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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF RETELLINGS: "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" ACROSS THE FEMINIST WAVES

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this work is to explore the topic of female sexual desire across some of the different versions of tale type ATU 425C, 'Beauty and the Beast'. There will be an emphasis on female retellings, since this work pretends to explore these tales from the perspective of academics such as Zipes, Warner or Tatar, who claim that the fairy tale is a subversive space for those who have been marginalised and silenced, such as women. Following this train of thinking, *Bookish and the Beast* (Poston, 2020) should be highlighted as the most recent retelling, which will allow us to explore how 'fan fiction' resembles the act of retelling as a type of text that tends to be written by and for women, and which more often than not, deals with sexuality themes relevant to its female readers from a postfeminist perspective in which the variety of voices is searched and appreciated.

For this same reason, and due to the chosen tale type, the concept of beauty will also be explored throughout this paper as an oppression mechanism that sometimes results in acts of female rivalry. Nonetheless, the paper will focus on the most contemporary retellings, in which beauty is relegated into the background, thus allowing the flourishing of female relationships based on female bonding and sorority.

In contrast, there will be a section dedicated to the question of what is considered 'monstrous', connected with the conception of masculinity and sexuality. This question will lead us to the final part of this thesis, in which we will consider the treatment of female sexual desire. Here, we will be able to observe the difference between the different retellings and adaptations of the tale; only a few try to omit said desire, whereas the majority of the versions try to normalise it and celebrate it in all its expressions and contexts: a fair marriage (Villeneuve), a lesbian relationship (Donoghue), a passionate encounter (Carter), or an equalitarian relationship with a female protagonist who knows her own desires—both romantic and sexual ones (Poston).

Keywords: fairy tales, retellings, Beauty and the Beast, female desire, feminism, biopolitics, fanfiction

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es explorar el deseo sexual femenino en algunas de las diferentes versiones del cuento de hadas ATU 425C, ‘La Bella y la Bestia’. Habrá un gran énfasis en las reescrituras femeninas, puesto que este trabajo pretende explorar los cuentos de hadas desde las teorías de académicos como Zipes, Warner o Tatar, que afirman que el cuento es un espacio subversivo para aquellos individuos que han sido marginados y silenciados, como puede ser el caso de las mujeres. Siguiendo esta línea, cabe resaltar la reescritura más reciente, *Bookish and the Beast* (Poston, 2020), que nos permitirá explorar los ‘fan fiction’ como la nueva forma de reescritura: un tipo de texto que tiende a ser escrito por y para mujeres, y que a menudo trata temas de la sexualidad femenina relevantes para sus lectoras desde una perspectiva postfeminista en la que abundan y se valora la variedad de voces.

Por este mismo motivo, y dado el cuento elegido, se explorará el concepto de belleza como mecanismo de opresión, que en ocasiones resulta en actos de rivalidad femenina. No obstante, el trabajo se centrará en las reescrituras más contemporáneas, donde la belleza se ve relegada a un segundo plano, permitiendo que afloren relaciones basadas en vínculos afectivos, en sororidad.

En contraste, también se llevará a cabo un análisis que cuestione el concepto de lo monstruoso, conectado con la percepción de la masculinidad y la sexualidad. Esta pregunta nos llevará finalmente al tratamiento del deseo sexual femenino, en el que podremos observar las diferencias entre las distintas reescrituras y adaptaciones. Observaremos que tan solo unas pocas versiones intentan omitir dicho deseo, mientras que la gran mayoría tratan de normalizarlo y celebrarlo en todas sus expresiones y contextos: un matrimonio justo (Villeneuve), una relación lésbica (Donoghue), un encuentro apasionado (Carter), o una relación igualitaria en la que la protagonista femenina es consciente de sus propios deseos, tanto románticos como sexuales (Poston).

Palabras Clave: cuentos de hadas, reescrituras, La Bella y la Bestia, deseo femenino, feminismo, biopolítica, fanfiction

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1. INTRODUCTION

> "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told me in my childhood than in any truth that is taught in life." (Johann Christoph Friedrich v. Schiller)

Fairy tales are in vogue once again. Not that they were not at some point, but this last decade has surely seen an important quantity of retellings of classical fairy tales both in the form of books and films. We are living in an age of nostalgia, in which today's adults are starting to form their own families and traditions. But living in a capitalist world, it is easy to turn back into what is familiar to us, what brings us comfort—or what the big industries make us believe brings us comfort and familiarity. Disney is very good at playing this game, and it does not matter if it is because the Mouse House wants everyone to forget that their early films are approaching public release,[1] or because they want to mount on the new wave of feminism, appearing as modern not only to nostalgic adults but also to their children. As an avid reader and a cinephile, it was impossible not to talk about the realm of fairy tales in such an important work as a TFM. More importantly, my interest in feminism, and especially in postfeminism and its relation to the third wave and the current fourth wave, made me realise that there was more to the eye than that was apparent in these films and books, something that I needed to delve into and bring my discoveries back to the real world. I have always loved fairy tales (who has not?). As a child, I watched Disney (and Pixar, and DreamWorks, and others) film versions of them endlessly to the point of breaking my VHS records. As a teenager, *The Never-Ending Story* captivated me so much that it became my favourite book, which I have re-read several times, always finding new meanings (but never as interesting as when I was younger and my imagination was, allow me the repetition, never-ending). And now, as an adult, I find myself going back once and again, sometimes in the form of retellings, others with new fairy tales or

