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From damsel in distress to active agent : female agency in children's and young adult fiction.

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FROM DAMSEL IN DISTRESS TO ACTIVE AGENT: FEMALE AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

By

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Brian and Nancy McDonough

for their constant love and support, and making me believe I could.

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ABSTRACT

FROM DAMSEL IN DISTRESS TO ACTIVE AGENT:
FEMALE AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Megan McDonough

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This dissertation analyzes the different ways in which female characters in children's and young adult fiction can claim agency. Using adaptation theory, feminist theory, and theories of agency and autonomy, this project examines how portrayals of female protagonists have changed to accept a multiplicity of strong females, and why we need these different kinds of characters within our culture. Working with the definition of agency as the choices one makes and the subsequent actions she takes, this dissertation examines how female characters from paradigm shifting texts claim agency. Each chapter uses a specific feminist lens to explore literary texts and their film adaptations in order to demonstrate shifting configurations of female agency. Adaptation is important because it creates new meaning through the creation of an adjacent, but distinct text of its own. Therefore female protagonists can claim agency in new and different ways in the film depictions.

Each of the four chapters is a specific case study with close readings of specific texts in order to explore the different ways in which women claim agency. Chapter one breaks the Disney princesses into four groups, and uses Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of dutiful daughter and independent woman, in order to examine how the princess

characters have changed and gained agency over time. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's idea of the "angel" versus the "monster" is used in chapter two to examine how fairy tale reboot films allow both the princess and the villainess to both be more complex characters who claim agency. The women of the Harry Potter series are the focus of chapter three, as the chapter explores the varied roles women play and how these women create a postfeminist community. Chapter four looks at Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games series, and through a lens of ecofeminism, how she uses the land to her advantage both save her life and shame the government. The dissertation concludes with a brief look at other texts with more diverse characters, and how diversity needs to be another avenue of study in relation to female agency.

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INTRODUCTION

"Destiny is a name often given in retrospect to choices that had dramatic consequences."
– J. K. Rowling

"A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman."
—Melinda Gates

And they lived happily ever after. Synonymous with fairy tales, this phrase signals the protagonists' achievement of better lives after navigating life's trials. But what does a happy ending really mean? For many of the most well-known fairy tales with female protagonists, this means escape from a terrible situation through an advantageous marriage for the protagonist. While we can appreciate that Snow White and Cinderella receive a "happily ever after," there is more to these tales than a nod to marriage at the end.[1] As Maria Tatar writes, "Today we recognize that fairy tales are as much about conflict and violence as about enchantment and happily-ever-after. When we read "Cinderella," we are fascinated more by her trials and tribulations at the hearth than by her social elevation" (xvi). While the story does end with a marriage, the tale itself

[1] Along with "Once upon a time," "happily ever after" acts as a framing device to let the audience know they are entering and exiting a fairy tale (Harries 104). Although synonymous with fairy tale endings, most classic tales do not utilize this phrasing and many tales do not have a happy ending. Rather the happy ending became the typical ideological notion created in the nineteenth century, mostly for the intended child audience. Fairy tale authors such as Oscar Wilde and George MacDonald continued to create tales with disappointment and tragedy (Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick* 100). However, most fairy tales associated with the Western canon of fairy tales ("Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Snow White," "Rapunzel," "The Little Mermaid," etc.) do have a happy ending or have been altered to have a happy ending—most of the time in relation to a marriage. While the phrase "happily ever after" is normally attached to fairy tales, the sentiment seems to have crept into many other tales of the twentieth century, particularly stories geared toward children and young adults.

presents Cinderella overcoming multiple trials in order to achieve her goal of attending the prince's ball. It is because of her diligence and kind manner in dealing with her trials that leads to her end reward. For the reader, seeing a character overcome obstacles is important because this is where the reader learns about self growth. Modern feminist tales have pushed for a new meaning to "happily ever after," making sure that there is more to the protagonist's life than a good marriage. Accepting that through trials and experiences a person can grow and change while attempting to alter her world is the premise of many modern feminist tales. Roberta Seelinger Trites argues, "The feminist character's recognition of her agency and her voice invariably leads to some sort of transcendence, usually taking the form of a triumph over whatever system or stricture was repressing her" (*Waking Sleeping Beauty* 7). The protagonist can overcome a stepmother, a government, or even herself, but the key to this kind of female protagonist is that she is the one making decisions about her own life and claiming her own version of agency.

Fairy tales and youth-oriented narratives of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have increasingly allowed female characters to assert themselves and claim agency. These character transformations parallel movements in society, as well as feminism, as popular culture reflects feminist trends. One way this is seen is through modern female characters transitioning from passive characters into active agents in charge of their own lives. Influencing everything from childhood play to adult cosplay, the kinds of female characters demanded by the twenty-first century audience has shifted toward stronger heroines,[2] particularly in fantasy and dystopian fiction. In 2012, the five

[2] This desire can be seen through the choice of texts being adapted such as the *Hunger Games*. It can also be seen in the creation of new female characters, like Tauriel for Tolkien's male-dominated world in *The Hobbit* films and in the introduction of Marvel's new comic series *A-Force* which focuses on a group of female superheroes.

top grossing films were speculative fiction,[3] two of those films being *Brave*, and *Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. As M. Keith Booker argues, this shows there is an extensive market for speculative fiction and it will remain a key component of popular culture for years to come (xxvii), including these stronger portrayals of women. The popularity of novels like J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997-2007) and Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games series (2008-2010) were major vehicles in the popularity spike of speculative fiction. With the prominence of these novels the trend to adapt novels into films has also grown, increasing the ways in which the mass population is exposed to strong female protagonists. Thus adaptation is important because for many modern cultural consumers the first exposure to female heroes occurs through film. Adaptation also creates new meaning because of the creation of an adjacent, but distinct text of its own. Therefore we can see agency being claimed in new and different ways. By analyzing multiple versions of a text, we can gain new insights into the characters, themes, and meanings behind these texts.

Feminism has had an enormous impact not only on social behaviors and roles, but also on the forms of cultural production, allowing for the creation of stories that subvert traditional narratives and shift away from passive females toward more active women who accept their own power. Due to the importance of this shift in female characterization, this dissertation looks at how female characters in recent children's and young adult texts are claiming more agency than their predecessors. Applying the feminist concepts of agency and relational autonomy and utilizing specific case-studies, including Disney's princess films, live-action fairy tale films, The Harry Potter series,

[3] According to M. Keith Booker speculative fiction refers to fantasy and science-fiction together; it can also include the horror genre (vii).

and The Hunger Games series, this dissertation looks at the shifting cultural configurations of femininity and female narratives to show how modern female protagonists claim agency in a multitude of ways.

Taking Action: Defining Agency and Autonomy

The need for protagonists to claim agency and assert their power is paramount in young adult texts because it helps the reader learn to claim her own power and agency. For my purpose in this dissertation, I define agency as the ability to make choices and follow through with corresponding actions. Clare Bradford et al define agency as "the making of choices and taking responsibility for them, in accepting the moral imperatives which in a properly functioning civil society should determine 'the choice we choose'" (31). This definition links society's norms and pressures with an individual's decision making process. We cannot separate ourselves from the society in which we are raised. There can be disagreement with and rebellion against society, but even these decisions are made through an understanding of societal morals and motivations. To their concept of agency, Bradford et al add the ability to act, stating, "To be able to act—to have *agency*—also means being able to answer for our actions, to be responsible" (33). For Bradford et al, it is this combination of making choices, acting on these choices, and taking responsibility for one's actions that create their central basis for agency. It is this definition that I use as the basis for my own definition, while I also add modern day notions of autonomy. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar define autonomy as follows: "autonomy, or self-determination, involves, at the very least, the capacity for reflection on one's motivational structure and the capacity to change it in response to reflection" (13). For Mackenzie and Stoljar the concept of autonomy is necessary from a

feminist perspective in order to understand oppression, subjection, and agency. However, since autonomy has been seen as a primarily masculine concept, they argue that autonomy needs to be reconfigured from a feminist perspective, which they call relational autonomy (3-4).

For relational autonomy,[4] while there is an internal aspect for the individual decision making process, like agency, there are social factors, practices, and even relationships that can limit the available options for a person. These limitations do not mean a lack of autonomy, rather a person must learn to work within their social confines, help change or reconfigure the social norms, or break out of the confines all together. Linda Barclay claims that both autonomous and nonautonomous persons are created within the forces of society. The difference between an autonomous and nonautonomous person "is that the autonomous person is not a passive receptacle of these [social] forces but reflectively engages with them to participate in shaping a life for herself" (Barclay 55). This form of active reflecting creates an autonomous person who acts deliberately, thus claiming agency. It is this kind of agency I argue is most helpful when exploring modern children's and young adult fiction.

In recent decades, with the rethinking of gender and gender identity, a reassessment of agency has occurred, prompting new definitions of agency. Lois McNay distinguishes between two different ideologies of agency. The first she terms a "primarily negative paradigm of identity formation" (2), and the second a more "creative or

[4] Relational autonomy relies on the shared conviction that people are socially embedded and that agents are created through their social interactions. Through an understanding of one's social interactions and given the ability to reflect actively on those social interactions one can become autonomous. This form of active reflecting creates an autonomous person who acts deliberately, thus claiming agency (Nedelsky; Makenzie and Stoljar; Barclay).

imaginative substrate to action" (5). McNay identifies the first version as coming from the poststructuralist's emphasis on "subject as discursive effect" (2). This is one of the predominant modes of thought which leads to a negative model of identity formation. Whereas she asserts a more positive model of agency comes from creative means, which allow for individual differences as well as more innovative and complex ways of enacting change (5). McNay observes that a new or revised version of agency has been the concern of feminism for years because it helps uncover the marginalized experiences of women, making both versions important. However, for McNay, the second version allows for a more well-rounded assessment of how individuals can claim agency and transform cultural meanings. She concludes, "the essential passivity of the subject underlying the negative paradigm results in an etiolated conception of agency which cannot explain how individuals may respond in an unanticipated or creative fashion to complex social relations" (161). While both approaches build important definitions of agency, it is this latter, more positive version that I am utilizing within this project.

Though I am approaching the concept of agency from a stance of choice and action, other dominant and academic views of agency oppose this definition. It is still important to understand these viewpoints as they do influence the study of agency. Poststructuralism, and feminist poststructuralism in particular, have greatly contributed to the academic study of agency by showing how language and discourse affect the subject and create meaning, particularly in the ways that it affects women and ideas of femininity. Chris Weedon states, "feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it" (41). Poststructuralist theory

does acknowledge that, though a person is "socially constructed in discursive practices," she is also a subject in her own life and capable of making her own decisions, whether it be acceptance or resistance to social constructs (Weedon 125). Weedon also asserts, "In patriarchal societies we cannot escape the implications of femininity. Everything we do signifies compliance or resistance to dominant norms of what it is to be a woman" (86-87). From a poststructuralist approach there is no acting for oneself or one's own motivations; everything relies on acceptance or rejection of specific cultural norms. Instead of choice and action, agency relies on a resistance of dominant norms.

Judith Butler uses this idea of resisting dominant norms in order to challenge ideas of gender, sexuality, and identity. She argues that gender is a kind of performance in which we all engage in our own way. For Butler, this performance is part of claiming agency. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler argues that agency is "a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power" (xxiii). For Butler, agency occurs through reiteration. Agency does not denote free will, nor does it provide individuals with the ability to choose for themselves (xxiii). Both Butler and Weedon accept that in order to subvert societal norms, a person must resist the dominant norms. Butler insists that this happens through a continued practice or performance, not a one-time action; whereas for Weedon the importance is in language and how language creates discursive discourse in which meaning can be found and used to make change. In Butler's concept of agency, we must continue to articulate certain relations to normative power as we perform identity in order for our reiterative performances to be considered agency (xxiii). For Butler and identity representation this is true, but for my definition and use of agency a one-time action can still enact agency.

Building on her ideas of agency, and adding power and subjectivity, Butler asserts that power "*enacts* the subject into being" (*The Psychic Life of Power* 13). For Butler, agency of a subject manifests when power is assumed by an individual (13-14).

Using Butler's concept of power to explore an individual's own potential power, Roberta Seelinger Trites claims that it is power that allows for a subjectivity which leads to agency. Trites differentiates between Foucault and Butler, concluding that Butler agrees with Foucault's notions that power is a process; however, Butler's definition allows for a subject who is internally motivated and can act proactively rather than only taking action to prevent oppression (*Disturbing the Universe* 5). Trites takes this even further to look at how adolescents are empowered and can take responsibility for their own actions. She argues that multiple forces continually act on young adults, and as adolescents learn to navigate these different forces they gain a kind of power from which they obtain their own sense of subjectivity, which leads to agency (5-6). Trites states, "This need to recognize one's own agency is a central pattern of adolescent literature; we achieve adulthood more comfortably if we recognize that we have some control over the various subject positions we occupy" (129). Testing the limits of society creates this sense of subjectivity, making an adolescent an acting agent in her own life, allowing her to "assume responsibility for [her] position in society," and letting her use her power to "enable [herself] or to repress others" (7). Trites explains, "The feminist protagonist need not squelch her individuality in order to fit into society. Instead, her agency, her individuality, her choice, and her nonconformity are affirmed and even celebrated" (*Waking Sleeping Beauty* 6). These ideas of asserting power in order to claim agency and individuality are compatible with Barclay's ideas of relational autonomy and the need for

a person to reflect on her life within society in order to achieve autonomy. Scholars such as Butler reject identity as internal, and instead look at the external and rely on observation of behavior. Using relational autonomy provides a route beyond Butler's analysis of surface performance to show the importance of internal processing as well as external manifestations, which I argue are both important to claiming agency.

In *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (1997), Trites argues that agency relates to the protagonist's ability to affirm her personality while making her own decisions and acting on those decisions. Her idea of agency also relies on the protagonist's voice. Trites writes, "agency is the issue of her voice, for voice often serves as a metaphor for female agency" (6). Using one's voice to find and keep her personality and help enact her own decisions is Trites' definition of agency. For Trites, voice is one of the most important aspects of agency. These ideas build off the notion of powerlessness, and the need to empower both female authors and female characters. This power includes "positive forms of autonomy, self-expression, and self-awareness" (8). Within feminist children's novels—as well as a much broader spectrum of texts—it is crucial for the protagonist to find her voice in order to claim agency and power within her own life. She must then work to keep her voice and continue claiming agency and power for herself.

Also working with ideas of subjectivity and how society influences agency, Linda Barclay argues that humans are inherently social beings, and through socialization and internal reflection people find their own autonomy. For Barclay, autonomy is necessary in order to claim agency, and autonomous agency is fashioned through responses to social influences (54). She observes that people are able to be autonomous because of the

social connections they continue to foster and participate in. Without continuous interaction, people would not be presented with the needed stimuli for reflection, which enable conscientious decisions. She emphasizes this point, saying, "The fact that any of us has the capacity for autonomous agency is a debt that we each owe to others" (57). Attempting to make it clear that autonomous agency requires socialization and social influences, she continues, "I argue that once we rid the concept of autonomy of any association with the incoherent idea that there is a core 'inner self' untainted by social influence, there is no conceptual incompatibility between autonomy and the socially determined self" (58). Using this concept, one claims agency in order to reach the "socially determined self." Here Barclay's idea of autonomy stresses conscious choice to remain embedded within society, or one could make conscious choices to leave certain possibilities behind. These kinds of decisions can both open and close avenues of choice and action. While a decision to act in one fashion creates a clear path of action for the present, this decision can also close off future options. Barclay claims, "Part of making an autonomous decision to commit oneself to a particular person or project precisely involves a decision to close off certain possibilities in the future, to make a decision or choice to no longer consider other options as ongoing possibilities" (61). In making these decisions, one creates limits or divisions for the relationships fostered under autonomy. To be an autonomous agent means deciding what attachments to promote, which to reshape, and which to let go of altogether (Barclay 57, 68). These kinds of decisions evoke agency.

For this project I define agency as a person's ability to actively make decisions and follow through with the corresponding actions. In order to claim agency, one must

actively reflect in order to make the best decision, thus utilizing relational autonomy. Understanding the power structures in which a person lives and accepting her own power can be crucial for a character to claim agency. For a person, claiming agency means going against society's norms in order for her to do what is best for herself, her family, her friends, or sometimes even society as a whole. Agency involves doing what she believes is right, regardless of society's attitudes and structures, and in spite of the possible negative consequences to herself. The character must take responsibility for her actions. She also accepts herself as a subject who can make her own decisions and she acts on those decisions.

For me, choice is the crux of agency, and how a person decides to act is how we see agency manifest itself. However, there is a range of visibility when it comes to agency. Some choices lead to a lack of action. But deciding to not take action can still constitute claiming agency. This is an important distinction because characters who choose this route can be perceived as passive and not claiming agency. Rather, I argue they are choosing a less visible version of agency. One example of this can be seen in the 2015 adaptation of *Cinderella*. When her stepmother demands that Cinderella marry the prince and make her head of the royal household, Cinderella refuses to act (marriage) in order to keep her stepmother away from the prince. In choosing not to act she is claiming agency. Nevertheless, the subsequent actions following this decision (not seeking out the prince, and him instead finding her) can lead the viewer to believe there is a lack of agency on Cinderella's part. Her ability to choose creates a clear distinction from the 1950 animated version of *Cinderella*, where Cinderella is not given the opportunity to claim agency. In this version, her stepmother locks her in the attic, leaving a crying

Cinderella whom the animals must rescue. However, agency is stronger and more easily seen when pursued actively. Active agency involves reflection, choosing a path for one's own life, and actively working to make it happen. Katniss assumes active agency when she chooses to be the Mockingjay and goes to war against the Capitol. Throughout her journey as the Mockingjay, Katniss continually makes decisions and takes action which allows the viewer to see a continuation of her chosen agency. Active agency is easier to see, but both of these examples are valid forms of agency which help the protagonist achieve autonomy. Understanding that there are multiple versions of agency is critical because the primary intervention of this dissertation is looking at how notions of female agency have shifted in recent years toward a more active and visible version of agency.

Female Representations in Children's and Young Adult Texts

The range of female characters portrayed in literature, film, and television has changed greatly in the last century. Authors of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries produced new texts that explored ways of reexamining gender binaries. The influences of the feminist movements[5] can be seen in many cultural works, such as the Disney princess films. Spanning eight decades, each new generation of Disney princesses reflects the cultural shifts associated with the respective feminist waves. Though the early princesses hold to traditional gender roles, the later princesses "have become more complicated" which reflects the "changing gender roles and expectations in American society" (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek 563). In the twenty-first century there

[5] First-wave feminism refers to the struggle to achieve basic political rights, and took place in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century through 1920 when women gained the right to vote. Second-wave feminism, occurring in the 1960s and 1970s, involved a fight for equality across the board (in the workplace, in education, at home, etc.). Third-wave feminism expands the fight for equality to include race, ethnicity, class, etc., and includes an emphasis on identity as a site of gender struggle (Haslanger, Tuana, O'Connor).

has also been a resurgence of live-action fairy tale films that work to subvert the traditional narratives of Western fairy tales and prior fairy tale films. This need to reexamine narratives and notions of femininity has also created diverse females in children's and young adult literature, including such characters as the brainiac and the warrior. The changes within society brought about by feminism have greatly influenced culture and made it possible for women to have a greater range of choices in how they want to live, creating greater means for seeking autonomy and claiming agency.

Exploring representations of female characters, some may ask why children's literature and feminism? Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair look at the societal shift women have undergone, from submissive and domestic to assertive and confident. They argue that reading influences the cultural education of children and young adults, and this influences their coming of age (26). Brown and St. Clair write, "It is no accident that the recent appearance of stronger female characters in young adult literature has coincided with changes in women's roles and in approaches to literary criticism" (25). Part of achieving such equality in the twenty-first century involves presenting young women with strong role models, particularly in the texts that they encounter. Children's and young adult literature is one avenue that can help promote feminist protagonists as it allows girls to see strong role models from a young age. Trites echoes these sentiments when she states, "Books which empower girls to recognize and claim their subject positions empower the entire culture, for our society can only grow stronger as we teach our children to be stronger" (*Waking Sleeping Beauty*, 137-38). In order for this empowerment to occur female characters need to be full subjects, not invisible voices.

Due to the othering of both women and children throughout history, it is no surprise that some critics use feminist theory to analyze children's literature. Lissa Paul, in her article "Enigma Variations: What Feminist Theory Knows About Children's Literature," asserts that this need to appropriate feminist theory for children's literature comes from the fact that "both women's literature and children's literature are devalued and regarded as marginal or peripheral by literary and educational communities" (149). Using feminist theory helps open new avenues to explore how women and children in literature gain a voice and are no longer invisible. Receiving more critical attention and literary merit, new and different kinds of female characters have emerged in literature. The more women and children are incorporated into the body of culture, the more culture "recognizes and incorporates the value of their difference" (155).

Feminist theory not only helps highlight how women and children gain a voice within cultural texts, it also explores how these women maintain power and subjectivity. In *Waking Sleeping Beauty*, Trites explores ideas of subjectivity and asks the questions "who has agency in a text?" and "is a female character allowed agency?" (28). Trites argues that a major criterion for feminist children's novels is that a female character keeps her subjectivity and has a voice throughout the book. Retaining the role of subject with a voice is particularly important for females because, as Trites discusses, pre-feminist texts silence female characters at the end of the story. Trites contends:

> Thus, while in prefeminist novels the protagonist tends to become Sleeping Beauty in a movement from active to passive, from vocal to silent, the feminist protagonist remains active and celebrates her agency and her voice. This, then, is feminism's greatest impact on children's literature: it has enabled the awakening of the female protagonist to the positive power she holds (8).

For Trites, characters like Laura Ingalls, Jo March, and Anne of Green Gables are spirited and outspoken children, but a sign of their maturity is learning ladylike silence—thus ending in a loss of voice. Instead, a feminist protagonist should be more articulate at the end of her story (7). Like Paul, Trites also argues for the use of feminism to help analyze and unlock the feminist protagonist. Since feminism tends to analyze who holds power within a given society or cultural context, it is possible to unite feminism and children's literature (29). Trites observes that young adult novels influenced by feminism "make overt efforts to overcome the paradigm of the voiceless female in adolescent literature" (88). In today's cultural context, under the influence of feminism, many different kinds of female protagonists exist because these female characters are given choice and find a voice as they are allowed to be autonomous agents.

Wanting to highlight strong female characters, and pushing for the reinvention of passive heroines into strong protagonists has been a major theme among feminist scholars. One such scholar, Susan Hopkins, explores postfeminism and Girl Power movements of the 1990s, and points to the modern need for female heroes. She states, "The current generation of girls and young women won't accept submissive, weak and dependent role models. Their heroes are active and aggressive in pursuit of their own goals" (3). She also concludes that the new female hero "can be selfish as well as selfless, competitive as well as co-operative, fierce as well as kind" and that her "beauty is another weapon in the warrior woman's arsenal" (109-10). While this is a well-rounded description of a female character, and I do agree with her assessment here, Hopkins does not always hold to this approach. Though she presents insightful analysis of women warriors of the 1990s, at times her assessment of these same traits shifts toward the

negative, and she appears to argue that the only solution for feminist characters is to have warrior women. She writes, "The helpless heroine has been replaced by the new stereotype of an ambitious dynamic tough girl seeking self-advancement and self-actualization" (108). While I agree that modern female characters are stronger, I do not think the answer is to shift from "helpless heroine" to "tough girl." We do not need to jump from one stereotype to another, but rather we need to utilize a wide range of representations—from strong and fierce to kind and timid. While some of Hopkins readings may push feminist goals to the extreme, her book *Girl Heroes: The New Force in Popular Culture* (2002) demonstrates how even in the past decade female characters have continued to grow and change. Instead of needing "campy girl action" like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*, we can have Hermione Granger and Katniss Everdeen who are serious characters fighting for the freedom of their respective worlds.

All of these women, campy or serious, fall into the category of strong female characters. However, recently, some female critics have begun to call for a stop to using the term "strong female character." Blogger Cara Averna points out that this term acts as a place holder for other words we would normally use for male characters. Her example: "Iron Man is confident, billionaire, play boy, smooth-talker, philanthropist while Pepper Potts is… a strong female character." She also argues that this term of strong female character means that a character cannot be weak at times. In her article in *Wear Your Voice* magazine, Nina Penalosa also argues that this term points to a historical viewpoint of women being the lesser, or weaker, sex. For her, "Strong characters are also the ones that survive anything, whether it's an emotionally traumatic situation or one that challenges them physically or mentally." This is male or female. Therefore, for her,

"strong female character" perpetuates the idea that women are weak. While the arguments these women, and other critics, make are valid, I disagree with the premise that we should stop using the term strong female character. These woman can still have moments of weakness or be broken at times—these moments help make these characters more human—but what makes her strong is that she finds a driving force to rise above the pain and continues her mission. For example, around the same time that The Hunger Games series was written so too was The Twilight series. While Katniss cried, felt broken, and considered running away, she stayed and fought, finding the strength and ability to save those she loves. When Edward left Bella, she was catatonic for months and then recklessly endangered her life. This makes her a weak female protagonist. Other series, like Rae Carson's The Girl of Fire and Thorns trilogy, begins with a character who is selfish, petty, and eats her feelings. However, once she is kidnapped and forced to fend for herself, Elisa learns that she can be independent, resourceful, and a good leader. Elisa moves from a weak character into finding her strength. This binary of weak versus strong can be helpful in distinguishing characters and how they claim agency. Still, as Penolosa points out, this should not be the only characteristic that we ascribe to women. What is it that make her a strong character? In answering this question we move beyond just strength into intelligence, courage, action, independence, kindness, etc. to create a more complex definition of what makes a heroine[6] an active agent in her own life.

[6] The term heroine has been criticized because some see it as lesser than hero since it is connected to the feminine. However, like strong female character, I will use the term heroine throughout my dissertation because it should not be seen as a lesser term because of the gender in which it is associated. Instead, it should be reclaimed by feminist texts to highlight the empowered, independent, and strong female protagonists.

Fantasy literature and fairy tales are two major genres that have been influenced by feminism and feminist readings, giving rise to multiple retellings of classic tales as well as aiding in the creation of new tales with strong female characters. Paul argues that fairy tales were given new life as a direct result of second-wave feminism. Feminists of the 1970s explored the passive heroines employed in the tales of Grimm, Andersen, and Perrault. Instead of writing the passive women found in classic fairy tales, Paul concludes the trend was moving toward female heroes, though as she argues it would take a couple more decades to succeed in finding strong women rather than female characters that appear to be "men tricked out in drag" ("From Sex-Role Stereotyping to Subjectivity" 117). Fantasy literature and modern fairy tales are major venues where these strong female characters are found. Works by Ursula K. Le Guin and Angela Carter provide readers with reclaimed tales that feature heroines. Estelle B. Freedman argues that society needs "women writing women" in order for women to break the silence and undermine patriarchy (312-13). For fantasy literature, Brian Attebery points out that a large portion of contemporary fantasy authors are female. He argues, "women fantasists are engaged in such joint enterprises as refurbishing the archetypal images of the goddess, redefining the qualities of heroism to include female experience, and reaffirming women's access to the narrative storehouse of the past" (89). Through this reworking of fantasy women find a voice and are the heroines of their own stories rather than damsels waiting to be saved.

These changes have created a more diverse realm of female representation. Paul stresses that feminism has not only changed children's literature, it has changed literary studies because feminist theory "insist[s] on the right to be included, but not just as honorary white men" ("Sex Role Stereotyping" 113). This statement should be expanded

beyond literary studies to include other areas of Cultural Studies, like film and adaptation studies. As Linda Hutcheon asserts, "adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (20). By appropriating modern feminist notions to create new feminist readings of narratives, it is possible to see female characters as heroines in their own right. As Paul points out, this is important because the female journey is different than the male journey, and society needs heroines ("Enigma Variations" 161-62). Through adaptation, problematic texts can be reinvented as feminist while other texts can be reimagined for even stronger representations of females.

Adaptation: New Readings of Culture

Some critics and scholars may ask why continue returning to the same story? Hutcheon discusses this desire, saying, "Part of this pleasure…comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (4). Unlike prequels or sequels, which continue within the same world but tell a different story, adaptation allows the audience to relive their favorite stories in multiple ways. Novel, film, play, video game, theme park, etc., each of these adaptations allows the audience to once again acquaint themselves with their favorite characters and immerse themselves into a beloved world. Adaptation also allows a text to reach a larger audience. From a feminist perspective, it is possible to use adaptation to help subvert traditional narratives toward a more feminist reading of culture by highlighting or recreating aspects of the narrative to stress modern notions of womanhood and to display female agency. Using both visual and narrative elements, adaptations can create new readings of culture.

Since the creation of film, theorists have been addressing questions about adaptation and its place in cinema. Critics, such as Siegfried Kracauer, believed that only texts that were inherently cinematic, or action oriented, could be translated into a true cinematic text (237-243). More contemporary theorists contest this idea. Hutcheon argues, "Just as there is no such thing as a literal translation, there can be no literal adaptation" (16). Adding to this argument, Robert Stam asserts that in adaptation a new and original text is created because of the change in medium (55). Within adaptation theory the concept of fidelity is widely studied and debated. Theorists like Stam are adamantly against judging an adaptation on fidelity, stating that this implies there is an essence within a text that can be extracted and used in the new text (57). This theory is in direct opposition to André Bazin, who claims that fidelity in a good adaptation has complete independence from the original while still being compatible to the original text (67). That is, "a good adaptation should result in a restoration of the essence of the letter and the spirit" (67). This idea of holding to the spirit of a text does free an adaptation from being a literal translation. However, Bazin also believes in the origin of an original text and claims that an original scenario is always better than an adaptation (70-71). With the proliferation of adaptations in modern culture, focusing on the ontology and order of texts is counterproductive because, for many people, adaptations are the first exposure, and therefore the viewer's original text. This challenges "the authority of any notion of priority" (Hutcheon xiii). As Hutcheon argues if people do not have prior knowledge of the original text then they do not feel the oscillation between original and adaptation, so do not interpret the work as an adaptation (120-21).

Building off of these previous theorists' ideas, I argue that in switching medium the text is inherently new. Different versions or adaptations may want to stress or examine different themes or aspects of a text. Both an original text and its subsequent adaptations are not created in a bubble; all texts are influenced by the time, place, culture, and context in which they are created (Hutcheon 142). Today, film adaptations are many people's first encounter with a story, and then they go back to the original text. This makes the viewer feel the oscillation of adaptation in reverse, and can lead the viewer to prefer the adapted text since it is the first exposure. Therefore, each adaptation should be examined for its own merits. However, because there is a base or original text, some elements must transfer from one text to the next, elements such as characters, themes, specific events or scenes, etc. These similarities are what help make a text an adaptation rather than an independent and new text. For example, a text like "Cinderella" has been adapted many times over. Though there are many variations, such as *Ever After* (1998), *A Cinderella Story* (2004), and *Cinderella* (2015), each retelling employs a girl and a prince-type character, an evil stepmother and stepsisters, a ball, a lost shoe, and the boy and girl finding each other in the end. Without these similarities we may not perceive the tale to be a "Cinderella" variant. But with these similarities to denote the story, other elements can change. Danielle in *Ever After* can be feisty and independent and claim agency in ways other versions of Cinderella have not allowed their heroines. This is also the case for texts within different genres. Certain aspects must stay the same in order for the genre to be recognizable, yet elements change as time progresses and in order to differentiate and tell different stories within the same genre. While the necessary persistence of certain elements is akin to Bazin's idea of "spirit," it does not require

prioritizing the ontology and order of a text—the adapted texts are just as valid and important as the original. Understanding that this term "spirit" has heavy implications within the field of adaptation studies, I will use terms like "elements" and "aspects" rather than "spirit" when referring to the necessary similarities between texts.

I also agree with theorists like Stam who assert that words like fidelity are inherently problematic when dealing with adaptations. As Stam writes, when we compare texts for fidelity we tend to use words like "unfaithful" or "betrayal," associating moralistic criteria with the adaptation and judging a text based on our own mental mise-en-scene rather than a text's own merits (54-55). Besides moralistic criteria, in translation studies there is also a gender bias that is problematic. The phrase "les belles infidèles" associates male with the original and female with the translation. Sherry Simon argues that feminist translation theory aims to deal with the issues associated with relegating women and translation to the bottom of the literary and social ladder (1). "Feminist writing and translation meet in their common desire to foreground female subjectivity in the production of meaning" (12). Rather than looking at a translation or adaptation as lesser than, it needs to be explored for the complexities and meaning that are created, and can help inspire new insights into the original text as well as its adaptations. By focusing on my chosen texts along with their adaptations it is possible to see shifting forms of agency. For example, Katniss gains agency within The Hunger Games film adaptations through the loss of the internal monologue which exists in the books. Losing the indecisive internal monologue, Katniss appears stronger and makes decisive decisions. In revisionings of "Snow White," "Cinderella," and "Sleeping Beauty," many of the female characters are able to gain new and varying forms of agency. Through both narrative and

visual shifts, it is possible to reimagine characters in order to reflect changing cultural values.

Criteria for Analysis and Chapter Summaries

In order to demonstrate how characters have shifted to more active agents over time, I will use six specific traits to explore agency: courage, action, intelligence, independence, kindness, and beauty.[7] After a comparative analysis of the traits of major characters in dozens of children's and young adult texts I chose these six categories because they are common attributes associated with female characters, and they provide observable criteria which allow for analysis of actions as active or passive as well as help create comparisons between characters. While these categorical traits are not intrinsically gendered, throughout a character's specific story narrative the different traits do become gendered as well as active or passive. Analyzing these shifts within different characters will provide grounds for comparison to show how female protagonists have changed and become more active agents over time.

For many female characters, exhibiting one's own agency normally requires courage and involves some kind of action. Displaying courage or bravery does not mean that a person is not scared; it means that she is still willing to act because the benefits outweigh the risk. Taking action or showing signs of physicality means she is willing to act, and make things happen rather than sitting around waiting for someone to save her or act on her own behalf. Independence is also necessary in order for a person to take control of a situation or act by herself to accomplish her goals. In demonstrating

[7] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar use similar terminology when discussing female characters created by female authors, such as Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. More recently critics, such as Susan Hopkins, have used these terms to describe modern female heroes.

intelligence a person uses critical thinking to analyze a problem and act accordingly. She can be book smart, but more importantly she thinks through the possibilities and chooses the best course of action for a situation, even when others cannot see the logic in her plan at the time. Kindness also plays a part. As a feminine virtue, kindness tends to be associated with those who are less action oriented. However, kindness can be an active trait when it leads to direct action, such as volunteering for one's sister in *The Hunger Games*. This specific trait emphasizes the feminine when a character claims agency as an act of kindness to help others. Overcoming traditional female voicelessness requires female characters to embody these different traits and speak for themselves. When female characters are successful at being strong, they are less likely to be labeled as a beauty. More passive characters tend to be described by their physical features rather than using action-oriented terms. However, beauty as seen through makeover can work to empower a heroine by creating a persona in which she feels emboldened or capable. Though there are other traits that are associated with women claiming agency, these six chosen traits provide a stable basis for comparing and contrasting the different characters within each case study.

Within different female protagonists these traits vary. No one female character is a perfect representation of a woman claiming agency. Somehow there is an assumption that women must hold all important traits—be beautiful, intelligent, kind, courageous, etc. Yet forcing any one character to hold all ideals of femininity is to break all representations (Dyer). Whereas male heroes are allowed to embody different kinds of masculinity, there seems to be one perfect, and unachievable, femininity. This project is not looking for the one right or perfect form of active female protagonist, but rather

examines how portrayals of female protagonists have changed to accept a multiplicity of strong females, and why we need these different kinds of characters within our culture: for readers and consumers of culture to see multiple versions of women.

To examine this shift toward strong female protagonists I will provide four case studies to examine different types of female protagonists. For these case studies, I will use the Disney's princess films (1937-2013); live action fairy tale adaptations, including *Mirror Mirror* (2012), *Maleficent* (2014), and *Cinderella* (2015); Rowling's Harry Potter series with the corresponding film adaptations (2001-2011); and Collins' The Hunger Games series with the corresponding film adaptations (2012-2015). Each case study will provide close readings of specific scenes from the chosen texts in order to analyze the different characters' reflections on their respective societies and the actions taken in response to these reflections, demonstrating how these characters actively work toward being autonomous agents. Each of these texts contains a well-known female lead character—someone the mass population would recognize—be it Snow White, Cinderella, Hermione Granger, or Katniss Everdeen. Many of these texts have achieved economic mass success, and thus it is fair to assume that their female characters have achieved mass-market acceptance. Examining these different texts and their characters reveals how the transformation of female protagonists parallels movements and changes in society, in feminism, and how popular culture has picked up on these trends in order to create characters that previously would not have been possible. To highlight how these texts function within a framework of women's empowerment, each chapter will be paired with a specific feminist school or concept. While the chosen texts do fall into the parameters of mass-market success and show how females claim agency, the majority of

the characters within these texts are white females. As a consequence, the main feminist trends and ideas analyzed are also mostly rooted in white, middle-class feminism. While I acknowledge that this can be seen as problematic from a contemporary feminist standpoint, I also needed to take into account issues within the genres themselves. A majority of fairy tale, fantasy, and dystopic texts of the twentieth century in fact have created white female characters, particularly those texts that have been adapted and reached mass-market success. This points to a larger issue within these genres; there needs to be diversification within the spectrum of heroines in relation to race and ethnicity within speculative fiction. This issue will be addressed more thoroughly within my conclusion; however, for the most part, this is outside the scope of this dissertation and will, I hope, lead to further study in later projects.

These four case studies have been chosen so that each chapter builds off the previous studies and expands the exploration of female narratives and ways that female characters claim agency. Examining the Disney princesses allows for analysis of the princesses as a genre and demonstrates how the princess character has changed over time. With nearly 75 years between the incarnations of Snow White and Anna and Elsa, it is possible to see historical and cultural shifts in how the princess character deals with the problems she faces and how she interacts with the world. This shift in characterization has led to a desire for different and new forms of fairy tales, which has manifested in a proliferation of fairy tale films. In the last five years there has been a greater push for live-action fairy tale films that reinterpret Disney's animated tales in order to provide more complex stories and characters. These new princesses are also more active and claim more agency than their early princess counterparts. From the influence of third-

wave feminism and the desire for more diverse depictions of women, other versions of womanhood have been expressed through characters such as Hermione Granger and Katniss Everdeen. Instead of having to be the prim and proper lady, more female characters are able to take charge. Hermione is a nerdy bookworm who would rather spend her time reading than chasing boys. It is her strength, wisdom, and stubbornness, however, which ultimately save her friends and herself year after year. Katniss is a hunter and a caretaker, making sure that her mother and sister do not go hungry. Volunteering for the Hunger Games and dealing with the subsequent battles, Katniss proves that a woman can be a warrior, she can be broken, and ultimately when she listens to herself she can overcome any obstacle. Through these different characters we can see that there is no one perfect female depiction, but rather a gamut of possibilities. It is this kind of range that needs to exist. Though each character may claim agency in different ways, it is important to see the choices these different women make and how they enact change in their own lives.

Chapter one explores the princess film genre, specifically the Disney princesses, to show how representations of this trope character have changed over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For this argument, I have broken the Disney's princesses into four main groups,[8] each group representing a different stage in the

[8] The first group of Disney princesses, the classic princesses, consists of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora and their respective films *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), and *Pocahontas* (1995) make up the renaissance princess group with their respective princesses Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, and Pocahontas. The modern princesses consist of Mulan, Tiana, and Rapunzel and their respective films *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), and *Tangled* (2010). The most recent group, the new age princesses, consists of Merida, Anna and Elsa, and Moana and their respective films *Brave* (2012), *Frozen* (2013), and *Moana* (2016). These groupings of princesses are mine. Other scholars, such as England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek, have classified the princesses in similar fashions, but in examining the princesses of the mid-to-late 1990s other scholars tend to group them all together, making Tiana the first modern princess. The fourth group is entirely my own.

evolution of the princess character. Though there are set standards that each Disney princess film adheres to, the princess character has evolved from passively waiting for the prince to save her into an active agent willing to seek out and achieve her own goals. This chapter focuses on the following films: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Mulan*, and *Frozen*. Utilizing Simone de Beauvoir's ideas on dutiful daughters versus independent women, this chapter explores how as the princesses have changed they have moved from simply being dutiful daughters to needing to rectify being a good daughter and being true to herself. By exploring these four films, I will demonstrate how the different waves of feminism—whether consciously or not—have influenced culture and affected the ways that these princess characters are produced, and how these princesses claim agency.

Continuing to examine fairy tale films, chapter two looks at the recent wave of live-action princess film reboots and how these fairy tales are being redone to give the princess character and other female characters, including the villainess, more agency. Using the films *Mirror Mirror*, *Cinderella* and *Maleficent*, this chapter examines how the classic tales of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora are retold for a twenty-first century audience. Within these films, the princess characters as well as the female villainesses are portrayed as more complex characters who are capable of claiming agency in new and different ways. To help show the contrast between classic Disney princesses and these modern reinterpretations, I utilize Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's concepts of "angel" and "monster" to show the complexities of the characters beyond this binary. *Mirror Mirror* presents a version of Snow White who does not sit by idly, but joins a group of bandits and leads them in robbing the rich to help the poor. She is also able to

outsmart her stepmother and regain her throne. *Cinderella* is a classic remake following the 1950s Disney version of the same tale. However, this modern version is updated to create more complex characters with intricate backstories which provide the means for Cinderella to stand up to her step-mother in ways that were not available to the 1950s Cinderella. *Maleficent* takes Disney's version of *Sleeping Beauty* and tells the tale from the villainess' point of view. In this new take on a classic fairy tale, the villainess becomes the protagonist in a complex tale that plays with the gray area between good and evil. While the focus is on the villainess, Aurora is also given a bigger role where she makes decisions about her own future, thus claiming agency in ways the character from Disney's 1959 version could not. By utilizing these three films—and their takes on the classic characters Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora—it is possible to examine how these films have shifted the female characters into more modern women capable of acting on their own and claiming agency.

Beyond fairy tales, fantasy literature has been a major venue for creating strong female characters. For children's fantasy, The Harry Potter series pushed this genre into the mainstream and helped create a new generation of readers. Chapter three explores how female characters within The Harry Potter series embrace being who they are, and how their choices and acts of agency allow them to stay true to themselves while helping Harry achieve success in defeating Voldemort. Throughout The Harry Potter series, females make choices and claim agency in different ways than the male characters. These females, though established as supporting characters, are necessary for the continued support and success of Harry. They also serve as a model for new possibilities for female subjectivity and new female protagonists in young adult texts. Exploring the concept of

postfeminism, this chapter looks at multiple female characters from the series in order to showcase the various versions of female that can exist. I have broken these women into four groups: the girls of Hogwarts, female role models, evil women, and Hermione Granger as ultimate postfeminist character. Throughout the series, the female characters provide very different views of what it means to be a strong female. Utilizing adaptation theory, this chapter will also examine how the visual medium affects the agency claimed by these characters.

Katniss Everdeen's journey from reluctant rebel to her acceptance of being the rebellion's Mockingjay is the focus of chapter four. Using ecocriticism, this chapter examines Katniss' participation in the young adult trend to have the heroine enter nature in order to be awakened to her own power and thus learn to claim agency. Katniss claims agency early in the series by volunteering for her sister in the Hunger Games. However, she is reluctant to take on the persona created by the Capitol, and she is just as reluctant to be the Mockingjay. For Katniss, claiming agency is not always easy and throughout the series she wavers back and forth in her decision to participate in the rebellion. For Katniss, so much of her persona and many of her actions are connected to nature. She cannot be separated from the Meadow she loves. This chapter also compares the novels to the film adaptations, and explores how shifting to the visual realm allows Katniss to become a stronger character. In adapting from novel to film, the changes made throughout the film series have created an even stronger female protagonist, while also playing up the political turmoil within Panem, and stressing the importance of Katniss' actions in order to be a beacon of hope and help save the people of Panem.

