the enchanted objects are computer-generated and simply have a voice provided by the cast members. In this case, the minority cast members are not greatly highlighted in the film, and most finally make an appearance as humans again at the end, after the spell has been broken by Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). The problematic nature of having minority cast members as the Beast's castle attendants or provincial book seller seem to merely reinforce stereotypes of diverse cast members playing only minor characters, and especially roles that are more service-based in nature. The Disney film clearly follows the tradition of resistance and critique that Beaumont established with her eighteenth-century version of the tale through the inclusion of a gay character and pushing for a more diverse cast, yet these changes do fall short of their goal given the controversy about LeFou surrounding the film, as well as the less-than-radical casting choices. On the other hand, the film does still reinforce the need for tales like "Beauty and the Beast" as a way for film studios or authors to continue working towards battling beastly ideologies that oppress others and fail to represent all people fairly and accurately.

Since Beaumont's creation of her version of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale in the eighteenth-century, later authors have revised the familiar narrative to resist beastly social ideologies or movements in entertainment. Whether it was the way women were viewed that Beaumont rejected, the anxieties about the "other" that Brontë expressed, the serious atmosphere of post-war France that Cocteau resisted, or the hyper-masculinity of the 80s that Disney wished to change, the "Beauty and the Beast" tale has proved a useful vehicle

for each person who revises it to express resistance of a social ideology. It is also this revising that has kept the tale relevant enough over the centuries that Disney felt it was time to revise the tale once more to not only update the advice given to women about beastly men to fit some of the more progressive feminist views circulating, but to also resist the beastly intolerance present today.

In the 2017 Disney film, just before she goes to return to the Beast's castle to try and warn him of Gaston's impending attack, Belle casts her iconic golden ball gown to the ground and then sets off on horseback as quickly as she can (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). As she fades into the background, her father sees the aghast expression on the asylum-keeper's face and states in a rather proud way that "She is very strong-willed" (*Beauty and the Beast*, Condon). This moment serves a crux for the independence that Belle exercises throughout the film as she "casts" off any final judgements of her actions, which is then reinforced by her father defending such an *improper* act in eighteenth-century France. With this moment, the Disney film utilizes the "Beauty and the Beast" narrative to modernize the feminist ideals portrayed: where a woman is not judged for her personal choices. Consequently, the film also appears to suggest in this moment that we should all "cast off" people's beastly intolerance and oppressive judgements in order to defend ourselves against the myriad of beasts in society today and possibly into the future.

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