[1] As Jonathan Bailey explains when talking about the Dumbo remake, but applicable to all the Disney live-action remakes, "new works, whether authorized or unauthorized, do not extend the copyright on the original [but] there's little doubt that Disney hoped that this version of the film would become the definitive version and that people who see it as the real one, a replacement for the 1941 film". In other words, even if Disney's original movies enter the public domain in a few years from now, with some luck for the company, people will only think of the newer ones, which tend to be more politically correct in terms of animal rights, racial matters, feminism, and even LGBT themes. (Bailey, Jonathan. "Why Disney's Remakes Don't Extend Its Copyright." *Plagiarism Today*, 9 Apr. 2019, https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2019/04/09/why-disneys-remakes-dont-rest-its-copyright/. Accessed 24 Mar 2021)

fantasy stories with tints of the fairy tale. But almost always in a darker sense. I still love the happiness that surrounds the classical fairy tales of my childhood, but now I appreciate more the complexities of the darker versions of the Brothers Grimm, of the obscure tales like *Coraline*, and how “The Nothing” of Michael Ende does not frighten me as it used to do, but instead I see in it a type of adulthood that I sometimes resist, and others I realise is part of me. I find myself between the nostalgic feelings and the wanting to understand this new period of my life: in both cases, fairy tales seem to help me, and that is why I still find them attractive and why I understand the decision to still write and publish them. They may seem repetitive, but they are not: as with my re-readings of Ende’s book, the retellings always add something new that teaches something different. Sometimes it’s just a subtle mention of the original author (as when Gaston says “So why don't we just turn around go back to Villeneuve?” in the Disney live-action) or a motif that is always present in the tale but in a different way (for example, when in *Bookish and the Beast* the rose is a birthmark), and others is very obvious, impossible to miss (the mask, the scent and the hair in Carter’s “The Tiger’s Bride”). In any case, it is there, waiting for us to realise that this text contains an important moral, something that we may have learn as children but now have forgot, something that we need to learn again.

1.1. Hypothesis and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore how the concepts of beauty, monstrosity, and desire have evolved in the realm of fairy tales, specifically in ‘Beauty and the Beast’ (ATU 425C), as the world has entered new waves of feminism. In this sense, this thesis relies on the perspective previously posed by many folklorists such as Jack Zipes, Marina Warner, or Maria Tatar: that fairy tales serve a role of subversion —especially when written by women, for they are an oppressed group in almost all cultures, associated with the fairy tale as a form of nursery, but appropriating it as a means of encoding messages of empowerment and fulfillment for new generations. By analysing this aspect of fairy tales and retellings, I wish to achieve an understanding of how this kind of literature has affected and still affects our ideologies, and how modern retellings serve to embrace new empowering attitudes towards female and masculine bodies, thus allowing all genders to enjoy their desires, especially female sexual desire, which has often been viewed as a dangerous monstrosity. It is my belief that the achievement of

this enjoyment of desire leads to important changes in society, because both women and men achieve an equal position and thus both of them gain access to equalitarian relationships.

Therefore, this study considers fairy tales not only as narratives for children, but also for young adults and adults as a means of gaining new knowledge about the world and themselves. Because of that, fairy tales are seen once again as a subversive space in which people of all backgrounds may learn something new thanks to the easy access that is granted by the form of fairy tales. In a similar way, this study will consider the realm of fan fiction, which will be represented by Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast* (2020) retelling and which is heavily linked not only to the contemporary websites of fan fiction like *Archive of Our Own* (2009), but also to the beginnings of the genre with *Star Trek* fan zines. Therefore, Poston's book would be one of the main focus of this study not only because of its fan fiction roots, but also because of its fourth-wave feminist perspective. It would exemplify how feminism is still important in today's society, and how it is useful for the adaptation of fairy tales like 'Beauty and the Beast', and finally, why the realm of fan fiction illustrates the new form of feminist fairy tale retelling.