The conclusion to this dissertation comes back to some the major concepts discussed within the chapters. Using *Moana* as a short case study, the conclusion will explore how female characters within popular culture texts continue to grow and change. Characters are starting to become more diverse, independent, and continue finding new ways to claim agency.

CHAPTER 1

FROM *FEMME FATALES* TO FROZEN FEVER:

SHIFTING POWER AND AGENCY IN THE DISNEY PRINCESS FILMS

> "It was not once upon a time, but at a certain time in history, before anyone knew what was happening, that Walt Disney cast a spell on the fairy tale, and he has held it captive ever since…If children or adults think of the great classical fairy tales today, be it *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Cinderella*, they will think Walt Disney."
>
> Jack Zipes, "Breaking the Disney Spell" (21)

In the twentieth century, Walt Disney created a new kind of fairy tale by adapting classic European fairy tales into modern films. Disney was not the first to adapt fairy tales to film, but as Jack Zipes says, "it was in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) that Disney fully appropriated the literary fairy tale and made his signature into a trademark for the most acceptable type of fairy tale in the twentieth century" ("Breaking the Disney Spell" 34). Disney was drawn to fairy tales because they reflected his younger life. He grew up with a distant and strict father, his family was poor, he was spurned by an early love, and he failed within the animation world prior to his Mickey Mouse success. Yet through his tenacity, courage, and drive to succeed he thrived (31), and was catapulted to fame as the father of the modern-day fairy tale. Creating fairy tales in both the Great Depression and post-WWII eras involved updating classic stories to encompass notions of the American dream and American values, particularly Disney's own conservative values. Some of the most recognizable fairy tales that showcase these ideals are Disney's princess films. While the earlier princess films may reflect Disney's

conservative beliefs and showcase more passive women, the later films, created after Disney's death and post-second wave feminism, shifted to reflect changes in culture and society by presenting women in more diverse roles. The modifications in the princess tales allow the princess character to be a stronger, more dominant woman capable of claiming agency. By comparing the different eras of Disney princess films, it is possible to examine how the princess character has shifted to reflect contemporary notions of femininity, power, and agency.

Origin of Fairytales: Women's Involvement in Story Creation

For centuries, fairy tales have been a means of entertainment and education. Modern children's fairy tales originated in adult storytelling and addressed adult anxieties and desires. These universal tales easily transformed from entertainment during the workday tedium to educational tales used in the nursery (Tatar, "Introduction" xii-xiii). Transitioning from oral tales to literary tales, fairy tales of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries established their own conventions and motifs, conveying themes and messages appropriate for the contemporary audience. These tales were meant to foster "a sense of belonging and hope that miracles involving some kind of magical transformation were possible to bring about a better world. They instructed, amused, warned, initiated, and enlightened" (Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* 2). Classic fairy tales are based on the utopian notion of hope, with the ending of the tale based on a new beginning. Each tale allows for the audience to recreate the message of hope, while endowing the story with connotations important to that particular time (4). Because of their universal messages, fairy tales both entertain and educate children and adults alike; thus fairy tales have been

canonized and institutionalized in Western culture. It was this universal message of hope that Disney appropriated and used to inspire his audiences through his films.

Despite the majority of names associated with fairy tales being male, women have always been involved in the dissemination of fairy tale stories to new generations. From telling stories while doing the laundry to working in the Painting and Inking Department for Disney, women have had a personal hand in conveying the messages within fairy tales to their respective audiences. These tales encountered gender appropriation beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when fairy tales transitioned from oral tales to written stories. As these tales were written down, the voices of the many female storytellers were lost to the literate class of the male scribe. The tales took on masculine dictates and fantasies, even if the storyteller had originally been a woman (Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* 7). When these stories were told orally, they could freely change from storyteller to storyteller. Once written down, there was a record of the story which opened fairy tales to the literary world of translation and adaptation. Women had to try and find their voices again in fairy tales. Sherry Simon argues that female subjectivity can be found through the production of meaning when translating. Through translation, "the translator is increasingly aware of her role in *determining* meaning, and of her responsibility in rendering it" (12). Fairy tales take this a step further because they are not just translated from one language to another. Female authors can find subjectivity and meaning by adapting fairy tales. Through adaptation, women are able to express their fears and provide female characters with the outcomes they wish for their own lives. One forum to see this kind of female empowerment was the French salons of the seventeenth century.

The circulation of primarily female authored fairy tales in French salons is one of the major factors which played a role in society's acceptance of fairy tales as legitimate literature. In France, fairy tales were originally meant to help educate children of breeding, so it was mainly aristocratic and educated ladies working with these stories. They worked to forge a discussion about manners, laws, and customs (Zipes, *Art of Subversion* 31-32). Authors such as Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, Marie-Catherine D'Aulnoy, and Charles Perrault circulated their works throughout the salons, becoming some of the most prolific French authors of fairy tales. These authors worked to educate and civilize their readers. Women writers in particular wanted to subvert the patriarchal notions within fairy tales and create tales to appease the notions of the educated women attending the salons, women who wanted more power to determine the outcome of their own lives (31-32). The number of female authors writing and giving voice to their fears through fairy tales shows females claiming autonomy and becoming the storytellers again.

During this time, another key player came into fairy tales—the fairy. These primarily female authors gave the power of change and promoting good fortune to a magical female form. Zipes asserts that these fairies exist for their own sake, and hold the power of metamorphosis previously explained through myth or religion. He writes, "It is clear that the gifted French women writers at the seventeenth century preferred to address themselves to a fairy and to have a fairy resolve the conflicts in their fairy tales than the Church with its male-dominated hierarchy" (*When Dreams Came True* 13). While the French writers of the seventeenth century may not have created feminist characters by today's standards, these authors did create a specific fairy tale aesthetic and ideology that

is canonized by Western civilization, and has prompted other women to utilize fairy tales as a course of powerful expression.

Just as women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fought to appropriate these stories for themselves and instill them with their own meaning, women of the twentieth century used fairy tales to further their own feminist agenda. Fairy tales experienced a renaissance during the latter half of the twentieth century as a result of growth in literary criticism and second-wave feminism. Over the past forty years feminism has become one of the most widely accepted and important approaches in examining fairy tales (Joosen 7). Beginning in the 1970s, with the rise of second wave feminism, there was "increasing discomfort regarding the gender dynamics" within fairy tales (Paul, "From Sex-Role Stereotyping" 117). Attempting to combat this discomfort, people began looking for heroines. Critics such as Marcia K. Lieberman and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar explored how fairy tales' use of traditional gender roles affected women and children. At the same time that scholars were breaking down the problems of the patriarchal tales, authors such as Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, and Robin McKinley created new fairy tales which challenged the readers' notions of sexual arrangements and the power politics associated with those arrangements (Rothschild 95-96; Zipes *Don't Bet on the Prince* 12). Along with authors who subvert traditional fairy tale messages, the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen writers and directors such as Hayao Miyazaki and Guillermo del Toro who have created films which adapt tales to use princess-type characters in different ways. In an age of technology, film adaptation is important to the dissemination of knowledge and stories to society en masse. While feminist scholars may argue that Disney's tales are conservative and patriarchal, Disney

as forefather of the American fairy tale means these stories have been widely dispersed to the twentieth century media driven audience. Thus in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Disney's fairy tale adaptations become important texts to explore through a feminist lens.

Disney Princesses: Dutiful Daughters versus Independent Women

For modern scholars, Disney is the unquestioned father of the twentieth century fairy tale; however, for many literary fairy tale scholars this is problematic. Scholars like Zipes, Sarah Rothschild, and Maria Tatar contend that Disney's versions are bland and promote his own personal conservative agenda.[9] While Zipes concludes that Disney "violated" the fairy tale literary genre ("Breaking the Disney Spell" 40), I argue that in creating this kind of visual fairy tale, Disney does not violate the fairy tale, but rather creates a new film genre. Robert Stam says of genre, "Although some broad genres (comedy, tragedy, and melodrama) are shared between novel and film, other genres are specifically filmic (e.g. the animated cartoon) because they depend on specific cinematic features such as the moving image, film editing, and so forth" (69). For Disney, the animated cartoon genre can be broken down further into categories, such as the animated princess film. Disney uses a formula as well as specific iconography to continue to alter and adapt this genre. Thomas Schatz says, "Iconography involves the process of narrative and visual coding that results from the repetition of a popular film story" (455). Disney's fairy tale iconography is important because generations are now raised on Disney's fairy tales rather than written or oral tales which are forgotten or dismissed (Ward 1-2). Instead audiences turn to these films where they expect to encounter certain narrative and

[9] See Zipes *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Rothschild *The Princess Story*, and Tatar *Off With Their Heads*.

character tropes. For Disney's princess fairy tales, the traditional iconography established within *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and carried through to *Frozen* (2013) includes: a princess, a prince, a villain, singing about one's desires, and animals portrayed as friends and helpers. Using these tropes allows for easy recognition of the princess film genre. To continue making films within this genre, filmmakers rework and vary content within the generic formula while, at the same time, utilizing the elements that helped make the genre popular (Schatz 462). This need for change, while keeping the genre recognizable, is achieved by adapting the princess character. As times have changed, there has been a need for the princess to become more active and independent; however, as she changes it is still possible for her to encounter all of the above mentioned criteria which is part of the iconography built into the Disney princess fairy tale. By altering the princess, what she sings about, and how she interacts with characters like the prince and villain, the Disney princess films have shifted to reflect the societal values and changes of their respective times.

Exploring the Disney princesses through the feminist notions of dutiful daughter and independent woman allows for a comparison of these different women and how they interact with the world around them. All of the princesses want to be dutiful daughters, yet, with the exception of the classic princesses, each princess struggles with being a dutiful daughter while striving for freedom and the chance to be an independent woman. Feminist scholar Simone de Beauvoir struggled with these tensions in her own life and discusses them in her writings. In *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1959) Beauvoir reflects on her desire to be a dutiful daughter, and yet she also wants her independence and to be an autonomous person. For Beauvoir, being the dutiful daughter meant taking

on a role of complete submission, which also meant a loss of independent spirit (Labovitz 77). Attempting to be a dutiful daughter Beauvoir "said good-bye to the independence which I had tried so hard to preserve in my earliest years. For some time, I was to be the docile reflection of my parents' will" (*Memoirs* 31). She struggled with this duality of good daughter and independent woman, but as she says, "I found it exhausting to be always fabricating masks" (193). Eventually, Beauvoir chose to break free of these masks in order to be independent and claim autonomy as an individual.

In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir discusses the need for women to be independent and autonomous, and why it is important for women to see themselves as subjects rather than objects. Explaining the difference between men and women in perceiving themselves as subjects, she writes,

> It is by doing that [man] makes himself be, in one single movement. On the contrary, for woman there is, from the start, a conflict between her autonomous existence and her 'being-other'; she is taught that to please, she must try to please, must make herself object; she must therefore renounce her autonomy…for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, grasp, and discover the world around her, the less she will find its resources, and the less she will dare to affirm herself as subject. (294-95)

A person must acknowledge her subjecthood in order to claim autonomy and agency. For the classic princesses, each woman's main goal was acting as the caring, subservient daughter; waiting for someone to improve her life. When the Disney princesses were reintroduced in the 1980s and 1990s, these women worked to establish themselves as subjects apart from their parents, and each wanted to establish a place for herself in her own respective world separate from the role assigned to her by her society. Each wants independence and freedom while still wanting to please her respective parent(s). She wants her parent(s) approval while still holding on to her autonomy. Beauvoir, in

describing an independent woman, sets forth what it means to be an emancipated woman versus a modern woman. She argues that an emancipated woman is active rather than passive, while a modern woman takes this a step further and sees herself as equal to man in thinking and acting (754-55). As the Disney princesses continue to change and evolve they do move toward more action and equality.

The Disney princess films are important cultural texts that need to be explored because they contain messages about women that are conveyed to most children in Western cultures. While many critics feel the princesses are not enough—strong enough, brave enough, independent enough—I believe these texts contain messages of strength and hope for their viewers, and when examined as a whole show how women's roles and perceptions of women have changed over the past 80 years. By utilizing Beauvoir's ideas on the dutiful daughter, the emancipated woman, and the independent woman, it is possible to examine how each group of princesses reflects historical changes in feminism and women's roles, and how each group of princesses works toward more independence and autonomy.

Many scholars break the princesses into groups, examining them in cohorts based on time period and attributes. The first group, the early or classic princesses, consists of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora.[10] These women tend to be more passive and their main goal is finding love. For my study, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, and Pocahontas[11] make up the group of Renaissance princesses, with Pocahontas being a very transitional princess, sharing many similarities with the modern princesses. These women are adventurous,

[10] From the films *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) respectively.
[11] From the films *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), and *Pocahontas* (1995) respectively.

seek freedom, and want more from life. The modern princess group consists of Mulan, Tiana, and Rapunzel.[12] These women are hardworking and want something in life that has nothing to do with the prince. My grouping for these modern princesses differs from other scholarly classifications of the princesses. Most scholars[13] group Mulan with the Renaissance princesses and consider Tiana to be the first of the modern princesses. However, there are so many fundamental changes to the female character in *Mulan* (1998) that I believe it to be the first princess film in this modern princess group even though timeline wise it is part of the Disney Renaissance. Finally, I argue that through Merida, Anna and Elsa, and Moana[14] Disney has created a fourth group, the new age princesses, where the women are strong, independent, and other relationships beyond love are the main focus of this group. In order to look at each group of princesses in depth, I have chosen four films to analyze: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Mulan*, and *Frozen*. Each of these films acts as a representation of its group and speaks to the traits of the group as a whole.

Classic Princesses: Dutiful Daughters

The earliest Disney princesses all dream of love, they sing and dance with their animal friends, they each face a villainess who feels threatened by the young woman, and in the end each must be rescued by the prince. Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora are the main protagonists within their respective films, but they are all passive in their actions toward other people and in acquiring what they want in life. Much of the excitement and

[12] From the films *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), and *Tangled* (2010) respectively.
[13] See such works as Dawn Elizabeth England, Lara Descartes, and Melissa Collier-Meek's article "Gender Role Portrayal and The Disney Princesses" and Sarah Rothschild's book *The Princess Story: Modeling the Feminine in Twentieth-Century American Fiction and Film*.
[14] From the films *Brave* (2012), *Frozen* (2013), and *Moana* (2016) respectively.

adventure is taken on by other characters such as the villainess or the princess' animal side-kicks. In "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses," Dawn Elizabeth England, Lara Descartes, and Melissa Collier-Meek conclude that these early princess films employed more traditional gender roles, with the princesses being "affectionate, helpful, troublesome, fearful, tentative, and described as pretty," (562). This is due, in part, to the "less complex" gender expectations of the 1920s and 1930s; whereas with the rise of feminism these expectations "become more complicated" (563), leading to changes in the later princesses. Amy M. Davis argues that these early princesses are representations of "the angel of the house," which fits within Hollywood's Victorian patriarchal values system (19-20). These princesses are demure, kind, and have simple dreams for a better life. In general these princesses are passive, more interested in seeking true love and finding a new, more loving home to live happily ever after.

Snow White is a classic 1930s young woman. Modeled after film star Janet Gaynor (Rothschild 72), Snow White is drawn to follow the popular styles of the time, with rosy lips and a flapper hairdo (Do Rozario 38). The peasant dress Snow White wears also has a corseted appearance, bringing attention to her small but visible curves (Whelan 23). This is important to help separate Disney's Snow White from earlier literary versions where she is a young girl of six or seven. Tracey Mollet argues that *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which was created during the Great Depression, is a rags to riches story of the American dream, and Snow White never gives up hope that her dream will become reality (114-15). Snow White also reflects the Depression era work ethic, happy to help out where she is able (Do Rozario 38). All of these traits also help contribute to the dutiful daughter mentality that Snow White embodies throughout the film. Released prior

to the 1960s and 1970s push for feminism and gender equality, the cultural standard was that a woman's place was in the home.[15] Consequently Snow White is portrayed as a homemaker with most of her actions occurring in the domestic sphere. There is no real effort to claim agency or autonomy because she is not given any other choice, nor does she seem capable of or concerned with finding other options. Rather, Snow White's kindness, gentleness, and perseverance are used to help her acclimate to the situations she is forced to endure, including servitude under her stepmother and making a new home for herself with the dwarfs.

In Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's version of the Snow White tale, she is a seven-year-old girl. Hated by her jealous stepmother, she is taken to the forest by the huntsman where Snow White pleads for her life. Struck by her beauty, the huntsman shows pity and lets her go. She stumbles across a tiny, well-kept house; the dwarfs do not need Snow White to take care of them. Rather, as a kindness to her, they offer her a deal to stay and keep house for them, to which Snow White agrees. After Snow White eats the poison apple, the prince finds her in her glass coffin and wants to take her away. As the coffin is moved it is jostled, freeing the piece of apple from Snow White's throat. Removing the apple piece wakes her up, not a kiss. Walt Disney, in adapting this fairy tale for his audience, reimagines these elements so that Snow White dutifully listens to and takes

[15] This is not to say that women did not work. Traditional gender roles assumed all women were members of families with a male as the breadwinner. However, many women were widowed, divorced, helped keep their family afloat, or were single and had to fend for themselves. In 1930 24.3 percent of women fourteen and older were employed, and by 1940 that number had risen to 25.4 percent, which during that time was a gain of about two million jobs. For minorities the statistics are even higher. In 1930, nine out of ten African American women worked in domestic service or agriculture. During this time many Mexican and Mexican American women worked the farmlands of the South and West. With the Great Depression, the jobs minorities held were hit hard because white men and women were willing to work the jobs previously deemed undesirable (Ware). While these statistics better reflect the state of America during the Great Depression, Walt Disney with his conservative values utilizes the more traditional gender roles and portrays the princess in the domestic sphere.

care of those around her. Instead of the prince only showing up at the end, the prince appears at the beginning and the end of the film, bookmarking his place in Snow White's life and driving the love story and her desire for love, thus needing true love's kiss. We meet Snow White tending to her stepmother's castle. Then the dwarfs are infantilized, living in filthy house that need to be taken care of, so Snow White can play mother and care for them. These adapted elements play to 1930s society where a woman's role was to take care of her family—a woman was to be a dutiful daughter and then marry and become a dutiful wife and mother. Snow White does reflect these societal ideals while patiently waiting for her station in life to change.

Early in his career Disney discovered the power of music to unite an audience and "tap into the spirit of a culture" (Mollet 121). For *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* singing is an important formulaic element which helps the audience connect to the story. Of Snow White's song "With a Smile and a Song," Mollet writes, "In the same ways that the Grimm brothers used traditions from their own society to connect with their audience, Disney used a focal point in 1930s culture, the tradition of musical film, to rally Americans to the cause of his fairy tale" (121). Walt Disney was one of the first filmmakers to use song to tell his stories (121), and he understood that music could help the audience connect to specific themes like hope. So Walt Disney introduces Snow White to the audience while she is singing a song. Her song describes what she wants most in life. Laura Sells classifies this as part of the musical formula that Disney production circles describe as the "I Want" song (178), and this kind of song is an important part of the Disney princess genre. Each princess sings about her life's biggest desire, and for these classic princesses it is love (particularly a love that can remove them

from their undesirable situations) that they dream about. Snow White sings "I'm Wishing" in which she wishes "for the one I love to find me…today." Her wish comes true because as she is singing the prince comes over the castle wall and begins singing with her. It is this love that keeps Snow White's hope alive throughout the film. She even expresses these sentiments to the dwarfs when she sings the famous song "Some Day My Prince Will Come," and sings, "Some day my prince will come, some day we'll meet again. And away to his castle we'll go, to be happy forever I know." Snow White's happiness hinges on her prince finding her. However, as both of these songs state she is waiting to be found, she is not actively seeking her prince. Therefore, the first encounter the audience has with Snow White is one of passivity, which sets a trend for the rest of the film.

Throughout the film, Snow White does not show any inclination toward action or independence, rather she relies on her role as dutiful daughter and mother-figure in order to survive. She relies on her stepmother to take care of her, then when she flees the kingdom she needs the dwarfs to take her in, and finally the prince takes her away to his kingdom where she will presumably be taken care of. To each of these people Snow White is duty-bound. We meet Snow White as a scullery maid, cleaning the castle for her stepmother. At the command of her stepmother, Snow White has willingly taken on the role of servant in her own house. After fleeing from her stepmother she finds the dwarfs living in filth—she even comes to the conclusion that they must not have a mother, so takes on the motherly role of caring for them—thus it becomes her duty to care for them in order to stay in the house. With the prince, although she is bound by the love she feels, she waits for him so she can fulfil her role as wife and mother. Looking at the connection

between mother and dutiful daughter, Beauvoir writes, "My mother's whole education and upbringing had convinced her that for a woman the greatest thing was to become the mother of a family; she couldn't play this part unless I played the dutiful daughter" (*Memoirs* 106); for Snow White everything she does proves that she is the dutiful daughter and is ready and willing to become the dutiful wife and mother. Even when she runs away from the huntsman, unlike the Grimm's tale where Snow White pleads for her life, in the film the huntsman tells her to run and she obediently listens and runs.

In order to survive, Snow White must rely on her beauty and kindness. In discussing the conventions of classical fairy tales, Marcia K. Lieberman writes, "[fairy tales] focus on beauty as a girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset. Good-temper and meekness are so regularly associated with beauty, and ill-temper with ugliness, that this in itself must influence children's expectations" (188). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* utilizes this convention while also playing on the archetypal fear and generational tension of one generation supplanting another in youth, competence, and beauty. The Snow White fairy tale epitomizes this because the Evil Queen gives up her beauty and allure temporarily, yet due to her wickedness dies as the ugly old woman. Beauty is the reason Snow White must flee her kingdom in the first place; her stepmother's narcissistic need to be the most beautiful in the kingdom makes her jealous of Snow White's beauty and her potential courtship. When the dwarfs see Snow White for the first time, their first comment is how beautiful she is. Even the prince sees past her ragged clothes and continues to search for the beautiful maiden with whom he fell in love. Kindness also helps her endure her trials. Because of her kindness to the animals in the forest, they lead her to the dwarfs' house and help her clean. This initial cleaning of

the dwarfs' house is done as a kind gesture, hoping that she can stay there; however, it becomes one of the conditions of her being allowed to stay, becoming a surrogate mother for the dwarfs (England, Descartes, Collier-Meek 563). These domestic images helped to project contemporary notions of ideal girlhood to a mass audience (Whelan 24). These same images also help convey the image of Snow White as dutiful daughter. Instead of figuring out how she can reclaim her rightful place on the throne, Snow White is content taking over the home and caring for the dwarfs while she waits to be rescued, thus attaching her merits and self-worth to the domestic sphere.

In comparison to the rest of the characters in the film, Snow White remains relatively passive. It is this passivity that leads to Snow White's lack of agency. Snow White does not actively reflect on her life as necessary for claiming relational autonomy (Barclay), she only reacts to situations: the huntsman urges her to run, the animals lead her to the dwarfs' house, and she feels bad for the old woman when the animals try to warn her about the Evil Queen. By only reacting to these situations and idly waiting to be saved, and not actively reflecting on her position in life, Snow White does not exhibit the characterizations of a person working toward autonomy or agency. Another factor leading to her passivity rather than her claiming of agency is the lack of responsibility she takes in her life trajectory, which leads to a lack of subjectivity. As Roberta Seelinger Trites argues, "we achieve adulthood more comfortably if we recognize that we have some control over the various subject positions we occupy" (*Disturbing the Universe*, 129). Snow White never shows control over the roles she portrays; rather she lets her stepmother turn her into a scullery maid and she accepts the dwarfs' conditions to cook and clean house for them. Thus, Snow White is a relatively passive character who leaves

the action to the rest of the characters. Instead, the majority of the power and agency reside in the villainess.

In all of the classic princess films, the princess is challenged by a female villain; a mother-like figure who is threatened by the young woman, so usurps the home for herself while actively thwarting and threatening the heroine (Davis 104). As Davis notes, "Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the villainesses in this era of Disney films is the much higher proportion of agency they show when compared to that of their victims" (107). In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the queen is the person to make decisions and act on them. Snow White's actions are purely reactionary to the queen's clear choices. Rebecca Anne C. Do Rozario classifies the Evil Queen and Disney's subsequent villainesses in the early princess films as *femme fatales*. When a *femme fatale* is utilized, she represses the princess in order to claim the power that should pass from father to daughter. Do Rozario argues, "Thus, the *femme fatale* attempts to keep the princess under her power, and failing that, to render her unconscious, thereby unable to validate the majesty of king or prince" (42). The Evil Queen claims agency by choosing to repress Snow White's sexuality and power and keep the power and validation for herself. Snow White's lack of agency comes, not from her want of the domestic sphere, but from the reactionary stance she takes toward the forces in her life. Instead of standing up for herself, she remains passive. For a 1930s audience, one possible association being made through the comparison of Snow White and the Evil Queen is that women with power and agency are dangerous or evil; it is the docile, timid, and kind women that triumph and win the prince. This same dichotomy can be juxtaposed with Beauvoir's ideas on dutiful daughter and independent woman. The powerful, independent woman is the person trying

to take away the princess's allure and power by repressing her and sentencing her to life as a servant (dutiful daughter), or as far as death in some cases. However, fitting the cultural dictates of the time, the demure and kind young woman wins her happily ever after by moving into the domestic sphere as wife, and the strong dominant woman is defeated.

Though Snow White is one of the most passive princesses created by Disney, she does help popularize the animated fairy tale for American popular culture, creating a blueprint for the major genre tropes and beginning a trend of princess films. During the time that Cinderella and Aurora were being created by Disney, feminist scholars such as Beauvoir and Betty Friedan were exploring the oppression of women and giving voice to women who want more in life. Friedan exclaims, "We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home'" (32). Women striving for more in life—politically, culturally, and socially—drove the second wave of feminism which worked its way into scholarship, culture, and media. Women left behind the idea of needing to only be the dutiful daughter and wife, and embraced finding other avenues of self-expression. Accordingly, when the Disney princesses reemerged thirty years later, they had taken on stronger, more active traits.

Renaissance Princesses: Breaking Free to Find Independence

The Little Mermaid started Disney's Renaissance era, which is classified as the animated films released between 1989 and 1999. While this was a time for both aesthetic and industrial growth, the Disney Renaissance helped establish animation as a mainstream form of expression in the film world (Pallant 90,110). During this time, the characterization of females as stronger and more independent became more

commonplace in both Disney films and Hollywood in general (Davis 194). Part of this is due to the bigger role women were playing in the production of films. The 1990s saw a rise of younger talent, including female writers, animators, supervisors, and producers. This then affected the kinds of women in Disney films, as well as how their portrayals were shaped (Davis 170). Susan Hopkins asserts that during this time the Disney princess has been updated to reflect the Girl Power attitude, saying the princesses now "live 'happily ever after' by pursuing their own goals" (141). All of the princesses in the Renaissance group want more for their own lives and strive to break free from society's edicts for their lives.

Exploring how Disney films have been affected by feminism, Cassandra Stover argues, "The post-feminist princess embodies ideals of feminism while representing the pressures and entrapment of pre-feminist culture" (4). This is not necessarily a bad thing, as Disney uses these pre-feminist notions to drive the narrative conflict, creating situations from which these post-feminist characters want to break free. Their successful breakouts help create their happily ever after (4). Stover[16] explores how, while the early princesses would not turn away a handsome prince, many of the new heroines—including Belle, Jasmine, and Pocahontas—actually reject a suitor who conflicts with her own goals. She concludes, "The ability to choose the right suitor at the end signifies post-feminist autonomy, and thus constitutes a happy ending. Post-feminism celebrates woman as the sexually autonomous individual, and thus Disney's rhetoric shifted from *any* prince to the *right* prince" (4). It is not just going against the grain to break free and

[16] For her article, Stover groups all of the post-second-wave feminism princesses together, and includes Meg from *Hercules* (1997), to examine post-feminist ideology. While I am utilizing her here with the middle princess group, she does include Mulan and Tiana in her argument.

find the right prince that makes these princesses different. Due to shifting notions of womanhood, the main characteristics associated with the princesses also changed. One example is that the *femme fatale* disappears because, as the princess character is reimagined by Team Disney, she is able to absorb some of the strength and exuberance of the *femme fatale* (Do Rozario 44). The more masculine and dominant traits associated with the villainess are no longer seen as evil, and therefore the princess can now share these traits. As the *femme fatale* disappears, the princesses now face different types of villains while also standing up to their fathers to achieve their goals.

An important factor to these Renaissance princesses is that each works to be a subject rather than an object in her own life. Looking at affirming oneself as subject, Beauvoir argues of women, "if she were encouraged, she could show the same vibrant exuberance, the same curiosity, the same spirit of initiative, and the same intrepidness as the boy" (*The Second Sex* 295). She goes on the state that this is "the kind of education that a father habitually gives his daughter" (295). All four princesses in the Renaissance group have a father rather than a mother as a parental figure, and each works to achieve subjecthood in her own life by acting on her curiosity and taking initiative. Each wants to please her father and earn his approval, but each woman also wants freedom to choose her own life path and is willing to actively work, and even defy her father, in order to gain what she wants. It is these actions that allow these princesses to claim agency. According to Beauvoir these actions make these women emancipated women. As she writes, "the 'emancipated' woman…wants to be active and prehensile and refuses the passivity the man attempts to impose on her" (754). Each princess wants to be a dutiful

daughter and make her father proud, but her duty to herself and her own desires is just as strong and drives these young women to be active and pursue their own dreams.

Along with taking action, the Renaissance princesses are not shown doing domestic work because domestic work is no longer the symbol of femininity as showcased in the earlier princess films (England, Descartes, Collier-Meek 563). "Women now…are expected to maintain…feminine traits, and also incorporate aspects of 'male' traits such as assertiveness, if they are to succeed outside of the home" (563). These middle princesses show both masculine and feminine traits, which help showcase each princess in a more active role. Ariel is portrayed as independent and assertive as well as showing affection and tending to her appearance. Belle shows bravery as well as the ability to nurture. Jasmine is assertive, yet fearful. Pocahontas is athletic and affectionate (564). All of these women actively work to save the prince's life in some capacity, and what they do in life is not solely motivated by romantic love (Davis 9). As Do Rozario states, "Heroism, egalitarianism and autonomy are slipped into the conventions of Disney princesshood" (47). All of the princesses created post-second-wave feminism[17] strive for something more in life. For these Renaissance princesses, by defying their fathers and fighting against their respective villains, these women prove that they are assertive and willing to fight for what they want most in life.

Hans Christian Andersen's 1836 tale of "The Little Mermaid," from which the film is adapted, presents a young mermaid who is fascinated by the surface. She obeys

[17] Like their predecessors, these women do still hold to more traditional white, middle-class forms of feminism (In the classic princess group Snow White and Cinderella were both forced to be impoverished servants; but that is a glamourized view-point of poverty, and they are able to easily rise in economic station). The Renaissance princesses do not need to work, and do have fathers to take care of them. However, we do start to see some diversification within this group, at least ethnically, with the creation of Jasmine and Pocahontas.

the rules and waits until her fifteenth birthday, after which she can go to the surface whenever she wants. In Andersen's tale, women make up the majority of the interactions with the little mermaid—her grandmother is the main parental figure, the sea witch grants her legs, and the little mermaid's sisters try to save her from death. And in the end, the prince chooses another as his bride, enacting the curse that if he did not choose the little mermaid to marry then she would die. In order to produce a film in line with the princess genre and provide the quintessential "happily ever after," Disney reimagines this story to highlight a father and daughter relationship as well as creates a love story that ends in marriage rather than death. *The Little Mermaid* premiered 30 years after *Sleeping Beauty*, introducing a new spunkier, more independent princess to the Disney canon. Drawn with flaming red hair and big blue eyes, Ariel's desire for freedom and independence drives her adventures as she seeks new knowledge about the human world above water. Sharing traits with other teenage heroines of the time, Ariel is curious and adventuresome, and she wants to learn more about a world to which she is extremely naïve. This new kind of princess does not just rely on kindness and beauty to get her by until the prince can rescue her. As Davis argues, unlike the earlier princesses, "Ariel actively seeks adventure and works hard to achieve goals she has set for herself, rather than simply responding to the crises with which she is presented" (178). In her need for freedom Ariel continually proves that she is independent and action oriented (though many of her actions involve the prince, Eric). Like all of the princesses in the Renaissance group, Ariel must have courage in order to save the prince. Ariel saves Eric twice: first during the storm when he is shipwrecked and drowning, and again at the end during the fight with Ursula. Ariel is also interested in seeking information about the human world. Though her naïveté about

the human world leads her to not always use the most trustworthy sources (Scuttle the seagull who imparts inaccurate facts about humans and objects, or Ursula who is willing to help her gain legs in order to trap Triton), Ariel wants to better herself through gaining knowledge and personal experience.

Like the classic princess group, the desire for more in life is expressed through Ariel's first song, the "I want" song. After being told by her father that she can never go to the surface again, Ariel sings about her desire to explore and be part of the human world in "Part of Your World." Written by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, this "wish song" differs from those sung by the earlier princesses because it expresses a fantasy to escape. Sean Griffin writes, "Unlike the earlier 'wish songs' in Disney's catalogue that only desire to find happiness in everyday life, Ashman's 'wish songs' specifically want to forsake the 'normal' world and find happiness somewhere else" (150). In the song Ariel dreams of what life would be like on the land, presumably where fathers understand their daughters and provide them with more freedom. Ariel sings, "Betcha' on land, they'd understand. Bet they don't reprimand their daughters. Bright young women, sick of swimming, ready to stand." Ariel dreams of a world where she is not controlled by her father, but could embark on her own journey. The line "ready to stand" is not just a metaphor for Ariel getting legs and walking on land, it also implies an independence that is afforded to the women on land—an independence Ariel is desperate to experience. Living in her father's kingdom and under his rules feels stifling to Ariel and she cannot understand why he believes land above water to be so bad. Believing fathers provide more freedom on land means that Ariel could still be a dutiful daughter because her father would approve of her freedom.

Along with freedom and independence, this is one of the few times Ariel expresses a desire for knowledge. Following the line "ready to stand," she sings "I'm ready to know what the people know. Ask 'em my questions, and get some answers." Ariel is curious which drives her desire to learn more about the human world and seek freedom and independence in order to explore. Sells explains, "As Ariel sings of access, autonomy and mobility, she yearns for subjecthood and for the ability to participate in public (human) life…Her desire for access is characterized by her hunger and fascination with a different world in which she believes she can have autonomy and independence" (179). It is important to note that she sings this song prior to meeting Prince Eric, therefore she is not singing about the prince or love, but rather she sings about her desire for freedom which is directly tied to her need to explore the land above water. She sings about an independence and autonomy separate from any other individual, thus claiming autonomy for herself and her own happiness.

"Part of Your World" expresses what Ariel wants most, and shows that she knows there is more to life than her world under the sea. "Part of Your World (Reprise)," expands upon this desire to achieve her goals. At the end of the song, she sings, "watch and you'll see, someday I'll be part of your world." Unlike her earlier predecessors who sing about waiting for their prince to find them, Ariel expresses her desire to be on land with Eric and she uses active language construction to show that she will work to achieve her goal. While this song may be seen as problematic from a feminist perspective because she is aligning her goals to be male-centric, what is made clear in this song is that Ariel does have a specific dream and she will actively work to achieve her goal. This song also aligns with Beauvoir's ideas of an emancipated woman because Ariel works to be active

in achieving her goals while rejecting the passivity her father attempts to force upon her by forbidding her to go to the surface. In making this choice Ariel also must forgo her role as dutiful daughter. Combining her earlier desire for freedom and independence with her active expression of intent to enter the human realm, Ariel actively reflects on her world and her desires while expressing aspiration to work toward these goals, thus claiming autonomy and agency.

Another important narrative aspect found in "Part of Your World (Reprise)" is that this is the first time Eric hears Ariel's voice. This is important because as Trites states, "Closely related to the feminist protagonist's agency is the issue of her voice, for voice often serves as a metaphor for female agency" (*Waking* 6). Although Ariel does choose to give up her voice for a chance to be on land, she regains her voice in the end and, as a result, retains agency. As Sells says, “If voice is a symbol of identity, then Ariel retains a measure of autonomy and subjecthood” (181). Ariel retaining her voice is a major change from Andersen's story where the sea witch cuts out the little mermaid's tongue so she can never speak again (59). While this change in the film adaptation addresses the need to remove some of the violence for Disney’s child audience, it also makes a greater feminist statement that Ariel regains her voice in order to claim agency and say what she wants. "Feminist protagonists…retain their voices" (Trites, *Waking* 7). Ariel regaining her voice shows that, though she may struggle, she is capable of making her own choices and acting for her own good.

Being more proactive, Ariel also challenges the patriarchy she is under in Disney's film adaptation. For Andersen, his protagonist's main goal is to gain a soul, and in the end can earn a soul through good works. This completely removes the father as an

entity. Updating the tale for a late-twentieth century audience, Ariel challenges her father, who represents the patriarchy, for freedom and the opportunity to explore other aspects of life. She must break the rules and defy her father's orders in order to go to the surface and fulfill her dreams. As Do Rozario postulates, if Disney (and fairy tales in general) had wanted to hold to traditional notion of the patriarchy then all of the princesses would have had brothers or male relatives to succeed the king (52), but none of the princesses have brothers. Thus the princesses are in direct line for power. This places importance on the father-daughter relationships portrayed in princess films, and it is the "disruption of the patriarchy by the daughter" that is the focus of these middle princesses (53). Examining *The Little Mermaid* specifically, Sells argues that Disney's adaptation shifts the meaning of the little mermaid's ascension to land from class to gender, with the land above water representing white male privilege in the film version (177). This shift to readings of gender lends itself to looking at Ariel and how she attempts to claim agency and autonomy. It is Ariel's independence and her willingness to continually work toward her goals in life that eventually earns her legs. Her willingness to pursue her goals and take action makes her an emancipated woman rather than a passive woman. Challenging her father to gain what she wants shows Ariel attempting to claim agency. Her father accepting that she loves Eric and wants to be on land means he must also accept her desire for something more in life than being restricted to his underwater kingdom. By claiming agency and gaining her father's acceptance of her autonomy, Ariel is able to gain legs and live on land.

Compared to the classic Disney princesses, Ariel is a new, more active princess who claims agency as she finds her autonomy within her society. Throughout the film she

explores the fathoms below, she finds a way to get legs, and she fights Ursula to keep her from killing Eric. It is true that Ariel could take more responsibility for her life, yet she is far from her previous counterparts who waited for life to happen. I agree with Davis when she says, "Therefore, while it cannot be denied that, as a 'feminist' film, *The Little Mermaid* has a number of flaws, nonetheless it does mark—at least within Disney animation—a move away from praising traditional solutions for women's unhappiness and hints at offering them choice beyond simple contentment with the role into which they were born" (181). Though there may still be problematic elements, like her shifting desire for freedom and independence on land to a desire for Eric, Ariel is a great step forward from the classic princesses. She showcases independence, courage, and a willingness to take action while trying to learn more about the human world above water. She also gains autonomy apart from her father and the merpeople and claims agency by entering the human world. Through these actions Ariel shows a curiosity and an initiative within life which, as Beauvoir points out, are some of the necessary traits to help a person be a subject in her own life. It is these steps toward an independent and autonomous woman that Disney continues to expand upon throughout the 1990s, continuing to create stronger and more capable heroines.

Modern Princesses: Independent Women Working for Equality

The modern princesses—Mulan, Tiana, and Rapunzel—are more complex characters who exhibit both traditionally masculine and feminine traits in positive ways. While each princess within the modern princess group wants to be a dutiful daughter and make her parents happy, she also has her own life goals that she wants to pursue. These princesses are modern women. Through their actions and adventures they prove they are

equal to men. Beauvoir asserts that a "modern" woman "prides herself on thinking, acting, working, and creating on the same basis as males; instead of trying to belittle them, she declares herself their equal" (*Second Sex* 755). This idea of being equal is a great step forward and one that these modern princesses embrace. However, for Beauvoir, a woman must shed feminine ideals because this is linked with passivity, and modern women must strive to be equal to males. I would argue that a strong female does not need for forgo the positive traits associated with femininity, such as grace, kindness, and beauty, rather these can be added to with courage, intelligence, and action. In post-third-wave feminism, in which all of the princesses within this modern group have been created, it is possible for a woman to have characteristics considered masculine and feminine, and all of these traits can be considered positive within these heroines. Building on Trites argument for feminist children's literature, Whelan calls the later princesses progressive because they "reject stereotypical behavior" (29). She writes,

> Progressive princesses exchange negative, traditionally feminine characteristics (i.e. passivity) for more positive, traditionally masculine traits, such as assertiveness and rebelliousness. However, they retain those traditionally feminine characteristics which are still considered positive by contemporary feminists (i.e. compassion). (29)

It is possible for a woman to do housework while still being strong and able to take control of a situation. Therefore the later princesses are shown performing domestic duties similar to the early princesses, but they also take on roles that are generally seen as more masculine (England, Descartes, Collier-Meek 563). Mulan goes to war, Tiana works to buy her own restaurant, and Rapunzel kidnaps and bribes to get out of her tower. These princesses are active agents within their own lives and have their own goals that have nothing to do with the prince.

Due to its time proximity to the other princesses within the Disney Renaissance, most critics consider Mulan one of the Renaissance princesses. However, in classifying the modern princesses as strong, independent, and wanting something in life entirely apart from the prince, I argue Mulan is the first of the modern princesses. She is one of three women[18] who are deemed princesses, but never actually achieves royal status within the film. This status was given to Mulan post-2000 with the creation of the Disney Princess Brand (Whelan 25), to help add to and diversify the line. However, this shows Disney's willingness to have a strong, brave princess who is not afraid to claim agency and assert her own power. This kind of princess is able to be more than just a princess. Christopher Vogler, who served as a story consultant for Disney Animation, learned to look at archetypes as more fluid during his time with Disney. Instead of a rigid role the character must always adhere to, Vogler looks to Vladimir Propp's ideas on folktales when he writes, "archetypes can be thought of as masks, worn by the characters temporarily as they are needed to advance the story" (24). Using archetypes such as mentor, hero, herald, or trickster in different ways lets the princess film genre shift and tell different tales while still being recognizable through iconography. By expanding what it means to be a princess, Disney can be more democratic about who gains the title princess—with or without royal birthright. These modern princesses can take up the mantel of princess, but they can also be heroine, entrepreneur, or adventurer.

Though all the princesses created post-second-wave feminism claim more agency than their early princess counterparts, Mulan takes a giant leap forward in showing how

[18] Pocahontas are Moana are the others.

princesses can be strong, autonomous, and claim agency. Released in 1998, *Mulan*[19] reflects changes within the pop-culture of the 1990s, particularly influences from third-wave feminism and the different girl power movements. Mulan is an Americanized version of a Chinese heroine from the classical Chinese poem "The Ballad of Mulan."[20] In the Chinese legend, Mulan's father is sick, but not serving in the army would bring disgrace to the family. Mulan forms a secret plan to take his place. She joins the army and for years fights alongside men, none of whom know she is a woman. After they win the war Mulan returns home and changes back into woman's garb, and at this point the soldiers realize their comrade is a woman. Throughout this story Mulan proves that she is strong and capable. These characteristics, along with her independent spirit, are the traits that Disney works to highlight and build upon in their film version of the Mulan legend.