Due to the chosen fairy tale, I will first focus on the concept of beauty. As will be seen across the analysis of the different fairy tales and the different feminist waves, beauty has been used as a mechanism of oppression that has tended to arouse feelings of female rivalry: because of the beauty of the protagonist, other female characters tend to feel jealousy and envy, which leads them to lie, to manipulate and to behave cruelly. However, this thesis will emphasize the later retellings, in which beauty starts to become a background characteristic of the protagonists, thus allowing female characters to become closer to one another, to create female bonds between them, and thus representing sorority. This new type of relationship will allow women to unite against the subtle oppressions of patriarchy, both inside and outside the realm of fairy tales. By constructing this kind of bond, I believe that it will be easier to engage in more productive and empowering conversations with men, for women no longer will be

fighting for their attention, but rather will understand that the world can only be changed by uniting both sexes and all genders.[2]

Something similar happens with monstrosity: whereas beauty transforms from a burden to a mere characteristic of the female protagonist, monstrosity changes from being a curse to being secret knowledge about oneself and others. At first, we will observe that monstrosity is associated with animals, for as Marina Warner explains in *Once Upon a Time*, these were regarded as threatening, and often encountered in the wild forests, a place typically connected with the unknown and thus, the dangerous. As time goes by, these beasts will appear more human, but still marginalised for an important reason: Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Rose", for example, will show us how lesbianism was seen as monstrous, even in a time of feminist outrage. Finally, we will encounter that beasts are completely human, and as such, even more difficult to identify in some contexts: in *Bookish and the Beast*, Ashley Poston presents a bestiality that may be worn as a protective disguise or be part of our real nature.

The questioning of these two concepts, beauty and monstrosity, will finally lead us into the topic of female desire. Analysed from a feminist perspective, I perceive it as related to these two concepts because it concerns attractiveness and because it leads to empowerment, something that, in some periods, was seen as dangerous and therefore monstrous. Following a similar train of thought as in the previous parts of the essay, we find that female desire has suffered a transformation in its treatment: from something to be feared to the more recent retellings (and some old exceptions, like Villeneuve's text) that present it as something to be celebrated. As such, we can find a strong connection with the concept of monstrosity, but with a twist: in the superficial layer, monstrosity is granted upon male characters, but analysing the texts in-depth, we find that females are also associated with it, for their desire is a transgression that society wants to silence. However, as previous scholars have claimed, the fairy tale is a text of subversion (in other words, transgression): it is no wonder that it encodes messages of empowerment, but sometimes only understandable for those who need it in their marginalisation.

[2] I say "both sexes and all genders" because I understand that biologically, there are two sexes (female and male), but socially, gender is a socially constructed concept and we should understand that there are more genders than man and woman.

In conclusion, in this thesis I will focus on Villeneuve's and Beaumont's versions as the first ones to treat this type of fairy tale (ATU 425C), for theirs are the ones who gained more recognition; but the main focus of the paper will be around the newest variations of the tale, analysing them from a postfeminist perspective in the case of Disney's 2017 remake of *Beauty and the Beast*, based on its previous animated film of 1991; and from a fourth wave feminist approach in the case of Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast* (2020). Between these initial versions and the two final ones, I will also discuss other retellings and cinematographic adaptations of the tale, for I believed that it is important to signal the different changes in the story that have led to Disney's live-action movie and Poston's book, in order to evaluate the latter with a stronger base of knowledge. I hope to demonstrate that, as feminism progresses, so do retellings; and as retellings renovate themselves, female beauty and male monstrosity are a thing of the past, while confidence in physical bodies of both sexes becomes the new message, thus allowing all genders to open bridges of communication, which will allow for a more equalitarian society.

1.1. STATE OF THE ART

Fairy tales have always been part of our traditions: at first, they were told in oral form and slowly, they started to appear in the written form. They started as myths (Greek gods), some of them evolved into legends (Arthur and his knights) and some of them remain as fairy tales. This is the case of tale type ATU 425C, commonly known as 'Beauty and the Beast'. Its origins go back as far as to Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche* Greek myth (ATU 425B), as well as to 'The Girl who Married a Snake' tale of the *Panchatantra* (ATU 433). As Ruth Bottigheimer explains, it was not until the late Middle Ages that Apuleius' myth was reprinted—concretely in 1469—and became famous throughout all Europe (Bottigheimer 45). There, the myth started to evolve and became a fairy tale under the pen of various French fairy tale authors such as Madame d'Aulnoy[3] or Charles Perrault.[4] However, it was not until 1740 that the tale became

[3] Madame d'Aulnoy published several 'Beauty and the Beast' tale types, among them 'Le Mouton', 'La Grenouille bienfaisante', 'Serpentin vert' or 'Le Prince Marcassin'.

[4] Charles Perrault is also the author of one 'Beauty and the Beast' tale, titled 'Riquet à la Houppe' (1697). Nonetheless, as Bottigheimer explains, it is not clear whether the monster transforms or not at the end (Bottigheimer 47).

known as 'Beauty and the Beast', thanks to the story by Madame de Villeneuve[5] published in *La Jeune Américaine ou les Contes marins* (1740), in which the motifs that we all known appeared all together: the merchant father, the cursed prince, the wicked fairy, the dutiful Beauty, the enchanted castle, and the transformation from Beast to prince that ends in marriage. Nonetheless, it is not Villeneuve's version that the world is most familiar with, for it was Madame de Beaumont's version,[6] published in her *Magasin des enfants* in 1757 which became canonical due to its short length and more refined style.[7] Since her adaptation, the tale has gained great recognition and has been adapted by many authors across cultures and made into different film versions. Thus, although this project aims to focus primarily on more recent versions of the tale, such as Disney's live-action remake (2017) and Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast* (2020), it is of the utmost interest to analyse these contemporary adaptations along with Villeneuve's and Beaumont's version, as well as with remarkable revisions like Disney's animated adaptation (1991), Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" (1979) and Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Rose" (1997).[8]

Generations have passed since the first "Beauty and the Beast" tale appeared, yet this "tale as old as time" (Woolverton) continues to examine the question of "who is the beast, who is the brute?" (Warner, *From the Beast*), searching for new answers as new types of monsters come into being. As Marina Warner points out, the Beast was first "identified with male sexuality which must be controlled or changed or domesticated through *civilité*" but with the passing of time it has evolved to be "perceived as a principle of nature within every human being, male and female, young and old" (*From the Beast*, original emphasis). That is, now that our relationship with the animal is

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[5] Her complete name is Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, but I will be referring to her as Villeneuve all along the thesis.

[6] Her complete name is Madame Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, but as with Villeneuve, I will be shortening her name throughout the thesis to Beaumont.

[7] According to Virginia E. Swain, "Literary history commonly locates the beginning of the "modern" fairy tale in Leprince de Beaumont's concise version of *Beauty*. Raymond Robert, for example, claims that Beaumont improved Villeneuve's story, making it more "youthful" ("le rajeuniss[ant]") by ridding it of elements that dated it considerably ("qui le dataient fortement") (146)." (Swain 198).

[8] At the beginning of this thesis research, Jean Cocteau's film version (1946) as well as Christophe Gans' film (2014) and Naomi Novik's novel *Uprooted* (2015) were also considered for the analysis. However, due to the length of this work, they were discarded in favour of the mentioned texts, more related to the different feminist waves under analysis.

different—humans no longer fear animals, but rather the other way around—, the new 'Animal Bridegroom' tale types represent the monstrous among humans, however magical they are. Maria Tatar does a wonderful job summarizing the importance of this tale positioning this issue of the monster along with others equally important:

> It may be the tale as old as time, but it is never the same old story. … The genius of "Beauty and the Beast" lies in its engagement with the cultural contradictions that riddle every romantic relationship, as well as the perils of leaving home and the possibilities of new family constellations. How do power and wealth figure in the calculus of marriage? What is the value of beauty? Of charisma? Of charm? What are the limits to forgiveness and compassion? How does marriage change family dynamics and vice versa? What is the right balance between compromise and dignity? As we shall see, there are just as many handsome men and beasts as there are beautiful women and beasts. (Tatar)

We can observe that there had been many studies revolving around 'Beauty and the Beast', but these have mainly centred on the concepts of beauty and monstrosity, sometimes innovating with the analysis of female curiosity—but mostly to claim that women are to blame for their nosiness (Warner, *From the Beast*). In this thesis, I aim to question more. Drawing from these previous studies, my focus is on the concept of desire—in particular, female sexual desire—and its connection to monstrosity. I believe that desire is an essential part of our identity and our relationships with others, and as such, something that needs to be thought of in equal terms. However, female sexuality has tended to be disregarded, as has been reflected in many fairy tales by portraying women as pure innocent maidens who do not know about sex and don't question what their future husbands impose upon them—Beaumont's version of the tale is one of the best examples. As such, my study is quite innovative in the field, for I will be exploring different texts that seem to offer a celebration of female sexual desire.

Similarly, as stated above, I will focus mainly on the newer adaptations, a decision that will allow us to talk about the topic of fanfiction in relation to fairy tales and the main concept of this study: desire. We will explore the connection between both text forms as a subversive space in which women feel free to speak in their own words, and, most importantly, a space where female sexual desire abounds without fear. This will be exemplified by Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast* (2020), the third book in

the *Once Upon a Con* series, which continuously emphasises its relationship with fanfiction as well as with fairy tales.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The type of research conducted in this thesis is a qualitative one, focused on the evolution of female desire and its relation to the concepts of monstrosity and beauty. Through the examination and analysis of different literary retellings and cinematographic adaptations of the tale 'Beauty and the Beast', in this thesis, I will try to demonstrate that retellings follow feminist waves and that the fourth wave feminism that we can encounter today advocates for a body that is not subdued to postfeminist politics. In other words, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that the retellings that follow the values of fourth-wave feminism are a reflection of bodies not politicised, and thus leave room for in-depth conversations about genre and diversity—of race, social class, disability, etc— that allow for the flourishing of equalitarian romantic and sexual relationships.