In comparison to other princesses, such as Ariel or Jasmine, Mulan does not have the tiny waist or the more delicate features that people have come to associate with the princesses. Annalee Ward writes of Mulan, "the female heroine is a self-empowered agent for change rather than a romantically motivated character" (94). For this film there was a conscious effort made to keep romance and overtly sexual bodies out of the film (Ward 108), and instead the focus is on Mulan's journey to find herself while saving her

[19] Admittedly, *Mulan* is an Americanized version of a Chinese tale; the film takes some of the tale's classic elements and makes them fit American ideals, such as individualism and the need for individual freedom. From an Ethnic Studies point-of-view, I admit this can be read as a problematic text. However, Mulan is part of Disney's canon of princesses which is why I am focusing on her in this study. For further discussions of *Mulan* in relation to Orientalism and Asian American Identities see such works as "Writing Chinese America into Words and Images: Storytelling and Retelling of *The Song of Mu Lan*" by Lan Dong, *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (2000) by Sheng-mei Ma, "The United Princesses of America: Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Purity in Disney's Medieval Past" by Ilan Mitchell-Smith, etc.

[20] It is believed that this ballad was composed in the Northern Dynasties (386-581 A.D.). While most accept this poem as fiction or legend, there is evidence that it could be based on real events, even if it is not based on one particular person (Dong 219).

family and country. Mulan has jet-black hair, almond shaped eyes, and has fewer curves. However, using a different body type is necessary in order to support the story of Mulan going to war and cross-dressing. Not only does Mulan's cross-dressing drive the narrative, it is also an important difference between Mulan and the other princesses: she takes on the persona of a man in order to achieve her goals. Yvonne Tasker writes, "Both gendered and class cross-dressing is explicitly presented as allowing female protagonists an opportunity and a *freedom*…that they would not otherwise achieve" (35). With the exception of the matchmaking scene, Mulan appears androgynous, causing the viewer to focus more on her actions and abilities rather than her looks. Even upon the audience first meeting Mulan, she is dressed in shorts and a flowing top. The classic princesses would not be portrayed wearing pants or shorts because it would have been culturally inappropriate for 1930s and 1950s American society. Post-second and third-wave feminism women wearing pants has become culturally acceptable. For a Disney princess to be shown wearing pants is a major cultural step forward. While this more masculine dress matches this particular character and her actions, it also helps shift the notions of what a princess can be. Part of this willingness to have a woman in more masculine dress could come from Mulan not being considered a princess when the film was first created. However, making Mulan a princess shows Disney's willingness to embrace different types of women as princesses, and shows that a princess can be strong, courageous, and independent.

Continuing the Disney tradition, Mulan expresses her desires in the first song she sings. In "Reflection," Mulan articulates her sadness in disappointing her family and wonders what it will take for her inner self to be the one she sees on the outside as well.

She believes she will never be a perfect bride or daughter, and states, "I'm not meant to play this part." Mulan wants the freedom to make her own decisions; she is an independent thinker and wants to act of her own accord. Yet, she also wants to make her family happy. This desire to be a dutiful daughter and fulfill her expected role of bride shows she cares about her family and how they are perceived in their community. When she questions, "Why is my reflection someone I don't know?," she is dressed in the traditional bridal attire having just come from the matchmaker. But the role that she is supposed to take on in order to bring honor to her family does not suit her. She is not the traditional bride. The song ends with Mulan contemplating the question, "When will my reflection show who I am inside?" While she sings this line she is looking at her reflection in the tombs of her ancestors; she wipes off half of her makeup so that half her face is in the traditional Chinese makeup and the other half is clean, representing the two different sides of herself. Somehow she must find a way to unify these two parts in order to appease her family and society while still finding her own happiness. For Mulan, self-discovery is her motivating factor. Her "I want" song conveys her dissatisfaction with the status-quo and her inability to meet traditional standards. Instead, she seeks an outlet to allow her inner, more independent and free-thinking self to thrive. Mulan must venture into the world to find a way to bring these two halves—the independent half, and the half that brings honor to her family—together.

Her need to prove herself makes Mulan one of the most active princesses in the Disney canon. She makes decisions deliberately and follows through with the corresponding actions. She chooses to go to war in her father's place, and, even after it is discovered that she is a woman, she risks her life to warn the soldiers of the Huns'

eminent attack. None of her decisions, until the final scene, are motivated by the desire for love. Self-discovery, along with family honor and duty motivate Mulan. While the majority of positive attributes associated with the early princesses are related to beauty and kindness, Mulan's positive traits align with courage, independence, intelligence, and action. More importantly, it takes all of these traits in order for her to save China. Disguising herself as a man, fighting multiple battles, and figuring out how to defeat the Hun army twice shows that Mulan has a creative way of thinking. This creative thinking, along with her corresponding actions as a soldier prove that Mulan is capable of claiming agency in her own life and for the good of others.

It is Mulan's willingness to continue to act on her own, even when no one believed in her, combined with her courage to stand up for herself that allows her to succeed. Mulan needs to prove both to herself and to the world that she is worthy, therefore everything she does in training and on the battle field is to show she is capable. Even though most people assume she went to war to save her father, she tells her sidekick Mushu, "Maybe I didn't go for my father. Maybe what I really wanted was to prove I could do things right, so when I looked in the mirror I'd see someone worthwhile." Mulan says this after it is discovered that she is a woman. What she does not realize is that she has already proven herself worthy. During the song "I'll Make a Man Out of You," Mulan struggles to keep up with the other soldiers, and Shang dismisses her from the army. She could go home at this point because she had fulfilled familial duty and her father would not have to fight. However, as she leaves, she looks toward the arrow Shang shot into the wooden pole their first day at camp. Mulan uses creative thinking and forms a rope out of the weights to help her climb to the top and retrieve the arrow. This

accomplishment proves not only to Mulan, but also to her fellow soldiers, that she is capable. As the montage continues, Mulan excels in all of the training exercises. She then goes on to fight the Hun army in the mountain pass and in the emperor's palace. Through these actions Mulan proves she is a modern woman. Even when she is belittled by her fellow soldiers she continues to persevere and achieve equal success—a bigger feat since her fellow soldiers do not realize until later that a woman out-performed them.

Issues of gender and gender roles take center stage during the scenes within the Imperial City. Prior to the soldiers entering the Imperial City, it is discovered that Mulan is a woman. In the original story it is not revealed that Mulan is a woman until after the war is over. While her fellow soldiers accept her as female and do not make a big deal about her gender, they never had the chance to accept her and choose to fight with her knowing she was a woman. In Disney's version, Mulan's gender is revealed prior to the last battle, so she is able to fight as an equal and gain the acceptance of her fellow soldiers as a woman. When Mulan arrives at the heroes' parade in the Imperial City, Shang refuses to listen to Mulan. She argues, "You said you'd trust Ping. Why is Mulan any different?" Ping, Mulan's male alter ego, was a trusted soldier who had proved his worth. Since Ping and Mulan are the same person, she is questioning why her gender matters. If Shang trusted one he should trust the other. After the Emperor is kidnapped by Shan-Yu, the soldiers utilize classic battle tactics to try and save the Emperor. Mulan knows these will not work in time. She enlists the help of Yao, Ling, and Chien-Po, three soldier who trusted Ping and are willing to trust Mulan. Within this scene, the director shifts gender dynamics in favor of the female form rather than the male soldier. Whereas the beginning of the film shows Mulan having to disguise herself as a man to enter the

army, this scene shows the three soldiers taking off their armor and disguising themselves as women in order to enter the Emperor's palace. In a not-so-subtle play on words and imagery, during this scene the instrumental score of "I'll Make a Man Out of You" plays in the background. After showing the men taking off their armor, the line "be a man" is heard while all three men strike a pose in women's clothing. This underscores the message that women are just as capable as men, and in this case shows there are some things that require a woman. Pretending to be concubines allows the soldiers to get into the palace where they save the Emperor from Shan-Yu. As the soldiers prepare to scale the palace Shang appears, ready to join Mulan and follow her plan. Though it takes him longer to accept Mulan, Shang's appearance validates Mulan's status as equal. By having these soldiers join Mulan, it shows that she, a woman, is just as accepted as a man, allowing her to fulfill the role of strong, modern woman. Through creative thinking and having courage to take action Mulan proves she is equal to any other soldier.

After Mulan saves the Emperor, Shang defends Mulan's unorthodox actions, calling her a hero. Chi Fu, the Emperor's aide, responds, "She's a woman! She'll never be worth anything," implying that her gender negates everything positive she has done. The Emperor settles the debate, saying to Mulan, "You have saved us all." As Trites says, "The feminist character's recognition of her agency and her voice invariably lead to some sort of transcendence, usually taking the form of a triumph over whatever system or stricture was repressing her" (*Waking* 7). By being true to herself and claiming agency, Mulan proves her worth while saving China. When the Emperor bows to Mulan, it shows that regardless of gender she is finally being recognized for her courageous acts to save China. Though the Emperor offers her a position in his government, Mulan turns it down

in order to return home. Once home, the first thing Mulan does is kneel at her father's feet to present him with tokens of honor from the Emperor. Though running away may have defied her family and their plans for her, Mulan still cares about them and wants to be the dutiful daughter. For Mulan, these gifts prove her duty to her family and fulfill her obligation to bring them honor, only she did it in her own way. She found a way to join her dueling halves to bring honor to her family while still having an independence in life. Only at the very end does love factor in. Mulan inviting Shang to dinner plays into the established conventions of the princess genre. This goes back to Vogler's idea that Disney uses archetypes in a more fluid way. Mulan is able to wear multiple masks throughout the film. She can play be the heroine China needs, but she can also have interest in a relationship. Holding to these genre conventions gives *Mulan* the fairy tale treatment, and makes the film more recognizable as a princess film. However, it does not negate all of the courageous, strong, and independent actions Mulan engages in throughout the film. For Mulan going to war is a journey of self-discovery, and when she returns home she has grown and found herself to be someone worthwhile.

New Age Princesses: Independent Women Searching for More

When Disney released *Tangled* in 2010 they claimed that it was going to be the last of the princess films. The heads of the Pixar Animation Studio and Disney Animation, Ed Catmull and John Lasseter, confirmed this was the last fairy tale for Disney's foreseeable future. As Catmull said, "Films and genres do run a course…They may come back later because someone has a fresh take on it" (qtd in Chmielewski and Eller, par. 3). In releasing this statement they also acknowledge that two other projects were no longer in production, one of which was "The Snow Queen" (Chmielewski and

Eller, par. 3). However, fans did not have to wait long for the fairy tale hiatus to end. In 2012 *Brave* was released, introducing Merida, a princess who explicitly states she does not want to get married. This was the first princess film to nix the prince character all together. Merida is enough. She was quickly followed in 2013 by Anna and Elsa in a revamped version of "The Snow Queen," retitled *Frozen*. *Frozen* presents two strong female protagonists, breaking the traditional mold of female protagonist and *femme fatale*. And rounding out this group of new age princesses is Moana. Like *Brave*, *Moana* (2016) does not have a love interest. Instead, the film focuses on a chieftain's daughter, who is next in line to lead her people, and her journey to save her people and her island. With these films Disney is not focusing on the male-female binary relationship, but rather they are exploring other important relationships. *Brave* looks at the relationship between a mother and daughter, the relationship between sisters is the focus of *Frozen*, and *Moana* shows the relationship between people and nature. All of these films present strong and independent women capable of claiming agency and taking control of their own lives. Though it may have been a short-lived hiatus, when Disney brought back the fairy tale princess, they revamped her and created a fourth group of princesses. *Brave*, *Frozen*, and *Moana* focus on more than the male-female binary of other princess groups, while continuing the legacy of the modern princesses, showing one can be a strong, independent, and courageous woman while still holding the title of princess.

After its release, *Frozen* received a lot of reviews praising it for the different tone it took in dealing with the classic princess character. In his review "*Frozen* is Another Step Forward for Disney Princesses," Kevin McFarland writes that "a modern take on female independence is the best aspect…especially when judged against the reductive

princess fantasies in the Mouse House vault. *Frozen* does for sisterly relationships what *Brave* should have done for mothers and daughters." While some may still attack these films for not being progressive enough, the general public seems to judge these films based on the entertainment factor, with *Brave* falling short and *Frozen* proving to be one of the most successful films of all time. I would argue that *Brave* falls short because the creators abandoned much of the classic iconography associated with princess films. By not having songs, charismatic animal side-kicks, a compelling villain, or a Prince Charming character, the film breaks from the film genre too much to even be recognizable. Admittedly, *Brave* was held to higher visual standards being a Pixar film, yet as Kenneth Turan from the *Los Angeles Times* writes, "the magic that is Pixar's birthright…is inescapably absent more often than not." Merida is a new kind of princess, but the lack of familiar iconography from the genre compounded with the need to change the princess creates a loss of magic.[21] However Pixar's *Brave* is important because the choice to keep Merida single and not include a prince paves the way for Disney to rethink the princess character, which leads to two strong princess-type characters in *Frozen*.

With *Frozen*,[22] Disney returns to the expected iconography of the princess genre, linking it more closely with the previous princess films. *Frozen* presents two women who sing about what they want in life, helpful animal sidekicks (in the form of a reindeer and a snowman), an adventure to save the kingdom and a sister, a prince, and a villain. However, in this film Disney takes some of the iconographic aspects of the genre and

[21] Because of this lack of genre iconography I have chosen to write about the second film in this group in order to better compare the princesses in the previous groups to the princesses of this new age group.
[22] *Frozen* is loosely based on Andersen's tale "The Snow Queen." Originally Elsa was going to be the villain, but once "Let It Go" was written, the creators saw this as a powerful anthem for her and decided to rewrite the story and make Elsa another protagonist. So while this film is inspired by a classic literary fairy tale like all the other princess films, I would argue *Frozen* is more of an original story rather than a true adaptation like the other princess films.

changes them in order to subvert some of the classical conventions, specifically the conventions of the prince, the villain, and true love. Following *Tangled* and its precedent that the prince does not need to be the perfect knight in shining armor, *Frozen* takes this a step further and turns the prince into a villain trying to kill the princesses for their throne. By conflating the roles of the prince and the villain, the creators made a more complex character who causes the audience to question what makes a person worthy of being "Prince Charming." Disney also questions some of the antiquated notions of true love from earlier princess films. For instance, when Anna and Hans announce to Elsa their intent to marry, Elsa tells Anna, "You can't marry a man you've just met." Whereas other films (such as *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*) have the couples meet and fall in love instantly, and still find it acceptable and believable to fall in love and get married in a day; here Elsa clearly points out the absurdity of this notion. Instead, over the course of the film Anna and Elsa learn what it means to love and look out for each other, which then places emphasis on the love between the sisters rather than the need for "true love's kiss." By changing and varying these different elements of the princess film, the creators hold to Schatz's ideas of reinventing the generic formula while still utilizing the popular elements of the formula (462). This makes *Frozen* a successful genre adaptation; it is still recognizable, nevertheless different enough to be new and interesting. Also, by choosing to change these specific elements of the genre the creators also created modern women who can take care of themselves while finding agency and autonomy.

The film opens with Elsa and Anna as children. They are best friends who share a room and love playing together. One night, as Elsa creates a winter wonderland in their castle for Anna, she accidentally hurts Anna with her magic. From then on the castle is

closed to outsiders, and Elsa is moved to a different bedroom. She also begins ignoring Anna, believing the less contact they have the safer it will be for Anna. This beginning scene sets up the whole tone and theme of the film: mending the relationship of the sisters through love. Whereas the beginning of the early princess films focused on love and the later princess films focused on dreams, here the focus is on a specific relationship. While there may be twists and turns throughout the story that lead to romance, adventure, and love, having this introduction to the tale presents the overarching goal of bringing these sisters back together. Throughout this tale Anna takes the more typical princess journey as she learns to stand up for herself and claim agency; however, Elsa also grows and learns to find true autonomy and freedom, not just isolation.

Elsa's coronation day is the main event which launches the sisters' respective adventures. Upon Anna waking up, the audience is presented with her "I want" song, "For the First Time in Forever." Like the early Disney princesses, Anna's "I want" song is about love. In "For the First Time in Forever," the gates to the castle are opening for coronation day, and Anna is dreaming of the possibilities this day offers, including the possibility of finding "the one." Anna played dutiful daughter, never questioning why the palace was closed and standing in for Elsa at their parents' funeral. But the isolation caused by these actions makes Anna lonely. She does not have the same duties to king and country that Elsa does, so she is free to pursue other avenues of life. And on coronation day she plans to take full advantages of the opportunity. Anna is excited for the gates to open because then, as she sings, "for the first forever I won't be alone." Later in the song she continues her list of things that are a possibility, including "I could be noticed by someone." In both of these instances Anna believes she might meet her true

love and get married. However, at the coronation party, the first person to notice Anna is Elsa. They are amazed at the party and giggle over the smell of chocolate. While it seems small, this is the attention that Anna has been longing for. Throughout most of the film Anna believes that Hans, whom she met on coronation day, is the answer to her loneliness. But as she tries to help her sister, she realizes that there are other relationships that are more important. Here Anna reconnects with Elsa, hence she is no longer alone. So while Anna's song appears to be about romance, and seems to fit with the early princesses, in the end Anna's desires expressed in her "I want" song are met by her reconnecting with her sister.

Throughout the course of the narrative, Anna claims agency as she sets out to find Elsa and save Arendelle. She takes action, proves she is independent by striking out on her own, and shows courage in both confronting Elsa and in saving her. Though she may retain some traits of the classic princesses, the actions she takes to save her country and sister prove that Anna is a modern woman. From the beginning of the story, Anna is the one to initiate adventures. The first time we meet Anna and Elsa, Anna wakes Elsa up to go play. After Elsa sequesters herself, Anna continues to try and get Elsa to come out of her room. And when Elsa sets off winter in Arendelle, Anna is confident she can get Elsa to fix it. Her head may be filled with notions of love and romance, but when it comes to the practical, Anna is independent and action oriented. She commands Hans to stay behind and look after the kingdom, she makes Kristoff take her up the mountain, and she chooses to save Elsa instead of herself. It is this selflessness that saves her in the end. She is persistent in her efforts, and continues to follow through with her promise to find Elsa, even when she continues to hit road blocks. One example of this is when she and Kristoff

come to a rock wall while hiking up the mountain. Despite the fact that Kristoff believes it is impossible, Anna just starts climbing. Though she doesn't get far (Olaf finds the ice staircase made by Elsa), Anna proves she will continue to persevere no matter what. These action align Anna with the modern princesses who work to overcome obstacles and take control of their situation. Everything Anna does is to save Elsa and Arendelle, and the actions taken to achieve her goal prove that she is an active agent.

Elsa also sings what could be considered an "I want" song in "Let It Go;" however, like the later princesses her song is not about love, but the freedom she has yearned for since childhood. Elsa understands and holds to Beauvoir's ideas on dutiful daughters and the need to remove the mask of obedience in order to be free and be independent. In Elsa's case she literally has a mask, represented in the gloves her father makes her wear to suppress her magic. She wants to be a dutiful daughter, and after she hurts Anna she listens to her father and his mantra "conceal, don't feel, don't let it show." Even after her parents die, she continues to follow his orders. In the song "Let It Go" Elsa lets go of her duty, and instead does what she wants in life. At the beginning of the song when she sings, "Be the good girl you always have to be. Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know," she is repeating what she has been told her entire life. Once people know about her magic she feels like she can get rid of her mask. Visually this is represented by Elsa removing her gloves. She removes the final glove right before singing the line "let it go" for the first time. She then proceeds to make snowflakes and create Olaf. These are the first beautiful snow creations she has made since she injured Anna. In this song Elsa empowers herself. Instead of being afraid, she says that the distance has allowed her to let go of her fear. She wants to test her limits and see what she can do. Toward the end of the

song she sings, "That perfect girl is gone. Here I stand in the light of day." Elsa is beginning to accept her magical gift as part of herself, and she no longer wants to conceal it from the world. She can be successful as an independent woman. During this song Elsa both expresses what she wants and also lets go of the past in order to accept herself. Elsa begins to claim agency and autonomy when she goes to the mountains. While on the mountain she is able to process who she is and, through self-discovery, she finds her authentic self (Meyers 156-58); she does not have to hide her powers, but can embrace them as part of herself.

In "For the First Time in Forever Reprise," Anna and Elsa sing a duet, which shows how Elsa's autonomy still exists in fear and isolation, while Anna attempts to claim agency by helping her sister. Anna attempts to claim agency by stating exactly what she wants from her sister. She uses active vocabulary the entire time, and tries to set out an action plan for fixing the problem. Anna believes in her sister and is certain that everything can be fixed if they work together. Anna begins the song, singing, "For the first time in forever we can fix this hand in hand…You don't have to live in fear, cause for the first time in forever I will be right here." Anna has not gone on this long journey to return home without Elsa. Elsa, on the other hand, tries to get rid of Anna by reassuring her that she might be alone but she is free. Throughout this song Elsa uses vocabulary linking her magic to her feelings. This harks back to what the trolls told her when she was little—fear will be an enemy. The storms Elsa creates are linked to her fear. Elsa must accept herself in order to no longer be ruled by fear, yet she doubts herself when others are around. Only in isolation does she feel free. For most of her life Elsa lived in isolation, partly at the command of her parents and partly of her own doing.

When she runs away, she attempts to claim agency by finding the freedom she has longed for. Yet, isolating herself away from Arendelle out of fear does not truly promote autonomy. Since full relational autonomy comes from social interactions rather than isolation (Nedelesky 12; Barclay 54), only when Elsa chooses to be part of society does she fully accept who she is and embrace her new autonomy. On the other hand, Anna encourages Elsa to reintegrate with people. She tries comforting Elsa by saying it is okay and they will work together to fix everything. Elsa sings, "I'm such a fool, I can't be free. No escape from the storm inside of me. I can't control the curse." She tries to make Anna go away, saying she is making it worse. Then Elsa admits, "There is so much fear; you're not safe here." Her fear of not being able to stop the storm causes her to lash out, sending the ice outward, hitting Anna in the heart. As the trolls told them years before, this is a mortal wound; the only way to defrost a heart is an act of true love.

In the end, it is sisterly love that saves both Anna and Elsa. Anna gives up her chance at true love's kiss and chooses to sacrifice herself in order to save Elsa from being killed by Hans. She acts selflessly to save Elsa. In choosing to sacrifice herself, Anna saves both herself and Elsa because an act of sisterly love is an act of true love—as potent as true love's kiss. Meanwhile, Elsa's feelings for Anna both create and terminate the storm that threatens Arendelle. The storm represents Elsa's anguish and fear. When she is told Anna is dead the storm stops because she no longer has anything to fear or care about. Her whole life has been about protecting Anna, and if Anna is gone then her life does not matter. Elsa is then able to thaw the ice because she finally realizes the key to her magic: if fear can freeze then love can thaw. Accepting herself and realizing that her magic can be positive allows Elsa to reintegrate into society and finally fully accept

the autonomy she fought for throughout the narrative. In this film, both sisters understand the repercussions of their actions, and are willing to take responsibility for these actions, thus claiming agency (England, Descartes, Collier-Meek 33). While the potential for a happily ever after with Kristoff is thrown in at the end for Anna, the film ends with an image of the sisters ice skating together. The story returns these characters to the playful and loving sisters they were at the beginning of the film, before any turmoil rocked their kingdom. This makes the film's happily ever after the reconciliation of two sisters.

Fans and Fandom Infusing Princesses with Agency

Over the past eighty years Disney princess films have proven successful, both financially and through their fandom. Not only have most of the films done well at the box office, there is also Disney's princess merchandise which is a billion dollar industry. Started in 2000, by 2010 the princess franchise was bringing in 4 billion dollars a year (Whelan 25). Beyond the financial success of the Disney princesses, their influence on fans and fandom proves their staying power. The Disney princesses exists as one of the major modern-day fandoms. In the twentieth century everyone was raised on Disney films. For those who were growing up during the Disney Renaissance, this is particularly true. Disney was many people's childhood fandom, and now as adults people incorporate the princesses into art, cosplay, and fanfiction. Look at Tumblr, fanfiction websites, blogs such as HelloGiggles, or websites like deviantart.com, and different versions of the princesses can easily be found. Whether it is quizzes, polls, reimaginings, or fusions, the princesses are everywhere online. For example, on the Disney website the princesses are drawn together, but they still inhabit their own worlds and do not cross over into each other's worlds. Amy Mebberson has reimagined the Disney princesses as a sisterhood and

created her comic "Pocket Princesses" where all of the princesses live in the same house and have adventures together. Karen Hallion, on the other hand, has combined the princesses with *Doctor Who* for a fandom fusion. In each of Hallion's drawings the princess is depicted in her own world, but instead of a prince there is a Tardis and the Doctor waiting for her.

Along with the different aspects of fandom, Disney princesses have also been a big part of the social media trend of online quizzes. Scrolling through different social media outlets and blogs, one can find quizzes for determining "which princess are you," "which prince would you end up with," and one particular poll posted on Buzzfeed's wall asked readers, "Which Disney princess is your feminist icon?" In this poll, published on Buzzfeed's website April 30, 2015 by community member Kyle Davis, over one-hundred thousand people voted for their Disney feminist icon.[23] Winning 31% of the vote, Mulan came in at number one, and Merida comes in second with 17% of the vote. Not surprising, Cinderella, Aurora, and Snow White came in last, with Snow White only receiving 903 votes compared to Mulan's nearly forty-thousand votes. The masses are aware of the princesses and how they have changed, or could be made stronger. This is why people continue to reimage the princesses as different races, genders, living in different decades, being superheroes, and even as breast cancer survivors. Because these are fairy tale characters, there is a universal appeal that lends these characters to different reimaginings and, through these different concepts of the princesses, the fans continue to create interest in these characters.

[23] The poll includes all the princesses from Snow White to Anna and Elsa (Moana not available at the time the poll was taken).

Another area where fans and fandom are providing the princesses with more agency is through cosplay. At any comic book convention it is easy to find cosplayers using the princesses for inspiration. Whether it is an original princess cosplay, or a fusion with Star Wars, Xena the warrior princess, zombies, Steampunk, etc. the princesses continue to inspire fans. With these different fusions and reimaginings of the princesses, fans are giving agency to the princess characters—even the early princess. Redoing Snow White so she is mixed with Xena or a Jedi shows the desire to give Snow White strength, something she can gain being combined with other strong females like Leia or Rey. Through this kind of cosplay, the cosplayer is also able to claim her own agency by combining these characters to create a new character just for herself. In all of these different versions of the princesses, what is clear is that there are specific aspects of each princess that people relate to and want to continue replicating and using for inspiration. These different kinds of fandom mean that the princesses do not stay stagnant, but rather continue to evolve with culture and society. The classic princesses were created in an era where caring for the home and being a dutiful daughter and wife were the roles available to women. Now, through art and cosplay, these characters are given new life and new abilities more in line with the freedom and agency claimed by modern women.

Some may contend that the messages conveyed within the Disney princess films are nothing more than meaningless fluff, yet these films and their characters have proven popular time and again, verifying that they are a staple in both American and world popular culture. As Zipes says, "As long as the fairy tale continues to awaken our wonderment and enable us to project counterworlds to our present society, it will serve a meaningful social and aesthetic function" (*When Dreams Came True* 29). Clearly Disney

continues to create strong characters which the masses can relate to. Over the past 80 years, the Disney princesses have transitioned from passive, dutiful women to strong and courageous heroines. While each princess wants to be a dutiful daughter, as the princesses have grown and changed they have also embraced the desire to pursue their own dreams, allowing each group of princesses to claim more agency and autonomy than the last.

CHAPTER 2

FAIRY TALE REBOOTS:

OLD STORIES, NEW WOMEN

"…the advantage of the more general anthropological usage in thinking about adaptation is that it implies agency: people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt."
Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (150)

Adaptation allows us to continue to visit our favorite stories in new and varied ways. Contradicting the Freudian notions that repetition provides a means of coping with loss and hardships, Linda Hutcheon argues that there is pleasure in repeating stories through adaptation (114). While some may argue that fairy tales like "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Cinderella," and "Sleeping Beauty" are outdated and their heroines are too passive for a modern audience, these stories can also be read as timeless tales of survival, which is, at least in part, the reason why they continue to be retold today. Through adaptation fairy tale protagonists can gain higher levels of agency. Over the past few years, Disney's earliest princess tales have been revisited and revamped for a modern audience, where strong female characters are becoming the norm rather than the exception. Three popular and creative films looking back at the stories of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora are *Mirror Mirror* (2012), *Cinderella* (2015), and *Maleficent* (2014) respectively. Through their choices and actions, both heroines and villainesses in

these films prove that they are strong, capable women who will take life circumstances into their own hands in order to create their own happily ever afters.

Adaptation is not just about repetition, it is also about change (Hutcheon 114-15). For film companies, one easy way to create change in these classic cartoons is to recast them as live-action films. As Hutcheon points out, because films are expensive to produce, most producers want projects that have proven popular over time (29). Beginning around 2010, a push for live-action films based on fairy tales became popular among Hollywood production studios. Kelly Konda posits this trend began with Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland* (2010), and has continued to grow with the successes of *Maleficent* and *Cinderella*. But Disney is not the only film studio to capitalize on live-action fairy tales. The 2012 release of the Snow White adaptations *Mirror Mirror* and *Snow White and the Huntsman* by Relativity Media and Universal Pictures respectively are just two examples of the revisionist tales that have been released since 2010.[24] For today's audience, whether the films conform to traditional stories and plots or are considered revisionist, film companies continue to return to fairy tales for story ideas—and they don't plan to stop any time soon. Konda's article outlines eighteen fairy tale films which are currently in production.[25] Even if all of these do not get the green light and become films, clearly having so many fairy tale stories at some point in production shows that the studios are aware that audiences are craving fairy tales, and they plan to deliver. However, they are not producing tales with passive princesses. Even when

[24] These two suggestions are based on the fairy tales being analyzed in this chapter. Other fairy tales have been utilized by other film companies for revisionist tales, creating such films as *Beastly* (2011), *Red Riding Hood* (2011), *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013), *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013), and adapting Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods* (2014), to name a few.

[25] In the comments he does note that not all of these films may be made into films, but different companies at least claim to have plans for these projects, and they are each at some stage in production.

utilizing the traditional fairy tale stories, for the twenty-first century audience the female characters tend to claim more agency than their earlier counterparts. Graeme McMillan argues that while science fiction and fantasy genres have dominated the box-office for decades, a dominant complaint has become that they are too male-centric. But this has been changing with shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and films like *The Hunger Games* and even the *Twilight Saga*. As McMillan says, "The very idea of, maybe not feminist fantasy, but *female-led* fantasy, at least, feels like it answers a particular need to broaden the focus of, and audience for, some of the most financially successful films and television shows" (par. 9).

Enchanted: A Feminist Revision of Disney's Canon

With the changing cultural reception of the twenty-first century, Disney as a whole shifted their view on what a princess character could entail. Starting with the marketing campaign for the Disney Princess line, eventually Disney began to rethink the princess character. Getting in on the game of retelling its own fairy tales, and even poking fun at itself for the aura it has created around certain fairy tales, Disney created the film *Enchanted* (2007). With Robert A. Iger taking over as chief executive in 2005, the Disney Corporation had to look at how they were going to continue the Disney legacy (Barnes). As Brooke Barnes points out, even a few years prior, a film like *Enchanted* "would have been labeled as treason in the Magic Kingdom…The grounds: mocking classic Disney characters" (par. 1). Barnes is also quick to point out that the board of directors does not consider *Enchanted* a parody, but rather "a giant love letter to Disney classics" (par. 26). However, this does show that Disney is willing to reevaluate the

tropes and motifs used to convey their fairy tale stories, and what it means to be a Disney princess.

Enchanted begins in the cartoon kingdom of Andalasia, where Giselle meets Prince Edward and he proclaims they will be married the next day. Prince Edward's stepmother, the evil queen Narcissa, does not want him to marry because then she will lose her power in the kingdom. Therefore she banishes Giselle to a place where there are no happily ever afters—New York City. Transitioning to a live-action film, *Enchanted* creates absurd situations in which the audience can question the notions of classic fairy tales (like the prince and princess meeting and marrying so quickly, mother and daughter relationships, and helpful forest creatures) and how these stories fit into our world in the twenty-first century. Making a statement about Disney's early fairy tales, *Enchanted* pulls specific elements and motifs from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, among other films, in order for the audience to draw connections between *Enchanted* and other Disney films. Throughout the film, Narcissa's henchman Nathaniel tries to kill Giselle by feeding her a poisoned apple. When Narcissa comes to New York City to kill Giselle herself, she transforms into a dragon. And as Giselle prepares to fight the dragon, she loses her shoe. All of these intertextual references clearly connect the viewer back to the classic fairy tales as well as to Disney's earlier adaptations, yet each element has a twist that connects the tale to its modern audience. Though Giselle does fall under a sleeping spell after taking a bite of the apple, it is not Prince Edward that can save her, rather it is Robert the divorce lawyer whom she has gotten to know over time. Neither Prince Edward nor Robert slay the dragon; instead, Giselle fights to save Robert from the dragon. Queen Narcissa even comments on this,

saying, "Oh my, this is a twist on our story. It's the brave little princess coming to the rescue." After saving Robert (with the help of her chipmunk friend Pip), Giselle decides to stay in New York. So while Giselle may abandon her fairy tale life (seen through the abandoned shoe) for a life in the real world, the shoe is not neglected. Instead Nancy, Robert's ex-girlfriend, puts on the shoe and runs away to Andalasia with Prince Edward for her fairy tale ending. The film ends with the narrator saying, "And so they all lived happily ever after," but what is interesting in this version is that it is a different kind of happily ever after for each character. By embracing its past heritage and realizing that the new generation needs a different kind of heroine, Disney proves it can still provide timeless tales while changing with the times by adapting the princess to be stronger and more independent.

In these new fairy tale films the princess can be intelligent, courageous, and action-oriented. She can do the saving rather than needing to be saved. And the villainess can be vulnerable and heart-broken, not just vengeful. All of these traits create stronger, more diverse characters within the fairy tale film genre. These new reimaginings of classic fairy tales still get to the heart of the tales which shows the strength and endurance needed by the protagonist to overcome obstacles and gain her own happily ever after, which does not insinuate an ending but rather the new beginning of a better life.

Looking at the different roles women play in fairy tales, one issue that many fairy tale scholars and critics discuss is the lack of mothers within fairy tales. While in many cases this loss drives the narrative plot, from a gender standpoint it is problematic because there is a lack of female representation. Scholars such as Laura Sells and Marjorie Worthington believe this is problematic because it perpetuates the idea that

Western patriarchy is built on matricide (Sells 179; Worthington 32-33). Lynda Haas argues that the phenomenon of missing mothers is not only in most Disney films, but most films in general. She writes of mothers, "the typical mother is absent, generously good, powerfully evil, or a silent other, a mirror that confirms the child's identity without interference from hers. In this way, mothers are either sentimentalized or disdained" (196). In the case of the early Disney princesses, the assumed good (birth) mother is absent and the "mother" role is taken over by the evil villainess. Elizabeth Bell calls these evil women the *femme fatales*—women at the height of their power, sexuality, and agency (115-118). The *femme fatale* character was an often utilized character type in film noir, which was at its height during the 1940s and 1950s, so contemporary with Disney's early princess films. The *femme fatale* of film noir is a woman who seduces, exploits, and destroys her sexual partners; many times she is also portrayed as strong and powerful, and the male in comparison is weak and threatened (Luhr 30). For Disney, the *femme fatales* are in direct competition with their respective princesses.

For the early Disney films, the separation between the princesses and their respective evil mother figures created a duality that scholars Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar qualify as the "angel" and the "monster" (17). Using the tale of Snow White as an example, Gilbert and Gubar declare that within most patriarchal texts, "for every glowing portrait of submissive women enshrined in domesticity, there exists an equally important negative image that embodies the sacrilegious fiendishness of…the 'Female Will'" (28). Gilbert and Gubar go on to point out how this kind of duality can be debilitating to women within society (53). This is why it is important that in these revamped fairy tales, while there may still be the good princess and the wicked stepmother, each female

character is more complex and she is given a rationale that explains her chosen behaviors. Instead of a passive "angel of the house," the princess can be a warrior, and instead of just a "monster" the stepmother provides reasoning for her decisions.

In these twenty-first century retellings of Disney's early princesses, the role of mother given to the *femme fatale* is even more important because her desire, or lack thereof, to be mother to the princess is related to the perceived threat in the growing autonomy and agency of the princess. When most scholars discuss the older woman being threatened by the younger woman, it is the older woman's beauty that is being threatened.[26] I would argue that in these recent adaptations the stakes are even greater because the princess also threatens the older woman's power and agency. For example, in *Mirror Mirror* the Evil Queen is threatened by Snow White's efforts to regain the kingdom because it would strip the queen of her power over the kingdom. In all of the fairy tale films examined in this chapter, the princess is willing to fight for what is rightfully hers instead of passively waiting for the prince to come and rescue her. So instead of beauty being the primary trait that is seen as threatening like the early Disney princesses, the actions the princess is willing to take become the primary threat to the older woman and her position in society.

For this chapter, three modern fairy tale films based on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Cinderella," and "Sleeping Beauty," have been chosen to analyze the early Disney princesses and how these characters have been updated for the twenty-first century.[27] While there are many fairy tale adaptations to choose from, for a comparative

[26] See Bell's article "Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies" for more on the issue of body and beauty in Disney's animated films.

[27] Though outside of the timeline for this chapter—the last 5 years—many other fairy tales could be analyzed for how they eliminate the duality of angel and monster in favor of more complex female. Films

analysis I have chosen films that cater to the same family-friendly audience base as the classic Disney princesses, and were released within a few short years of each other.[28] *Mirror Mirror* is a revisionist tale for Snow White's story where Snow White runs away from the palace and joins a band of thieves in order to save her kingdom. Though it is not made by Disney,[29] this film still pulls elements from Disney's version and makes references to this film as one of its inspiration texts. Disney's 2015 *Cinderella* is a clear remake of their animated classic. However, director Kenneth Branagh and writer Chris Weitz tweaked the story to create more character backstory and motivation, allowing the audience to see Cinderella as an agent in her own life rather than a damsel waiting to be saved. Finally, Disney's revisionist film *Maleficent* tells the story of *Sleeping Beauty* from Maleficent's point of view. Not only is Maleficent our protagonist, but Aurora is also given choice over the kind of life she wants to live. Released in just a three year span, these films show a popular push for fairy tale films that adapt to fit more modern notions of female empowerment.

Mirror Mirror: Snow White's Shift to Warrior Woman

Mirror Mirror, like other remakes of this time, focuses on character development and motivation. Not only are the evil queen and princess characters fleshed out, but the prince is a main character and a rationale is given for why the dwarfs live the way they

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like *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (1997) and *Ever After* (1997) provide strong female characters who fight for what they want in life. Books such as *Ella Enchanted* (1997) and *Princess Academy* (2007) show girls setting out to save themselves. Even plays like Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* and the new book written by Douglas Carter Beane for Rodger and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* create proactive female characters.

[28] These are also all American films. There are many great foreign takes on fairy tales, but these would be outside the scope of this dissertation. Jack Zipes' book *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films* looks at many film adaptations of fairy tales from around the world.

[29] In October 2016, Disney released a statement saying the studio is planning to reboot its classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as a live-action film, but no prospective date for release has been given yet.

do. This version of the tale has both the Evil Queen and Snow White show interest in Prince Alcott, thus playing up the idea that the Queen is seeking power through youth and beauty. Both want Prince Alcott to help save the kingdom: the Queen through marriage and access to his money, Snow White through the use of his army to help her retake her kingdom. Unlike its animated predecessor, as Snow White ventures out into the world and sees what has become of her father's beloved kingdom, she does not sit by idly waiting to be saved; instead Snow White begins fighting to gain back her kingdom. [30] In this version of the classic Snow White tale, both women fight for autonomy apart from the other, but here Snow White is able to triumph over the Evil Queen because Snow White claims agency and decides to act in order to regain her kingdom.

The film opens with the Evil Queen acting as narrator. She begins the tale with "Once upon a time…", but as the narrator of the story she is quick to point out that this is her story. Acting as narrator and claiming that this is her story gives the Queen power and agency within the narrative, creating an even bigger divide that Snow White must cross in order to claim her own agency and make this her story. Telling her story, the Evil Queen elaborates on her own beauty and intelligence and how much the king loved her. Right before the audience meets Snow White, the Queen expresses the threat she feels from Snow White, saying, "the kingdom fell into an icy despair as the queen realized if she wanted to remain the most beautiful woman in all the land, well, snow would have to do what snow does best, *Snow* would have to fall" (emphasis mine). As the Queen says

[30] In 2011, the television show *Once Upon a Time* premiered. This show also presents a version of Snow White who is a warrior and is willing to fight back against her evil stepmother. Along with *Snow White and the Huntsman*, these three texts show that updating Snow White to be a fighter was an important move for the modern day character. Though outside the scope of this dissertation, the television show uses many strong women who participate in battle while attempting to claim agency. Because of the television medium, the writers have had seasons to recreate many classic fairy tale women, both protagonists and villainesses, and make them more complex.

this, the scene changes from warm and inviting to cold and dark as snow begins falling on the castle. Here the landscape is reflecting the harsh changes that the Queen has made to the kingdom. In order to save the kingdom, Snow White will have to overthrow the Evil Queen and not succumb to the Queen's wish that "Snow would have to fall."

Upon first meeting, Snow White appears to be a passive character. Snow, as she is referred to throughout the film, has pale skin, dark hair, and red lips—the classic description for this character. She is dressed in a lovely gown which consists of puffy cap sleeves, a tight pink bodice, and full yellow skirt, all of which mimics the yellow, blue, and red dress from Disney's animated version. This first scene with Snow also plays up the Disney trope of the princess having the uncanny ability to communicate with wildlife. A bird flies through the window, so Snow follows and asks the bird if it is hungry. She then proceeds to pull a seed from a slice of apple and feed it to the bird. Not only does this scene portray a classic image of Snow White that the audience will recognize, it also brings in the apple motif known to most versions of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." At this point in the tale, she is content staying in her room, heeding her stepmother's edicts and not questioning what is happening to herself or her kingdom. This paints Snow as a classic passive fairy tale heroine with kindness and beauty as her main traits; however, Snow quickly begins to deviate from this classic mold.

Establishing the animosity between Snow and the Evil Queen while visually showing the passive "angel" versus and the evil "monster," *Mirror Mirror* continually comes back to scenes where the Evil Queen and Snow interact. This differs from Disney's version as well as the Grimm brothers' where the only interactions between the characters occur when the wicked stepmother is in disguise. Therefore, from the onset of

the film Snow White knows the Queen is her adversary who must be fought. Early in the film there is a scene where Snow sneaks down to the ballroom. Though it is Snow's eighteenth birthday, the Queen despises her and does not want her around. Banishing Snow to her room, the Queen says, "It's important to know when you've been beaten." The Evil Queen owns the kingdom and she doesn't plan to give it up, even though Snow is now eighteen.

After this encounter, Snow retreats to the kitchen where the staff have prepared a cake for her. Baker Margaret, acting as the good mother figure, wants only the best for Snow and wishes to see Snow take back her kingdom. She says, "Your father meant for you to inherit his crown. And that woman has the entire kingdom convinced that you're a pathetic shut in, incapable of leaving the castle. And the worst is, she has you thinkin' it." Unlike Cinderella and Aurora who have a fairy godmother and the good fairies respectively in their tales, Snow White did not have an older, kind-hearted woman to help take care of her. Bell argues that Disney utilizes different types of women throughout their animated films: the ingénue, the *femme fatale*, and the nurturing female (108, 118). While both the Grimms' tale and Disney's version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* lacked this caring older woman, in *Mirror Mirror*, baker Margaret is created, thus providing Snow White with a caring mother figure. Combined with the Evil Queen as narrator and Snow as heroine, adding Margaret as nurturing female and voice of reason means the majority of the narrative power is carried by women. Margaret is an important character within the film's narrative. She is not just a cook, she is Snow's mentor, and she is pivotal in criticizing the role of aristocracy within the story. It is Margaret who prods Snow into leaving the palace to see the condition of her people, and then persuades

her to seek the prince's help to win back her kingdom. Margaret provides the push Snow needs in order to set out on her own and begin her exploration for the truth. Thus Margaret fulfills the role of feminine nurturing and sacrifice. She may not be magical like the other grandmother figures, but her words are powerful in helping Snow begin to find her autonomy.