Throughout this study, I will analyse not only the concept of monstrosity, but also how beauty is treated by both the character who embodies the concept, and the individuals who surround the beautiful one. In this sense, I will find two kinds of tales: those in which female rivalry appears out of jealousy—sometimes due to the beauty, others because of the wealth acquired—and those in which female bonding rises to create a fair ending for all female characters, independently of their beauty. I will treat female rivalry as a kind of female monster, and female bonding as the example to follow so as to achieve a better society based on sorority and inclusiveness.

Continuing with the emphasis on transformation, I will turn in the last section to explore how desire transforms characters in these narratives and signal how often those desires are connected to monstrosity. This project aims to defend this type of desire, for as I will explain in more detail later on, if they are seen as monstrous it is because they are related to female desire, from both heterosexual and homosexual perspectives. To achieve this objective, Cristina Bacchilega's questions will help guide this exploration of desire:

> Is transformation "real" or does it result from Beauty's new perception of him? Does the change answer or betray Beauty's desire? And what kind of transformation has she undergone herself? Who has tamed whom, and how have social dynamics shaped this apparently magic moment? … Where is Beast—the beast in our loved one and the beast in ourselves—after the transformation? (79-80)

In other words, I aim to answer what it means to reconcile with our own desires, and not those that society imposes upon us—especially upon women. This will allow me to deconstruct patriarchal ideas of beauty and monstrosity. As such, I will be able to explore how the dismantling of patriarchal concepts of desire allows for feminist conversations that include all types of women, as well as men and non-binary individuals.

1.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project presents itself as a feminist study. Analysing the different versions of the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale, this thesis groups together certain versions according to each of the different feminist waves that have been manifested in the feminist movement as recorded in Sarah Gamble's *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (2006) as well as in Nicola Rivers' *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave* (2017). Similarly, I will be using books that deal with the rising of the foruth wave, such as Kira Cochrane's *All the Rebel Women. The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism* (2013), Prudence Chamberlain's *The Feminist Fourth Wave* (2017) and Diana Parry's *Feminism in Leisure Studies. Advancing a Fourth Wave* (2019).

Likewise, the chosen scholars follow a feminist approach, even if their theories are mainly based on other movements. For instance, Jack Zipes will be useful for a clear understanding of the importance of fairy tales across generations and the relation that the folk tradition has with the lower classes (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, 2000; and *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 2006). Similarly, authors like Maria Tatar, Marina Warner and Christina Bacchilega represent the female voice of fairy tale scholarship while exposing their different alignment to movements such as postcolonialism or postmodernism in work like *Once Upon a Time* (Warner, 2014) or *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Bacchilega 1997). Tatar and Warner's studies will be especially important when analysing the main aspects of 'Beauty and the Beast',

such as the concept of ‘beauty’, thanks to their books focusing on this particular tale: *Beauty and the Beast. Classic Tales about Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the Globe* (Tatar, 2017) and *From the Beast to the Blonde* (Warner, 1994).

On the other hand, the ideas of biopolitics and the abject that were termed by Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva respectively will have an important role in this study when we analyse the concept of ‘monstrosity’. I will be referring to Kristeva’s main work, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (1982), as well as some of the best articles around the topic that belong to scholar Isabel Balza, who has studied the figure of the monster from a biopolitic perspective (“Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica”), more often than not with a feminist approach (“Cuerpos biopolíticos: Harpías y Hechiceras. Sobre monstruos femeninos y mujeres monstruosas” or “Crítica feminista de la discapacidad: el monstruo como figura de la vulnerabilidad y exclusión”). Along with Balza’s articles, Lola Robles and Monika Riedman’s papers, although focused on Pilar Pedraza’s fairy tales, will serve to go deeper into the analysis of the monster as a figure of transgression. Continuing with the concept of deviation, Judith Butler’s queer theories, summarised by Balza, will serve to analyse texts like Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Rose”. Other articles by Brian Attebery, Jena Jorgensen, along with Warner and Tatar, will explore the connection between monstrosity and masculinity. On the other hand, Tatiana Korneeva’s article, “Desire and Desirability in Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont’s ‘Beauty and the Beast’” will be a good start point to start the discussion of desire in the different versions of the tale.

To analyse the two Disney adaptations, I will return to Jack Zipes and his book *Fairy Tales Beyond Disney: International Perspectives* (2016). Regarding the connection of fairy tales, retellings and fanfiction, I will employ *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (2014), along with several articles from both the Internet and published journals.

Finally, it is important to note that the selection of literary tales under analysis are all written by women, except for Apuleius’ *Cupid and Psyche* myth and the script of the 2017 Disney remake, written by Stephen Chobsky and Evan Spiliotopoulos. In particular, I want to bring attention to the chosen translation for Villeneuve’s story, for, as Heidi Heiner signals, Ernest Dowson’s translation is “one of the most accurate

translations of Villeneuve's content in English, including elements often changed or omitted in other translations" (28), such as the question that the Beast posits every night, and which will be of utmost importance when we analyse the topic of desire. Finally, the other retellings and adaptations have all been written by women: Villeneuve's version (1740), Beaumont's adaptation (1756), Angela Carter's two stories (1979), Linda Woolverton's script for the 1991 Disney animated adaptation, Emma Donoghue's tale (1997), and finally, Ashley Poston's novel (2020).

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The selected texts and movies are only a small sample of all the different versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' that the world has to offer, for this is one of the most beloved tales and there are innumerable versions and countless articles about it. Therefore, I have opted for the retellings and adaptations that I consider most important and useful for this study: Apuleius', Villeneuve's, Beaumont's and Disney as the precedents for the fame of the story; Donoghue's and Carter's as the representatives of the second wave of feminism and the revival of fairy tales; Disney as a portrayal of postfeminism; and Poston as the representative of the conflict between postfeminism and fourth-wave feminism.

Finally, even though the sample of authors is predominantly female (with the exception of Apuleius and the Disney remake), it only represents one part of society, that of Western culture: whether they are French, as the *conteuses*; British as Emma Donoghue and Angela Carter; or American as Disney associates and Ashley Poston. This takes us to the recognition that this work, although focused on the feminist perspective of fairy tales, fails in representing a more intersectional feminism. As such, we acknowledge that this intersectionality is what we should aspire to in future projects; but meanwhile, we appreciate this short vision in our works and continue to encourage our feminist colleagues that not only talk about this issue, but suffer it in their own lives—it is important to take into account that feminism must always include issues of race, of disabilities, and the LGBT collective, among other types of oppression and discrimination.

2. The Transformative Power of Fairy Tales

"Everything you look at can become a fairy tale and you can get a story from everything you touch." (Hans Christian Andersen)

Fairy tales seem to have always existed, whether in oral or written form. And despite popular belief, fairy tales are not childish and never have been exclusively targeted towards children. Jack Zipes, one of the most important voices among the academic field of fairy tales and folklore explains the history of the fairy tale, which remounts as early as human existence, for fairy tales are "only one type of literary appropriation of a particular oral storytelling tradition related to the oral wonder tale, often called the *Zaubermärchen* or the *conte merveilleux*, which existed throughout Europe in many different forms during the medieval period" (Zipes, "Towards a Definition" xvi). Slowly, fairy tales as we know them started to be written down in Latin for the aristocracy and other important members of society like the clergy and the middle classes (xvi). Yet "it was not until the 1690s in France that the fairy tale could establish itself as a 'legitimate' genre for educated classes" (xxii). In fact, it is during these years that the fairy tale gained its name, that is, when "the French female writers 'baptized' their tales *contes de fees*" (xxii) after having introduced them into the literary salons and published them. Even though most societies "explicitly admonish women to be silent, and abhor, ridicule, and sometimes even violently quiet those who are not" (Greenhill et al. xxiv), it was women who first told tales and who named them, often transmitting not only society's values but subtly undermining them. Nonetheless, women remained marginalised, and their names rarely appear in the credits of these tales. As Zipes explains, "since most women … were not allowed to be scribes, the tales were scripted according to male dictates or fantasies" ("Towards a Definition" xx). This was sadly a worldwide situation, for "even the Brothers Grimm, in particular Wilhelm, began to revise their collected tales in *Kinder- und Hausmdrchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, 1812-15), making them more appropriate for children than they had done in the beginning and cleansing their narratives of erotic and bawdy passages" (Zipes, "Towards a Definition" xxv). Therefore, fairy tales in different countries like France, England, or Germany, although they started to produce more fairy tales, they did so under the assumption that they needed "to socialize children and indoctrinate them

through literary products that were appropriate for their age, mentality, and morals" (ibid xxiii). This is exemplified by one of the tales we are going to analyse in this thesis: Beaumont's version of "Beauty and the Beast" (1756), based on the text written a few years before (1740) by Villeneuve with the same title, and which will also be part of this analysis.