Once Snow decides to leave the palace, her character begins to deviate from the classic tale. On her way to see the villagers Snow meets the prince, but she is the one who saves him. Prince Alcott and his servant have been robbed by the dwarfs, who left them tied up in a tree. Snow cuts them loose and continues on her way to the village. It is a simple meet-cute but, unlike other versions of Snow White, this meeting gives the power to Snow and makes her the rescuer. Throughout the course of the film Snow rescues Alcott twice, and beats him in a sword fight, proving that she is not a trapped damsel in distress, but instead, she is the heroine. Making the decision to leave the palace removes Snow's obedient "angel" label. She quickly becomes a member of society, fully aware of her role as well as her duties, and therefore ready to take action. All Snow needed to become this warrior was a push in the right direction. This push does not come from a man or a person of power within the court, it is provided by the loving mother figure, Margaret. As Linda Barclay argues, "autonomy is said to consist of a capacity, or the exercise of certain competencies, that enables one to reflect on one's aims, aspirations, and motivations and choose one's ends and purposes through such a reflective process" (53). Leaving the palace was a great first step for Snow, but seeing her people's poverty makes her reflect on the docile role she played for so many years by doing only what the Queen told her to do. Realizing she wants to take care of her people and that she is

capable of taking control, Snow takes her first steps toward autonomy because she actively reflects on her role in the world in which she lives. Now she must make decisions and take action against the Evil Queen in order to claim agency for her kingdom and rise to the role that society has assigned her. Snow crashing the Queen's ball is her first act of agency, and it sets up the classic scene of the Evil Queen having Snow White taken to the forest to be killed. After this scene the film continues to follow the two women, both working to get what they want most: the Evil Queen uses magic to enchant Alcott in order to marry him for his money, and Snow White lives with the dwarfs[31] and learns how to fight so she can reclaim her throne.

Like Disney's Wicked Queen, the Evil Queen in *Mirror Mirror* is a selfish individual who is only out for individual pleasure, even to the detriment of the society as a whole. She only does what will make her happy in the moment: marrying for money to fund her lifestyle, turning her servant into a cockroach, taking extreme measures to look beautiful, etc. In fleshing out the Queen's character, we learn some of the means and methods that she has had to employ in order to keep up her lifestyle, including holding her powerful position as queen. She used a love potion on the king to make him marry her, she married five times in order to keep up her lifestyle, and she used magic to turn the king into a beast whom she uses to threaten the townspeople for more tax money. The Queen acts to keep her power because she is scared to be ugly and powerless; therefore, everything she does works to keep her young and powerful. Though she is the villain of

[31] The dwarfs also hark back to Disney and give the dwarfs names that match their personalities. They have names like Grub, Chuckles, Wolf, Butcher, Half-pint, Napoleon, and even Will Grimm. Some of the connections may be more tongue-in-cheek than Disney, but using names connected to personalities allows the audience to more quickly connect with the characters. Just as Disney wanted his audience to love the dwarfs, here we are able to see that the dwarfs are more than the thieves the Queen forced them to become.

this film, having these expanded parts which do not exist in other versions of this story gives the audience a better understanding of how the Queen obtained her position and why she tries to keep Snow under her power. What also sets this character apart from most other versions of the evil queen is that she shows fear and vulnerability. The scenes where we see the Queen the most vulnerable are when she is with her magic mirror. Her magic mirror—a perfect reflection of herself—tends to be rational and tries to get the Evil Queen to see the repercussions of her actions. This use of the Queen's image as her magic mirror creates an interesting shift in the "angel" versus "monster" dichotomy. The "monster" is supposed to be the mirror of the "angel" (Gilbert and Gubar 28), yet here we are seeing that the Queen has both a kinder and more logical side as well as a malicious, greed-seeking side. Therefore her villainy comes down to her choices. Though the Evil Queen has power and agency, both of these exist because of her magic and how she chooses to use magic. This makes her agency fleeting and passive. Everything she is and holds power over requires others to do for her—her magic mirror keeps her in power with magic and her servant Brighton keeps the servants and townspeople in fear of her. The loss of either of these entities would result in the loss of her agency, making it possible for Snow to beat her.

Mirror Mirror takes the Queen's narcissistic tendencies even further because, in the Disney version, we only see the Queen as vain and trying to get rid of Snow White, but here she also robs the people to pay for her lifestyle. Though Tracey Mollet's argument looks specifically at Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and how it projects a story of Great Depression American society, I would argue her assertions that Snow White represents the middle class people and the Wicked Queen represents selfish

individualism still apply to *Mirror Mirror*. The film may not speak to 1930s America, but it still embraces the dichotomy of selfish individualism versus community. *Mirror Mirror* even takes it a step further because Snow White begins fighting for the people of her community, embodying a Robin Hood persona with the dwarfs to rob the rich and give to the poor. Mollet writes, "Whereas in the Grimm version of the tale Snow White's dreaming does not power the plot, her character appears much less important than in the Disney retelling, where the heroine filters the fears and aspirations of the common American during the Depression" (116). Clearly Mollet is showing how Snow White's character grew in importance for Disney, yet Snow White is still a very passive character. For Mollet, Snow White's success in the Disney film is based on "the triumph of her spirit and love for the prince over the wicked witch" (116).

While Disney's version of the film taps into Great Depression anxieties, *Mirror Mirror* seems to update some of the tropes for a modern audience which experienced anxieties due to the recession of 2008, the banking crisis, and maldistribution of wealth. As Snow notices, the wealthy keep trying to gain more wealth while the poor continue to grow poorer and cannot seem to climb out of debt to the Queen due to high taxes. In order for the people to overcome these evils, director Tarsem Singh makes Snow an active character who claims agency by choosing to work with the dwarfs in order to help provide for her people. Unlike the animated version where the dwarfs' conditions were housekeeping, the dwarfs in *Mirror Mirror* insist that Snow become a thief. Her counter-condition is that anything they steal goes back to the people. Here Snow proves that her kindness is a strength,[32] and her looks can empower her. Coupled with action and

[32] Kindness is one of Snow's personality traits. This leads to good deeds, whether these are seen as passive or active. At the beginning of the film, Snow's kindness can be read as a passive trait because she has not

courage, Snow's kindness allows her to find a way to help the dwarfs find acceptance within society while helping her people reclaim their money.

After agreeing to join the dwarfs, Snow undergoes a makeover. Instead of trying to make her girly or pretty, the dwarfs help embolden her so that she can accomplish the tasks necessary to rob the rich and help her people. Losing her ball gown, Snow settles on a blue top with black pants and black corset; an outfit which allows her to run and swordfight in order to win battles. During this makeover montage the dwarfs also teach her to fight and stand up for herself, giving her means to be an active agent. Throughout the montage, she struggles with the different skills the dwarfs are teaching her. This section is intercut with clips of her trying on different awkward outfits. Once she chooses her new blue and black outfit the montage shows her successfully completing tasks. Creating a montage which includes scenes of both her makeover and her learning to fight emphasizes the idea of empowerment through change—both physical and mental makeovers help her achieve her goals. Her time in the forest with the dwarfs teaches her how to be independent which invokes more independent thinking, leading her back to relational autonomy. But all of her decisions leading to her agency and autonomy are based in her desire to be kind and help others.

This film version goes back to the Grimms' idea of the Queen making multiple attempts to kill Snow White. However, in this modern version, Snow White fights back against the Queen. In the Grimms' version, each time the Queen approaches Snow White

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yet found autonomy within her society, but blindly follows the Queens orders. Kindness to animals, servants, the prince, etc. is just part of her. She turns her kindness into an active trait when she claims agency and begins working toward freeing her people. Instead of letting something like greed drive her, she works to return the kingdom's wealth to the people. It is combining her drive to be kind and help others with traits like courage and independence that makes her kindness become active actions which resolve problems.

she dresses herself as a different old peddler woman or peasant. She sells Snow White poisoned laces for her corset, a poisoned hair comb, and finally gives Snow White the poisoned apple (332-34). In each of these instances the princess chooses to buy or take the Queen's wares, but it is the dwarfs that must save her. Singh makes Snow an active participant in fighting the Evil Queen. Here Snow battles bewitched puppets attacking the dwarfs' home, and she takes on the beast of the forest. This version of the Snow White tale turns the tables on the original, having the dwarfs be threatened by the Queen while Snow White saves them. The Evil Queen is furious when she discovers that Snow is still alive. She uses her magic to enchant wooden puppets which attack the dwarfs' home. Because these are inanimate objects, the dwarfs cannot figure out how to kill or stop them. When the puppets have all of the dwarfs nearly defeated, Snow returns to the house, ready to fight. She notices that there are strings attached to the wooden creatures. She uses her sword to cut the strings and the wooden puppets slump to the ground. In this scene, Snow is not a damsel in distress, she is the heroine who saves the dwarfs.

Later in the film, after Snow has rescued Prince Alcott from marrying the Evil Queen—she rescues him by kissing him to break the Queen's love potion spell, another twist on Disney's version where the prince must kiss Snow White to save her—Snow White must face the Queen's beast. The Queen, enraged that she has been duped again by Snow, sends her beast to the part of the forest where the dwarfs live. Snow, knowing the beast has been sent for her, says to the dwarfs and the prince, "Gentlemen, I can think of no greater group of warriors to lead into battle, but this is my fight." She runs out the door and locks the dwarfs and prince inside. The dwarfs unleashed a warrior when they taught Snow to fight, and now she plans to fight her own battle. When Prince Alcott tries

to run after her, she says to him, "You know all that time locked up in the castle I did a lot of reading. I read so many stories where the prince saves the princess in the end…I think it's time we change that ending." Prince Alcott responds, "No, no, no, Snow! You're trying to mess with tried and true storytelling; it's been focused-grouped and it works. Just let me save you!" This line is amusing because it points to other fairy tales like the classic Disney princess films, and it shows that the creators are aware that they are turning the typical fairy tale model on its head. Snow is not a sleeping damsel who needs to be rescued, instead she is the heroine of her own story and will save herself.

In taking on the Queen and her beast, Snow White ends up saving her father as well as herself. With the help of the dwarfs and the prince (who escape from the house), Snow fights the beast. As the beast approaches Snow, the dwarfs and prince work together to get Snow her dagger and then urge her to kill the beast. Here kindness takes over and Snow cannot quite bring herself to kill the beast. But in that moment of hesitation, she realizes the beast has a medallion matching the Queen's necklace. Snow lunges like she is going to stab the beast's heart, but instead she cuts away the medallion, breaking the Queen's spell and freeing her father. By utilizing action, independence, intelligence, and kindness, Snow breaks the "angel" mold that her predecessors held to, and proves that she is a living embodiment of an active agent.

Over the course of the film Snow White moves from a sweet, passive, non-autonomous person to an active agent able to make her own decisions and fight for her own life. Compared to the first description of Snow White, the woman who fights the beast and rescues her kingdom is strong and capable. With the help of Margaret, the prince, and the seven dwarfs, Snow learns to question her surrounding and her role in the

world, thus allowing her to find autonomy. Once she sees her worth in the kingdom, she is then able to claim agency through her actions. Throughout the film, Snow utilizes active agency and proves that she is more of an active agent in her own life than even the Queen. Though the Queen rules over everyone, she relies on magic and the help of others to do her work. Snow learns to claim agency by herself and without magic, thus making her a stronger character capable of besting the Queen. *Mirror Mirror* takes this idea further than other adaptations of the Snow White tale because Snow never falls under a sleeping spell from which she must be awakened. This choice breaks the mold of older tales, creating a new kind of princess who can act for herself and does not need enchanted sleep to gain a prince. Maria Tatar says that "the choice of a catatonic Snow White…as the fairest and most desirable of them all may offer a sobering statement on folkloric visions of the ideal bride" (*Grimm's Fairy Tales* 146). Earlier generations hearing Snow White's story did not mind that their princess was catatonic. However, this move to have the princess fall into a sleeping state turns her into an object, stressing her passivity as she waits for true love's kiss to wake her. Asleep, she cannot be a subject in her own life. Many twenty-first century women would find it problematic that the main protagonist falls under a sleeping spell after fighting her way to freedom throughout the majority of the film. Not having Snow fall under a sleeping spell allows her to remain a subject from the time she is awakened to her own autonomy and agency, and remain an active agent who never loses the ability to act for herself.

In the end, Snow defeats the Evil Queen and marries Prince Alcott. In another nod to Disney's tale, Snow White does not get married in a white dress; instead she wears a blue dress with puffy sleeves, a white collar, and a large yellow bow on the back. Just as

Disney's Snow White rides off into the sunset in her classic blue and yellow dress, here too Snow White meets her happily ever after in a blue and yellow dress. As for the Queen, instead of death being her end, she ages into an old hag—thus punishing her with her own worst fears of aging, losing her beauty, and losing her power. She shows up at the wedding as an old hag and presents Snow White with a present: a bright red apple. As Snow is about to take a bite the Queen says, "…to the fairest of them all." Knowing who it is, Snow pulls out her dagger and cuts a piece to offer to the old hag, saying, "Age before beauty." The Queen appears appalled that her plan to kill Snow still does not work, to which Snow says, "It's important to know when you've been beaten." This line refers back to when the Queen and Snow first interacted at the beginning of the film. Though the Queen thought she had won, Snow proves to be a formidable opponent, and in fact stronger than the Queen. The film ends with the magic mirror saying, "So it was Snow White's story after all." It *is* Snow White's story: it is the story of how Snow White found her role outside the castle, learned about her own responsibilities, and found her own way to claim agency and to get what she wanted out of life.

Cinderella: A Lesson in Courage and Kindness

While Singh's version of Snow White literally made the main character a warrior, Kenneth Branagh's live-action *Cinderella* takes a more subtle approach in recreating characters in order to highlight the strong females. As Branagh says, in taking on this film one of his main goals was to emphasize the "human" element of this tale (Solomon 7). Everything from creating a tragic past for the stepmother, to fleshing out the prince's role, to creating an inner strength and courage for Ella (Cinderella's given name in this film version) work toward showing many facets of humanity, and play up the human

element that at times was lacking in the animated version. The film's emphasis on the theme "have courage and be kind" helps to highlight characters who contain these traits and explores how these characters stand up for themselves and claim agency.

For this version of *Cinderella*, Branagh and his creative team pulled elements from Charles Perrault, the Grimm brothers, and Disney's animated story, as well as added new elements of their own. Unlike Perrault's and the Grimms' versions where the father is still alive but does not protect his daughter or Disney's version where both parents have died, Branagh's version begins with both parents alive and well. Both parents are loving and caring and instill in Ella a joy for life. Ella's mother in particular teaches her how to see the world not as it is, but as it could be. Beginning the film with the mother alive is unusual for a Cinderella tale, yet here it presents a normally absent entity in order to help empower Ella. Worthington argues that the removal of mothers from Disney princess films helps facilitate the patriarchal dictate for the need to have a wedding because the mother might want more for herself or her daughter "than the traditional marriage plot" (41). Putting the mother back into the story, even for a short time, allows her to instill in Ella life lessons which Ella takes to heart and in the end helps her find a better life. On her death bed, Ella's mother tells her, "have courage and be kind." Her mother understands that these traits have power, and Ella can persevere through anything if she utilizes these traits. Here the writers have taken two classic princess traits—courage which is normally associated with strength, but also kindness which at times can make a character seem weak—and made them the driving forces for empowering Ella. Ella's mother tells her, "You have more kindness in your little finger than most people possess in their whole body, and it has power; more than you know." Though this foreshadows

her time living under her stepmother, this speech also equates Ella's life choices to be kind to others, like her stepmother and stepsisters, with power. Ella's choice to be kind empowers her and makes her an agent in her own life, even when it seems that she is being oppressed by others.

While many critics dismiss Cinderella as a passive character who needs the prince to save her, in this version of Cinderella, Branagh works to give Ella an inner strength that not only helps her survive the trials of life, but I would argue also helps her rise above adversity and learn to claim agency for herself. As Branagh says:

> In the script, we tried to make absolutely clear that we were presenting a girl whose life would not be dependent on or defined by a man arriving. Her life would not be dependent on or defined by glamourous or expensive things arriving. Also, this girl would not be defined by having some easily available magical or supernatural force, like a fairy godmother as an omnipotent, omniscient agent who would take care of everything. The fairy godmother helps, of course, but as in life, things are mostly up to the individual. Cinderella rises to the challenge. (qtd. in Solomon 102)

Making it so Ella rises to the challenge and actively works toward a better life for herself makes all the difference in creating an autonomous character. This does not mean that Ella has to be selfish or that her actions should be read as passive, rather she makes a series of decisions—some to help her family and some to help herself—and acts upon them in order to claim agency. Trites argues, "The feminist protagonist cares about other people, but she cares about herself, too" (*Waking Sleeping Beauty* ix). In order to defeat her stepmother's plans, to help the prince, and to achieve a new happier life for herself, Ella must find the line between caring for others and acting for herself. In doing so, she proves that both courage and kindness are necessary in order to claim agency.

To contrast Ella's goodness, her stepmother is ruled by sorrow and bitterness which turns into spite when dealing with Ella. Lady Tremaine is presented as elegant and

refined. She wants only the best for herself and her daughters. However, she loses her first husband and is forced to remarry for the sake of her daughters. Her daughters lack the grace and social skills to make it in society, and while Ella may not have her hair styled and wear the newest fashions, Lady Tremaine knows she has the poise and elegance to succeed as a lady of the royal court. She is jealous of Ella and how much Ella's father loves his daughter. For Lady Tremaine, Ella represents everything that she has lost and the potential her daughters cannot reach so, as the lady of the house, she is willing to wield her power against Ella and turn her into a servant rather than another daughter.

One of the most important scenes in this live-action version of *Cinderella* is the confrontation between Lady Tremaine and Ella after Lady Tremaine discovers that Ella is the mystery princess from the ball. In Disney's animated version, Lady Tremaine figures out Cinderella is the maiden the prince seeks, so silently goes and locks her in her room. While Cinderella does beg for her stepmother not to lock her in, she remains relatively silent and passive, allowing the animals to take on the role of savior, and she never speaks her mind against her stepmother. Neither woman is really given a voice in this scene, so it is important that both get to speak their minds in the live-action version. In Branagh's version, when Ella hears the proclamation by the newly crowned King Kit that he would like to marry the mysterious princess from the ball, she rushes home to get her remaining glass slipper. In the attic of their country estate, Branagh has the "angel" and "monster" of the tale face off—but instead of the angel remaining passive Ella shows great strength, while Lady Tremaine is not just monstrous to counter Ella's goodness, instead she demonstrates a vulnerability in telling her unhappy tale.

In this scene Ella's stepmother confronts her, and the audience is able to see the bitterness that drives Lady Tremaine as well as the inner goodness and strength that drives Ella. Through dialogue, wardrobe, and lighting Ella and Lady Tremaine appear opposites, helping to highlight through all facets of film the goodness within Ella and the wickedness that Lady Tremaine possesses. Ella is dressed in light colors and stands where a window allows sunlight to stream in and highlight her; she speaks of love and kindness as the greatest treasures in the world. Lady Tremaine, by contrast, wears dark colors and sits in the shadows of the attic spewing accusations at Ella because she does not believe good things should come to Ella. Knowing the modern audience's familiarity with fairy tales, the writers have Lady Tremaine begin her story with "Once upon a time," and she goes on to tell a tale of heartbreak. Losing "the light of her life" and then having to remarry for the sake of her daughters, only to lose that man and inherit his daughter. It is a sad story, but instead of grieving and letting go Lady Tremaine holds on to her sorrow and allows it to make her bitter. At the end of her tale she says, "And so I lived unhappily ever after." In her bitterness Lady Tremaine cannot (or does not want to) see that good things can happen to good people like Ella. She accuses Ella of stealing the slipper and when Ella says it was given to her, Lady Tremaine says, "Nothing is ever given. For everything you must, pay, pay, pay." Ella counters, "That's not true. Kindness is free. Love is free." For the entirety of their relationship Ella has tried to be kind, and Lady Tremaine has only used this kindness to her advantage by taking Ella's room for her own daughters and turning Ella into a servant. Her treatment of Ella shows that Lady Tremaine fears Ella, and knows that Ella could trump her not only in beauty, but also in

goodness and grace; therefore Lady Tremaine works to take away Ella's agency and autonomy in order to keep her an oppressed servant.

Throughout this scene Lady Tremaine shows that she is threatened by Ella, but when Ella stands up for herself and Kit, refusing to marry him in order for the stepmother to gain power, Lady Tremaine is caught off guard. Ella's statement of "No" and her choosing to not act may be read as passive by some critics because she does not take any major action. However, in her non-action she chooses to rebel. Her rebellion is the most important action because in Ella's refusal to do what her stepmother wants she claims agency for herself. This inaction is a very loud action against her stepmother. In discussing the concept of angel of the house and the monstrous woman Gilbert and Gubar assert, "the monster-woman, threatening to replace her angelic sister, embodies intransigent female autonomy" (28). But here the angel stands up to the persecutor and claims her own autonomy, thus breaking the Victorian model of angel versus monster. Lady Tremaine expected Ella to do as she was told, just like she did with the housework. However, Ella kept up the house for her parents' sake and did her stepmother's bidding out of kindness. Here she proves that all of her previous actions were based on her life credo to have courage and be kind. By standing up to her stepmother and refusing her demands, Ella proves that she does have courage and that kindness does not mean she has to play doormat to her stepmother and stepsisters. Ella takes it even further, saying, "I was not able to protect my father from you, but I will protect the prince and the kingdom, no matter what becomes of me." Lady Tremaine is outraged that she would be refused by Ella, prompting Ella to continue pushing and ask why her stepmother has always been so cruel when she (Ella) did not deserve the treatment she has received. Lady Tremaine

responds, "Because you are young and innocent and good, and I…" she cannot even finish her sentence. She looks at Cinderella with such rage and jealousy, it appears as though Cinderella is everything that Lady Tremaine was in her youth, but she has let heartbreak and bitterness drive her and her decisions. She is a reflection of what Cinderella could become if she let herself be bitter, yet Ella's goodness allows her to escape relatively unscathed.

In order to create a match worthy of Ella's kindness and strength, the prince character also had to undergo changes. Branagh challenges the gender representations of the earlier film by making Cinderella more active and creating a prince to complement her character growth. Both Cinderella and Prince Kit are given larger roles and more voice in order to showcase the mutual respect and agency each has within the relationship. In Disney's animated version the prince is a cipher to help complete the fairy tale with an advantageous marriage. He is only in the film a few minutes and speaks very little. For this updated version the character of the prince had to be fleshed out because this Cinderella would not be interested in him if he did not have some kind of depth or complexity (Solomon 116-120). By reimagining the character of the prince, giving him his own backstory and his own storyline throughout the film, Branagh is able to produce a character with more agency in his own right and who can also support and attract someone as courageous and kind as Ella. Therefore, Ella and Kit have a meet-cute prior to the ball where Ella and "apprentice" Kit meet in the forest. This meet-cute creates a better reason for Ella to want to go to the ball. Instead of chasing a prince for a husband, Ella hopes to find apprentice Kit and spend the evening with him. During their meeting in the forest, Ella claims autonomy by speaking her mind, both about the royal

hunt and her position in life. Ella tells Kit two things: "We must simply have courage and be kind", and "Just because it's what's done, doesn't mean it's what should be done." Kit agrees with both of these life philosophies, and they become the driving forces that help him open the ball to all the people of his kingdom, and gain his father's approval to seek out his mystery date and marry her. At his father's death bed, Kit tells him, "I believe that we need not look outside of our borders for strength or guidance. What we need is right before us, and need only to have courage and be kind to see it." With this assertion, the King sees that Kit has become his own man and will be a good ruler for the kingdom; he tells Kit to marry for love. By fleshing out the prince character, and showing him standing up for his beliefs in having courage and being kind, the audience can see that Ella and Kit make a good match beyond the need for a happy ending.

The only time Lady Tremaine claims Ella as a daughter is when she tries to use her role of "mother" as a power play to keep Ella from going to the prince. However this claim of "mother" has no effect on Ella. Because the film begins with her mother alive and well, Ella and the audience know what it is for Ella to have a mother who treats her child with love and kindness. Therefore this claim that Lady Tremaine is her mother actually has the reverse effect of what Lady Tremaine wanted because it allows Ella to empower herself. Ella claims autonomy separate from Lady Tremaine, saying, "You never have been, and you never will be my mother."

Ella continues to stand up for herself when facing King Kit to try on the glass slipper. Her choices in handling the situation make this an important scene and differentiates it from its cartoon predecessor. Once the royal party makes its way to Ella's house, Branagh recreates the scene where Cinderella tries on the glass slipper in order to

highlight her strength. This scene shows Ella is a strong character capable of claiming autonomy and agency, and shows that Kit is a loving and kind individual himself. In the animated version it is the Grand Duke who interacts with Cinderella, and after she produces the other glass slipper (the one the Grand Duke had had broken) he takes her to the palace. In this version, Kit himself comes to the house and meets with Ella. In this new scene, even before trying on the shoe, Ella takes a great risk asking if he can love the servant girl named Cinderella.[33] Names have power, and here Ella takes back her power by owning the name her stepsisters gave her out of spite.[34] As Trites explains, "Naming, as a linguistic practice that implies ownership, also calls attention to subjectivity. Someone self-named or who names other things displays more agency than whatever or whomever receives the name" (*Waking Sleeping Beauty* 31). Ella, being given this new derogatory name, feels like all of her power in the household has been stripped away. Escaping her stepmother and stepsisters' cruelty, she runs away to the forest where she meets Kit for the first time; when she meets him again as the servant girl, she claims the name Cinderella. By self-naming she actively claims her place as a servant, and takes back her autonomy which her stepsisters worked to take away in creating the name. When Kit asks her who she is, she responds, "I am Cinderella. Your Majesty, I am no princess. I have no carriage, no parents, and no dowry. I do not even know if that

[33] Ella's wardrobe here at the end, as well as in the forest when she first meets Kit, is important. She undergoes the classic beauty makeover in order to go to the ball, but that does not change who she is on the inside. She wants Kit to love her for who she is—for traits like courage and kindness. Unlike Snow White, who is empowered by her makeover because it can help her in her journey to be a warrior, Ella does not see power in the clothing, but in the individual and this is showcased through her decision to meet King Kit in her servant dress.

[34] One day, after sleeping by the fireplace for warmth, Ella serves breakfast while covered in soot. Her stepsisters, believing they are being clever, start coming up with nicknames like Cinderwench, Dirtyella, and finally Cinderella. Though her stepmother laughs at the girls' jests, when she sees a fourth place setting at the table she takes this opportunity to banish Ella to the kitchen, calling her by this new name Cinderella.

beautiful slipper will fit. But, if it does, will you take me as I am? An honest country girl who loves you." This speech proves that she is brave and refuses to be anyone but herself. Kit responds, "Of course I will. But only if you will take me as I am. An apprentice still learning his trade." Kit, too, is asking to be accepted as he is. In creating this scene, Branagh not only shows the compatibility of these characters, more importantly he allows each character to claim autonomy in verbally saying how they see themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Ella leaves her childhood home with one more act of agency. Before walking out the door, she turns to her stepmother who is watching from the staircase. Cinderella says, "I forgive you." There are no actions that can be seen, yet this is an active sentence. It is a choice that Ella makes, unprompted, thus allowing her to claim agency. In the face of adversity, sometimes kindness is the hardest yet strongest thing someone can do. Forgiving her stepmother is not to pardon what Lady Tremaine has done to Ella, but rather to free herself to fully move on. This mirrors the beginning of the film when Ella forgives her mother for leaving so soon. Ella's action to forgive frees herself to continue to live life with courage and kindness. Part of Lady Tremaine's bitterness comes from holding on to her grief and not forgiving people, whereas Ella has been able to be good and kind to others because she has extended forgiveness to others. In the end, Ella reclaims her identity and agency by admitting her position in life and willingly being seen as she truly is. Lady Tremaine therefore cannot claim agency because Ella's truth crumbles the façade that Lady Tremaine has lived behind. The last image of Lady Tremaine show her sitting on the stairs, grasping the rails. This conjures an image of her being imprisoned. Visually it appears as though Lady Tremaine will continue to live in

the prison she has created for herself. Ella, on the other hand, is last seen on the palace balcony with Kit greeting the people of the kingdom. Ella has claimed her chosen place in life where she is free, and can help rule the kingdom with courage and kindness.

Maleficent: Rethinking Female Heroism and Villainy

Mirror Mirror and *Cinderella* both revise the female characters in order to give them more agency, but the princesses are still the protagonists and the Evil Queen and Evil Stepmother are the respective villainesses. For *Maleficent* the villain becomes the protagonist in this revisionist tale. In revising Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* in order for Maleficent to be the heroine as well as the villainess, Maleficent needed to be imbued with a vulnerability that could complement her power and agency. To create such a complex character, Linda Woolverton, trusted Disney writer of other films such as *Beauty and the Beast* and Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, was brought on board to write the screenplay and bring a different version of Maleficent to life. Woolverton created a strong feminist story by taking a female character who is seen as an evil monster, and transforming her into a more complicated character. Creating a character who curses an infant and still receives sympathy from the audience takes a lot of care and thought. Susan Hopkins proposes, "In contrast to the caring, sharing 'good' girl, the new-style female hero is often driven by revenge, anger or a lust for material gain" (6). While Maleficent is originally motivated by anger and revenge, her story is much more complicated than what Hopkins is asserting, just like real heroines should be. By shifting the focus of the tale from romantic love to maternal love, Woolverton created a character who may be evil in seeking revenge, but can be redeemed through the love of a child. Here the *femme fatale* takes center stage as protagonist, breaking the mold of monstrous

female while providing a complexity of character as well as new forms of agency. Aurora, though still a small role in this film, is also revised to have more agency. In the end, both women have to come to terms with how their lives intersect and make choices about these intersections, thus allowing the characters of Maleficent and Aurora to each claim agency for herself.

In adapting the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* into *Maleficent*, Woolverton creates female protagonists (both Maleficent and Aurora) who are aware of their own power and set out to find their own destinies. Part of what makes Maleficent a strong female protagonist is that while she still holds the wicked traits associated with the original Maleficent, she also demonstrates traits normally associated with the princess character. She has a tendency to be harsh, assertive, and callous, but she also shows that she can be loving, kind, and selfless. Rebecca Anne C. Do Rosario explains that with the introduction of Team Disney, the *femme fatales* disappeared. She argues this happens because, post-1960s and 1970s feminism, the Disney princess was able to take on some of the exuberance of the *femme fatales* (42-44). Just like the princesses who absorbed some of the traits of the *femme fatale* as they became more complicated, the villainess can also take on traits of the princess and become a more complex character and heroine. Thus Maleficent can be vengeful and kind, while Aurora can be strong and curious. Though Aurora receives little screen time, much like in Disney's animated version, the time that is allotted to her shows the strong young woman Aurora has grown up to be. Aurora is able to claim agency and speak her mind. It is not a prince that drives her wants in life, it is her desire to be with Maleficent in the Moors. Both women learn to claim agency as they learn to care for each another and work toward a life together.

In order to allow Maleficent to be both heroine and villainess, a complex backstory had to be created. The film begins with the story of two kingdoms that were in constant discord. One realm is made up of humans and their king, the other realm is the Moors where the fairies and other magical creatures live. The narrator tells the audience that "only a great hero or a terrible villain might bring [these lands] together." The narrator goes on to tell Maleficent's story. When Maleficent was a young fairy she fell in love with an orphan boy named Stefan. However, Stefan abandons Maleficent to follow his ambitions in the royal court. When he returns to the Moors, he drugs Maleficent and cuts off her wings. Presenting them to the king of the human realm, he claims he killed Maleficent and is married to the king's daughter, becoming the next king. King Stefan and the queen have a child, and Maleficent sees this as the perfect time for retaliation against Stefan. It is this tumultuous relationship between Maleficent and Stefan that drives the backstory, and creates sympathy for Maleficent. While Aurora is cursed in order for Maleficent to get back at Stefan, Aurora also saves Maleficent from herself, and through their mutual love they save each other.

Young Maleficent was an "angel of the house," but the violation of losing her wings and being betrayed by someone she loved brought out the "monster" within her. Throughout the film, these two sides of Maleficent battle as she struggles with wanting to help those she loves while also wanting revenge for the wrongs she has suffered. This is a complex duality that did not exist in the early Disney princess films—good and evil were separate, no exceptions. Aurora, though sweet, stands up for what she wants from a young age. Thus Woolverton works from early in the story to break the idea of a passive, angelic princess. Instead Aurora is instilled with a drive to achieve her own desires rather

than passively listening to what others want her to do. Through these role changes Woolverton works to dislodge the ideas of the angel and the monster that the animated characters clearly hold to. Instead, Woolverton penned a female-centric story which focuses on the bond between two women and how working toward what they want from life allows each to find her own power through claiming agency.

In the original Disney version of *Sleeping Beauty* there is no explanation as to why Maleficent is evil, only that she is evil. She even refers to herself as "the mistress of all evil" at one point in the film. Her curse is for Aurora to die, and one of the good fairies has to use her magical gift to turn the curse from death to a sleep that can be awakened by true love's kiss. In this animated version, Maleficent is the monster. For the revised tale, Maleficent shows up at the christening and speaks the curse over Aurora. Aurora will prick her finger on her sixteenth birthday, and the only thing that can wake her is "true love's kiss." After Stefan abandoned and betrayed her, Maleficent does not believe that true love exists; therefore, she believes she is cursing Aurora to a sleep forever. Using Aurora's sixteenth birthday and true love's kiss as anchors for the curse will make Stefan have to continually face what he did to Maleficent. For Maleficent, this curse not only inflicts her revenge on Stefan, it is her way of claiming agency and taking back her power which Stefan took when he robbed her of her wings. Claiming agency, though positive for the female since she is asserting herself, does not mean that the outcome must be positive for everyone. Though cursing a baby may go against social imperatives, thus making her villainous, for Maleficent it is a creative way to seek revenge against Stefan. This deliberate choice and subsequent action on Maleficent's part is her first wicked act and her first major act of agency within the film. However, unlike

the animated version where Maleficent has no given motivation behind her wicked actions, here in the live-action version the audience understands why Maleficent takes these actions. Her backstory creates a vulnerability that allows viewers to sympathize with Maleficent rather than Stefan and his family. These actions also create a complicated bond between Maleficent and Aurora, which the film builds upon in order to allow both women to claim agency for the good of their respective realms.

Stefan's actions during the curse scene are also important because they begin weaving the theme of parental love into the story. Stefan would do anything to save Aurora: he has all spinning wheels burned, he has Aurora taken away to be raised by others until the day after her sixteenth birthday, and he builds a wall of iron thorns to keep Maleficent away.[35] However, what began as parental love to save Aurora shifts to the need for revenge against Maleficent and a paranoia that Maleficent is coming for him. This makes Stefan's heart harden over time. He does not even go to his wife when she is on her death bed; instead, he remains in a dark room, talking to Maleficent's wings. To counter Stefan's shift toward the villainous, Maleficent grows kinder over the course of the film. The curse scene is Maleficent's action to seek revenge against him. However, in her obsession to watch over Aurora and make sure she survives to her sixteenth birthday Maleficent's heart is softened due to the maternal bond that grows between her and Aurora. This maternal bond becomes the focus of this film.

Maleficent is a reluctant mother figure. She becomes "fairy godmother" to Aurora because the good fairies are neglectful and inept. Waiting for the time when her curse will come to pass, Maleficent watches over Aurora and protects her from other evils,

[35] Iron burns fairies

wanting her curse to be what kills Aurora. Many of these scenes are amusing because they depict contradicting emotions and reactions. Maleficent will speak poorly of Aurora and call her names, but at the same time she will save Aurora from incidents like falling off a cliff. Through these interactions with Aurora, Maleficent regains compassion and love. Maleficent must look after the child if she is going to make it to her sixteenth birthday and fulfill the curse. However, these interactions have the reverse effect on Maleficent. Unlike the Evil Queen or Lady Tremaine, her time with Aurora makes her learn to love the child. Kathleen R. Riley writes of modern adoption stories, "Over time, perceptions about adoption have evolved along more optimistic and affirming lines, with a narrative that focuses on themes of redemption as well as rescue—for mothers as well as their children" (165). She goes on to argue, "Becoming a 'real' mother through adoption opens up a whole new world of possibilities, and the myriad promises of redemption both now and in the future" (176). Though the mother lives in Disney's 1959 version, here the mother is killed off so that no one can stand between Maleficent and Aurora, making this a true adoption tale. Maleficent is redeemed through her love for Aurora. And while Maleficent believes she is trying to rescue Aurora from her curse, Aurora saves Maleficent from the villainous path she was following. In the end, each woman needs the other in order to be the best version of herself.

Maleficent's first act of agency was to curse Aurora in order to get back at Stefan. At this point she claimed autonomy as the wicked queen of the Moors and turned it into a dark and scary place, and the creatures that once loved her now fear her. With Aurora in the picture, Maleficent reflects on her place in life and actively chooses to change once again. Barclay argues, "To consider which particular attachments we should reshape,

which to reject, which to choose, and which to promote, we need autonomy" (68). Through a lens of pain and hatred Maleficent chose to be wicked and inflict her sorrow not only on Stefan, but also on Aurora and the creatures of the Moors. Interacting with Aurora over the years, and seeing her interact with the creatures of the Moors reminds Maleficent of the good that at one time existed in the Moors and in herself. Aurora's presence makes Maleficent reevaluate her life. Regaining her perspective on life from a place of love, she once again reevaluates her motivations and decides she wants to change the future for Aurora and herself. By reevaluating her life and the decisions she has made, Maleficent claims autonomy once more as a good fairy; she then claims agency by acting on these new reflections and trying to undo her previous curse. This internal change within Maleficent is conveyed through the color of her magic.

In *Maleficent*, the duality of heroine and villainess in Maleficent can be seen visually through the color of her magic. The majority of her magic is gold; however, when she performs magic out of hatred or spite her magic turns green. The first time her green magic manifests itself is when Maleficent finds out why her wings were stolen. The next time this green magic is seen is when she curses Aurora. The green magic of this curse is important for later in the film when Maleficent once again takes action and tries to reverse her curse.[36] Spending time with Aurora makes Maleficent grow fond of the girl, and one night, after taking her home from the Moors, Maleficent attempts to lift the

[36] There are some important scenes leading up to Maleficent reversing the curse, and their order matters to the theme of maternal love. The first time Maleficent and Aurora interact in the Moors, Aurora calls Maleficent her fairy godmother. Maleficent looked out for Aurora when the good fairies were incapable of doing so, and therefore appeared to be a good person working to help Aurora. After this scene in the Moors, the film cuts to the castle where King Stefan is told the queen might not live through the night. Just as Maleficent's feelings toward Aurora are shifting to love, the queen dies, thus freeing the mother role to be fulfilled by Maleficent. The film cuts back to Maleficent and Aurora in the Moors as Aurora plays with magical creatures and Maleficent looks on, appearing happy and light-hearted like she was in the beginning of the film.

curse. Maleficent is surrounded by gold magic, but the curse she created when Aurora was a baby is too strong and Aurora radiates green magic which rejects the new spell. Though there cannot be two Maleficents on screen, having the two colors of magic allows the audience to visually see the villainess and the heroine attempting to battle. The gold and green magic clash and swirl around each other as the good magic attempts to overtake the vengeful curse. While Maleficent is not able to reverse the curse, this scene and the different colored magic provides a visual manifestation of two of Maleficent's choices coming together.

One of the most important scenes in this revisionist tale to receive a twist is Aurora's awakening to a kiss. In this version it is Maleficent, not the prince, who awakens Aurora with true love's kiss. Making this huge change in the story not only highlights the theme of maternal love, it also gives the power to a female character. In most versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale, including Disney's animated version, the prince either stumbles across the princess or intentionally seeks her out, and he is the one to awaken the princess with a kiss. In this version, Maleficent puts Prince Philip into an enchanted sleep and takes him to the palace because her sidekick Diaval says he is Aurora's only hope of "love's true kiss." Prince Philip awakens outside Aurora's room, and the good fairies drag him inside to try and awaken Aurora. When Aurora does not wake up, Philip and the good fairies leave the room and Maleficent and Diaval come out of hiding. Going to Aurora's bedside, Maleficent delivers a speech proving how much her time with Aurora has affected her—changing her from a vengeful witch back to a good and caring fairy. She says, "I will not ask your forgiveness because what I have done to you is unforgiveable. I was so lost in hatred and revenge. Sweet Aurora, you stole

what was left of my heart. And now I have lost you forever. I swear, no harm will come to you as long as I live. And not a day shall pass that I don't miss your smile." Only when she believes she has lost Aurora forever is she willing to admit what Aurora meant to her. Maleficent believed that Stefan had taken everything from her, and the only way to reassert her power in the world was through equally vengeful acts. However, through her actions as mother (either reluctant or subconscious) her heart was healed and her actions once again become loving—attempting to reverse the curse, then seeking a means of waking Aurora, and promising nothing will harm her. With tears running down her cheeks, Maleficent bends over and kisses Aurora on the forehead. As she turns to leave the room, Aurora says, "Hello, Godmother." It was not a prince Aurora had only met once who held the power to awaken her, it was the woman who looked after Aurora her whole life and grew to love her. Diaval says, "No truer love" and he is right; it was a mother's kiss that was "true love's kiss."

These scenes in the castle also provide Aurora with agency. Just like Cinderella who chose kindness and forgiveness, so too does Aurora choose to forgive Maleficent. She even asks to go back to the Moors with Maleficent. As they attempt to leave the palace King Stefan's guards attack Maleficent. Aurora takes action and begins fighting the soldiers, proving she is brave and willing to fight for those she loves. Though the soldiers keep her from getting to Maleficent, when she runs from the fire she ends up in the storage room where Maleficent's wings are kept. Instead of being scared or hiding, she is curious and investigates. She now knows the truth of who stole the wings, and she works to break open the cabinet to free the wings. This scene is important to Aurora helping heal Maleficent. Through love and kindness, Aurora healed Maleficent's heart

and turned her back into a good fairy. Now, in freeing Maleficent's wings, she literally heals Maleficent and makes her physically whole. Through Aurora's love and curiosity, Maleficent returns to being a powerful good fairy, just as she was before Stefan wounded her. Choosing to live in the Moors, trying to save Maleficent, and working to free the wings are all actions Aurora takes in order to form her life into what she wants. This makes her an active agent in her own life, and helps prove that modern princesses can still be sweet and kind, but they can also take action when it is for their own good or for those they love.

Aurora also claims agency in working to unite the human realm and the Moors when she is made queen, succeeding her father. Though Prince Philip is present, and Aurora is happy to see him in the Moors, the focus is on Aurora and how she brings the kingdoms together. As Trites argues,

> In rewriting folktales to advance feminist ideologies and to identify female subjectivity, feminist writers are both protesting the powerlessness of women inherent in our culture's old folkways and giving voice to a new set of values: a set that allows for the princess to have power, a set that allows Sleeping Beauty to wake up not to a destiny that immerses her in her husband's life but to a density that is self-defined. (*Waking Sleeping Beauty* 45)

Throughout the entire film Aurora makes her wishes known. At no point does she rely on a man to help; instead when she needs help it is her mother-figure who comes to her aid. While Trites is metaphorically speaking about all passive females in fairy tales, and particularly children's literature, her claim that the princess (or female) character needs to wake up to a "destiny that is self-defined" is exactly what Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora do in these new retellings of old fairy tales—thus all claim more agency than their earlier counterparts because they all make choices and take action to create the life they

want for themselves rather than waiting for someone to come and take them away. At the end of *Maleficent*, Aurora is queen of both the human realm and the Moors, allowing her power and agency to rule over the lands and bring the two kingdoms a kind of peace they had not seen in generations.