But why, then, are fairy tales so attractive not only to children, but also to adults? According to Jack Zipes, the fairy tale genre still captivates us because "as a metaphorical mode of representation, whether it may be oral, iconic, or written, … [it] effectively draws our attention to relevant information that will enable us to know more about our real-life situations, … it allows for personal and public, individual and collective interpretations" (Zipes, "Once Upon a Time" 101). In other words, the fairy tale is one way of understanding the real world through motifs that seem simple yet reflect our everyday conflicts in an attractive manner, drawing us closer to aspects of our lives that otherwise we would have ignored. Fairy tales, then, are a way in which we can reflect about our personal identity and our connection to other people. Therefore, we can affirm that fairy tales are a form of creating community: through them, we share our most important values, question those we need to re-evaluate; and they are shared between families and friends across generations. As Jessica Senehi explains, they are part of folklore and as such "an accessible tool of subversion because the vernacular—common knowledge—belongs to the people. … Profoundly accessible, folk arts and folklore are critical tools for disrupting, challenging, and resisting powerful social systems and social injustice" (Senehi xlvii). This is similar to what Warner considers the main power of fairy tales, that is, "a huge theatre of possibility" (Warner, *From the Beast*) in which we "can unlock social and public possibilities" (*From the Beast*). In fact, as Jack Zipes claims, "if there is one 'constant' in the structure and theme of the wonder tale that was also passed on to the literary fairy tale it is *transformation*—to be sure, miraculous transformation. Everybody and everything can be transformed in a wonder tale" ("Towards a Definition" xvii, original emphasis). Therefore, it is no wonder that we use fairy tales to imagine better futures: the beginning of a fairy tale may reflect what we consider a bad and current situation, and towards the end, this may be *transformed* into a better outcome for everyone involved. Warner explains that "the enchantments also universalize the narrative setting, encipher concerns, beliefs and

desires in brilliant, seductive images that are themselves a form of camouflage, making it possible to utter harsh truths, to say what you dare" (Warner, *From the Beast*), confirming that fairy tales can be useful to declare the problems of society and provide answers to them in a smart way. In other words, fairy tales are told and retold because of "our desire to reshape our lives and environment" (Zipes, "Once Upon a Time" 106). Cristina Bacchilega agrees with the belief that "stories and looks, telling and seeing, have the power to transform, but the ontological status and the effect of such change are ambiguous" (Bacchilega 90). On a similar note, Marina Warner emphasises the optative mood of fairy tales, meaning that they do not depict a real future, but instead, they attempt an "announcing [of] what might be. Imagining the fate that lies ahead and ways of dealing with it (if adverse …) or achieving it (if favourable …)" (Warner, *From the Beast*). Therefore, we can understand the reasons behind women writers being attracted to this genre.

As Jack Zipes explained above, women were often discouraged to write their own tales, yet when they were able to do so, this type of expression meant that women found a way to "define alternative social ideas and knowledge, articulate opposition to social injustice, and give voice to their creativity and aesthetic values" (Senehi xlviii). Senehi believes that "even when done a from a relatively disempowered position, this resistance is an exercise of power in the social construction of meaning" (xlviii), allowing culture to be "an ongoing process of revision and negotiation" (xlviii) in which women can actively be part of this process of cultural and social knowledge construction and production. Zipes coincides with this thought, treating fairy tales as contagious because "they are injected into our systems almost as a cure for dreaded social diseases" ("Once Upon a Time" 105-106). This was in fact reflected in the nineteenth century, which turned away from fairy tales as a children's literature and saw how the fairy tale genre "became marked by the very individual desires and needs of the authors who felt that industrialization and rationalization of labour made their lives compartmentalized" (Zipes, "Towards a Definition" xxvii). As such, fairy tales' history repeated itself: at first, they were told by women; later, they were transcribed by men and adapted for children; but "just as the 'conventional' fairy tale for adults had become subverted at the end of the 18th century, there was a major movement to write parodies of fairy tales, which were intended both for children and adults" (Zipes, "Towards a

Definition" xxvii) during the nineteenth century, which consisted in the questioning of dominant values and a revitalization of "wonder, curiosity, and creativity" (xxvii). Therefore, fairy tales are attractive to both children and adults because, as Jack Zipes, Marina Warner, Cristina Bacchilega and Jessica Senehi have made clear, fairy tales contain the power to tell stories about ourselves and our relationships with others, and about the change we need to continue to progress as a society. In other words, fairy tales are powerful because they are able to transform us.

2.1. THE DISNEY FAIRY TALE

The nineteenth-century closed with fairy tales subverting the norm of the upper social class, but with "the beginning of the 20th century, the fairy tale became fully institutionalized in Europe and North America … [meaning] that a specific process of production, distribution, and reception had become regularized within the public sphere of each Western society" (Zipes, "Towards a Definition" xxviii). Fairy tales were once again at the service of the upper classes, used once again to indoctrinate children. The best example of this industrialisation of the fairy tale was and is still represented by the Disney company, which created its own formula of the fairy tale and made it the standard one to follow in subsequent adaptations, whether conscious or unconsciously. As Zipes continues to explain, "what counts most in the Disney fairy tale is the repetition of the same message: happiness will always come to those who work hard and are kind and brave" ("Towards a Definition" xxx). Disney thus has been selling us the famous American Dream in all its fairy tales, mixed up with outdated ideas of femininity in which women marry young and beautiful, and who although subversive to their father figures in some occasions, tend to remain submissive to their husbands. Disney has been able to maintain this success mainly to their "skilful marketing stratagems" (Zipes, "Beyond Disney" 278), which make us see Disney all around us: that is, Disney is not only present in our VHS, DVDs or Blu-Rays, but also in many stores and the many theme parks dedicated to the franchise. Disney is ever-present.