The greatest agency that Aurora is given in the story is the role of narrator. While Disney's animated version uses a male narrator, here at the end the female narrator tells the audience that this is the real story of Maleficent, saying, "So you see, the story is not quite as you were told, and I should know, for I was the one they called Sleeping Beauty." Woolverton brings the feminine presence of Aurora to the forefront and gives her a new realm of agency by making her the voice of the story. No longer relegated to be the passive, sleeping princess, Aurora tells her story, which makes her an active agent. She concludes the tale, saying, "In the end, my kingdom was united not by a hero or a villain, as the legend predicted, but by one who was both hero and villain. And her name was Maleficent." Aurora may have the last word of the tale, but she draws the attention to Maleficent and how she overcame hatred and revenge in order to be the heroine Aurora needed. After sixteen years of caring for Aurora, Maleficent learned what it means to truly love and care for someone. In the end Maleficent is less of a wicked witch and more a caring godmother. By creating a narrative where the female protagonist undergoes such a drastic shift, Woolverton challenges traditional notions of the "angel" princess and "monster" villainess. Instead the audience is presented with a complex female protagonist who shows great character growth and proves that female characters do not have to conform to either the 'good girl' or 'bad girl' mold—she can be both. This makes Maleficent a strong feminist protagonist, and is a great step forward for Disney's female

canon. The tale ends with both Maleficent and Aurora secure in their positions within society; they are independent and autonomous, and can finally live happily ever after together.

All of these twenty-first century films work to overcome the passive princesses and villainous women of the early Disney princess films. In the early tales Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora fit the Victorian notion of the "angel of the house." Each princess is kind, innocent, selfless, and passive. This is in sharp contrast to the monstrous villainesses who are wicked, selfish, and autonomous. Holding to these rigid roles, in the original princess films each villainess works to take down the young beauty who threatens her power. But as Gilbert and Gubar write, "It is debilitating to be *any* woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (53). Segregating women to the categories of either angel or monster means if a woman is not a passive and self-sacrificing person then she must be a selfish and wicked woman. Just as Gilbert and Gubar argue that female authors must work to break women out of these two molds, women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have worked to create many avenues throughout society for women. These new paths have moved into popular culture and allow the princess to move from passive angel to active agent who can fight her own battles. The villainess is also allowed a vulnerability and a backstory to help the audience understand why she works against the princess. In these modern retellings of "Snow White," "Cinderella," and "Sleeping Beauty" the concepts of both the angel and the monster are overcome through characters claiming agency and showing new levels of complexity.

CHAPTER 3

THE WOMEN OF HARRY POTTER:

AGENCY FOR A POSTFEMINIST GENERATION

"Hermione made it okay for girls to be the smartest in the room. To be a leader, the one with the plan."

Emma Watson

"It is our choices…that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

Dumbledore, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (333)

As Kathryn Westcott writes in *BBC News Magazine*, with the acceptance of people such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg as popular geeks and the rise of traditional "nerd" interests, such as comic books, anime, and video games, the terms "nerd" and "geek" have become popular and accepted self-descriptions. In the words of Neil Gaiman, "Nowadays, people own their nerd-dom" (qtd in Westcott). Film adaptation is one of the major contributing factors to popularizing nerd culture and the kinds of texts that go along with this subculture. Not only was J. K Rowling's Harry Potter series[37] being adapted in the early 2000s, around the same time J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series was adapted by Peter Jackson, George Lucas rebooted *Star Wars'* popularity with the creation of the prequel films, and comic book superheroes began taking over the

[37] Since this entire chapter focuses on the Harry Potter series, all of the titles will be shorthanded to lose the "*Harry Potter and the*" when referring to the texts, both in text and for citations. The designations are as follows: *Sorcerer's Stone* for book one (1997), *Chamber of Secrets* for book two (1998), *Prisoner of Azkaban* for book three (1999), *Goblet of Fire* for book four (2000), *Order of the Phoenix* for book five (2003), *Half-Blood Prince* for book six (2005), and *Deathly Hallows* for book seven (2007).

big screen. These creations and adaptations made these "nerdy" texts more widely available to the public, and introduced them to a new generation of potential fans. With this new wave of popularized texts, the "nerdy girl" became more visible and vocal. Most images of the nerd prior to the twenty-first century are of the *Star Wars*-loving, Dungeons and Dragons-playing male nerd. Within the last decade, though, women have become more involved in these different fandoms. The term fangirl, [38] with both its positive and negative associations, has entered the world's colloquial lexicon. Sam Maggs asserts, "Women are becoming the driving force behind geek culture, and we shouldn't be relegated to the sidelines" (11). Vocal female nerds like Maggs have called for more active female characters, particularly as main characters, within these different speculative fiction worlds. Yet even prior to this heightened demand, Rowling showed it was possible to have a world where males and females take an active part in improving the world. Therefore, the Harry Potter series makes a great case study to explore the different ways that female characters claim agency within this fantasy world, which can then inspire people in the real world.

Rowling planned a seven book series from the beginning; she allowed the characters to age and mature, tackling issues of both childhood and adulthood. With such a long series, Rowling was also able to build a large and nuanced fictional community. For Rowling, her community supports equality regardless of gender. It is this kind of

[38] Fangirl refers to a girl or woman who is obsessed with some aspect of pop culture or some actor. Many times people use this term in a derogatory way to refer to females who are overly obsessed, and tends to marginalize these people as obsessive, young, or silly. However within blogs and forums fangirls will use this term to describe their love of something, or turn it into a verb, fangirling, in order to describe their reaction to a text. In these blogs and forums, fangirl is used in a positive and empowering way. According to a Twitter poll by the Collective Blog, 67% of those who voted said they do see fangirl as a positive term (most that voted not to use the term did so because they do not identify as female, but rather as male, genderqueer, or other non-conformative genders).

community that makes Rowling's world a postfeminist world. While some characters may read as classic archetypes, others break the mold; what makes this world postfeminist is that this wide range of characters function within the same community and demonstrates the varied roles women choose. With her series, Rowling created multiple diverse women, showing that there is no one right way to be a woman, but rather there are different ways women can be autonomous and claim agency.

Importance of Children's and Young Adult Fantasy

Early in the history of young adult fiction, Y.A. novels tended to be realistic fiction, and these stories dealt with issues facing teenagers: drugs, pregnancy, familial issues, death, etc. These novels were known as 'problem novels', and they were particularly popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Novels like S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967), Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974), or the many novels by Judy Blume speak to young adults and express the fears and anxieties of society for this new subculture of young adults (Waller 93). Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s fantasy became the most popular genre of children's and young adult literature.[39] Children's and young adult fantasy literature is important because the genre lets the reader tackle real world issues in the safe environment of fiction. As Trites argues, teenagers wonder if they can make a difference in the world (*Disturbing the Universe* 1). They also grapple with the different power structures in their world (parents, authority figures, etc.) (x). In a fantasy world, where the story does not have to conform to the laws of our reality, bigger stakes can be created for the protagonist, thus allowing her to tackle even larger issues.

[39] While young adult literature did not come into existence until the latter half of the twentieth century, children's literature has existed since the early nineteenth century. Authors such as Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, and Lloyd Alexander have created popular children's fantasy novels prior to the 1990s.

Accordingly, in genres like fantasy and dystopia, a protagonist's impact can literally mean saving her society or the world. Critics Francis J. Molson and Susan G. Miles argue that fantasy novels are important for young adult readers because "YA fantasy assists in revealing to adolescents that they are not immortal, that evil exists both within and outside, that they are capable of great evil as well as great good, and that they must make choices or render judgements if they are to grow into authentic adulthood" (qtd. in Lynn xxii). Fantasy is a popular genre among children and young adults because of the reader's ability to see a protagonist in their age group do incredible things. It can encourage the reader to also achieve greatness.

Book series continue to be popular for younger audiences, both for realistic fiction and fantasy, because the young reader wants to return to a familiar world, and to know what happens next to their favorite characters (Lynn xlii). Y.A. authors writing in genres like fantasy and dystopia tend to create series rather than stand-alone novels, allowing the arc of events to stretch over multiple books. This also allows for the protagonist(s) to grow and mature over time. Roberta Seelinger Trites proposes, "Young Adult novels are *Entwicklungsroman* or *Bildungsromane* that self-consciously explore the individual's power in relation to the institutions that comprise her or his existence" (*Disturbing the Universe* 18).[40] For Trites, this is a major factor in defining the difference between children's and young adult literature. While self-growth is a part of all novels that fall into these categories, for young adult novels, the protagonists deal with the relationship between the individual and society versus the self-discovery of children's

[40] Trites defines the difference between *Entwicklungsroman* and *Bildungsromane* as follows: *Entwicklungsroman* is a novel of development while a *Bildungsromane* is a novel where the protagonist comes of age. For her, if a protagonist does not come of age in a book then it qualifies as *Entwicklungsroman*; she argues that all young adult novels fall into this category (18).

literature (20). Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair offer one explanation for why multiple novels within a series can be helpful when writing for a young audience. They argue, "series novels that take their heroines from early adolescence to young womanhood may allow for more in-depth exploration of gender and developmental issues than is possible for a writer whose heroine's experiences must fit between the covers of one novel" (128-29). Gaining more time to grow and mature also provides more opportunities for one to find her own power and claim agency.

From a feminist standpoint, fantasy literature is also important for the equality that the genre offers to female protagonists as well as the numerous female authors giving voice to these characters and their stories. Fantasy is an important genre for female protagonists because the quest-like nature of fantasy can level the playing field and give female characters a chance to be heroines who save the day. As early as 1993, the *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* published an article on gender bias in young adult literature. In the article, Linda Forrest urged librarians to select texts that help fight the gender bias of the damsel in distress or dependent female character types. She argues that fantasy is one genre that has a "rich source of gender-fair fiction" (qtd. in Lynn xxv). In fantasy, females can be knights, witches, queens, healers, or puzzle solvers, all just as strong as their male counterparts. This is possible, in part, because fantasy worlds can exist outside of the real world's patriarchy and can conform to a multitude of other beliefs. However, it is not just the female characters within children's and young adult fantasy that matter, many of the famous names associated with the genre are female: Natalie Babbitt, Susan Cooper, Ursula K. Le Guin, Lois Lowry, Robin McKinley, Tamora Pierce, J. K. Rowling, Megan Whalen Turner, to name a few. These women

create strong, dynamic characters who go on imaginative journeys and learn many of life's hard lessons. These women claim agency through their creation of stories, which gives them a voice. Many of these authors choose to create a series where they can unfold the protagonist's journey over time, thus allowing more time for the protagonist to grow and learn to claim agency and autonomy for herself.

The Harry Potter series is a noteworthy example to examine because it holds to the above criteria—it was created by a female author who carefully crafted both male and female characters to show different versions of strength and agency. Written as a seven book series, with each book representing one year in the lives of the characters, the Harry Potter series is the kind of bildungsroman where the reader watches characters grow and change throughout the years. Within the series, as the characters age and mature, they must come to terms with their own power and how they fit within society's power structures, both for good and for evil. Due to this shift in age and maturity, critics such as Trites and Ruth Nadelman Lynn argue that the Harry Potter series is composed of both children's and young adult literature. As the characters age the books become darker and the issues discussed are more complex. Trites says that this shift from children's to young adult literature happens as "death becomes more of a menace" and "the characters begin to explore their sexuality" (472). This allowance of time to grow and mature gives space for the characters to learn about themselves while finding their own autonomy and agency.

Beyond the realm of the book, the Harry Potter series has also been adapted into films, allowing the viewer to also watch these characters age and mature. Through adaptation, the ways that the female characters claim agency can change. In adapting the

Harry Potter series to film, decisions had to be made as to what aspects of the books should be used for the film versus what events could be cut to help condense the stories for a cinematic timeframe. While Rowling was involved in making the films, unlike the books that are created by a sole person, in film, there are many people involved in bringing a story to life. Everyone—from writers, directors, to actors—can have different views of characters and different interpretations of scenes. Linda Hutcheon discusses some of the important shifts that must happen when moving from a telling genre like novels to a showing genre like film. She writes, "In the move from telling to showing, a performance adaptation must dramatize: description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images…In the process of dramatization there is inevitably a certain amount of re-accentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot" (40). This can lead to some major differences between novel and film.[41] It also provides license for new scenes to be created and other scenes to be refocused in order to shift narrative importance and convey specific themes to the film audience. Robert Stam offers a variation on the issue of fidelity in film, saying, "an adaptation should be faithful not so much to the source text, but rather to the essence of the medium of expression" (58). In this way, adaptation is like literary translation. A

[41] For the most part, the Harry Potter film adaptations work to create new and different kinds of agency for the female characters. However, those adapting a work must be careful in what new messages can be created through the removal of certain information. For example, in the film version of *Sorcerer's Stone* (2001), most of Hermione's efforts to help get through the different obstacles at the end are removed. The focus is on Harry needing to get to the professor and stop him. In emphasizing Harry's role, while cutting down on obstacles for time, the creators remove some of the power and agency that Hermione has in this scene. When Hermione says, "Me!...Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery," this reads as self-deprecating, and Emma Watson who plays Hermione delivers the line in a bashful manner. Since Hermione's efforts throughout this saga have not been portrayed, the viewer is more inclined to take this line at face value and accept that Harry is a better wizard than Hermione. Thus agency and power have been taken away from Hermione in this scene in order to benefit Harry. While this is one example of lost agency, and there are others, for the most part the filmmakers works to strengthen and empower the female characters through adaptation.

translation of a text can be literal word for word translation, but some heart and style of the text will be lost. Or a translator can utilize free translation where it may not correlate perfectly, but the heart or spirit of the text will remain. Therefore, within the different films it is possible for the representations of characters to change, and the ways that characters claim agency can also change.

Pop Culture and Postfeminism

Since the early 1990s and the emergence of the term *postfeminism*, feminists have debated the meaning of postfeminism and whether or not this is a positive term for feminism. Many feminist scholars equate postfeminism with antifeminism or the backlash movement; however, a number of scholars dealing with popular culture and media studies view postfeminism as a positive way to examine current cultural texts. For these scholars postfeminism is connected to the Girl Power movements of the 1990s and the reclaiming of girl and girlhood as a positive. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra write, "Postfeminist culture works in part to incorporate, assume, or naturalize aspects of feminism…postfeminist culture emphasizes educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work, domesticity, and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment" (2). As Tasker and Negra point out, all of these postfeminist traits are based in the idea of choice. Women can *choose* to work, go to school, or stay home.[42] While these are positive aspects, they do point out their misgivings that feminist concerns are lost in postfeminism (2-3). Though a valid point and something scholars and critics should keep in mind, I would argue that linking the postfeminist idea of choice with the feminist concepts of agency and autonomy opens

[42] Tasker and Negra do point out that the idea of choice inherently makes postfeminism white and middle class because it assumes economic freedom.

new avenues to explore the ways in which women are driving their own lives beyond the consumerism normally associated with postfeminism and chick-lit.[43]

Angela McRobbie, one of the major advocates for postfeminism as a positive in feminist and pop culture studies, argues that there has been a shift from "emancipatory politics" to "life politics" (19). Moving from group power struggles and battles (as seen through other waves of feminism) to individual issues and struggles has led to a group of women who are "dis-embedded" from communities where the gender roles are fixed. Here she means that as the old social classes fade, women are left to find their own structures (19). Women now make their own decisions and set their own plans for the paths they want to follow in life. In losing set gender roles in favor of following one's own plan, McRobbie writes, "As the overwhelming force of structure fades, so also, it is claimed, does the capacity for agency increase" (19). While postfeminism is a multifaceted and complex concept, it is this concept of creating one's own path which I want to draw from.

Many postfeminist scholars tend to examine consumer culture and women, or the independence and sexual freedom of women in texts such as *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001) and *Sex and the City* (1998-2004). Examining texts where a female's choice in career, family life, and personal interests is both accepted and praised is important for young readers. Fantasy is a genre that can highlight these areas and manipulate different gender roles because fantasy does not have to conform to real world structures or laws. Along with the idea of choice, another important concept within postfeminism is the ability for a woman to embody seemingly contradictory traits. Susan Hopkins writes, "The girl hero

[43] For more on feminism and postfeminism in chick-lit see Diane Negra's book *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2009).

embodies the contradictions of the postfeminist era: she is both radical and conservative, real and unreal, feminist and feminine" (6). In explaining postfeminism, McKenzie Wark in the preface to Hopkin's *Girl Heroes*, says, "[Postfeminism] accepts its own immersion in the social order, particularly in media. It takes images and stories from the media, and, rather than showing what they lack, it is showing what they might be good for" (xi). Holding to the focus of this dissertation—to show that there is no one right female character, instead we need multiple kinds of role models—postfeminism in this light demonstrates the need for varied depictions of women, and emphasizes an acceptance for choosing different paths in life. The Harry Potter series is one such text that proves multiple varied women can exist within the world.

While postfeminism may seem problematic for third-wave feminism, which works to include minorities, class, and gender into issues of feminism, I would argue postfeminism does not need to negate the work of third-wave feminism. Fantasy allows for a postfeminist world that still looks at issues like race and class through a different lens—like Muggles[44] versus wizards in the Harry Potter novels.[45] Hermione Granger may

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[44] Muggle refers to a non-magical person.

[45] One of the critiques of postfeminism is that it can be seen as re-inscribing whiteness to feminism and the feminine (McRobbie 69). I would argue people like Rowling work with postfeminist ideas while integrating race and gender, making ideas of third-wave feminism and postfeminism work together. Rowling creates characters of different races. Cho Chang, Harry's first girlfriend, is of Asian descent. Angela Johnson, fellow Gryffindor and Quidditch captain, is black. Examples like these are prolific throughout the novels, yet Rowling does not make a big deal about the color of one's skin. Rather her stressing of equality is through wizarding bloodline, thus making her own statement on race in the real world. When casting for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* was announced people were outraged that they would cast a black woman as Hermione, yet Rowling was thrilled. Rowling tweeted "Canon: brown eyes, frizzy hair and very clever. White skin was never specified. Rowling loves black Hermione." In an interview, she went on to further state, "I had a bunch of racists telling me that because Hermione 'turned white'—that is, lost colour from her face after a shock—that she must be a white woman, which I have a great deal of difficulty with. But I decided not to get too agitated about it and simply state quite firmly that Hermione can be a black woman with my absolute blessing and enthusiasm" (qtd in Ratcliffe). While her world may not portray the micro-aggressions and exclusions that minorities might confront regularly, her characterization works to portray persons of color and other minorities in roles beyond stereotypes.

appear to be a hetero-normative character, but in the wizarding world she is discriminated against due to her bloodline and because she was born to Muggle parents (derogatorily she is called a Mudblood, meaning dirty blood for not having wizarding parents). Meanwhile the Weasleys are looked down upon by families like the Malfoys because economically they are poor, however, their bloodline is pure wizard. These classifications bring up issues of prejudice, particularly in the treatment Hermione receives from characters like Draco Malfoy and the beliefs and actions of characters like Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge. Through these kinds of associations, J. K. Rowling explores issues of race, class, and gender within her series without reproducing real world stereotypes and issues.

By utilizing postfeminism to analyze the women from the Harry Potter universe, it is possible to show how feminism is still functioning within this text to empower both characters and women in the real world. For her wizarding world, Rowling created many different kinds of women: working women, stay-at-home moms, nerds, sporty girls, girly girls, evil women, kind women. Each woman has her role to play within the world, but what is important is that each female character within Rowling's world is a subject rather than an object seen by the male protagonist. While there are numerous female characters that could be analyzed, I have chosen four groups of characters to analyze in order to highlight the varied and diverse group of women Rowling has created. The four groups are: Ginny and Luna as the girls of Hogwarts; Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall as the female role models; Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge as the evil women; and Hermione Granger as the ultimate postfeminist character within the series.

Most of the female characters I have chosen to write about are on the side of

good, but Rowling also creates strong women who side with evil. Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge also claim agency in their own ways. Though they are antagonistic toward Harry and his friends, they too are given the power of choice. It is the combination of characters and the world in which they live that makes Rowling's series postfeminist. Countering Eliza Dresang's comments that Hermione is without sisterhood, Helen Berents points out two important facets of Rowling's series: "firstly, that this is a world of equality, where respect, tolerance and fairness are advocated, against a dark force of prejudice, exclusivity and discrimination; and secondly, that in searching for a 'sisterhood,' Dresang has underestimated the importance of the bond between the Trio, irrespective of gender" (156). A world of equality and community regardless of gender is part of what makes Rowling's series postfeminist. Female and male characters alike are able to form bonds, work to help build their community, and make their own life choices. In this kind of equal community it is possible for Hermione to be friends with Harry and Ron as well as Ginny and Luna. There can be a juxtaposition of popular girl and outcast, both of whom are needed and valued within the series. Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall can be the respective stay-at-home mother and teacher while both being maternal toward the children and serving as strong feminist role models. Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge show that it is not just good women who are strong and claim agency, but within this postfeminist world all women can be strong and achieve their goals. The women of the Harry Potter series pursue what they want in life, make their own life choices, and claim agency for themselves. While Hermione on her own serves as a great example for postfeminism, it is the collection of all these strong female characters, serving in different roles and existing within a world where equality and fairness are a

given, that truly makes the Harry Potter series a work of postfeminism.

Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood: Duality of Girlhood

One of the movements associated with postfeminism is the Girl Power movement, and the need to reclaim girlhood as a positive term. Tasker and Negra write, "Within popular media culture itself, some of the highest-profile postfeminist franchises have centralized girls and girlhood, fusing empowerment rhetoric with traditionalist identity paradigm" (18). Fusing these ideas together means that many different versions of girls can be empowered. One genre that multiple scholars, including Tasker and Negra, point to as empowering for girls is the fantasy genre, particularly stories involving witches. Exploring witches in popular media, Hopkins asserts, "In some sense, popular witchcraft is the perfect religion for the postfeminist age—it promises girls and young women unlimited individual power" (154). In claiming this individual power, these young women also claim agency. Tasker and Negra are careful to point out that this exploration of girl and girlhood can be connected to the tendency to treat women of all ages as girls, so it is important to distinguish girls from young women (18). However, using this positive empowerment of girls and young women as seen through the Girl Power movements and postfeminism is helpful in examining characters from children's and young adult texts. Through their different life paths and choices, each character finds her own power and agency. Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood are two such girls within Rowling's series that accept their girlhood and use it to empower themselves and claim agency.

While Ginny is in all seven books, she does not become a prominent character until *Order of the Phoenix*. In this same book Luna Lovegood is introduced. Together

they provide a juxtaposition to one another and show how the popular girl and the outcast can both be strong, courageous young women who are worthy of the title heroine. Ginny is outgoing, has a lot of friends, and dates multiple boys. Luna is more introverted and has a knack for telling the truth which can make people feel uncomfortable. Along with Neville Longbottom, these three characters form a secondary trio—the three from Dumbledore's Army—that aid the original trio in fighting Death Eaters and helping accomplish the tasks necessary to defeat Voldemort. While Harry thinks these are the last three members of Dumbledore's Army that he would want to accompany him on a mission (*Order of the Phoenix* 761), they prove themselves to be brave and capable when faced with danger. By having two girls in this trio, there is gender equality of three girl and three boys when both trios fight together. For these darker books, Ginny's kindness and passionate loyalty along with Luna's airy manner and truthful way of speaking help round out the group and show that strength comes in many different forms.

Ginny is popular, athletic, has a good sense of humor, and stands up for herself. Throughout *Order of the Phoenix* and *Half-Blood Prince* she has multiple boyfriends, including Harry. She makes the Gryffindor Quidditch team, and she uses her sense of humor to help boost the morale of her team. "Ginny…was the life and soul of the team. Her imitations…kept them all highly amused" (*Half-Blood Prince* 518). Being raised with brothers like Fred and George, she can see the opening for a joke and utilizes this talent to help lighten the mood in a dark situation. Known for her passionate outbursts and refusal to be left behind because she is too young or inexperienced, Ginny's strong will drives her to stand up for herself and fight for what she believes in.

One of Ginny's strongest attributes is that she is willing to be an advocate—she

stands up for her friends as well as herself. As early in the series as *Chamber of Secrets*, Ginny sticks up for Harry. When Draco Malfoy taunts Harry for garnering attention, Ginny tells Malfoy, "Leave him alone, he didn't want all that!" (*Chamber of Secrets* 61). When facing a problem, Ginny thinks outside the box. Unlike Hermione, whose inclination is to study a situation, Ginny is action-oriented in how she claims agency. Whether it is taking action on the Quidditch pitch, breaking into a teacher's office, or causing trouble for Death Eaters, she takes to heart the idea that anything is possible if you are brave enough. At one point she even tells Harry, "The thing about growing up with Fred and George…is that you sort of start thinking anything's possible if you've got enough nerve" (*Order of the Phoenix* 655). This positive mindset, along with inner strength and nerve, helps make Ginny a confident and competent witch who rallies for those she cares about and the causes she cares about.

Ginny is also willing to advocate for herself and her desires. When others try to put her down or shame her, she has no problem putting them in their place. For instance, in *Half-Blood Prince* when Ron and Harry see her making out with her boyfriend, Ron tries to stop her by shaming her. She counters by physically trying to jinx him and by pointing out that there is nothing wrong with her actions (287-88). Here Ginny expresses her freedom by not being ashamed of her actions and not letting Ron shame her. Later in the same book, when Harry and Ginny start dating, Ron threatens to take away his permission for them to date. Ginny opposes him, saying, "*Your permission*…Since when did you give me permission to do anything?" (536). She will not be pushed around by anyone, especially her brothers. Instead, she is her own best advocate as she stands up for herself. Beyond relationships, Ginny also advocates for herself and her capabilities as a

witch. In *Order of the Phoenix*, Harry and Ron try to stop her from going to London with them, arguing she is too young and too inexperienced. She thwarts their attempts to stop her with the logical argument that she is three years older than they were when they rescued the Sorcerer's Stone. She also uses concrete examples, like her hexing Draco Malfoy to demonstrate her ability as a witch and to prove she is just as capable as Harry and Ron (761). By advocating for herself as well as those she loves Ginny proves her own personal strength. In choosing to stand up to those who oppose her and taking action to help those she cares about, Ginny claims agency.

The film adaptations also work to increase Ginny's agency by stressing her action-oriented nature and her desire to help those she loves. The *Half-Blood Prince* (2009) adaptation in particular highlights Ginny in two scenes, stressing the important role she plays in Harry's life while increasing her agency. First, there is the addition of a scene where the Weasley's house is attacked by Death Eaters. Harry runs out of the house after the Death Eaters; Ginny follows right behind. Attempting to find the Death Eaters and stop their attacks, Ginny chooses to run out into danger and fight rather than stay within the house's magical safety barriers. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley attempt to stop both Harry and Ginny from leaving the protection of the house, but they choose to forego their safety in order to fight the enemy. This scene underscores Ginny's willingness to take action. Ginny is not idle, which is why she volunteers for Dumbledore's Army, goes to the Ministry of Mysteries, and sneaks out to fight in the Battle of Hogwarts. She is active, and this additional scene in the film enhances this characteristic even more.

In another scene, Ginny is added to help Harry make the decision to get rid of the Half-Blood Prince's potion book. In *The Half-Blood Prince*, Harry is trying to hide the

book from Professor Snape and Ginny is not present in the scene. In the film, Ginny becomes the voice of reason for Harry. Ginny advises him to get rid of the book, she takes Harry to the Room of Requirements, and she hides the book so Harry cannot find it. Throughout this entire scene, it is Ginny that is given power and agency in getting rid of the book. While in the Room of Requirements, Ginny also claims agency by making her feelings about Harry clear. She is not one for words like Hermione, but prefers to take action. Therefore she claims agency by kissing Harry. Visually, this is a quick and clear way to show the connection between Harry and Ginny, but it is also fitting for the character and her action-oriented mindset. Through these additions, the adaptation underscores Ginny's notion of girlhood which involves action and courage.

Luna is a smart, caring, unique individual who dances to her own drum. Unlike so many of the other main characters within the series who are from Gryffindor, Luna belongs to Ravenclaw, the house that prides itself on learning and wisdom. Therefore, unlike Ginny who is present for events because she is a Gryffindor, Luna's presence is deliberate. One of Luna's major quirks is that she believes in many conspiracies and mythical creatures that do not exist, even in the wizarding world. The first time Luna is mentioned, she is called "Loony Lovegood" by Ginny (*Order of the Phoenix* 185), and her first description also suggests that she is a unique individual who other students at Hogwarts prefer to avoid. Rowling writes, "The girl gave off an aura of distant dottiness. Perhaps it was the fact that she had stuck her wand behind her left ear for safekeeping, or that she had chosen to wear a necklace of butterbeer caps, or that she was reading a magazine upside down" (*Order of the Phoenix* 185). These eccentricities combined with Luna's tendency to speak the truth make other characters feel awkward around her. Yet it

is this ability to see the truth and understand humanity on a different level that also endears her to the others. For example, in *Half-Blood Prince*, Luna observes that Ron can be unkind at times. She does not say it in a cruel or condescending way, she is just being observant. This prompts Harry's thought that "Luna was demonstrating her usual knack of speaking uncomfortable truths; he had never met anyone quite like her" (311). Though it may be unnerving at times, this knack for telling the truth is also very comforting to Harry throughout the series. These eccentricities help make Luna a strong and autonomous character. She sees how she is different from other students, but she does not care. She accepts herself for who she is, and does not work to change herself to please others. With Luna, the focus is not on looks or popularity; she is an exemplary representation of loving and accepting one's self, regardless of what others think. It is her kindness, her ability to tell the truth, and her willingness to help even in the face of danger that makes Luna a strong example of girl power.

Through these three darker books later in the series, many times it is Luna who is there for Harry when he is his loneliest, speaking uncomfortable truths as well as comforting insights. It seems fitting to have someone who knows loneliness to be the one comforting Harry in his times of need. The first time Luna speaks one of these truths, though, it does not comfort Harry. In *Order of the Phoenix*, as they head to the castle, Harry sees thestrals[46] for the first time. Luna assures him that he is not crazy, because she too can see them (199). However, since at this point he believes Luna is crazy, this is not comforting to him. Over the course of the school year, Harry gets to know Luna through

[46] These are skeleton-like horses. Only people who have witnessed death can see thestrals; they are invisible to everyone else. Since Harry witnessed Voldemort kill Cedric Diggory at the end of *Goblet of Fire*, he can now see these creatures.

Dumbledore's Army and their adventure to the Department of Mysteries, so he understands her quirks better. At the end of the book, when Luna mentions Sirius's death, he finds that she is the first person he does not mind mentioning Sirius because he remembers that Luna can also see thestrals. She too has seen death—her mother. When Harry asks her about it, Luna says, "I still feel very sad about it sometimes. But I've still got Dad. And anyway, it's not as though I'll never see Mum again, is it?" (863). In Luna, Harry finds someone who understands his pain and grief. She does not push him to talk or try to console him, she merely speaks her truth in believing in an afterlife. It is a simple conversation between two friends. Yet, as Harry watches Luna walk away "he found that the terrible weight in his stomach seemed to have lessened slightly" (864). Luna's kindness and intuitive nature make her an insightful friend.

The adaptation of *Order of the Phoenix* (2007) reworks these scenes to highlight Luna's importance, both in imparting knowledge to Harry and in sharing his loneliness. The scene starts with a voiceover of a letter Harry sent his godfather, telling Sirius how lonely he is. It then cuts to Harry following the thestrals and coming across Luna. In the film, it is Luna who explains thestrals to Harry and why he can see them. While normally Hermione is the one to provide Harry with information, Luna obtains wisdom from many places and is not as by-the-books as Hermione. Therefore, at times, Luna is the one to impart knowledge, particularly when it is attached to feelings. As in the books, Luna's knack for speaking the truth comes through again in this new scene and stresses why Voldemort would want Harry to feel lonely. Luna says, "Well if I were You-Know-Who, I'd want you to feel cut off from everyone else because if it's just you alone, you're not much of a threat." She puts a complex concept into simple terms, helping Harry see that

he has people in his life that care about him and believe in him. Luna chooses to be nice to Harry and help him because she sees in him the same loneliness that she feels.

In the *Deathly Hallows* novel, at three important points in Harry's journey, Luna comes to his rescue with her calm, kind words. First, after Dobby's death, Luna closes the house-elf's eyes, commenting, "Now he could be sleeping" (480). Luna then provides the Eulogy for Dobby, saying, "It's so unfair that you had to die, when you were so good and brave. I'll always remember what you did for us. I hope you're happy now" (480). Her words are simple, yet they summarize what everyone else is thinking but cannot put into words. Then at the Battle of Hogwarts, when a flood of dementors converge on the group, everyone counts on Harry's powerful patronus to save them. Even Hermione yells at Harry to get his act together. It is Luna who is calm amid the chaos and talks to Harry, quietly encouraging him to find a happy memory (649). Only at her prompting is Harry able to perform the magic necessary to save everyone. And finally, after the Battle of Hogwarts, when everyone is taking stock of what has happened and how many people they have lost, Luna comes to Harry's rescue again. Harry finds himself sitting on a bench next to Luna, and she says, "I'd want some peace and quiet, if it was me" (745). Perceptive and sweet, Luna is the helpful friend Harry needs in that moment. With a cry of "Oooh, look, a Bilbbering Humdinger!" Luna provides a distraction so no one sees Harry disappear (745). This is the last time Luna is mentioned in the Harry Potter series, but it fits so well because she uses her weird beliefs to distract others, yet she is doing it for the kindest of reasons—to help her friend. Just like one of the first times she talks to Harry, assuring him that she too sees thestrals, here Luna once again offers comfort and friendship.

While all three of these actions in the book showcase Luna's kindness and her perceptivity to others emotions, the film works to give Luna a more action-oriented kind of agency. As Harry hunts for the Ravenclaw Horcrux[47] in *Deathly Hallows, Part 2* (2011), the film changes the way Luna helps Harry to make her more assertive. In both book and film, Luna suggests that the lost diadem of Ravenclaw could be the Horcrux, but in the book Harry figures out he needs to talk to the ghost of Ravenclaw. The film has Luna physically chase after Harry in order to get him to go talk to the ghost. When Harry tries to ignore Luna, she yells, "Harry Potter! You listen to me right now!" Not only does she take action by chasing Harry, she also demands to be heard. By utilizing a characteristic that is so unlike Luna—yelling a demand—she gets Harry's attention and is able to have her voice be heard. She is also helpful to Harry because she takes Harry to the Ravenclaw ghost, who speaks to Harry partly because Luna has been one of the only students who was kind to her. It is a small change from the book to the film, but this new interaction between Harry and Luna highlights Luna's kindness while allowing her to take action and make her voice heard.

Throughout the last three books in the Harry Potter series, Ginny and Luna are crucial in helping fight the different evil forces threatening Hogwarts and the wizarding world. Ginny and Luna serve as lookouts when Harry and Hermione break into Umbridge's office (*Order of the Phoenix* 736-42). When Harry decides he needs to go to the Ministry of Magic, it is Luna that comes up with the solution of using thestrals to fly (762). And though Harry is adamant that Ginny, Luna, and Neville are not going to London, they insist, pointing out that they are all members of Dumbledore's Army, "And

[47] Inanimate objects which contain part of Voldemort's soul. He cannot truly die until all Horcruxes have been destroyed.

this is the first chance we've had to do something real" (761). Berents argues that Luna's calm insistence on participating in Sirius Black's rescue in *Order of the Phoenix* shows a girl acting on her own and choosing to participate in a dangerous situation. This claim works for other female characters as well, including Ginny and Hermione. On multiple occasions, all three choose to venture into danger with Harry. Berents writes, "outbursts such as Ginny's, read in addition to the calm decision making by Luna and instinctive, clever responses such as Hermione's at several points of the seventh book, demonstrate young people's agency in choosing" (151). These young women claim agency by choosing to participate in the different battles against Voldemort and his Death Eaters. For instance, In *Half-Blood Prince*, it is Ginny, Luna, and Neville who come to Harry's aid when Death Eaters invade the school. They are the only members of the Dumbledore's Army who respond to Hermione's summons, once again willing to risk their lives and fight.

Ginny and Luna's actions in *Deathly Hallows* are distinct from the other books because instead of following Harry's lead, they became the leaders. Harry, Ron, and Hermione do not return to Hogwarts with the rest of their classmates for their seventh year because they are searching for Horcruxes. However, Ginny, Luna, and Neville refuse to sit by idly; since Death Eaters are running Hogwarts, they choose to still be a part of the fighting through leading a rebellion at school. They break into Snape's office to steal the sword of Gryffindor (297-98), put up graffiti on the walls saying "*Dumbledore's Army, Still Recruiting*," and cause trouble for the Death Eater teachers (575). Once the trio makes it back to Hogwarts, Ginny and Luna return to school, ready to fight. When Harry questions why people are coming to the castle, Neville replies, "I

promised [Luna] and Ginny that if you turned up I'd let them know. We all thought that if you came back, it would mean revolution" (581). While Neville is already in the castle hiding students from the Carrows, both Ginny and Luna choose to return to the castle in order to fight. Though we only get fragmented bits of information throughout the book that Luna and Ginny are helping lead a rebellion, it is still important information, proving that part of what makes these characters postfeminist is that they continue to choose to fight. "The perception that we now live in a postfeminist era—where women can be heroic and independent, where they can do whatever they want, and where they can overcome oppressive patriarchal systems—is well served by the fantasy of teenage adventurers who can readily kick ass" (Brown 11). Independent of Harry, Hermione, and Ron, these girls still choose to fight the oppressive reign of Professor Snape and other Death Eaters at the school, making them heroines in their own right.

Ginny and Luna are both female characters who embrace their girlhood as a positive. Ginny claims agency both in choosing to date and to stand up to people like Ron when he tries to bully her for it. She accepts that she can be sporty, strong, and she emotional. Luna is intelligent and willing to speak the truth as she sees it. She accepts being different and a loner, but she also embraces friendship when it is offered to her. By having these two girls be part of a secondary trio who work with Harry, Ron, and Hermione, the idea of community is extended and provides a community of peers who can be counted on. Neither character wishes to be more, but accepts herself and sees herself as equal to her male counterparts. These girls also claim agency by choosing to help friends, even in undertaking dangerous missions and risking injury or death. Through film adaptation, both girls prove their strength as Harry's friends while also

showcasing action-oriented methods of help. In a postfeminist age, where Girl Power represents confident and independent young women, Ginny and Luna act as different and diverse role models of girlhood.

Molly Weasley and Minerva McGonagall: Female Role Models

In a postfeminist world, it is important that women are portrayed in different roles. "Postfeminists are against the totalitarian disposal of traditional female gender roles by feminism; personal choice is the central concept. If a woman chooses to stay at home for her family, that is her choice, and this choice is equal to the choice of choosing a career" (Adriaens and Van Bauwel 178). Molly Weasley and Minerva McGonagall are a stay-at-home mother and teacher respectively, and both women are valued and appreciated for the roles they play in this postfeminist world. These women are involved in caring for and educating the children within the books. Each woman takes an interest in Harry and helps care for him; thus, these women become mother-like figures for him. Beyond their nurturing capabilities, they also prove that they are strong, capable witches at the Battle of Hogwarts. Discussing the importance of women in the Battle of Hogwarts, Berents writes, "In many ways, such examples, particularly from Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall, serve as excellent feminist role models for Hermione (as well as other female characters, and readers of any gender)" (146). Berents points out that Rowling has women play a larger role in battle than most traditional war narratives, but the way Rowling writes the battle, the fact that women are so involved is unremarkable (146). It is assumed that women can fight as well as men, and they have the freedom of choice as to whether or not they want to participate. This same assumption spans the entire series, making these feminist women, and their choices are in line with

the postfeminist belief of choosing one's own path.

Mrs. Weasley is a typical mother: kind, helpful, reproachful, and a disciplinarian when necessary. She is proud of her children and their accomplishments. Throughout the series, she seems content being at home and raising her seven children. She sees parenting as a very important job and looks down on those who do not take raising and nurturing children seriously. Rowling writes, "She had always refrained from criticizing the Dursleys in front of Harry, but her eyes flashed every time they were mentioned" (*Goblet of Fire* 616). A child being neglected and mistreated, like how the Dursleys treated Harry, was unconscionable for Mrs. Weasley. Caring for her children is the life path that Mrs. Weasley chose, and she takes her job very seriously. From a postfeminist standpoint, all the actions Mrs. Weasley takes to protect the children and care for them support motherhood as a positive life goal. McRobbie discusses the backlash to second-wave feminism's views on motherhood and their anti-family sentiments, "this not only alienated ordinary women, it also rebounded on feminists themselves, by isolating them from family life and cutting them off from the pleasures of having children and from the meaningful community which emerges around motherhood" (31). Third-wave feminism and postfeminism both counter anti-family notions by supporting the family unit in all its formations, and works to shift views of motherhood back to the positive. Mrs. Weasley and her actions shed light on the positive notion of having a family and being a mother, making her a necessary postfeminist character within Rowling's world of equality.

From the first time Mrs. Weasley meets Harry, her nurturing nature takes over as she helps him through the magical portal to get the train to Hogwarts. Once Harry and Ron become friends Mrs. Weasley takes Harry under her wing, sending him Christmas

presents (*Sorcerer's Stone* 200), inviting him to their home for the summer holiday (*Goblet of Fire* 30), and making sure he has everything he needs for the new school year (*Order of the Phoenix* 163). While she knows that she cannot order him to do anything, multiple times throughout the series she implores him to listen to her warnings. Through words and actions Mrs. Weasley proves that Harry is a member of her family. During the Triwizard Tournament she goes to the school to represent Harry's family during the third task (*Goblet of Fire* 616). When Sirius and Molly get into a fight over what is good for Harry, Sirius claims he is not Molly's son. She responds, "He's as good as…Who else has he got?" (*Order of the Phoenix* 90). In *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry comes of age, the Weasleys give Harry a gold watch (a typical gift for a wizard coming of age). Mrs. Weasley is embarrassed that the watch is second-hand, but Harry does not care. Rowling writes, "Harry had got up and hugged her. He tried to put a lot of unsaid things into the hug and perhaps she understood them" (114). Though this is a physical gift linking Harry to the family, it is Mrs. Weasley's actions since book one that prove she loves Harry. And in this scene, we see that Harry also accepts her as a mother figure. Through her actions toward Harry and her own children, Mrs. Weasley symbolizes a positive postfeminist view of motherhood as important role in society.

At times her motherly chiding may provide humor within the Harry Potter books, but Mrs. Weasley's actions speak to the love and concern she has for her family. Protecting her family is most important. When the Order of the Phoenix[48] reconvenes, she makes sure that everyone is fed and taken care of, and that the children stay out of the way—she does not want them knowing about the dangerous missions or trying to help

[48] The name for the group of witches and wizards working to bring down Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

(*Order of the Phoenix*). Though many of her actions at the Order headquarters may seem harsh, her top priority is ensuring the safety of her family. When she tries to get rid of a boggart[49] at the Order's headquarters, the boggart keeps taking the shape of different family members' dead bodies. When Harry and others come to her rescue, she apologizes for her tears. But she goes on to explain, "I'm just s-s-so worried…Half the f-f-family's in the Order, it'll b-b-be a miracle if we all come through this…And what's going to happen if Arthur and I get killed, who's g-g-going to look after Ron and Ginny?" (177). While Mrs. Weasley admits that she is afraid, more importantly, she does not succumb to the fear and refrain from fighting. She may cry from fear of losing those she loves, but she will fight, and will fight to the death if necessary. Here we see the duality of mother and witch coming out through the apparent postfeminist contradictions. Mrs. Weasley is both afraid and willing to fight—these two contradicting emotions do not negate one another. Instead, in postfeminism, it is possible to embrace both fear and courage together, which Mrs. Weasley demonstrates in this scene.

This duality continues to be apparent when Mrs. Weasley begins working for the Order of the Phoenix. From the children's viewpoint, Mrs. Weasley's job within the Order is to take care of the headquarters and keep the children in line. In *Order of the Phoenix*, all the children become frustrated at her continual efforts to prevent them from eavesdropping on meetings and making their own plans. During summer break, every member of the Order takes working shifts, except Mrs. Weasley. Once the children are all back at Hogwarts, she starts taking shifts for the Order. She is the ever-present stable adult presence who makes sure that the children, especially Harry, are looked after and

[49] A magical creature that has no form; instead it reads the deepest fears of the person looking at it and transforms into a physical manifestation of that fear.

kept out of trouble, which is the most important task that she can fulfill. Once she knows Harry and her children are safe at Hogwarts, she joins the others in working toward Voldemort's defeat (371). Unlike some characters, such as Sirius, Mrs. Weasley knows that, when the children are in the house, their protection is her number one priority. While they are all at Grimmauld Place, Sirius sulks around, upset that he cannot leave the house and go on missions for the Order. Mrs. Weasley, on the other hand, understands that her role is making sure everyone is busy and kept out of trouble. She is a valuable member of the Order and a talented witch, and the protection of Harry and her children is her main mission for the Order when they are away from Hogwarts.

The best example of Molly's abilities as a witch is demonstrated in her role at the Battle of Hogwarts. In *Deathly Hallows*, when the call goes out that Harry has returned to Hogwarts, Mrs. Weasley is one of the many members of the Order who comes to help fight. In the very last skirmish, chaos breaks out. She has already lost one child to the battle, and then she sees Bellatrix Lestrange, one of Voldemort's most devoted and vicious followers, fighting Hermione, Luna, and Ginny. Bellatrix fires a Killing Curse within an inch of Ginny. This leads to Mrs. Weasley's most famous line of the series, "NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!" (736). This is a mother's rage, and Mrs. Weasley's fierce protective instincts emerge. It is important that it is not just Ginny that Bellatrix is fighting, but also Hermione and Luna. Yes, she is a mother protecting her daughter, but she is also protecting the children of Hogwarts. Others try to come to her aid while she fights Bellatrix; however, they are students and Mrs. Weasley rejects their help, refusing to endanger any other child's life in this battle. Bellatrix taunts Mrs. Weasley, "What will happen to your children when I've killed you…When Mummy's

gone the same way as Freddie" (763). This is the breaking point for Mrs. Weasley: her children are threatened and her dead son is used against her. Mrs. Weasley may not be a natural killer like Bellatrix, but she will do whatever is necessary to protect those she loves. Before she deals a death blow to Bellatrix, she screams, "You—will—never—touch—our—children—again!" (736). Her most powerful act as a witch is an action of protection for that which she values most—children. For Mrs. Weasley, being a mother and protector of children is her chosen life path. She performs this duty with grace, love, and strength, making her a postfeminist role model.

Minerva McGonagall, or Professor McGonagall as all the students know her, is also a protector of children, but she has made a professional career out of this life path. Professor McGonagall is a strong and powerful witch who excels at her job. She is strict with her students, but fiercely proud of their accomplishments. The first descriptions that the reader gets of Professor McGonagall are of "a rather severe-looking woman" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 9), and later when Harry first sees her, "A tall, black-haired witch in emerald-green robes…She had a very stern face and Harry's first thought was that this was not someone to cross" (113). Professor McGonagall is a teacher that is known for being "strict and clever" (133), but that does not mean that she does not care for her students. Though she fits the trope of stern teacher with a heart of gold, Rowling creates a character who is passionate about her career and her students, and she stands out as another representation of female role model.

From Harry's first year, Professor McGonagall looks out for him. She disciplines him when he breaks the rules, such as when he and Ron fly a car into the Whomping Willow tree (*Chamber of Secrets* 80-82); she also celebrates his victories, such as when

Gryffindor wins the Quidditch Cup (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 313). Because Harry has a penchant for breaking school rules, Professor McGonagall walks a fine line of being proud of him and being frustrated by his actions. For instance, when Harry rescues Ginny from the Chamber of Secrets, McGonagall is impressed, but she is also quick to point out his wrong-doing. She says, "so you found out where the entrance was—breaking a hundred school rules into pieces along with way, I might add" (*Chamber of Secrets* 328).

It is not just Harry that Professor McGonagall cares for, however, she is protective of all the people at Hogwarts. Professor McGonagall has a strong sense of justice, and she protects those whom she does not believe are being treated fairly. She also stands up to those whom she believes wield their power inappropriately. Throughout *Order of the Phoenix*, Professor McGonagall stands up to Dolores Umbridge and defends those whom Umbridge tries to oppress. She comforts Professor Trelawney when she is dismissed (595), she offers to fight by Professor Dumbledore's side when the Ministry tries to arrest him (620), and she defends Hagrid when he is removed from the school (721-22). In defending Hagrid, Professor McGonagall is wounded and must be removed from the school and taken to the wizarding hospital. When Harry needs help, he thinks, "Dumbledore had gone, Hagrid had gone, but he had always expected Professor McGonagall to be there, irascible and inflexible, perhaps, but always dependably, solidly present" (730). Professor McGonagall is a strong and reliable presence at Hogwarts.

Professor McGonagall's agency is increased within the films through increased screen time as well as through increased independent action. Instead of casting other actors or actresses to play the other teachers, there are times that interactions with lesser known teachers within the books are given to the main film cast, including Professor

McGonagall. For instance, in the book *Chamber of Secrets*, Hermione asks the History of Magic teacher about the Chamber of Secrets. Yet in the film version, the students are in Transfiguration when this scene takes place, so she asks Professor McGonagall. Not only is this effective in minimizing the number of actors needed in the film, but it also demonstrates that McGonagall has insider knowledge that she can impart to the students, giving her power and authority within the story. Other times, the maternal side of McGonagall is highlighted in this same manner. In *Half-Blood Prince*, after Dumbledore's death, instead of a group of professors meeting in Dumbledore's office, it is only Harry and McGonagall in the office. She offers comfort to Harry, saying, "In light of what has happened, if you should have the need to talk to someone…" In this moment she is not just the new Headmistress, she is his Head of House and mentor, and she cares for his wellbeing.

Professor McGonagall's mixture of sternness and humor creates a loveable teacher with a high level of sass, allowing her to be tough but still admired. For example, when Dolores Umbridge observes Professor McGonagall's Transfiguration class, McGonagall uses subtle sarcasm to put Umbridge in her place. Umbridge asks if McGonagall received her note, to which McGonagall responds, "Obviously I received it, or I would have asked you what you are going in my classroom" (*Order of the Phoenix* 320). As McGonagall begins her class, Umbridge continues to interrupt, so McGonagall says, "I wonder…how you expect to gain an idea of my usual teaching methods if you continue to interrupt me? You see, I do not generally permit people to talk when I am talking" (320). She takes her role as Transfiguration teaching seriously; not just teaching students to transform objects, but making them into successful and mature witches and

wizards.

In *Deathly Hallows,* Professor McGonagall stands strong and leads the other teachers in protecting the school and the students. When she learns of Harry's return and the need to set up barriers against Voldemort and his army, she quickly rallies the other teachers together to begin providing defenses. She enchants all of the school statues and suits of armor to bring them to life and serve as an army for Hogwarts (602). While statues and suits of armor may seem like a more logical choice of army, she uses everything available to her, including enchanting desks to form a thundering herd which she also leads into battle (644). One of McGonagall's biggest contributions to the Battle of Hogwarts is helping force Professor Snape to flee the castle (599). With Snape gone, Professor McGonagall is once again Headmistress and in charge of everything that happens in the school. Everyone looks to her for instructions. As she tells Professor Slughorn, who is reluctant to help in the battle, "If you wish to leave with your students, we shall not stop you. But if any of you attempt to sabotage our resistance or take up arms against us within this castle, then, Horace, we duel to kill" (601-02). Unlike every other situation within Hogwarts where precautions are taken for everyone's safety, here McGonagall speaks the dire truth of this battle. No longer is Hogwarts a place of learning magic, it is the setting for the greatest battle of the second Wizarding War. She provides a way out for everyone who wants to leave; unlike Voldemort, she holds no prisoners. The callous strength she demonstrates during the Battle of Hogwarts does not mean that she does not feel. In the book, when Harry pretends to be dead and his body is returned to the castle, it is Professor McGonagall's cry that he hears first. "The scream was the more terrible because he had never expected or dreamed that Professor McGonagall could

make such a sound" (730). She has spent over forty years guiding students through their education, now she leads them into battle.

For the film adaptation, these scenes for the Battle of Hogwarts are repositioned to give more narrative weight to Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape while also increasing McGonagall's agency. In the book, when Snape is banished from the castle, the fighting occurs in a hallway and is accomplished by a group of teachers. Harry is the only other person to witness these actions. The film moves these scenes into the Great Hall with all of the students and teachers, as well as members of the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army, present to witness the fight. At the beginning of the scene, the Great Hall is dark and ominous. Snape threatens to punish anyone helping Harry Potter. When Harry steps forward to confront Snape, McGonagall jumps in front of him to protect him from Snape's possible attack. McGonagall alone battles Snape, continually sending fire at him until he is backed up against a wall and is forced to flee out a window. As soon as Snape exits the Great Hall, Professor McGonagall lights the torches in the Great Hall, literally bringing light back into Hogwarts. It has been a dark and dreary place under Professor Snape, but with Professor McGonagall back in charge there is hope at Hogwarts again.

As with the fight against Snape, the scene where the teachers work together to protect the school is also relocated for a more spectacular setting: the front of the castle. This scene also stresses that McGonagall is now in charge. Going to the front of the castle, she has numerous students and teachers following her, waiting to receive orders. She tells Neville to blow up a bridge. When he questions her how, she says, "Why don't you confer with Mr. Finnigan. As I recall, he has a particular proclivity for pyrotechnics."

This is the McGonagall sass that has endeared her to so many fans of the series. Then McGonagall uses the spell *Piertotum Locomotor* to bring the statues to life; because they are in the entrance hall, this creates a visually dynamic scene. Suits of armor fill the walls and begin dropping to the ground and marching around McGonagall, Flitwick, and Mrs. Weasley. McGonagall commands them, "Hogwarts is threatened. Man the boundaries. Protect us. Do your duty to our school." The mood of this scene is lightened again by Professor McGonagall saying to Mrs. Weasley in a giddy tone, "I've always wanted to use that spell!" This scene epitomizes her strength while softening her by having her quip with students and expressing joy at using a rare spell.

The juxtaposition between Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall within the Harry Potter series showcases that it is possible for women to choose different life paths which allow them to make a difference in their world. Raising her own children and adopting Harry, Mrs. Weasley makes sure that everyone is in line and taken care of. From feeding and clothing the whole group, to making sure they are prepared for school, Mrs. Weasley rules her house. From guiding the first years to their sorting ceremony, to serving as headmistress and leading the school into battle, Professor McGonagall serves as a good example of diligence, intelligence, and strength. Even in her strictness for the rules, she is a comforting presence at Hogwarts. Both women are kind, nurturing disciplinarians; they are also strong, capable witches. These traits and more make Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall postfeminist role models for both the girls within the books and readers alike.

Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge: Evil and Agency

Rowling does not only create strong females who fight for good while

representing evil women as weak or passive. She also creates strong and independent women who oppose Harry and those fighting for what is right. An incorrect simplification that is sometimes applied to feminism is that feminists believe men to be bad and women to be good. In Rowling's world she treats men and women equally—for good and for bad. "In the world Rowling has created, sex is, as it should be, irrelevant to the question of one's moral fiber…Each character is judged individually by what kind of person he or she is, and each character is given the opportunity to be either good or evil" (Gladstein 59). Instead of painting good and bad with a broad brush, Rowling creates nuanced characters in which good people have flaws and those that side with evil can have redeeming qualities. Two such women in Rowling's world are Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge. Much of the evil and prejudice that these women perpetuate is based around bloodline and their belief that pureblood wizards are superior to half-blood or Muggle-born wizards. Because of or in spite of their prejudice toward non-pureblood witches and wizards, these women make choices and claim agency in order to get what they want. Narcissa Malfoy is the evil side's counter to Mrs. Weasley; she chooses her role of mother and prioritizes her child over everyone and everything else. Dolores Umbridge represents the law, but she is willing to change, bend, or reinterpret the law in order to get what she desires. These women show that in a postfeminist world, women do have choice and it does not have to be a choice for the good of others.

Narcissa Malfoy is a minor character within the Harry Potter realm. Her son, Draco, and her husband, Lucius, are the characters with whom Harry and his friends interact most, and through them the audience gets a sense of what type of people the Malfoys are. They are an old, rich, wizarding family who care about both economic and

wizarding status. When Draco seeks out Harry on their first train trip to Hogwarts he famously says, "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 108). In this context he is referring to both the Weasleys' economic status as poor, as well as their acceptance of people who are not pureblood. The Weasleys associate with half-blood and Muggle-born wizards and are pro-Muggle. Families like the Malfoys label the Weasleys blood traitors (*Deathly Hallows* 247). Narcissa and her sister Bellatrix also believe that the wizarding bloodlines should remain pure. They disowned their sister Andromeda because she married a Muggle-born (*Order of the Phoenix* 113). For all intents and purposes, the Malfoys believe in Voldemort and his desire to rid the world of Muggles in order for pureblood wizards to be the ruling race.

While Narcissa sides with Voldemort, the two scenes in which she is the focus, she chooses to go against Voldemort in order to try and save her son Draco, thus giving her a redemptive quality. Narcissa chooses to follow her family in serving Voldemort and upholding his values within the wizarding world. However, her main priority in life is Draco. The first time we meet Narcissa is at the beginning of *Half-Blood Prince*, in one of the few chapters in the series that does not follow Harry. In "Spinner's End," the reader follows Narcissa as she seeks out Severus Snape and begs him to help Draco. Voldemort has given Draco the task of killing Dumbledore; afraid Draco might fail and then be killed by Voldemort, Narcissa pleads with Snape to help save her son. On her way to Snape's house, Bellatrix tries to talk Narcissa out of her plan. Narcissa responds, "I've listened already. I've made my decision. Leave me alone!" (20). She knows the danger of going against Voldemort, that it could lead to her own death, but for her only

son she claims agency by risking her own life to ask for help in saving Draco.

The second scene is in *Deathly Hallows* after Voldemort 'kills' Harry. After Voldemort curses Harry, he too passes out. When he awakens, Voldemort sends someone to make sure that Harry is dead. He sends Narcissa. As she feels Harry's pulse, in a barely audible whisper she asks "*Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?*" (726). When Harry responds in the affirmative, Narcissa chooses to lie to Voldemort and the rest of his Death Eaters and proclaim, "He is dead!" (726). At this point, she does not care about Voldemort's war or need for vengeance, she only wants to get to the castle, get her son, and get him to safety. Like Mrs. Weasley, Narcissa Malfoy prioritizes her child above all else. Therefore the most courageous thing she can do is risk her life by lying to Voldemort in order to get to the castle and rescue Draco. For Narcissa claiming agency means risking her own life in order to help her son. In the process of saving Draco, she also saves Harry. So while her family may serve Voldemort, allow him to use their house as his headquarters, and fight in his war, when it comes to her mothering instincts, not even Voldemort can stop her from saving her son. Therefore Narcissa may be seen as an evil woman because of who she serves, but her action which saves Draco, and therefore Harry, also redeems her.

Dolores Umbridge is a different kind of evil; she is not a follower of Lord Voldemort, but she does hold to her own rigid, yet contextual, standards of what she believes is right. The reason many fans hate her more than Voldemort is because, unlike Voldemort who is pure evil, Umbridge's villainous tendencies come with government-appointed power. Umbridge has a political agenda: she does everything within her power to make things go how she wants, even if it means creating new laws and policies or

having to bend the rules. She mistreats the students she does not like, creates imaginary infractions and penalizes employees for them, and enjoys making others uncomfortable. Whereas Voldemort is the villain we all hope to never face, Umbridge is the villain we face every day.

In *Order of the Phoenix*, Dolores Umbridge is assigned by the Ministry of Magic as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. At this point in the series, the Ministry of Magic does not believe that Voldemort has returned. When Harry mentions Voldemort's return in class, Umbridge responds, "you have been informed that a certain Dark wizard is at large once again. *This is a lie*" (245). Umbridge does not like Harry because he counters what she and the Ministry want the people to believe, so she assigns him detention for lying. His punishment is to write lines, but with a special quill that uses the writer's own blood, thus carving the words into the writer's skin. In Harry's case, he must write "*I must not tell lies*" (266). Though Hogwarts frowns on punishment that inflicts pain or injury on a student, Umbridge believes herself above these rules. Continuing her reign of terror at Hogwarts, she gets herself appointed High Inquisitor, which allows her to make new rules for the school. She is also able to observe, critique, and fire other teachers, like Professor Trelawney and Hagrid. Umbridge also gains power over all punishments and privileges for students at Hogwarts. Her first act is to ban Harry and George Weasley from ever playing Quidditch again (416). Umbridge claims power and agency by taking away authority and agency from others. In her drive for power and order, she enjoys lording her authority over others, and finds joy in punishing and demeaning both students and teachers.

As signs and events continue to indicate Voldemort's return, Umbridge becomes

even more unreasonable in her attempts to gain full control of Hogwarts. In preventing students from believing that a tyrant has returned, Umbridge becomes her own kind of tyrant. She declares that teachers cannot give students any information that is outside of their subject, and she becomes more ruthless in her punishments of students who challenge her (*Order of the Phoenix* 551). When she catches Harry breaking into her office, she proves just how far out of bounds she will go to gain information. First, she demands Veritaserum (truth potion) from Snape, but he informs her that it has all been used on her other interrogations. Harry and Hermione had wondered how Umbridge made a fellow student snitch on Dumbledore's Army, but she had used truth serum, which is not a normal practice at Hogwarts. When she cannot use Veritaserum on Harry, she becomes willing to use the illegal Cruciatus Curse[50] to get answers (745-46). Even though she represents the law, Umbridge acts like she is above the law. Here she feels justified in using an illegal curse on a student to gain the information she wants, proving her acts of agency benefit herself and those she represents, not the greater good.

Umbridge does not necessarily side with Voldemort, but she does believe some of his ideology and within the Ministry of Magic works to uphold these values while torturing those who are not pureblood. In *Deathly Hallows*, Harry, Ron, and Hermione must face Umbridge again because she owns Salazar Slytherin's necklace, which is a Horcrux. In the Ministry of Magic, Umbridge interrogates people about their wizarding bloodlines. Dementors are present, keeping the accused scared. Umbridge has a patronus protecting her; Harry observes, "it glowed brightly because she was so happy here, in her element, upholding the twisted laws she had helped to write" (259). Due to fabricated

[50] Causes the person being cursed to experience excruciating pain.

claims about bloodline, the Ministry created a Muggle-born Register and, "*issued an invitation to every so-called Muggle-born to present themselves for interview*" (209). Umbridge helped create new regulations and enjoys upholding the new laws which allow her to strip people of both their wands and their freedom. Umbridge, like Voldemort, believes in keeping the wizarding world pureblood. She even lies about the history of Slytherin's locket when asked about it because she wants to "bolster her own pure-blood credentials" (261). Through her choices and actions, Umbridge claims agency through oppressing others in order to achieve her goal of purifying the wizarding world. Her choices mean punishment for many people, but she stands by her convictions and does what she wants, making her a villainous woman.

Like the other women in the Harry Potter series, Narcissa Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge also make choices and take action, thus claiming their own kinds of agency. However, much of their agency is rooted in selfishness as it ensures that what they want most comes to pass. Narcissa takes bold steps against Voldemort in order to ensure the safety of her son. Umbridge harasses and tortures people that do not share her same principles. While they may not oppose Voldemort, each makes her own choices and seeks the life she wants, making these women postfeminist individuals as well.

Hermione Granger: Heroine for Hogwarts

The best example of a postfeminist character in the Harry Potter series is Hermione Granger. Hermione is a vital part of the Harry Potter series, and the kind of girl that embodies the duality of a postfeminist heroine. Over the years, Hermione struggles with different dualities in her life and must work to overcome obstacles, proving that she can create her own life path and claim agency for herself. She can be both rational and

emotional; she fights for what she believes is right regardless of what people think; she can want to be liked by her peers; she can be afraid; and she can be a fighter. Through her creation of community, her need to champion causes, and her acceptance of herself and her power, Hermione proves to be a postfeminist woman.

Looking at the protagonists of the Harry Potter series, I agree with Christopher E. Bell when he asserts that Harry is not the sole protagonist because his name is in the title—rather it is Harry, Ron, and Hermione together that make up the protagonist of the novels. Bell argues that Rowling's series utilizes a classic trinity protagonist structure of body, heart, and mind. He asserts, "It is easy to see Harry as the main source of agency, because his role in the trio is that of the body, he is the 'do-er'" (6). This is true; Harry takes on a majority of the action, and because he is the character that the books follow, we see all of his actions. Due to the books' point-of-view, we do not follow Hermione on her journeys, but there are many instances throughout the series where Hermione runs off to complete important tasks. Bell goes on to state that Ron is the heart, "he is the emotional center of the team, by turns both courageous and cowardly" (7). While Hermione can be emotional, it is Ron whose actions are driven by emotion. Hermione's role is the brain of the group; "she is the source of logic, knowledge and rational thinking" (7). In this capacity, Hermione tends to be the person who devises the plans which save the day.

Community is an important aspect of Hermione's life. As Bell asserts, "Hermione's ability to construct and maintain community is one of her strongest (and most feminist) abilities. However, hers is a brand of feminism that specifically seeks to include men in the process…It is what is so postfeminist about Hermione; her community

isn't pigeonholed to 'sisterhood'—it requires both genders to advance its ideals" (8). For Hermione, Harry and Ron are two of the main people within her community circle. While they may fight and have disagreements, in the end, when they really need each other, these three come together for the greater good. Even when the world is against them, they stick together and work to free their community from sources of evil.

At the beginning of the series, Hermione does not start as friends with Harry and Ron; they are annoyed by her and believe that she is a know-it-all. Prior to becoming friends, Hermione stands up to Harry and Ron, trying to keep them from leaving the dormitory at night and getting Gryffindor in trouble (*Sorcerer's Stone* 155). She might not be their friend, but in this case, she cares about her community as a whole and does not want Harry and Ron to hurt the Gryffindor community by losing house points. Therefore, she is brave and stands up to them. Once Harry and Ron befriend her, she joins in the adventure and accepts that sometimes the rules must be broken. Though Harry and Ron still consider Hermione a know-it-all, her knowledge is channeled into specific goals which help them, particularly in stopping Voldemort's plans. In befriending Harry and Ron, Hermione is also forced to reevaluate her views on rules versus justice. For example, at the end of *Sorcerer's Stone*, Hermione stuns Neville Longbottom when he tries to stop the trio from leaving the dormitory to go after the Sorcerer's Stone (273). Neville is attempting to do the same thing Hermione did to Ron and Harry earlier in the story, but this time Hermione believes breaking the rules will benefit the bigger communities of both Hogwarts and the wizarding world. During the first scene, Harry had wanted to fight Draco Malfoy over a petty disagreement, but the second time the trio wants to stop a professor from helping Voldemort return to full

power. The cause they are working for trumps the rules that must be broken. For Hermione, this first book in the series sees her settle into the wizarding world, create her own community, and begin to establish her own thoughts on justice.

Hermione has a finely honed sense of what is right and just. She believes in abiding by the rules, but is not above breaking the rules when she believes it will save others from harm. Protecting people and creatures she believes are being hurt or taken advantage of is particularly important to her. Because of this, throughout the series Hermione champions many different causes in order to try and improve her community. In these instances, Hermione claims agency by trying to help the marginalized within her community find a voice and gain autonomy within the wizarding community. In *Chamber of Secrets,* she willingly breaks rules in order to gain information to help stop the attacks on Muggle-borns. She argues to Harry and Ron, "*I* don't want to break rules, you know. *I* think threatening Muggle-borns is far worse than brewing up a difficult potion" (165).[51] In *Prisoner of Azkaban,* she assists Hagrid with researching laws and past court cases to help defend the hippogriff Buckbeak, to prevent the innocent animal's execution. In some cases, she cannot understand why people will not support her cause. For instance, in *Goblet of Fire,* after seeing the treatment of the house-elf Winky, Hermione sees the plight of house-elves and rallies to try and free them from servitude. When Ron protests that house-elves are happy not having fun, Hermione rebukes him,

[51] While Draco Malfoy references his belief that some wizarding families (pureblood families) are better than others in *Sorcerer's Stone*, it is in *Chamber of Secrets* that these ideas are expanded upon. Here the heir of Slytherin is unleashing a monster which is only attacking those who are Muggle-born. As in the real world, when danger threatens a situation involving prejudice, people will act to perpetuate the prejudice. In Rowling's world, this is also the first time we hear the word "Mudblood" used as a derogatory insult. Malfoy uses it as an insult against Hermione when he is angry, and for the remainder of the series he and others who share his beliefs use this term to put down people of Muggle birth.

saying, "It's people like *you*, Ron…who prop up rotten and unjust systems, just because they're too lazy too—" (125). Hermione sees a problem in the system and she is not daunted by criticism or by backlash because she believes that she is fighting for justice and what is right. She goes on to form S.P.E.W., or Society of the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, and for the rest of the series she fights for house-elf rights (224-25). Fighting for the helpless and innocent is something Hermione does throughout the series, and so she continues to claim agency by acting to help those who are voiceless.

Another cause that Hermione fights for is the need for students to learn to defend themselves against Voldemort and his army of Death Eaters. She wants to empower students who feel helpless and are not receiving the training they need to fight. However, the first battle she must face is her own fear. Through the creation of an alternative name, people in the wizarding world ascribe power and subjectivity to the name Voldemort, and because they fear him they refuse to use the name. For more than half of the series, Hermione is conscious of the wizarding world's feelings toward the name Voldemort, and she adopts the wizarding community's practice of not saying the name. However, when Hermione feels the need to rally people in order to prepare to fight Voldemort, she says the name. In trying to convince an enraged Harry that he needs to teach others defensive magic, Hermione says, "this is exactly why we need you…We need to know what it's r-really like…facing him…facing V-Voldemort" (*Order of the Phoenix* 328). She recognizes what refusing to say the name means. Saying *Voldemort* pushes Hermione in her own journey to claim agency for herself, rather than giving power and agency to a name. She will no longer cower in fear; she rises above fear to speak the name and to take action against Voldemort. Here, Hermione demonstrates her

postfeminist duality. She is afraid of Voldemort and of what his name represents. She is afraid, but she also has the courage to persevere. However, she is also a fighter and is willing to overcome that fear for the greater good of her community—boys and girls alike—who also want to stand and fight. She finds empowerment through saying the name, and empowers others through her actions of saying the name as well as motivating others to act. Through these actions, she strengthens her community by creating a community willing to stand up and fight for themselves.

While Hermione saying Voldemort's name is a big step in her journey to fight for her community, the film adaptations change Hermione's view on names and naming in order to change how she claims agency. In the books, Hermione adapts to the cultural norms of the wizarding world and does not say Voldemort's name until the fifth book. In the films, Hermione follows Harry and Dumbledore in logical thinking and does not attribute fear to the name, and therefore she uses Voldemort's name instead of "You-Know-Who." In the *Chamber of Secrets* film (2002), when Lucius Malfoy calls Harry very brave or foolish for using Voldemort's name, Hermione counters with "Fear of a name only increases fear of the thing itself." Her logical thinking stops her from upholding the cultural norm of avoiding Voldemort's name because she refuses to add to the fear or legend that the refusing to use the name promotes. Whereas in the books, this was a fear that needed to be concurred, here Hermione refuses to give Voldemort that kind of power. Therefore using his name demystifies him and takes away the power that is associated with the fear of the name. Through the action of using Voldemort's name Hermione claims agency by not giving into fear.

In *Deathly Hallows*, Hermione also claims "Mudblood" as a positive, thus

reclaiming the power from the derogatory term that those like the Malfoys attempt to take away by using it. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione are captured and taken to Malfoy Manor, Bellatrix wants information. She has the prisoners taken to the cellar, all "except for the Mudblood" (463). For Bellatrix, someone with dirty blood is expendable, and therefore the best person to question. When Ron volunteers to take Hermione's place, Bellatrix tells him, "If she dies under questioning, I'll take you next…Blood traitor is next to Mudblood in my book" (463). There is a clear order to how expendable these people are to Bellatrix while she is gaining information. After they escape from Malfoy Manor, Harry tries to convince Griphook the goblin to help them. But it is Hermione who convinces him. When Ron protests Hermione calling herself a Mudblood, she says, "Mudblood, and proud of it!" (489). In *Chamber of Secrets* she learned what the term Mudblood meant, and at the time took it as the insult it was meant to be. Throughout the years she has accepted that she is a capable witch, and that bloodline has nothing to do with it. Throughout the series, Hermione has built her life and her community by fighting for those who do not have a voice. Now that Muggle-borns are being persecuted, she uses this term as an empowering rally cry to help save those who Voldemort deems unworthy. Just as she always has, Hermione stands for the goblins, the house-elves, and the Muggle-borns as she convinces Griphook to help them defeat Voldemort. Just as when she said Voldemort's name for the first time, once again Hermione uses naming as a way to claim power and agency.

Hermione may be great at building community and championing causes, but it takes her a while to truly accept her own personal strength and power. Throughout many of their adventures, Hermione is the individual who comes up with a plan and figures out

how to execute said plan. However, Harry is the one that follows through with the action to the end, gaining most of the hero's credit. Without him, villains would not be defeated, but without Hermione, Harry would not be able to collect the information necessary to complete his tasks. Yet, at the beginning of the series, Hermione is very reluctant to accept praise or see her actions as important. At the end of *Sorcerer's Stone* the three protagonists attempt to stop a teacher from stealing the Sorcerer's Stone. After overcoming multiple obstacles, Hermione tells Harry that he is a great wizard, to which he counters "I'm not as good as you" (287). Hermione responds, "Me!...Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery" (287). Hermione may be bashful in accepting praise, but it is an ironic line because she has at least equaled Harry in the amount of work she has done to successfully pass the obstacles. She uses knowledge from Herbology to save them, flies a broom to help catch a key, and solves a puzzle to help Harry and herself escape a trap. Throughout all of these obstacles, she proves that she is action-oriented and brave as well as bookish and clever. Hermione may not see her full worth yet, but the audience is given enough information to deduce Hermione's true worth.

As the series progresses, Hermione becomes more comfortable with her strength and power. She accepts the role that she plays within the trio and understands that she is as valuable as Harry to any of his missions. For example, in *Deathly Hallows*, when the Ministry of Magic is infiltrated, it is Hermione who jumps into action and executes her plan. She collects Harry and Ron and Disapparates them to a new location, away from the Death Eaters. Her purse is enchanted with an Undetectable Extension Charm so that all of their necessary belongings are packed. Without her planning, Ron and Harry would have

been captured by the Ministry. Here we see Hermione has accepted that she is a talented witch who is important to the success of finishing Harry's mission and defeating Voldemort, and is comfortable taking charge in order to accomplish necessary tasks.

Although Hermione accepts herself as a powerful witch and a productive member of her community, she still cares about being liked and is sensitive to how others see her. In *Sorcerer's Stone*, she runs off crying when she overhears some of the boys making fun of her, and again is upset in *Prisoner of Azkaban* when Ron refuses to talk to her. In *Goblet of Fire*, Hermione is invited to the Yule Ball by the Durmstang champion, Viktor Krum. Here, Hermione partakes in the postfeminist trend of the makeover. As Jeffrey A. Brown argues, "The women who undergo the makeover…gleefully embrace their newfound feminine power and are rewarded with social acceptance and praise" (188). This is a special night for the students of Hogwarts, and Hermione wants to look and feel beautiful and feminine. She looks so different at the ball that it takes Harry a few moments to recognize her, and Ron walks right past her without recognizing her. Harry observes, "But she didn't look like Hermione at all. She had done something with her hair; it was no longer bushy but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an elegant knot at the back of her head…and she was holding herself differently, somehow—or maybe it was merely the absence of the twenty or so books she usually had slung over her back" (414). Everyone is amazed at her transformation. She admits that it takes a lot of work to tame her hair, so is not worth the effort every day (433). Through her nonchalant attitude toward her looks, Hermione proves that caring about appearance is a choice one can make. Unlike other postfeminist narratives, like *The Princess Diaries* (2001), where the girl undergoes a makeover and must remain transformed, Hermione chooses to go back to

her normal, natural self. Here Hermione shows that looks and makeovers should not be looked at as a necessity, but rather as something a person embraces for herself. She demonstrates this once again at Bill and Fleur's wedding; when she wants to get dressed up, she is more than capable of doing so. Hermione shows that she can be smart and dedicated to her studies, and she can still care about her appearance. It is a matter of choice and how she wants the world to perceive her. She is happy to be dressed up with slicked back hair, but she appears as comfortable with herself in plain clothes and bushy hair.[52]

Throughout the books, Hermione grows and learns to accept herself. She is secure in her powers and abilities, and trusts her own judgment. *Deathly Hallows* is the book that truly proves how strong Hermione is and how much she has grown over the course of the series. She embraces the dualities of life and stresses the importance of making one's own choices, highlighting her strengths as a postfeminist woman. She can be sad and broken, and continue to fight for what she believes is right. Whether it is trying to find the locations of the Horcruxes, setting up barriers around their camp to keep them safe, or evading recognition and capture, Hermione continues her streak of brilliant plans to save the day.

Setting up the final book and all of the difficulties that the trio faces, Rowling makes it clear that this is a choice that Hermione and Ron both make to stay by Harry's

[52] Though beyond the scope of this chapter and the characters being discussed, Rowling does deal with issues of beauty and vanity within the series through other characters. Hermione's makeover is one of the main scenes where appearance is at the forefront, but throughout *Goblet of Fire* there are multiple references to Fleur and her beauty. Other characters, such as Romilda Vane and Lavender Brown in *Half-Blood Prince*, also demonstrate issues with vanity. Romilda Vane attempts to lure Harry with a love potion. In the film version of *Half-Blood Prince* Lavender's obsession with Ron is played up, as well as how vapid and shallow she is. While beauty, femininity, and appearance are all a major part of postfeminism, these are not the main issues on which Rowling focuses. However, they do still exist in small ways throughout the series.

side. These three characters have the same conversation twice, both times Hermione and Ron making it clear they will not let Harry fight his battles alone. After Dumbledore's death in *Half-Blood Prince,* Harry lets them know he will not be returning to Hogwarts the following year; instead he will set out to finish Dumbledore's mission to find and destroy all of Voldemort's Horcruxes. Telling Hermione and Ron about his plans is Harry's way to say he is taking this journey alone. When Harry protests their desire to go with him, Hermione says, "You said to us once before, that there was time to turn back if we wanted to. We've had time, haven't we?" (651). Ron adds, "We're with you whatever happens" (651). Dumbledore may have left a gargantuan task, but Hermione and Ron are in to the end. To emphasize the idea that for Hermione and Ron helping Harry is a choice they make willingly, they have this same discussion at the beginning of *Deathly Hallows*. Harry once again tries to protest, and Hermione answers, "We're coming with you. That was decided months ago—years, really" (96). Hermione and Ron have chosen over and over again to help Harry—they ventured after the Sorcerer's Stone, they helped solve the mystery of who opened the Chamber of Secrets, they went to the Department of Mysteries and fought Death Eaters, and they will help Harry hunt down Horcruxes and end Voldemort for good. For Hermione, this is her chosen community. Just like with every other cause she has supported, she puts her whole heart and all her energy into it. Whatever may come, Harry can count on Hermione to be there.

In adapting this for the *Half-Blood Prince* film, the filmmakers stress the idea of Hermione's choice. At the end of the film, after Dumbledore's death, it is Harry and Hermione that discuss plans for hunting Horcruxes. Ron is in the scene and the camera cuts to him at times to show his presence, but all of the dialogue shifts to Harry and

Hermione. Together, these two discuss the fake Horcrux and their plans for the next year. Harry says that he is going out on his own. Hermione responds, "I've always admired your courage, Harry. But sometimes, you can be really thick. You don't really think you're going to be able to find all of those Horcruxes by yourself, do you? You need us, Harry." At this last line, the camera holds Harry and Hermione in a close up, and Hermione forces Harry to look at her. The camera then cuts to a long shot where the audience can see Ron sitting in the background. Hermione speaks for both of them. This shot also shows that Harry and Hermione are holding hands, highlighting how they support one another. Harry taking Hermione's hand is his non-verbal recognition that she and Ron will join him. The emphasis on only Hermione and Harry focuses on Hermione's agency in choosing to participate in hunting Horcruxes.

This scene is even more important in light of how the last three films work to show the close friendship Harry and Hermione develop, building Hermione's community in new and different ways. The final book was released in 2007, and the final three films were released in 2009, 2010, and 2011 respectively. Because the books had already been released, the film adapters knew that Ron and Hermione end up together, not Harry and Hermione. Therefore these films stress Harry and Hermione's friendship and how they are there for one another. These last three films build a closer, platonic bond between these two characters, emphasizing Harry's role in Hermione's community. In the film *Half-Blood Prince* (2009), they console each other throughout the film over respective heartbreaks caused by Ron and Ginny. *Deathly Hallows, Part 1* (2010) actually creates a scene not in the books to show the importance of Hermione and Harry's friendship. After Ron leaves Harry and Hermione to find Horcruxes on their own, the director presents a

new scene where Harry and Hermione dance. This scene highlights their friendship and Hermione's vital role in Harry's life. Attempting to cheer each other up, Harry and Hermione dance around their tent until they are both laughing and hugging. Though a short scene with no real dialogue, Hermione and Harry's actions visually convey the support Hermione and Harry provide for one another. It is not romantic love but familial love between these characters; they are like brother and sister and would do anything to help the other. This scene also emphasizes that Hermione is still there—she has chosen to remain with Harry and fight, no matter how long it takes. Once again Hermione proves that she is strong and capable of handling whatever they might encounter.

Hermione claims agency by choosing to help Harry hunt Horcruxes, and she follows through by continuing to stick by Harry even when things become difficult. Whereas Ron believes that they will be capturing a new Horcrux every week and complete their mission quickly, Hermione accepts that she is in this for the long haul. When Ron gets frustrated and leaves, he asks Hermione if she is coming with him. As anguished as she is (both Ron and Hermione have feelings for each other, so this also serves as a hiccup in their love story), she responds, "Yes—yes, I'm staying. Ron, we said we'd go with Harry, we said we'd help—" (309). In choosing to help Harry, Hermione agreed to take responsibility for her choice, enduring cold, hunger, frustration, and even torture to help find Horcruxes and destroy Voldemort. This scene also demonstrates Hermione's postfeminist duality. She made a clear choice: the choice she believed to be right, but she is still emotionally distraught by losing Ron and has no problem crying in front of Harry (310). However, she soldiers on and continues the hunt with Harry. Hermione shows that a person does not have to be only strong and capable or

emotional and weak, but it is possible to be emotional and show one's feelings while still persevering through difficult situations.

Reason does not have to be free of passion or emotion—this is part of the contradiction that makes Hermione postfeminist. Many times, Hermione's emotional outbursts come from a reaction to something she is passionate about. Typically it is when she sees something unjust occurring which she cannot fix that causes her to have an emotional reaction. During the Battle of Hogwarts, after Fred is killed, Ron and Harry want to go fight Death Eaters. They want revenge. Hermione remains the logical one, telling the boys they will fight but they must first finish their mission and destroy the last Horcrux. Rowling writes, "She was crying too, and she wiped her face on her torn and singed sleeve as she spoke, but she took great heaving breaths to calm herself" (*Deathly Hallows* 640). Hermione does not have to separate emotion and logic; she can be sad that her friend just died, but she sees the best path is to destroy the final Horcrux and finally defeat Voldemort. She can calm herself and see the logical answer. It might be the hard path, but she urges Harry and Ron to keep going. Like so many other times throughout the series, it is Hermione who keeps a cool head and makes sure they see their mission through.

Hermione is a groundbreaking character because she took the stereotype of the quiet bookworm and made the bookworm a strong action heroine as well. As Hopkins notes, "Young witch protagonists are more often heroic than repulsive or monstrous…the witch has been made-over as a postfeminist boundary-breaker" (154). Hermione fights alongside the boys and holds her own. Over the course of the Harry Potter series, Hermione proves that the dualities of postfeminism are both possible and positive. She

proves it is possible to be emotional and logical at the same time. She stands up for what she believes is right. Through her continuing choice to help Harry in his quests to stop Voldemort and her corresponding actions, Hermione continually claims agency and proves that she is the strong and capable heroine that the wizarding world and the readers need.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed multiple examples of strong, capable women within Rowling's wizarding world, but what is even more wonderful about this world is that there are so many more intelligent and independent women, which helps promote equality. By having such a diverse cast of strong females, and focusing on their respective achievements rather than their gender, Rowling has created a postfeminist world. The postfeminist world created in the Harry Potter series continues to be an inspiration to audiences, particularly female nerds. "No one could have realized when J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* first appeared in 1997 that this new work of fantasy fiction…was going to change the entire face of contemporary popular culture" (Booker xiv). Rowling's series has not only inspired many other works of fantasy fiction, she has also inspired many young girls to embrace who they are.

CHAPTER 4

FROM THE 'GIRL ON FIRE' TO THE MOCKINGJAY:

NATURE AND AGANCY IN THE HUNGER GAMES SERIES

"Places come into us lastingly; once having been in a particular place for any considerable time—or even briefly, if our experience there has been intense—we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways, many too attenuated to specify."

Edward S. Casey

After the Harry Potter series, one of the most popular series to emerge was Suzanne Collins Hunger Games series, the first novel of which was published a year after the Harry Potter series finished. *The Hunger Games* (2008) transported readers into the dystopic world of Panem. Instead of fantasy, this dystopic series shows a world under the tyrannical rule of the Capitol and President Snow. By creating a character who thrives in nature and must rely on nature to survive, Collins participates in the modern trend of young female protagonists entering the natural world in order to awaken to and understand the realities of their world; this awakening leads them to claim agency and to take action in order to save their respective societies.[53] Throughout Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games series, Katniss Everdeen faces multiple battle arenas, and each time she must utilize the space around her in order to survive. Katniss is most comfortable out in

[53] Though the Hunger Games series is the most popular, other dystopic novels that fit within this trend are Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* (2005), Ally Condie's *Matched* (2010), Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011), and Rae Carson's fantasy *The Girl of Fire and Thorns* (2011).

nature where she can hunt and she is free from the prying eyes of the government. However, once she enters the Hunger Games as a tribute, what resembles her safe place becomes a minefield of death traps. Her survival is possible in large part due to her understanding of the natural world, which allows her to turn hazards into weapons. While in both Hunger Games arenas, Katniss uses nature to her advantage, both to help her survive and to shame the Capitol. In choosing to embarrass the Capitol and later singling out the Capitol as the enemy, Katniss claims agency by establishing her autonomy and proving she is more than just a pawn in the Capitol's game. This is an important part of Katniss' narrative, and is highlighted throughout the film adaptations as well. Utilizing ecocriticism and adaptation theory, this chapter will explore the ways that Katniss interacts with the world around her, both human and non-human, and learns to claim agency and take action in order to change her world.

Ecocriticism and Feminism: Nature and the Hunger Games Series

Cultural representations that draw connections between women and nature are easy to find throughout history. From biblical images of Eve and the Garden of Eden, to Greek and Roman mythology, to ideas of Mother Earth, an affiliation between nature and women has persisted throughout culture, language, and history (Merchant 2-4). Ecocriticism as a field of study emerged as scholars sought to examine these connections and how "images of women and nature…relate to the formation of our modern world and their implications for our lives today" (xxi). Due to this inherent cultural connection between women and nature, some scholars claim that issues of nature are inherently feminist issues; thus ecofeminism emerged in the 1990s with the intent to study issues of subjugation. Scholars combined the fields of feminism and ecocriticism to examine the

important connections between the treatment of women, people of color, and people living in poverty, as well as the treatment of non-human land (Warren xi). Ecofeminism has both academic and real world applications. Ecofeminist scholar Gretchen T. Legler argues that dealing with real world environmental issues is feminist as well as ecological because "the uses and abuses of the environment that have led to what they [ecofeminists] see as the potentially catastrophic present are largely due to a patriarchal environmental ethic that has conceptualized land as 'woman'" (228). Carolyn Merchant links these same ideas to the notion that in ancient civilizations the feminine earth was to be protected and revered, whereas the modern world with its patriarchal mindset is driven by mechanization, technology, and a desire to control nature (xix-xxiii). This drive to control nature can be seen both in the real world as well as in modern cultural texts. Corruption of the natural environment is one of the main fears expressed within modern-day dystopic texts.

In a modern-day technological society, the male/technology and female/nature binaries become important concepts within culture and society. Sean P. Connors, in his ecofeminist reading of *The Hunger Games*, reasons that this binary, seen through nature/modernity, where Katniss represents nature and the Capitol's reliance on machines and technology represents modernity, is one of the major driving forces within the novel (142). Agreeing with Connors, Lykke Guanio-Uluru explains, "The power hierarchy implicit in the binary is read as gendered, with Katniss/nature/woman suffering from the coercive practices of the Capitol/modernity/patriarchy" (219). Yet Katniss with her knowledge of nature is able to repeatedly embarrass and shame the Capitol, represented through the characters of President Coriolanus Snow and the Gamemakers. Sarah

Margaret Kniesler discusses the connection between power and feminine nature versus masculine culture, arguing, "Throughout the series, Katniss's actions allow her to successfully negotiate the woman-nature analogy out of subjugation and into equality. As the narrative unfolds, the idea that nature has power that should be respected and appreciated becomes more prevalent within Panem, largely through Katniss's minor triumphs and, later, with the complete overhaul of the government" (25). This is able to occur because the people of the Capitol see nature as a foreign space which can be deadly (and the Capitol makes nature even more so through mechanization within the arenas), whereas Katniss sees nature as a place full of resources if only harnessed properly.

The concepts of space and place are important to ecocriticism, and form another critical binary. Yi-Fu Tuan, in his book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, differentiates between space and place as follows:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value…The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan 6)

For Tuan, living in a specific location is only one facet of place. The value we ascribe to a location is also important, and it can allow a space to become a place. In the patriarchal male/technology binary, nature is a space to be conquered or dominated. For the female/nature binary, though, space can be revered and therefore transform into place. But as Tuan stresses in his book, there is an interdependent relationship between space and place, and one cannot fully be understood without the other. For the Hunger Games

series, like other young adult dystopic novels, the ideas of space and place are integral to the protagonist claiming agency.

In young adult dystopias, there has been a recent trend in novels with female protagonists to send the young woman into the wilderness in order for to her to be awakened to the realities of her world. Once awakened, the female protagonist must then learn to claim agency and take action in order to help save her society. In an article co-written with Katherine A. Wagner entitled "Rebellious Natures: The Role of Nature in Young Adult Dystopian Female Protagonists' Awakenings and Agency," we argue that a female protagonist's time in nature, time away from the constraints and mechanization of her society, helps catalyze her awakening. This occurs because her time away allows her to see nature in a new way, and the space of nature transforms into a place endowed with meaning. Thus nature becomes an ideal place for her to claim agency (157). During her time in nature, the female protagonist finds a new sense of self which empowers her. Katniss varies slightly from the females discussed in our article because she already has knowledge of nature at the beginning of the series. However, it is not until she is in the Capitol controlled nature of the Hunger Games that she is fully awakened to the Capitol's power and deception. Katniss then needs additional time in nature to pause and reflect on her situation, allowing her to be awakened to the realities of her world and then to claim agency in order to enact change.

Throughout the Hunger Games series, Collins uses both nature and Katniss' actions to examine issues of power, privilege, and agency. Katniss is linked, both physically and metaphorically, to nature. She thrives in nature, and finds empowerment in what she can accomplish within nature. While there are many female characters from

the series that could be discussed individually in their own right, this chapter will focus on Katniss and her connection with nature. This chapter will also examine how Katniss' agency changes through adaptation and the loss of the first-person narrator, as well as how her role changes as the story becomes more political with the heightened presence of characters such as President Snow.

Katniss and Nature: Claiming Agency and Enacting Change

From the beginning of the narrative, Katniss is presented as someone who is knowledgeable about the land, and uses this knowledge to help her family survive. Because she is introduced as hunter and provider, her knowledge is coded as a masculine knowledge. It sets her up for success in the arenas, but is also sets her apart. Peeta Mellark, the male tribute for District 12, on the other hand is more affluent as the son of a baker; this feminizes him and he must rely on Katniss to survive. Therefore an important element within the Hunger Games series is the gendering of both Katniss and Peeta. In many ways, the traditionally masculine and feminine roles have been reversed with these two characters, creating more complex gender roles. Katniss hunts, is the breadwinner for her family, and is willing to fight to the death. Peeta is a baker, an artist, and would rather talk through a situation and come to an agreement. These are their chosen roles, which they both demonstrate throughout the series. Even in the last pages of *Mockingjay* (2010), as Katniss reflects on their lives back in District 12 after everything they have survived, she says, "I hunt. Peeta bakes" (436). In the article "Female Focalizers and Masculine Ideals: Gender as Performance in Twilight and The Hunger Games," Guanio-Uluru utilizes Judith Butler to examine gender performances within these two series. A character like Katniss is complex because she must be feminized in order to be more

appealing to the Capitol residents, while also relying on the strength she gains from her masculine traits. Guanio-Uluru writes, "Arguably, it is only through combining her performance of emphasized femininity with her ability to *also* display physical strength and hunter prowess (that is: to perform hegemonic masculinity) that Katniss prevails in the Games" (214). She goes on to argue that "Peeta effectively serves to 'feminize' Katniss" (218). He does this through declaring his love for Katniss thus making her the female half of a heterosexual relationship (this also helps Peeta's performance of the masculine because it sets him up as the male half the relationship), as well as turning her into a more nurturing figure when she must take care of him in the first arena.

Katniss connects nature to survival and caring for her family. She also connects nature to Peeta and his kindness. After her father's death, Katniss has to figure out how to feed her family. Starving, she ends up outside the bakery. Out of kindness Peeta burns bread, knowing he will be beaten for it, and gives her the bread. Following the gift of bread, Katniss notices a dandelion—she knows if she goes to the Meadow and into the woods she can feed her family. At 11 years old, Katniss becomes the breadwinner of her household—tying her to nature for survival, but also emphasizing the masculine role of replacing her father as breadwinner. However, for Katniss and her family nature is also restorative. Unlike the Capitol who only see nature for a place of material gain (Connors 143), nature brings Katniss and her family back to life. The first step in this restoration is going to the Meadow and picking dandelions for their first real meal after the bread. She says, "I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed" (37). Following this, the woods become a place Katniss visits daily for food. She says, "The

woods became our savior…I stole eggs from nests, caught fish in nets, sometimes managed to shoot a squirrel or rabbit for stew, and gathered the various plants that sprung up beneath my feet" (*The Hunger Games* 58-59). These skills she learned in order to care for her family are the reason she is able to survive the Hunger Games.

Over the course of the series, Katniss faces three separate arenas: two arenas created for the Hunger Games and the Capitol itself, which serves as its own kind of challenge because she must take on an urban environment. For the arenas created by the Gamemakers, tributes must survive in a natural environment, enhanced by the Gamemakers with technology that allows the Gamemakers to watch the tributes as well as control nature for entertainment. This reinforces the link between the male/technology binary and the society of the Capitol, and they will control and conquer nature/female. During her time in both arenas, Katniss never knows where the cameras are, but she knows they are watching her every move. There are also sections of the arena that are set up with different deadly traps. Sometimes the Capitol relies on *muttations,*[54] other times they use natural events, such as fire, flooding, or an avalanche, to control the tributes and the game. To survive an arena, one must have fighting and hunting skills, which are traditionally coded as masculine skills. But prior to even reaching the arena, tributes must be prepared for parades and interviews. These television appearances give the people of the Capitol a chance to see the tributes and decide who they want to bet on and sponsor. At this point beauty plays a big role—the prettier contestants tend to get more sponsors (*The Hunger Games* 66). Therefore traits which are traditionally coded as feminine are also important. It is not just masculine or feminine attributes which help a tribute win, but

[54] A term used to describe Capitol-created or altered animals.

a combination of both: a tribute must be deadly but also play well to the cameras in order to achieve victor status. Katniss is different in that she performs a character for the cameras, but she uses her knowledge of nature to wound the Capitol rather than just other tributes.

Katniss' first act of agency in the series is volunteering to take her sister Primrose's place during the reaping. As Prim walks toward the stage, Katniss runs after her, pushes Prim behind her, and gasps, "I volunteer as tribute" (25). Through both words and actions Katniss claims agency by taking her sister's place in what is normally considered a death sentence for someone in District 12. After this particular decision and claiming of agency, most of Katniss' choices become reactionary. While Katniss volunteering for Prim is a preview of the agency she is capable of claiming, it is not until she has had time in the arena and is awakened to the true motives of the Capitol and the Gamemakers that she becomes proactive in claiming agency and taking action.

Upon arriving in the Capitol, Katniss receives a makeover in order to prep her for the tributes' parade. Cinna, her stylist, creates a theme which he follows for all of the outfits she wears in preparation for the Hunger Games. For the parade the kids from each district wear costumes that highlight their district's main industry. For District 12, that is coal. Most of the time District 12 tributes are dressed as coal miners. With Katniss and Peeta, the stylists are innovative and go back to nature and look at coal's properties and uses. Cinna comes up with the idea to emulate burning coal and creates fake fire in order to make Katniss and Peeta appear as though they are on fire. He uses very little makeup and simple costumes. As Cinna says, "I want the audience to recognize you when you're in the arena…Katniss, the girl who was on fire" (77). By using fire, he creates a

memorable image of the "girl on fire." Her fiery outfit and this nickname link Katniss to the element of fire, which is used throughout the series as a major plot device as well as metaphor. Anne M. Canavan and Sarah N. Petrovic argue, "Even though Cinna has crafted her persona as the Girl on Fire, it is clear that his costuming of her was meant to bring out part of her personality that already existed, rather than to create something from nothing" (49-50). Cinna saw a spark in Katniss and refused to let her drift into the background after she volunteered for her sister—Katniss sees this action as necessary to save Prim, whereas others like Cinna see it as a rebellious act. Katniss just needs time in nature to recognize this part of herself.

These makeovers are important to Katniss' survival, yet critics like Connors point out that the gendering of Katniss at this point is done by males. Cinna, Haymitch, and Peeta all help establish a feminine look and persona that the people of the Capitol see. Connors goes on to stress that the male tributes are not held to the same standards, and instead are allowed to rely on physical prowess rather than beauty (147, 150). But I would argue there is also a strength given to Katniss through these makeovers. Her first fiery look gives her confidence and hope that she can gain Capitol support. For her interview gown, Cinna puts Katniss in a bejeweled gown that gives the impression that she is engulfed in flames. Looking at herself, Katniss thinks, "I am not pretty. I am not beautiful. I am as radiant as the sun" (*The Hunger Games* 140). This look empowers Katniss and helps her feel like she can face the people of the Capitol. Jeffrey A. Brown argues that Katniss, as a postfeminist female character and girl revolutionary, undergoes a makeover that makes her physically and mentally strong instead of just pretty (188). These makeovers are not just about making Katniss pretty or girlie, they help her create a

persona which she can project to the people of Panem. This persona is a mixture of feminine beauty and clothing with masculine survival traits, a juxtaposition which continues throughout the series. So while beauty may be an aspect of these makeovers, for Katniss, they are more about empowerment and building confidence to help her tackle the arena.

The empowerment gained through costume and persona is used again in *Catching Fire* (2009). Once again at Cinna's hand, Katniss is set ablaze. Instead of the "girl on fire" portrayed through frilly dresses and bejeweled gowns, now she embodies glowing coal and "is as deadly as fire itself" (233). Though she must face other victors who have been around much longer than she has and are therefore more experienced, by once again utilizing nature and the more sinister associations of fire, Katniss is painted as a deadly contender. Whereas in the first parade Cinna wanted Katniss to be recognizable, here she appears unrecognizable and almost androgynous. Her hair is done in a braided up-do, her makeup creates angles and shadows, and she wears a simple jumpsuit that covers her entire body (232-33). This image gives Katniss the strength she needs to survive the parade, facing the other victors, and entering another arena. Katniss says to Cinna, "I think…this is just what I needed to face the others" (233).

Cinna uses fire one more time to rebrand Katniss: from "girl on fire" to the Mockingjay. Snow insists that Katniss wear her wedding dress for the tribute interviews. Cinna recreates the dress so that, during her interview, when Katniss twirls her dress catches fire. Burning away the white silk, Katniss is left wearing a black dress made of feathers with tiny white patches on the sleeves. Katniss now resembles a mockingjay

(284).[55] After Katniss' dress transforms, she thinks, "I can tell [Caesar] knows that the mockingjay isn't just my token. That it's come to symbolize so much more. That what will be seen as a flashy costume change in the Capitol is resonating in an entirely different way throughout the districts" (285). Through Cinna's fashion Katniss moves from "girl on fire" who sparked a rebellion to Mockingjay, the face of the rebellion. Cinna's act of defiance creates a strong persona to help lead a rebellion.

Katniss is not just linked to fire metaphorically through her nickname and costumes, she also uses the element of fire for her own gains during the Hunger Games. Unlike many of the other tributes, she recognizes both the dangers and the benefits of fire. She acknowledges the need to use fire for food and warmth, but unlike some of the other tributes she knows fire can also act as a beacon to one's location. While she uses this knowledge for actions, such creating a distraction in order to destroy the careers supplies (*The Hunger Games* 216-221), the most well-known example of fire is the wall of fire in the arena. This fire starts out as a hazard created by the Gamemakers to threaten and potentially kill Katniss while driving her closer to other tributes. This is also meant to be entertainment, as demonstrated by the section of forest rigged with fire cannons. As Katniss reasons, "The fire was just to get us moving, now the audience will get to see some real fun…Somewhere, in a cool and spotless room, a Gamemaker sits at a set of controls, fingers on the triggers that could end my life in a second" (204-05). The irony of

[55] In her first Hunger Games, Katniss' district token is a gold pin given to her by a friend. The pin's image is of a small bird in flight, a mockingjay. "They're funny birds and something of a slap in the face to the Capitol" (*The Hunger Games* 49). The mockingjay is the mix between a Capitol *muttation* known as a jabberjay and mockingbirds. When the Capitol's need for the jabberjays waned, they were left to die off since they were all male; but they mated with mockingbirds. Thus the mockingjay is a symbol of a creature returning to nature and overcoming the death sentence which the Capitol had dealt. So the rebellion using it as their symbol is like a slap to the Capitol because they are saying they too will overcome the Capitol's oppression.

her nickname and this charade are not lost on Katniss. She thinks, "I hear Cinna's voice, carrying images of rich fabric and sparling gems. 'Katniss, the girl who was on fire.' What a good laugh the Gamemakers must be having over that one. Perhaps, Cinna's beautiful costumes have even brought on this particular torture for me" (206-07). Katniss sees the link between herself and this natural element, but she does not yet fully understand the spark her actions can ignite.

Once the flames die down, the fire that was supposed to lead to her death becomes a helpful tool in allowing Katniss to escape the career tributes who have chased her up a tree. Rue, a fellow tribute, points out a tracker jacker's nest.[56] Katniss is concerned that she might not be able to drop the nest on the careers; she worries the tracker jackers will attack her instead. However, as she gets closer to the nest she realizes, "the humming becomes more distinctive. But it's still oddly subdued if they are tracker jackers. *It's the smoke*, I think. *It's sedated them*" (218). Without the Gamemaker's wall of fire, there would not have been enough smoke to put the tracker jackers to sleep, thus allowing Katniss to use them as a weapon against the tributes vying for her death. And as Kniesler points out, "Although Katniss is unable to turn these tools of the Capitol against the creators themselves, she is able to use them as a weapon against the Capitol's favorite tributes" (26). While Katniss is reactionary to both the Gamemakers' wall of fire and the tributes who trapped her up a tree, using the tracker-jacker nest as a weapon to ensure her escape begins to show Katniss how deadly she can be in the arena when she is proactive.

[56] Tracker jackers are another *muttation*. They are an enhanced kind of wasp created by the Capitol and used against the districts. Their venom works with the fear sections of the brain, creating nightmarish hallucinations. The venom is also deadly; most people cannot survive more than a few stings.

Though volunteering to save her sister is an act of agency, Katniss then spends much of the book reacting to events caused by this decision. It is not until she watches Rue die that Katniss fully awakens to the motives of the Capitol, and she becomes proactive rather than reactionary. As stated in the article "Rebellious Natures,"

> The process of awakening occurs through [the] protagonist's awareness of the world and herself that, although perhaps still mediated through cultural and social imperatives, is altered through the realization that she must be responsible for the changes she wishes to see in herself and her world…Within much of young adult dystopian fiction there is a causal relationship between a protagonist's awakening and agency. Only after being awakened to the realization that choices need to be made can the protagonist engage in the decision-making process that is agency. (McDonough and Wagner 158)

This is true of Katniss. Rue's death is a turning point for her. Prior to Rue's death, Katniss' decisions are reactionary to her surroundings and her drive to survive. After she loses Rue, Katniss' actions not only to help her survive, they are also influenced by her anger and drive to disgrace the Capitol. Thus, her second true act of agency is decorating Rue's body.

Part of what makes Rue's death so difficult for Katniss is that she formed an attachment to Rue, which helped her see the Hunger Games in a new light. Prior to her alliance with Rue, Katniss began learning the layout of the arena, but it was not until they began working together that Katniss was able to transform space into place. Though they only know each other for a short time, befriending Rue allows Katniss time to feel safe, and helps space transform into place. When she goes looking for Rue, she even designates places in relation to Rue, like "the site of our first meeting" (*The Hunger Games* 267). After Rue dies in Katniss' arms, Katniss cannot seem to make herself leave the body. She is angry at the boy from District 1 who killed Rue, but she realizes this is

not adequate enough. She is angry at the Capitol for putting all of them in this position where they have to kill each other. It is then that Katniss fully understands what Peeta meant when he said, "Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to…to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (165). Katniss decides she wants to shame the Capitol; she wants to do something to hold them accountable for the lives lost, and prove they don't own her. In order to achieve her message Katniss must utilize the few things she has available to her, including nature. Katniss collects wildflowers in shades of violet, yellow, and white. She covers Rue's wounds and weaves flowers into her hair. Katniss knows that, even if the Gamemakers choose not to show her in action, they will have to show the body as it is collected and taken out of the arena, and then everyone will know what she did for Rue (276-77). They are simple wildflowers, yet they wound Capitol like the spear that still protrudes from Rue's stomach. This action also shows Katniss that she can play the games her way.

Katniss' final act of agency in *The Hunger Games*, and the action that serves as the catalyst for the next two books, is when she challenges the Gamemakers, and by extension the Capitol, with poisonous berries. Katniss and Peeta are the last two living tributes. She reacts to what Peeta says: "We both know they have to have a victor" (402). Katniss knows without a victor the games would be a failure, so she makes the courageous decision to challenge the Gamemakers with the poisonous berries. When Peeta protests, she says, "Trust me" (402). They could use weapons to fight each other, or the Capitol could send in *muttations* or use the technological control over the environment to force them into survival mode. However, Katniss beats them to it with the berries. She uses this element of nature which the Gamemakers placed in the arena

against them and the Capitol. Thus, for the Capitol to have a victor Katniss and her knowledge of nature must win. In the novel, Katniss' internal monologue shows that she questions her decision. She claims agency in producing the ultimatum of two victors or no victor, and she is willing to follow through with the necessary actions. However, as she is about to eat the berries, she questions whether or not she has read the Capitol correctly (403). Even after winning the Hunger Games, Katniss admits to herself that her main goal with the berry stunt was to outsmart the Gamemakers; she didn't think about how these actions would reflect on the Capitol (418). This was her chosen act of agency, and now she must face the consequences.

With Rue's death, Katniss began to awaken to the evils of the Capitol, and she acts by challenging the Capitol with the berries. In *Catching Fire*, when the tributes are reaped from the pool of previous victors, and she must once again compete the Hunger Games, Katniss must come to terms with who the real enemy is. Entering the arena, there are 23 people that must die in order for the victor to survive. For much of the time, she is preoccupied with making sure Peeta survives and is the victor. This idea that she will not play to be victor, but plans to die in the arena so that Peeta lives (300), is an act of rebellion itself because the entire premise of the Hunger Games is that each tribute vie for the victory for him or herself. Katniss is prepared to kill anyone who stands in Peeta's way. Though Katniss reluctantly takes on allies, she realizes they are necessary to help get rid of some of the competition and protect Peeta.[57] Unlike the first arena, where her bond with Rue helped space become place, in this second arena it is the pause needed to

[57] At this point in the story all of the tributes that are part of the rebellion work to protect Peeta because they know if he dies Katniss will disappear, and then they cannot watch over her until she can be rescued from the arena in order to serve as Mockingjay.

learn place that allows Katniss to form bonds. The tributes must pause in order to figure out how everything in the arena works. As they overcome the obstacles they face, they also form bonds. This arena functions like a clock, which holds a new deadly trial every hour. Slowly the land gains labels like lightning, fog, blood, monkeys, and jabberjays. These labels help create the notion of place. Even though they are dangerous at times, it also helps signal which areas are safe places while other spaces are invaded with killer traps. When the tributes figure out the arena is a clock, the Gamemakers spin the land so that they can no longer tell which area is which. This removes the sense of safety through knowing places by turning the arena back into unknown space (373-77). What cannot be removed by the Gamemakers, however, are the bonds formed during the tributes' time of pause; these bond help Katniss make her final decision in the arena.

At the very end of *Catching Fire*, when Beetee's plan to electrocute the other tributes goes awry, Katniss plots out the deaths of Finnick, Enobaria, Beetee, and herself, leaving Peeta with only one enemy to kill. The word enemy triggers something in Katniss' brain. She hears Haymitch's last words to her, "*Katniss, when you're in the arena…You just remember who the enemy is*" (424). Just as with Rue's death, Katniss knew it was not the boy from District 1, but the Capitol that ultimately killed Rue; here she knows her true enemy is not Finnick or Enobaria. Realizing Beetee's actual plan was to use lightning to destroy the arena, Katniss undertakes the final actions to end the 75th Hunger Games. She ties the wire to one of her arrows and lets it fly into one of the force field's chinks. This action combines the Capitol's technology with nature to create an explosion. The wire is a special kind of technology that was created by Beetee for the Capitol's use. However, here it is used against the Capitol to help the tributes escape.

Read in correlation with Guanio-Uluru's idea that the binary of Katniss/nature/woman suffers under the rule of the Capitol/modernity (technology)/patriarchy, in this scene Katniss combines these forces in order to claim agency by using the Capitol's privileged technology with her knowledge of nature to end the Hunger Games.

Katniss is saved from the fiery arena with the intention that she will be the face of the rebellion—the Mockingjay. However, getting her to be the Mockingjay proves to be more difficult than the rebellion leaders anticipate. Throughout the series Katniss makes many difficult decisions, and time and time again she must choose to claim agency and take action. However, this does not mean that she does not second guess her decision, regret decisions, or want to run away at times. No one is perfect. Having a character who shows emotion, questions decisions, and does not want to act at times is what makes Katniss' choices to stand and fight so courageous. It is in these times of weakness or feeling broken that Katniss finds a new strength and courage which allows her to continue to fight. Choosing to be the Mockingjay is one of these times. The only way to truly help Peeta—help him escape the Capitol and not be punished by District 13—is to become the Mockingjay. In *Catching Fire*, she also faces a time where she is afraid of the Capitol and its power and she wants to run. Pack up, take her family, and go live in the woods. With her skills as a hunter, and ability to be independent, she could do it. But when Gale is whipped by the new Head Peacekeeper, she has to make a bigger decision. "Because, deep down, I must know it isn't enough to keep myself or my family or my friends alive by running away. Even if I could. It wouldn't fix anything. It wouldn't stop people from being hurt the way Gale was today" (135). This is what makes Katniss a

strong character. She may be broken, hurting, and at times mentally unstable, but still she still chooses to stand up and fight.

Katniss must deal with many issues throughout *Mockingjay*. She does not trust the rebel leaders in District 13, she feels guilty over her actions, and she is cut off from nature. She thinks, "It isn't enough, what I've done in the past, defying the Capitol in the Games, providing a rallying point. I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution" (*Mockingjay* 11-12). She does not want to represent the rebellion by being the Mockingjay symbol. She also feels guilt associated with everyone who has died because of her rebellious actions: the man in District 11 who whistled, Cinna, the people of District 12 who were fire-bombed because she blew up the arena, and the list goes on. Although she is physically recovering from injuries, she is also emotionally scarred. She does not want anyone else to die, and she especially does not want to be the cause of anyone dying. And for much of *Mockingjay* Katniss is cut off from nature. She is either in the underground realm of District 13, industrial districts, or the urban Capitol. Though one of her requirements for being the Mockingjay is time above ground where she can hunt, this is something she does very seldom. This makes her feel even more disconnected from the world and makes it harder for her to process her emotions.

While serving as Mockingjay Katniss comes to realize the power she holds. Haymitch points out that Katniss is at her best when unscripted, so the rebels agree to let Katniss visit a district. They wash away the Capitol make up and styling and let Katniss be herself. District 8 had just been bombed, so Katniss is sent to visit the wounded. Katniss does not want to be there; she has never been any good with the sick and

wounded, choosing to flee to the woods when people were brought to her mother for healing. Boggs tells her, "Just let them see you. That will do more for them than any doctor in the world" (96). As Katniss greets people she is surprised to see joy in so many wounded, "…pain and grief begin to recede, to be replaced by words of anticipation" (100). As Katniss continues to greet people it finally begins to click why she matters to these people. Glad her mask of makeup is gone, she realizes, "The damage, the fatigue, the imperfections. That's how they recognize me, why I belong to them" (101). A dolled-up, Capitol version of Katniss is not relatable or the person the districts love. The people of the Capitol may have loved the "girl on fire" with her dresses and makeup, but the people of the districts love the weary, battle worn girl with the berries. Life in the districts is hard, and someone who has experienced pain and grief and still stands up to the Capitol is the person they want to follow. As Katniss says her goodbyes, it clicks and she is able to define the sensation she has standing in this room with all these people. "Power. I have a kind of power I never knew I possessed. Snow knew it, as soon as I held out those berries. Plutarch knew when he rescued me from the arena. And Coin knows now. So much so that she must publicly remind her people that I am not in control" (101-02). Her stunt with the berries may have started out as a courageous act to save Peeta and herself, but it has come to mean so much more for so many people. Realizing the power she holds, Katniss continues to fight with the rebellion in order to end President Snow's reign.

After helping free the districts, Katniss must traverse and survive the Capitol itself. This arena epitomizes the Capitol's love for and use of technology, and shows how the Capitol can use technology to dominate and destroy. Part of the challenge for Katniss

is that, unlike the other arenas that had nature which she could use to her benefit, this arena is urban. In this case Katniss volunteers as a soldier for District 13 and the rebellion, but when she is assigned to a unit heading to the Capitol, she sees their mission differently. Seeing a map of the Capitol and where it is rigged with pods meant to destroy, Katniss thinks, "only a victor would see what I see so immediately. The arena. Laced with pods controlled by Gamemakers" (281).[58] Her and Finnick even joke about how they did not need to go through training because they are about to enter the seventy-sixth Hunger Games, but deep down Katniss is freaking out, "telling myself to hang on until I can go to the woods and scream" (282). Finding out she must once again face a kind of arena, Katniss' first reaction is to go to her safe place, the woods. In the underground dwelling of District 13 Katniss feels stifled. Everything is mechanized and run by strict schedule, whereas in the woods she is on her own time and experiences freedom. This shows once again that Katniss sees nature as restorative, and she seeks out nature in order to process her thoughts and emotions.

Once they arrive in the Capitol, Katniss sees the artificiality of everything. She describes the buildings as candy-colored with rainbow glass (291). When her unit experiences their first loss, Katniss compares the real with the "fake" of the Capitol; describing the scene, she says, "blood stains pastel stones, real smoke darkens the special effect stuff made for television" (311). Although overcoming the mechanization of the Capitol is a challenge, she is able to achieve this by using skills she learned in nature. She understands how a predator pursues its prey, and she applies these tracking skills to how

[58] Many of these pods were created by Gamemakers like Plutarch Heavensbee, and each holds a new deadly attack. Some unleash *muttations*, others gunfire, deadly waves of tar, light beams that melt humans into nothing, etc. Each highlights the mechanics and technology the Capitol thrives on while destroying the rebellion troops.

the Capitol will seek them out (333-335). Therefore skills acquired in nature help Katniss to outsmart the Capitol again, even when she does not have any natural resources to rely on. Katniss utilizes these traditionally masculine skills to help her people escape capture, but she also brings in traditionally feminine traits as well through her nurturing and her attempts to protect people. While the Capitol sees people as expendable, multiple times Katniss works to save people, even when they would serve as more of a hindrance than a help. For instance, when they are running from both *muttations* and Peacekeeps, Peeta asks to be left. Katniss stops and brings him back from a complete meltdown (353). Although it is valuable time needed for escape, it is more important for her to save a member of her team.

After surviving her journey to the Presidential mansion in order to kill President Snow, one of Katniss' last major acts of agency is assassinating President Coin. Though she is standing in front of a crowd, acting as firing squad for President Snow, she chooses to use her arrow on Coin instead of Snow. President Alma Coin, leader of District 13 and the rebellion, never liked Katniss and would have preferred working with Peeta. But the people loved Katniss and were willing to follow her. Prior to Snow's assassination, Katniss stumbles upon his prison within the Presidential mansion. During their conversation, Snow informs Katniss that it was District 13 that dropped the last bombs on the children of the Capitol and the medical relief aids—it was Coin's bombs that killed Prim. Snow helps Katniss understand Coin's plan, "To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with Thirteen barely scratched…But I wasn't watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I'm afraid we have both been played for fools" (403). Armed with this information, Katniss

steps out onto the terrace in front of the President's mansion where she is supposed to kill Snow for his crimes. Staring at Snow coughing up blood, Katniss knows he is the walking dead thanks to all the poison he's been exposed to over the years. But Coin has also committed terrible crimes and is poised to be Panem's next president. Instead of aiming for Snow's heart, Katniss shifts her arrow upward to the balcony where Coin is watching the execution, and assassinates the other person responsible for so much destruction during the revolution. This choice matches her other decisions throughout the series to claim agency. With decorating Rue's body and using the berries to force two victors instead of one, she chose the Gamemakers as her real enemy. When she destroyed the force field instead of shooting Finnick, she chose the Capitol as the enemy. And here, in assassinating Coin she sees another corrupt leader using others for her own gain. Because of this assassination, Panem can have a free election. In this last major act of agency Katniss believes she is sacrificing her own freedom for a truly free Panem.

In the end, Katniss is cleared of all charges in President Coin's death, mainly due to her being presented as "a hopeless, shell-shocked lunatic" (425). She is sent back to live in what remains of District 12 under the care of Haymitch and her psychiatrist. For Katniss, returning to the woods and meadow of District 12 is healing and she finds herself again when she is able to be back in nature. The ending of the Hunger Games series is successful because, even though narratively it only takes up a few pages, Collins allows time to pass. She shows a broken and battered Katniss having to try and live again. For months she lived in isolation waiting for her trial to end, then back in District 12 she goes catatonic. Katniss bears physical, psychological, and emotional marks from her time in the Hunger Games and fighting with the rebellion, and she gained those scars because

she had to be so strong for so long. Katniss needs time for those scars to fade. Part of this process begins when she starts venturing outside again. The first time she goes outside she sees Peeta planting primroses outside her house. This motivates her to clear her room of Snow's roses. Throughout the series, roses are President Snow's symbol, letting Katniss know he is watching her. One of his roses remains in Katniss' room; she throws it in the kitchen fire, thinking, "Fire beats roses again" (431). For Katniss, symbolically this represents her beating Snow one last time. As she comes back to life, she also begins to grieve for those she has killed and those she has lost. "Slowly, with many lost days, I come back to life" (435). In following through with normal, daily actions Katniss learns to find meaning in things again. She and Peeta work together on a book to help them remember everyone they have lost and everyone who lost their lives to the Hunger Games. Katniss hunts, Peeta bakes, and the Meadow she loves so much grows green again.

Once again Collins ties Katniss' actions to nature, showing that both Katniss and nature have been scarred but are learning to recover. Collins also uses nature to describe why Katniss chooses Peeta over Gale. She links Peeta to the calm and safe Meadow that represents life and restoration, whereas she connects Gale to the tumultuous fire that Katniss has faced too often. She writes, "That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself" (*Mockingjay* 436). As stated earlier, even though Katniss gained the nickname "girl on fire" from her costumes during her first Hunger Games, it was based on a spark that could already be seen within her. She just had to learn to harness that spark herself. Instead, what Katniss needs "is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The

promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses" (436). Since he gave her the bread, Katniss has always equated Peeta with dandelions and hope. Katniss' days as the girl on fire and the Mockingjay are over, and she needs to find the good things in life. For her, Peeta represents these good things. The series ends with Katniss and Peeta's children playing in the meadow.

Many readers had a problem with the series epilogue, and on my first reading of the books I too was disappointed in the ending. The problem most people have with the epilogue is that the series ends with Katniss as wife and mother, which is moving her backwards and reducing the feminist strides that she made during her times in the Hunger Games and as part of the rebellion. Rodney M. DeaVault argues, "Given her violent bid for autonomy and independence throughout the trilogy, relegating Katniss to the domestic sphere seems to do her a grave disservice by destroying the power of her 'other-ness'" (197). DeaVault and Guanio-Uluru both find the epilogue problematic in terms of gendering because Katniss has been performing masculinity throughout the series. Guanio-Uluru argues that "Katniss' performance of masculinity has come to incorporate aspects of the Sensitive New Man, which is modelled to her by Peeta" (215). For Guanio-Uluru, this comes back to Katniss' choice of Peeta as representation of new life (a link of nature to the feminine) over Gale's fire (linked to hegemonic masculinity). Thus linking Katniss to an image of the feminine in the end. Readings like these link Katniss to a role of passivity rather than the role of an action heroine, which can be problematic for the strong character that she has been throughout the series.

While there are valid points to these readings, I offer an alternative reading of the epilogue in light of Katniss being a strong female character who survives two arenas,

spearheads a rebellion, and learns to overcome distrust and brokenness. In the epilogue, Katniss' children represent the next generation that must learn of the problems of previous generations in order to try and not make the same mistakes. As Katniss and Peeta must explain to their children where their scars and nightmares come from, they will also explain how they survived. The epilogue begins in the Meadow because Katniss has returned to nature where she feels safe and happy. She sings her children the song she sang for Rue about the safety of nature:

> *Here it's safe, here it's warm*
> *Here the daisies guard you from every harm*
> *Here your dreams are sweet and tomorrow brings them true*
> *Here is the place where I love you* (438).

Her children do not know the cruelness of hunger or the arenas, so they take these words for granted. Her children do not know that the Meadow they play in and their mother loves, also serves as a graveyard for those that died in the fire-bombing of District 12. Like so many things, the earth has healed itself and returned to the peaceful Meadow it was in the beginning. And so too has Katniss healed in her own way. She has psychological as well as physical scars, but she has found ways to survive. Throughout the series Katniss proclaimed that because of the way her society functioned—using children's deaths to keep the districts in line while entertaining the Capitol—she would not get married and she would not have children. Here, in accepting that the Capitol's tyrannical rule of Panem is over, Katniss' final act of agency is choosing to have what she swore she never would—a family of her own. It is not a weak return to the traditional female role, it is a choice to reclaim her life as her own in this new society she helped to build. Thus the series ends with Katniss in nature, having been restored by nature, claiming agency by living the life she chooses.

Katniss and the Films: Increased Agency through Adaptation

In adapting the Hunger Games series, choices had to be made in translating the story from one medium to another. As Linda Hutcheon asserts, "adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (20). In the Hunger Games trilogy, certain aspects, like Katniss' internal thoughts, could not transfer directly to the visual realm of film. In the books there is a constant mental back and forth as she is trying to figure out the world around her and what game each person is playing. With the films, the story gains the omniscient narrator of the camera. Therefore changes needed to be made in order to allow the Hunger Games series to be as aesthetically pleasing in the visual realm as it is in novel form. Adaptation is also important because Katniss' agency is internal in the book because it is a first-person narration, and therefore her internal thoughts clarify and justify her actions in claiming agency. For the film, Katniss' agency and psychology must be defined more dramatically through action. Hutcheon, using Robert Stam, argues, "What is more important than thinking in terms of first- or third-person narration, argues Robert Stam, is 'authorial control of intimacy and distance, the calibration of access to characters' knowledge and consciousness'" (55). It is true that certain aspects of the thought process will not translate to the visual realm of film, but many techniques can be employed to physically show the psychology of a character. Though we cannot see Katniss' thoughts, the filmmakers create visual means to show both Katniss' inner strength as well as her mental anguish. In adapting the Hunger Games series from novel to film, the changes made have created an even stronger female protagonist, while also playing up the

political turmoil within Panem, stressing the importance of Katniss' actions and the need for her to claim agency in order to be a beacon of hope for the people of Panem.

When adapting a text from one medium to another, the creators need to be careful about how they adapt certain elements. Dealing with transitioning from a first-person point-of-view is one of the most important elements because if not done well the film can reduce the agency the protagonist claims for herself. A good example of this is the adaptation of Veronica Roth's Divergent series, which was written shortly after the Hunger Games series and worked to capitalize on the films' adaptation success. In the novels, Tris Prior thinks through her actions and the actions of others, helping the reader see her defiant acts as acts of agency. But without Tris' thoughts being translated into visual or verbal cues she is left looking reckless. One of the elements I found most disturbing in the adaptation of the second novel, *Insurgent* (2012), comes from the interactions between Tris and her boyfriend Tobias. In the novels, there are many times that Tobias reaches out to touch Tris and help reassure her—we know this because Tris' thoughts tell us this is how she perceives these actions. The film adaptation, however, does not replace this mental reassurance that this is a good and welcomed action. Instead the audience is left with multiple instances of Tris making a decision, and Tobias grabbing her wrist or arm as though trying to control her. Some who have read the books may infer Tris' thoughts into these scenes; however, for most viewers these scenes read as a loss of agency to a controlling boyfriend. This is an inadequate adaptation of the first-person perspective in terms of Tris and her agency. For the Hunger Games series, the storytellers created visual cues that allow the audience to know Katniss' mental state. They also break away from Katniss and create storylines for people who represent the

Capitol, such as President Snow, in order to show the connection between Katniss and the Capitol. These scenes flesh out the world of Panem, which highlights the dystopic society and the importance of Katniss' decisions both within the Capitol and at home in her districts. These creative decisions heighten Katniss' agency rather than work to diminish it.

The beginning of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013) provides some important examples for how the visual realm of film is still able to capture Katniss' inner turmoil while also strengthening her agency. *Catching Fire*, like *The Hunger Games* (2012), opens with Katniss meeting Gale in the woods to hunt. One of her favorite pastimes. However, in this second film she has survived the Hunger Games arena and suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In order for the audience to understand the trauma Katniss endured, the filmmakers created a new scene in the woods that depicts Katniss' psychological scars from the arena. Use of place is significant here because they use Katniss' favorite location, a place she used to feel safe, and show how her nightmares follow her everywhere; this turns her safe place back into a space of potential dangers. The first sign of this trauma comes when Gale walks up behind Katniss and she automatically targets him with her bow and arrow. This one quick action cues the audience to how tense Katniss is about her surroundings. Later, coming across a flock of wild turkeys, Katniss prepares to shoot one. However, after she lets the arrow fly she no longer sees a turkey; instead, Marvel, the boy from District 1 she killed for throwing a spear at Rue, is staring back at her. Katniss begins to scream. When the camera cuts back to the flock of turkeys Marvel has disappeared, but this quick shot/reverse-shot pattern provides a visual, physical manifestation of the images and dreams that haunt Katniss.

The creation of this first scene and the image of Marvel once again being shot by Katniss' arrow shows the audience how the victors continually relive the horrors of the games. This is an important visual exhibition because in the books we get Katniss' nightmares, and know that other victors such as Peeta, Haymitch, and Finnick are also plagued by reliving the games. This idea is reinforced with new dialogue in the film when Haymitch tells Katniss, "Nobody ever wins the games. Period. There are survivors. There are no winners." Creating Katniss' mental suffering in a physical way requires invention and imagination. Andre Bazin writes, "the differences in aesthetic structure make the search for equivalents an even more delicate matter, and thus they require all the more power of invention and imagination from the film-maker who is truly attempting a resemblance" (67). By breaking away from the original text and creating new scenes like the one discussed above, the filmmakers transfer specific mental elements from the book into physical reactions in the film and keep the overall tone and impression closer to the original text.

This scene showing Katniss' inner anxieties is followed by a scene where loss of internal dialogue makes her stronger. In both versions of *Catching Fire,* when Katniss returns home from the woods, she finds President Snow waiting for her. The book shows Katniss' unease and paranoia at having the president in her home. After President Snow suggests that they do not lie to one another, Katniss thinks, "my tongue has frozen and speech will be impossible, so I surprise myself by answering back in a steady voice, 'Yes, I think that would save time'" (21). The film, on the other hand, shows her surprise at seeing President Snow, but here Katniss' answer is quick and decisive. Even though the book tells us that she responded in a steady voice, the reader knows how uncomfortable

Katniss is with President Snow's presence. The film uses this same line of dialogue, "Yes, I think that would save time," but taking away the unease seen in the mental subjectivity of the book, the film portrays Katniss as decisive and on par with President Snow. Instead of encountering a constant stream of questions and second-guessing, the audience sees Katniss as a strong and capable character who knows the role she must play.

Beyond use of new dialogue and visual cues to help in adapting to film, shifting and accentuating certain themes also help the film adaptations. Hutcheon writes, "In the process of dramatization there is inevitably a certain amount of re-accentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot" (40). In the Hunger Games film series, hope is one major theme that is accentuated throughout. This is necessary because in the film adaptations, it is possible to break away from Katniss in order to see what is happening in the Capitol and the districts. This means that the distress of the people and the politics within the Capitol play a larger role, thus making Katniss' decisions even more important to overthrowing the corrupt leadership. President Snow, in the first film, admits hope is the reason there is a victor of the Hunger Games. Then in *Catching Fire* He argues that the victors are dangerous because they believe they are invincible, and must be eliminated. Snow sees the hope that the victors give the districts, and so he feels threatened by them. Stressing the idea of hope, the film versions make the idea of the Mockingjay even more important because in order for people to be willing to fight they need a symbol of hope. As Fátima Vieira asserts, "Dystopias that leave no room for hope do in fact fail in their mission…The writers of dystopias…have tried to make it very clear to their readers that there is still a chance for humanity to escape, normally offering a

glimmer of hope at the very end of the narrative" (17). Instead of leaving the glimmer of hope for the very end, the Hunger Games weaves this concept throughout. The Mockingjay is a needed symbol of hope, thus making Katniss an important part of the revolution and someone for those in Panem to look to.

President Snow is a character who is giving much more of a presence in the films, helping to heighten the viewer's awareness of the political implications of Katniss' decisions. In *The Hunger Games*, two scenes in President Snow's rose garden are created in order to help show the ruthlessness of Snow and his thoughts on Katniss. In the books, Snow is symbolically linked to roses. He always wears them in his lapel, and he uses them as a reminder and threat to Katniss that he is always watching. Therefore a rose garden is a fitting setting for President Snow's meetings. It also creates an interesting juxtaposition between him and Katniss: Katniss must use nature in order to overcome the society/technology of the Capitol, but Snow is put in a natural setting while wanting his technology to kill Katniss. In the film, both rose garden scenes occur after Katniss has done something to defy the Capitol. The first scene occurs after Katniss receives a score of 11 for shooting an arrow at the Gamemakers. In this scene Snow cautions head Gamemaker Seneca Crane, "A little hope is effective, a lot of hope is dangerous. A spark is fine, as long as it is contained." Here Snow is implying that Katniss, 'the girl on fire,' is dangerous and she needs to be contained. By Snow's standards this most likely means killed, but he does not come right out and say it. Seneca Crane lets Katniss live because she is a Capitol crowd favorite, but Seneca meets Snow again in the rose garden after Katniss has decorated Rue's body in flowers, causing rioting in District Eleven. Though these scenes may be brief, they show the threat Snow perceives in Katniss.

One of the most important scenes in *The Hunger Games*, the berry incident, also becomes stronger with the loss of internal thoughts because Katniss clearly makes the decision to claim agency by standing up to the Capitol. Visual elements within the film adaptation also enhance and highlight the Gamemaker's control while helping strengthen Katniss' agency. As soon as Cato dies the sky lightens from night to day, showing that in this arena the Gamemakers control all elements, even the time of day, in this mechanical version of nature. Peeta still delivers his line about them needing a victor, but in attempting to summarize all of Katniss' thoughts on the Capitol, the film gives Katniss one line of dialogue the book does not have. Katniss responds to Peeta's victor remark, saying, "No, they don't. Why should they." This one line lets us know that she is not the desperate girl trying to save Peeta and herself, but she is a fighter who is outsmarting the Capitol—she is the instigator Snow believes her to be, giving hope to the districts and sparking change. Then, when Katniss pulls out the berries, the camera provides a close-up of the berries. After giving Peeta the berries, the scene cuts to three specific groups: Seneca Crane, Gale, and Capitol residents. In seeing these three particular groups, it stresses how the government, the districts, and the residents of the Capitol all react to Katniss' choice to use the berries. Cutting back to Katniss and Peeta, as they prepare to eat the berries, Katniss looks up to the sky where she knows the cameras are watching her, challenging the Gamemakers to let her eat the berries. Though she does not know she is starting a nationwide rebellion when she pulls out the berries, this action is a conscious choice. She uses these berries to claim autonomy and agency while standing up to the Gamemakers, and by extension the Capitol. Adding the cutaways stresses this is a

political decision, even if Katniss does not fully realize it at the time. As for Katniss, added dialogue and acting emphasize that this is a conscious rebellious act.

To enhance the idea of rebellion, the filmmakers chose to use a specific hand gesture described a few times in the books and turn it into a symbol of solidarity and rebellion for the films. The gesture is performed by placing the three middle fingers of one's left hand to the lips, and then holding them out toward the person the gesture is meant for. In the books, this is an important gesture that comes from District 12. When Effie Trinket asks for applause after Katniss volunteers for Prim, District 12 does the most courageous thing they can: stay silent. "Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong" (*The Hunger Games* 27). Then the people of the district salute Katniss in this manner. It is described as "an old and rarely used gesture of our district…It means thanks, it means admiration, it means good-bye to someone you love" (28). While it is a sweet gesture in the book, in the film, a crowd of hundreds remaining silent and performing this single gesture together has amazing visual impact. Using this gesture also provides a quick visual cue for the feelings of the crowd. It does not require dialogue or Katniss' internal thoughts to help create understanding, so makes an easy visual representation for the rebellion and for those following the Mockingjay.

Linking this gesture with rebellion begins with Katniss in the first film when she decorates Rue's body with flowers. In the film, when Katniss finishes decorating Rue's body and is about to leave, she looks straight at the camera and performs this gesture of goodbye for Rue. With the ability to cut away from Katniss in the adaptation, the audience is able to see Rue's district react to Katniss' sign of love and respect. The people of District 11 are gathered in a square watching Rue's death and Katniss'

subsequent actions. When she does the three-fingered gesture toward the camera, the people in the square repeat the gesture toward the TV screens. Then rioting breaks out. The people fight back against Peacekeepers, try to destroy food supplies meant for the Capitol, and attempt to take charge of their district. While decorating Rue's body was Katniss' attempt to find autonomy apart from being a tribute in the Hunger Games, this act fueled by Katniss' anger was enough to spark the anger in others and motivate them to also act against the Capitol.

Use of new dialogue and Katniss' salute also helps in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* (2015) when Katniss goes to District 8 to visit the wounded. In the novel, Katniss experiences many emotions; she comes to the realization of the power she holds, but most of this occurs through her mental subjectivity. In the film, this realization of power is shifted to new dialogue and a verbalization of her agreement to fight. A young boy asks her, "Are you fighting, Katniss? You here to fight with us?" Katniss responds, "I am. I will." This connects to Roberta Seelinger Trites' ideas on voice and the need for female protagonists to retain and use their voices. Here, Katniss literally gives voice to her assent to be the Mockingjay and fight. Prior to this, her agreement was based more on the need to do what she could to rescue Peeta, but now, seeing these people, she realizes that they need her as much as Peeta does. In response to Katniss saying she will fight, the people of District 8 all salute Katniss with the three-fingered gesture. Once again, a single gesture is able to convey the solidarity of a group. They may be physically broken by the Capitol attacks, but their spirits have not been broken and they still stand with the rebellion and the Mockingjay.

Another time when hope is emphasized is after Gale has been whipped. Prior to his punishment, Katniss had wanted to run away and escape the power of the Capitol. After the whipping she wants to stay and stir up trouble in her district, hopefully starting an uprising. In doing so she must accept that her actions put her family and friends at risk. Thinking of Prim her resolve waivers, yet she realizes that everyone in her life has already been impacted by the Capitol, and not in any good way (*Catching Fire* 138-40). These realizations in the book are expressed through three pages of Katniss' thoughts. For many viewers cutting important sections from a book tends to be seen as negative; however, Hutcheon points out that when plots have to be condensed this can make them much more powerful (36). Combining the need to condense or cut these long sections of internal thoughts with the invention of new ways to express these feelings has allowed the Hunger Games series to gain some new and powerful scenes. To capture the thoughts Katniss has in this moment of accepting her role and claiming agency, the storytellers created a new scene between Katniss and Prim. While collecting snow for Gale's wounds they have the following conversation:

> Katniss: How can we live like this? How can anybody live like this?
> Prim: It's not living, but…since the last games something is different. I can see it.
> Katniss: What can you see?
> Prim: Hope.
> Katniss: You understand that whatever I do comes back to you and mom. I don't want you to get hurt.
> Prim: You don't have to protect me, or mom. We're with you.

Here Katniss is able to express the same doubts that she feels in the books, but she is persuaded that her choice is the right choice due to the strength and presence of Prim, something not present in the books. Having previously stated to Gale that she is going to stay and cause trouble, Katniss has already chosen to act, thus claiming her agency.

However, here in this scene we are able to see the strength Prim has gained while noting that there is a distinct change in the districts since Katniss used the berries in the Hunger Games. Hope for change in the link that connects these actions. President Snow understands that power of hope, which is why he wants the victors destroyed. Prim understands the power of hope and how Katniss acts as a beacon of hope. And Katniss comes to realize the power she holds in perpetuating the hope of a new future.

The importance of what Prim says is stressed even more in the next scene, where once again adaptation is able to cut away from Katniss. The film cuts from Katniss and Prim hugging to President Snow and Plutarch Heavensbee meeting in Snow's office. In this scene Snow tells Plutarch, "If you cannot contain Katniss Everdeen then I will be forced to eliminate her." Using this containment reference, going back to the conversation Snow had with Seneca Crane in the previous film, Snow once again shows his determination to get rid of Katniss and what she has come to stand for. However, after her trick with the berries he is no longer content with her just being "contained" and would rather have her "eliminated." To extend this, he has decided that her entire species, victors, needs to be disposed of. This conversation also harks back to Snow and Plutarch's first meeting where they are discussing Katniss and what needs to be done about her. Snow argues, "She has become a beacon of hope for them. She has to be eliminated." Plutarch acknowledges that Katniss is the symbol of the rebellion—which he should know since he is a major player in the rebellion, but needs to gain more time in order to get Katniss out at the right time. To placate President Snow, Plutarch suggests that the districts need to live in fear. Snow counters, "Fear does not work as long as they have hope. And Katniss Everdeen is giving them hope!" Integrating the theme of hope

into *Catching Fire*, just as the rose garden scenes did in *The Hunger Games*, Snow recognizes that as long as Katniss is the symbol for the rebellion and giving the people hope, then she threatens his regime and must be dealt with. These new scenes emphasis the delicate political balance within the Capitol while underscoring the themes of hope and Katniss being the symbol of the uprising.

Enhancing the idea that Katniss' decisions are important, the filmmakers utilize techniques like crosscutting in order to show both Katniss and President Snow during certain scenes. Toward the end of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, after Beetee's plan fails, Katniss pulls an arrow on fellow tribute Finnick. This scene cuts back and forth between Katniss in the arena and President Snow watching from the arena control center. Snow appears happy when he sees Katniss targeting Finnick, and he cheers her on when he believes that she is going to shoot Finnick, saying, "Let it fly, Miss Everdeen. Let it fly." He wants the people of Panem to see her kill an ally because it would tarnish her reputation with the rebels. The scene cuts back to Katniss and Finnick, with Finnick reminding her, "Katniss…Remember who the real enemy is." She lowers her arrow, and the scene cuts back to Snow who looks confused and disappointed that she did not shoot Finnick. She chooses her enemy, the Capitol, and instead of shooting Finnick she rigs her arrow to make the force field short-circuit. Here the filmmakers use clever camera angles. They show Katniss targeting the force-field, but it is shown on the screen that Snow is watching in the control center. This creates the image that she is targeting him. He looks shocked that she is targeting him (the force-field), and baffled when the force field fails and they lose communication with the arena. By cutting between Katniss and President Snow, it stresses the weight of Katniss' decision to see the Capitol as the real enemy

versus the helplessness that Snow feels in realizing that his plan to kill off the Mockingjay has failed. The rebellion has begun, Katniss is the Mockingjay, and Snow in his need to control and hold power did not see this particular move coming.

Using crosscutting, as described above, creates a connection between Snow and Katniss. Although Katniss is always mentally assessing why President Snow would do something, seeing his actions in the films increases the viewer's knowledge of Capitol dealings and shows how Snow is also constantly assessing Katniss. The end of *Mockingjay Part 1* uses this connection and creates a new scene where Katniss and President Snow have a conversation. In the book, during the Capitol raid to rescue Peeta and the other captive tributes, Katniss is banned from Command "because serious war business is being carried out" (*Mockingjay* 195). In the film, Katniss is in Command, watching. When the Capitol's system begins rebooting and District 13 loses communication with the rescue team, Katniss volunteers to go on air. She says, "Broadcast me. If Snow's watching this, maybe he'll let the signal in, if he sees me." Katniss knows she is the person Snow keeps tabs on, and she is the only person with whom he would speak. Though she is worried for both Peeta and Gale's safety, she shows strength and courage in her ability to create a plan and hold a calm conversation with President Snow. Much like their conversation in Katniss' house in *Catching Fire*, they are honest with one another. Toward the end of their conversation, Katniss comes back to the same conversation topic: her convincing Snow she loves Peeta. She asks, "You asked me to convince you that I was in love with Peeta. Haven't I at least done that?" Snow responds, "Miss Everdeen, it's the things we love most that destroy us. I want you to remember I said that." Snow knows that the rescue team is in the Tribute

Center rescuing people—he let them in. After this conversation Katniss breaks down because she knows Snow set a trap. She hugs Haymitch, and cries over and over, "Did I lose them both tonight?"

The contrast of capable soldier holding the president's attention with an individual who is scared and crying does not make Katniss weak; instead, it shows the complexity of her situation and her character. She showed intelligence for thinking of a way to keep the broadcast going, and bravery for talking to Snow in a calm and rational manner. Nevertheless, she cares for Peeta and Gale—they are the whole reason she goes through with her plan—and she is scared that she will lose them. She becomes emotional when she can no longer do anything to help them. The scene cuts from her crying and holding Haymitch to her sitting in the dining hall, waiting. President Coin comes to see her. Coin says, "But whatever strength, courage, madness, keeps us going, you find it, at times like these. You have it, soldier. It's what's kept you alive all this time. And it won't fail you now." Katniss nods her head in agreement. She may be worried and hurting, but she has already made it through so much, she knows that she can survive this waiting game as well.

Translating Katniss' decision-making process while creating new scenes with characters like President Snow allows for stronger scenes with a greater impact than just pure translation. By combining different techniques such as cross-cutting and cutaways, as well as dramatizing Katniss' internal thoughts and feelings, the Hunger Games adaptations capture and accentuate the themes of political injustice and the need for hope in order to change the world. Emphasizing these themes, the message that our actions matter and we can make a difference in the world is heightened and, through adaptation,

is able to reach a wider audience. The adaptation of the Hunger Games series is done well because it allows characters like Katniss to claim more agency, perform more courageous acts, and create more of an impact on a revolution. Writing about action heroines such as Katniss, Brown argues, "These heroines eschew overt sexualization, and their narratives offer sustained critiques of oppressive patriarchal systems under the guise of pure entertainment" (171). Katniss does help lead a revolution, and through adapting her agency and mental subjectivity into more physical and dramatic actions highlights Katniss as action heroine. While an adaptation may not hold to the letter of the original text, utilizing specific elements such as characters and themes, a new replication of the story can be told, and sometimes can prove to be even stronger than the original text.

CONCLUSION

"…speculative fiction genres such as science fiction, fantasy, and horror, far from being escapist forms that simply allow their consumers to avoid engagement with reality, are in fact themselves vehicles for new forms of critical engagement, and often quite self-consciously so."

M. Keith Booker

This dissertation has aimed to show various ways women in children's and young adult speculative fiction claim agency. Many different versions of women need to be represented within popular culture texts in order to help break stereotypes and prove that not just the warrior woman that can be successful, but all different kinds of women can be active agents in their own lives, enacting the kinds of change they want to see. It is a combination of traits, such as courage, action, independence, intelligence, beauty, and kindness, which help build strong female characters who are autonomous and claim agency.

Diversity in Speculative Fiction

Due to the nature of the chosen texts, the focus of this dissertation has been on primarily white, middle class females and how feminism affects women within this group. Expanding on the ideas within this dissertation, an area of further study is the need for diversity within children's and young adult texts, thus looking at how different races, ethnicities, and economic statuses affect the ways in which characters claim agency. In her article, "The Ongoing Problem of Race in Y.A.," Jen Doll interviews

multiple Y.A. writers to discuss the need for more diversification within young adult literature. She quotes Walter Dean Myers, National Ambassador of Children's Literature for 2012 and 2013, when he discusses reading predominantly British authors during his childhood, saying, "What happened as a result, in retrospect, was that I devalued my own experiences" (para. 4). Without representation, people see themselves as invisible and their life experiences as unvalued. Part of this problem comes from the fact that characters within literature are by default white, and, as Coe Booth says, if they are black or a different ethnicity then there are long passages discussing their skin color and background (Doll para. 9). As Doll states, "the problem is an ongoing and multifaceted one, as entrenched in economics and culture as is racism itself, perhaps" (para. 11). Within publishing, books need to sell. But books are a discretionary product. When people of low economic means are not buying books, then the demographic of publishers does not match the diversity that is needed for the potential readership (para. 13). While it is getting better with authors such as Sherman Alexie, Coe Booth, Jacqueline Woodson, and Torrey Maldonado writing for young adults, most of this fiction is realistic fiction. This too is problematic since fantasy and dystopia are the most widely read young adult genres. Marc Aronson says of fantasy worlds, "And generally that world, while not particularly white, is not deliberately multi-cultural" (qtd. in Doll 11). If fantasy and dystopia are the most popular genres for the wider audience, then these areas need to be the focus of diversification in order to better represent those reading.

One issue of diversity within speculative fiction, particularly fantasy, is that these stories occur in realms outside of our real world. Therefore, in many cases, the races and ethnicities within the novels do not actually exist. But as M. Keith Booker points out,

speculative fiction genres do not provide an excuse to ignore these issues, but rather provide another realm for critical engagement (3). Consequently, these stories can be read through critical lenses such as feminist theory or critical race studies. As Rashmi Varma argues, feminist theory and critical race studies cover some of the same ground as both work to analyze representation within literary and cultural texts (232). One critical lens that can help look at diversity within speculative fiction is multicultural feminism. "In the mainstream liberal view, multicultural feminism is essentially about the 'diversity' and 'difference' that women of color in the United States represent. In this view, multicultural feminism reflects the vast range of women from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds who participate in both the celebration of their differences and their commonalities as women of color" (Varma 240). In modern America, this may mean looking at people of other ethnicities such as Native American, Hispanic, or Asian, as well as black women, but for fantasy this can expand out to the diversity of communities within a created world. Two such works which expand on race and ethnicity within a fantasy world are Cinda Williams Chima's Seven Realms series and Rae Carson's Fire and Thorns series.

Chima's series takes place in the fictional world of the Seven Realms. Raisa *ana*'Marianna is the princess heir to the Fells. Chima works to create many levels of multiplicity within Raisa: she can be scrappy and be a warrior, but she can also be educated and elegant. All of these are necessary to help her grow and lead her people. Part of what makes her an important character for multicultural feminism, though, is that throughout the series she struggles with her two separate ethnic identities. Born to a mother from the Valefolk and a father from the Spirit clans' Demonai tribe, she is a

biracial character. In the series, the Valefolk are read as the white, colonizing people, and the Spirit clans are the indigenous peoples. Whether or not it was the author's intention, it is easy to read this story through a lens of American history and culture. Tensions run high between these two groups of people, and each wants Raisa to abandon the other group in order to rule in their favor while subjugating the rest of her realm. It is not until Raisa accepts both parts of her ethnic identity that she becomes the ruler her peoples need. Unlike her sister, who completely denies her Spirit clan side, Raisa accepts that she can be queen for the Valefolk and warrior for the Spirit clans. She can rule the Fells and represent the Valefolk and Spirit clans equally, making her a stronger leader.

Carson's series works to celebrate different groups and ethnicities while showcasing how deeply rooted racism can be. In her series, Lucero-Elisa de Riqueza is a princess of Orovalle. She is secretly married to the king of Joya d'Arena for an alliance. After his death, she must rule as queen and find a way to stop Invierne from attacking. The Inviernos are fair-skinned sorcerers; whereas the people of Orovalle and Joya are darker skinned and read as Hispanic or Latin American. The author highlights this connection through the choice of character names as well as Spanish-based words used throughout the series, such as *zafira* and *Scriptura Sancta*. For Elisa, race and ethnicity becomes an issue when she must find a way to protect the peoples of Joya and Orovalle from Invierne while also getting the people of Joya to accept an Orovalleño as their queen. At the beginning of the series, it appears as though the Inviernos are trying to invade and colonize Joya d'Arena; however, as the series progresses, the truth is much more complicated, and neither group wants to believe they share ancestors. Elisa finds ways to attempt to overcome centuries of racism and hatred, enacting treaties that force

these two very different peoples to work together for mutual gain. Elisa admits to her guard Hector that her empire cannot last forever, but he finally grasps her master plan, saying, "By then we'll have lived side by side for so long with the Inviernos that we'll have forgotten to be enemies" (*Bitter Kingdom* 357). Queen Raisa works to build peace between these two warring groups of people by attempting to build safeguards to help the generations overcome hatred and prejudice.

Both Raisa and Elisa must claim agency and find their own autonomy within their respective societies, but they must also deal with issues of race and ethnicity as they try to bring the warring nations of their lands together. Each woman must claim agency in order to take control of her realm and be the ruler the people need. Varma asserts, "Multicultural feminism's task was to anchor its analyses of individual oppression in real-life experiences of racism, oppression, homophobia, poverty, and sexism" (243). While Raisa and Elisa exist within the fictional worlds of the Fells and Joya d'Arena respectively, these women must deal with issues of racism, oppression, and sexism as they try to help their respective communities. Both also deal with issues of poverty as they live in hiding from their own communities, highlighting the plight of the poor within their societies. Not only is the idea of a multicultural community being stressed within these texts, women are being elevated to places of power. Both Raisa and Elisa become queen, ruling over their respective realms without kings. While these stories may take place within fantasy realms, having fantasy expand to embrace multiculturalism allows for new and varied ways that people can be exposed to different kinds of characters with whom they can relate and see their lives valued and validated. Though examples like

these still may not be the norm, the fact that young adult authors are beginning to create these kinds of texts shows a shift toward a more diverse and inclusive kind of literature.

Moana: A Final Case Study

Different realms of culture may need to diversify the kinds of people depicted, but film is particularly important because it is a medium with a wider audience than most other media. Even Disney, with its conservative values, has attempted to create a more diverse spectrum of characters. Disney's newest princess film, *Moana* (2016), presents a young Polynesian girl who must go on a voyage in order to save her people. The story holds to Disney's princess iconography by presenting a princess-type character, songs about her desires in life, a villain, animal sidekicks, and a prince-type character (Maui)—however, this story does not use romance in any way. Instead independence, equality, and identity are the main themes underscored throughout the film. At one point in the film Maui calls Moana a princess. She counters, "I'm not a princess. I'm the daughter of the chief." Maui says, "If you wear a dress, and you have an animal sidekick, you're a princess." Though this is meant to be humorous, it also points to Disney redefining what a princess is. Disney may utilize classic iconography, like the animal sidekick (Heihei), but they are not holding to the same standards for what makes a "princess" character. She does not have to be the damsel in distress, she does not even need a love interest; for Disney a strong and independent woman who can save herself and her people can also be a princess. Though both genders are presented as equal, the film highlights the important role of women in each other's lives and in helping one another find their true identities. Moana may be the main character, but she is supported by her grandmother and mother. The land is also embodied by two female entities, Te Fiti and Te Kā, and Moana must

help her find her real identity. Through this variation on the princess story, Moana learns to claim agency, work independently, and take action to help save her people.

Unlike most of the other Disney princess films, which are based on fairy tales or stories, this is an original story that utilizes myths from Polynesian culture. Directors John Musker and Ron Clements, also known for *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, and *Princess and the Frog*, were drawn to the Pacific Islands and the mythology surrounding Maui, a demigod. This story is also based in real life. There once were great voyagers in the Pacific Islands, but then for a long period of time they stopped moving from island to island. Adding the ecological undercurrent of the earth dying, Musker and Clements used the mythology of Maui and the history of the Pacific Island peoples as voyagers to build the story of *Moana* (McEvers). In an interview with Kelly McEvers for NPR, Musker addresses some of the criticism surrounding the film and its appropriation of the Pacific Islands. McEvers asks about the dangers of combining multiple island cultures into one, and Musker responds, "When we went to the islands, we met a great deal of anthropologists and linguists and choreographers and cultural ambassadors. And their advice to us was actually, it's best that you don't fix it to a certain place…That will give you more license to kind of combine these things. And it's sort of pan-Pacific in a way." They wanted the story to be inclusive of the Pacific Islands while being able to create a world where fantasy can take over and allow gods like Maui and Te Fiti to exist. While there may be some criticism surrounding *Moana* and how the Pacific Islands are represented, the directors wanted to create an inclusive Polynesian setting within a fantasy-type world. This choice does work to help diversify the Disney princess line-up and expand the kinds of stories being told.

Fitting with Polynesian culture, Moana wears clothing that consists of bright colored prints, grass skirts, and head dresses and jewelry adorned with flowers and shells. Her clothing tends to consist of two pieces, showing her midriff. These kinds of outfits distinguish her from other Disney princesses with their Western-style dresses. Moana is also physically built differently. Though she has curves, she has an athletic build rather than the unnaturally tiny waist of most Disney princesses; she is built more like a woman in the real world. Auli'i Cravalho, the actress who voices Moana, said of Moana's looks, "And yes, she's rocking a beautiful tan. Her curly hair blowing in the wind…And her athletic build makes her just fully ready to kick some butt" (McEvers). Moana's looks reflect the beauty of the Polynesian culture, but she is also built for action—she dances the Hulu and weaves baskets, but she also repairs her ship and fights gods and monsters.

Beyond looks, Moana is the daughter of the village chief, and set to be the next chief of Motunui. From the beginning of the film she is called "the next great chief." No marriage is necessary in order to for there to be a chief; her father is raising her to know how to lead her people. On the island of Motunui, men and women work together in order to help the community thrive. There are not men's jobs and women's jobs, both genders are seen working in the coconut fields, weaving baskets, and hauling fish. Due to the equality of genders, all the villagers look to Moana as the next leader without question. When the land begins to die and the people need a plan, they ask Moana for advice. Unlike other princess films where the parent(s) are dead and this drives the plot or creates the living situation from which the princess must escape, for Moana, it is an inner desire that drives her. Moana's mother, father, and grandmother instill in her life lessons to help her become the leader her people need. Moana wants to please her family, but she

also wants to establish her own autonomy and be an independent person. Moana's journey is about claiming agency in order to find her true identity and bring these parts of herself together in order to help serve her community.

From infancy Moana has been called by the ocean, but her father tries to keep her away from the water. He commands her to stay on the island, reminding her, "You are the future of our people, Moana. And they are not out there (the ocean). They are right here (the island)." Like all the other Disney princesses, Moana wants to be the dutiful daughter and make her parents happy. However, she also has an inner desire to be independent and explore the sea. For Moana, unlike the classic Disney princesses, being a dutiful daughter does not mean holding to Simone de Beauvoir's idea of dutiful daughter as loss of independence as well as complete submission. Even in wanting to be a dutiful daughter, this means Moana needs to be an active agent and lead her people. The conflict between dutiful daughter and independent or modern woman comes from Moana wanting to be a leader but also wanting to go out to sea (*Memoirs* 31, *Second Sex* 754-55). As their island begins to die, Moana stands up to her father, telling him they need to be voyagers again. When he gets angry, she counters, "You told me to help our people. This is how we help our people." She is willing to be proactive and go searching for a new place to live, now she must be independent and disobey him in order to save her people. It is not until she returns, successful in her mission, that he see the validity of her words and actions to help her people.

In Moana's "I want" song, "How Far I'll Go," she sings about her desire to go venturing out to sea. She sings this song prior to knowing about her people and their heritage as voyagers, so she sees these desires as counter to what her people need and

what her father wants. She sings, "I wish I could be the perfect daughter, but I come back to the water, no matter how hard I try." In the song she tries to convince herself that staying on the island is a good thing. Throughout the song, Moana uses active language to express her actions and desires. She sets out an action plan, and hikes up the mountain to place her chieftain stone on the mountain, saying, "I can lead with pride, I can make us strong." She is confident in her abilities. But, before she places her stone on the mountain she questions if this is really her desire. "But the voice inside sings a different song. What is wrong with me?" Moana questioning why she has this drive within her to go to the ocean makes her see the need to be a perfect daughter and strong leader as counter to her desire to venture out on the sea, which she sees as something unnatural or wrong because of what she has been told her whole life by her parents. However, she looks at the ocean and realizes that, "It calls me." She sets out for the ocean again, and this time she gets in a boat and rows out to sea. The song ends with the line, "One day I'll know how far I'll go," and Moana is confident in her ability to get past the reef. An important aspect to the ending to this song is that, while Moana is active in making her choice and taking action, she fails. She gets caught in the reef and injured, which shakes her confidence. It is not as simple as making a decision and succeeding, sometimes one needs perseverance as well.

When her confidence is shaken, it is the women in her life that assist and encourage her. Gramma is an important character within the film because she supports Moana, and helps her realize her destiny. After Moana fails to get over the reef, she says she is going to put her rock on the mountain, and Gramma agrees. Moana questions why she does not stop her, to which Gramma replies, "You said that's what you wanted." Gramma may want Moana to fulfill her destiny to return the heart of Te Fiti, but unlike

Moana's father who wants to dictate Moana's life and demands she stay on the island, Gramma will not force anything on Moana. She lets Moana choose. When Moana finally asks, she leads Moana to the truth: her people were voyagers who stopped travelling when the heart of Te Fiti was stolen by Maui—Moana must get Maui to return the heart in order to save her island. On her death bed, Gramma encourages Moana to go fulfill her destiny. As Moana packs supplies for her trip, her mother finds her. Prior to this, her mother has consoled and supported Moana, but held to the father's belief that Moana's life is on the island. This time, instead of stopping her, she helps Moana pack supplies. Her mother may appear sad and worried as tears appear in her eyes, but there is also pride in her smile as she watches Moana make this decision and set out on her own. She lets her go with her blessing. The women in Moana's life understand her destiny and support her in her in choice to leave the island in order to try and save her people.

Leaving Gramma's death bed, "How Far I'll Go (Reprise)" begins playing, and Moana sings, "All that time wondering where I need to be is behind me. I'm on my own, to worlds unknown. Every turn I take, every trail I track is a choice I make, now I can't turn back from the great unknown where I go alone; where I long to be." Instead of questioning what is wrong with her, this time Moana accepts her choice to venture out to sea. She is active and independent in her choice, and the lyrics reflect this. The first line in this section occurs as she hugs her mother goodbye. She has the blessing of her mother and grandmother, and she no longer wonders what her path should be. The scene then cuts from their family hut to the caves that store the ships, and she sings, "I'm on my own," knowing from this point on she must rely on herself and accept her choices and actions as her own. As she reaches the reef she sings, "Soon I'll know how far I'll go."

Here the lyric has shifted from "one day" in the original song to "soon" because she is taking her dream and making it a reality. The song ends as Moana makes it over the last wave within the reef. She has persevered. Through the cycle of failure, doubt, and trying again, Moana shows that things do not always come easily, but that does not mean a person should give up on her goals.

Once she is off the island, Moana's first goal is to find Maui. Maui is the prince-type character for this story, but there is no romance between Moana and Maui. Instead, they help each other through their respective journeys as they each learn about his and her own identity. Moana helps Maui see he is a good person worthy of being saved by the gods, and worthy of being a hero if only he will act like one and fix his past mistakes. When Moana first finds Maui, he does not want to help her on her mission. Through his selfishness Moana must step up and take action. She escapes when Maui tries to trap her on his island so he can steal her boat. When Maui will not help save the heart from the kakamora, Moana boards their boat and fights to save Heihei and the heart of Te Fiti. In helping Maui get his magical hook back, it is Moana who is able to distract Tamatoa, steal back Maui's hook, and allow them to escape. Through her displays of courage and action she teaches Maui what it means to be a hero. Once she helps Maui see his potential to be a hero again, Maui teaches Moana wayfinding and helps her become an independent sailor. Together, they attempt to return the heart of Te Fiti. Like with Moana trying to get past the reef, the same circle of failure, doubt, and perseverance occurs as they try to return the heart of Te Fiti.

Maui and Moana fight to get past Te Kā, but she strikes Maui and nearly breaks his hook. He becomes scared of losing his magic and leaves Moana. Moana then gives

the heart of Te Fiti back to the ocean. Gramma's spirit visits her and tries to reassure her. Just like when Moana failed to get over the reef, her grandmother understands her disappointment, and says, "It's not your fault. I never should have put so much on your shoulders. If you are ready to go home I will be with you." Gramma does not want her to feel defeated in failure, but to recognize the courage Moana showed in trying. However, she also knows Moana is capable and, when Moana hesitates in leaving to go home, she calls her out on the hesitation. She helps Moana find her inner strength again by pointing out that the scars, experiences, and people help shape who we are. All of her successes and failures on her journey have helped shape Moana. Gramma sings, "Do you know who you are?" As Moana responds, she begins to realize how much she has accomplished in trying to help her people. She has ventured further than anyone and is so close to success, but her biggest realization is that the drive to succeed is not external, it is internal. She sings, "And the call isn't out there at all, it's inside me." To her grandmother, she sings, "I will carry you here in my heart, you remind me that come what may, I know the way. I am Moana." Moana then jumps in the ocean and retrieves the heart of Te Fiti. Again she takes action and works to persevere toward completing her quest.

After retrieving the heart of Te Fiti, Moana fixes her boat and sets sail by herself for Te Fiti's island. As she does this she says, "Aboard my boat I will sail across the sea and restore the heart of Te Fiti." Here Moana takes responsibility for restoring the heart of Te Fiti. This is very different from every other time she used this kind of proclamation. Prior to this, she always told Maui he would board her boat and return the heart. She would take him to the island, but he would fulfill the mission. Now she sees she can

fulfill the mission on her own. Moana understands who she is, and she knows has what it takes to succeed, with or without Maui; she will find a way to save her island and her people. To succeed, though, she must help Te Kā remember her true identity. Moana makes it to the island, but she must make it past Te Kā, a lava god. With the ocean helping her, and Maui distracting Te Kā (and sacrificing his hook in the process), Moana can return the heart of Te Fiti. But when she tries to return her heart, Te Fiti is gone. Standing on the top of the mountain, Moana sees the spiral on Te Kā—Te Fiti's alter ego without her heart. She must help Te Kā remember who she is. Moana approaches the edge of the island and askes the ocean, who has been protecting her, to let Te Kā come to her. As Te Kā towers over her, Moana sings, "This is not who you are. You know who you are. Who you truly are [replaces heart]…Te Fiti." This adventure ends with Te Kā remembering her true identity, Maui realizing he can be a hero with or without his hook, and Moana successful in her mission and secure in her new identity as voyager.

The film ends with Moana, leaving a sea shell on the mountain of her island and leading her people out to find a new island. She is the leader her father wanted her to be, only she takes her people to the sea rather than her staying on the island. She embraces her heritage, and sets out to find her own identity. In order to complete her mission she must claim agency, and in claiming agency Moana is able to find her relational autonomy: her role within and apart from her society. Moana, like so many of the other women analyzed within this dissertation, is a strong, capable, independent woman. She is the heroine her people need. As characters within children's and young adult texts continue to change hopefully the representations of women will also continue to diversify and change. Yet the traits that make these strong female characters—courage, action,

intelligence, independence, kindness, and even beauty—need to endure in order to help young women continue claiming agency and making a life of their own choosing.

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Ware, Susan. "Women and the Great Depression." *History Now*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Web. 15 Feb. 2017

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Worthington, Marjorie. "The Motherless 'Disney Princess': Marketing Mothers out of the Picture." *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture*. Eds. Ann C. Hall, Mardia J. Bishop. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009. 29-46. Print.

Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Eds. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, Laura Sells. Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 21-42. Print.

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---. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. Second edition. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

---. "Introduction." *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Routledge, 1987. 1-36. Print.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Megan McDonough
University of Louisville
Bingham Humanities Rm. 303 Louisville, KY 40292
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Education:

PhD in Humanities **University of Louisville** **March 2017**
Dissertation Title: From Damsel in Distress to Active Agent: Female Agency in Children's and Young Adult Fiction

MA in English **La Sierra University** **2010**

BA in English: Literature **La Sierra University** **2008**
Cum Laude

Areas of Specialization
Children and Young Adult Literature, Fantasy and Dystopic Fiction, Fairytales, Film Studies, American Cultural Studies

Research

Publications, Scholarly

Refereed Articles and Chapters:

Wagner, Katherine A. and Megan McDonough. "Claiming the Throne: Multiplicity and Agency in Cinda Williams Chima's *The Seven Realms Series*." *The Woman Fantastic in Contemporary American Media Culture*. Eds. Elyce Rae Helford, Shiloh Carroll, Sarah Gray, Michael R. Howard II. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2016.

McDonough, Megan and Katherine A. Wagner. "Rebellious Natures: The Role of the Environment in Young Adult Dystopic Female Protagonists' Awakenings." *Female Rebellion in YA Dystopian Fiction*. Eds. Sara K. Day, Miranda Green-Barteet, Amy L. Montz. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

Employment

La Sierra University **Riverside, CA**

Adjunct Instructor in Composition, Pre-Foundational English, and Humanities, 2015-present

University of Louisville **Louisville, KY**

Graduate Teaching Assistant in Humanities Department, 2011-2015
- Solo-taught and designed courses

La Sierra University **Riverside, CA**

Adjunct Instructor in Composition and Pre-Foundational English, 2010-2011
- Solo-taught courses

College Writing Instructor in English Department, 2008-2010
- Solo-taught courses

Library Circulation Assistant, 2004-2010

Head Link Plus Processor, 2006-2010
- an inter-library loan program for California and Nevada

Courses Taught

University of Louisville

"Intro to Film." This course uses popular films from around the world to introduce students to concepts of film form, content, terms, and techniques with a particular attention to the relationships between these film elements and the cultural constructs presented in the films.

"Cultures of America." (2012-2013) This course explores American culture—with an emphasis on Native American, African American, and Japanese America culture—through an examination of literature, film, art, and history. This course uses the specific lens of utopia and dystopia to explore different facets of culture.

"Cultures of America." (2011, 2014) This course explores American culture—with an emphasis on Native American, African American, and Japanese America culture—through an examination of literature, film, art, and history. This course looks at media and technology and how they have helped influence culture.

La Sierra University

"Humanities 104: Exploring American Culture through Literature and Film." This course focuses on events in American history between 1910s-1960s, and explores how these

events were viewed from multiple perspectives and utilized through the different humanities areas.

"Pre-Foundational Reading." This course focuses on expanding vocabulary and teaching critical reading skills necessary for college courses.

"Pre-Foundational Writing." This course uses six small, specifically designed papers to help students learn writing techniques needed for writing at the college level.

- The Spring 2011 session was the test pilot for a grant project examining if learning speech and debate would help in writing persuasive essays.

"College Writing 111." This course uses a wide range of projects to begin development of writing and revising techniques needed for college writing.

"College Writing 112." This course focuses on persuasive and argument writing.

"College Writing 113." This course focuses on skills needed for reaching and writing college research papers.

Presentations and Invited Lectures

Conference Papers, Presenter

"The Hazards of *The Hunger Games*: Katniss's Use of Environment to Survive the Hunger Games." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2016.

"The Women of the Delta Quadrant: An Exploration of Female Agency in *Star Trek: Voyager*." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. New Orleans, Louisiana. April 2015.

"Rebellious Natures: The Role of the Environment in Young Adult Dystopic Female Protagonists' Awakenings." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Chicago, Illinois. April 2014.

"It's all about the Land: An Ecocritical Exploration of Landscape Paintings in the Renaissance." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2014.

"I Had a Nightmare that I Returned to Manderley: Rebecca's Reincarnation through her Initials." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2013.

"Keeping the Suspense Alive: The Role of Narrator in Victorian Mysteries." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Boston, Massachusetts. April 2012.

"Expecto Patronum: The Link between Humans and Animals in *Harry Potter*." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. San Antonio, Texas. April 2011.

"Haven and Hell: Ecocriticism in *Uglies* and *The Hunger Games*." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2011.

"What Do You Mean I Can't Wear That: An Exploration of Identity and Accessories." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. St. Louis, Missouri. April 2010.

"Peeling Back the Layers: Exploring Frankenstein Through the Narrative Onion." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2010.

"Happy Ever After: Disney's Adaptations of Classic Fairytales." Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association. San Francisco, California. November 2009.
"The Angel of the House versus the Victorian Rebel: The Duality of Sisters in Wilkie Collins." (Dis)junctions Conference University of California, Riverside. Riverside, California. April 2009.

"The Emotions of Water: Bollywood and Elemental Symbolics." Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2009.

Panel/Roundtable

"International Horror Films: The Limits of Representation." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Chicago, Illinois. April 2014.

"Use of Library in Horror and Fantasy." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. San Antonio, Texas. April 2011.

"We've Become Swans, Now What?" Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors Society Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. March 2010.

"From Student to Scholar: The Ugly Duckling Stage." Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors Society Conference. Minneapolis, Minnesota. March 2009.

Conference Organization and Panel Leadership

Panel Chair, "Peter Jackson's Vision of *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Chicago, Illinois. April 2014.

Conference Organizer, University of Louisville's Assoc. of Humanities Academics 'Global Humanities' Conference. March 22, 2013. Louisville, Kentucky.

Conference Organizer, University of Louisville's Assoc. of Humanities Academics 'The Phoenix Effect: Regeneration, Rebirth, Reformation' Conference. March 23, 2012. Louisville, Kentucky.

Conference Organizer, Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2011.

Conference Chair, Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2010.

Panel Chair, "We've Become Swans, Now What?" Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors Society Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. March 2010.

Panel Chair, "World Literature: Global Perspectives." Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors Society Conference. Minneapolis, Minnesota. March 2009.
Colloquium Student Organizer, Natures: La Sierra University's Graduate Humanities Conference. Riverside, California. February 2009.

Guest Lectures

"Why Adaptation Theory: An Introduction to Adaptation Theory for Literature Majors." Delivered to ENGL 466F/566F Literature and Film. Dr. Sam McBride. La Sierra University. Fall 2015.

"Thesis Statements: Creating a Clear Argument." Delivered to four different AP History classes at San Bernardino High, helping students to prepare for writing AP exam essays. August 2015.

"Writing and Publishing Using Ecocriticism." Delivered to ENGL 615F Ecocriticism. Dr. Lora Geriguis. La Sierra University. Spring 2014.

"My Journey into Ecocriticism." Delivered to ENGL 615F Ecocriticism. Dr. Lora Geriguis. La Sierra University. Spring 2011

"Fairytales and their Literary Influence." Delivered to ENGL 415A/515A Literature for Children Pre 1940. Dr. Winona Howe. La Sierra University. Winter 2011.

"The Ugly Duckling Syndrome: From Student to Scholar." Delivered to ENGL 604: Methods and Materials. Dr. Lora Geriguis. La Sierra University. Winter 2009.

"Censorship in Children's and Young Adult Literature." Delivered to Young Adult Literature. Dr. Winona Howe. La Sierra University. Winter 2010.

"Expectations for College Writing." Delivered to five different AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes at San Bernardino High, helping to prepare

students for what to expect in a College English course. San Bernardino High AVID. September 2009.

Creative Presentations

"Finding the Calm in the Chaos." Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors Society Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. March 2010.

Awards and Honors

University of Louisville

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Humanities Department, 2011-2015

La Sierra University

College Writing Instructor, English and Communication Department, 2008-2010.

College Writing Instructor of the Year, English and Communication Department, 2010.

Neff-Lewis Scholarship, English and Communication Department, 2008-2009, 2009-2010.

Richard G. Guy Memorial Scholarship, College of Arts and Sciences, 2009-2010.

Senior of the Year. English and Communication Department, 2008.

Best Senior English Portfolio, English and Communication Department, 2008.

Who's Who Among American College Students, 2008, 2010.

Organization Membership and Leadership

Popular Culture Association, 2009-Present.

Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Organization, 2008-2010.

- President of La Sierra University 'Alpha Iota Upsilon' chapter, 2009-2010.
- Secretary of La Sierra University 'Alpha Iota Upsilon' chapter, 2008-2009.

Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association, 2009-2011

Services to the University and Community

University Committees, Organizations, and Departmental Services:

University of Louisville

Association of Humanities Academics, Participating Member, 2011-2017
- Vice President, 2013-2015.
- Secretary, 2012-2013

La Sierra University

Mathematical Word Problem Aid, 2011.
- University Faculty and Staff from both the Math and English Departments collaborated to find a way to help students better navigate solving mathematical word problems.

Freshman Composition Textbook Committee, 2010.

La Sierra University Library Committee, 2009-2010.
- Graduate Student Representative

Library Focus Groups, 2006, 2008, 2009.
- Sat three times as a student representative: student worker, Senior, and Graduate student

Community Service and Outreach:

Volunteer Worker, La Sierra Academy, Elementary Library, 2010-2011.

Sigma Tau Delta Community Projects
- San Bernardino High Lending Library, 2009-2010.
  - La Sierra University's Alpha Iota Upsilon chapter of Sigma Tau Delta worked with AVID at San Bernardino High to set up a library for Young Adult Literature which the students were requesting to read but could not afford.
- Barnes & Noble Book Fair, 2008-2010.
  - Organized annual event to benefit non-profit literacy organizations

Valley View Junior High after school reading program, Winter 2008.
- In conjunction with La Sierra University's Service Learning Program and Young Adult Literature, worked with two junior high girls to encourage them to read and converse about books after school.