However, Disney success is not solely maintained because of the company's marketing skills. Due to Disney's fame, not many film studios dare to try and produce

movies based on fairy tales, especially within the United States[9]. In fact, even the ones produced and released in the United States have been disappointing[10]. This is, according to Jack Zipes, because these fairy tale films spent exorbitant amounts of money in advertising and trailers, as well as in hiring celebrity actors who may not be the best suited for the roles, as well as an incredible number of special effects, all "to increase spectacle for the sale of spectacle" (Zipes, "Beyond Disney" 279-280). Moreover, Zipes highlights the problematic depiction of women against women conflicts that abound in this kind of films, often portraying "young beautiful virgins against experienced and smart but villainous women" (280). Often, the young woman is trained by a man to confront the evil female adversary, which according to Zipes sends the implicit message that "in order to become a "true" woman in today's world, a woman must become a man" (280). In other words, by portraying apparently strong women who are characterised by characteristics typical of masculinity, these films that at first sight appear to be feminist, end up perverting the ideas of feminism with their emphasis on weapons—or "phallic toys" as Zipes calls them. ("Beyond Disney" 280). Finally, even though these films are promoted as different to the ones produced by the Disney company, often targeted towards adults as darker and more reflective, the "social and political conflicts and problems" ("Beyond Disney" 280) they sometimes portray are forgotten and trivialized when they provide the typical happy end.

Nonetheless, Zipes tries to maintain hope for innovative fairy tale films and turns his attention towards animated fairy tale adaptations such as *Shrek* (DreamWorks, 2001) or *How to Train Your Dragon* (DreamWorks, 2010), two films he values because of their the effort to treat topics of otherness and peace —even if the sequels evolve into Disney-like tales, forgetting about their innovative aspects (Zipes, "Beyond Disney" 280-281). Another example Zipes provides trying to be hopeful about the future of ground-breaking fairy tale films is Pixar's *Brave* (2012), which he defines as "a feminist

[9] Jack Zipes explains that outside the US, fairy tale experimentation is more common, even if not that famous. He discusses, along with other authors, the type of fairy tale films that are being produced in other countries in the different chapters of the book *Fairy-Tale Films Beyond Disney: International Perspectives*. Some of these countries are France (chapter 5), Germany (chapter 6), Italy (chapter 7), Japan (chapter 12), China (chapter 13), or Canada (chapter 18), to name a few.

[10] Movies that belong to this disappointment include, according to Jack Zipes ("Beyond Disney" 279): *Red Riding Hood* (2011), *Beastly* (2011), *Dorothy and the Witches of Oz* (2011), *Mirror, Mirror* (2012), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *Oz the Great and Powerful* (2013), *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013), *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013).

fairy-tale film" ("Beyond Disney" 281) in which the mother/daughter relationship is explored "with tenderness and compassion" (282) rather than with evil stepmothers who try to impose their views on the protagonist. Although Zipes believes that Disney still needs to go beyond its own boundaries to achieve the same recognition as *Brave*, he highlights the efforts made with *Maleficent* (2014). According to him, this Disney film reinterpreted 'Sleeping Beauty' with a "remarkable feminist approach" ("Beyond Disney" 290) even if it still included the message of true love as the only salvation for the curse and as a means to change the world. While Zipes appreciates the distinctive aspects of the film that make it very different from the ones usually produced by Disney—the rape scene and a green and democratic world governed by a woman[11]—, he fails to recognise Linda Woolverton's credit during this production. As the first female screenwriter for Disney, and still working with the company, I believe it is important to recognise her work. Moreover, she agrees with Zipes' views about how innovation in fairy tale films (and films in general) is not just about making "women flying around, and shooting rays at things, and blowing buildings up, just like the men always did" (Erbland) because it quickly becomes repetitive and "there are so many interesting ways to describe women besides just strong" (Erbland). As an example of the "strong-willed" (Erbland) woman that Woolverton defines, we can turn to Woolverton's own creation of 1991 for the Disney company: Belle from "Beauty and the Beast". In Woolverton's words, Belle "is a feminist. … a woman of the '90s, someone who wanted to do something other than wait for her prince to come" (Dutka). As such, Woolverton's version of "Beauty and the Beast", along with the 2017 live-action remake by Stephen Chbosky and Evan Spiliotopoulos will be analysed in this thesis from a postfeminist approach. That is, I will reflect on the fact that even though the 1991 film is perceived as ground-breaking, it still complies not only to Disney's ideas of romantic love, but also to 1990's ideas of feminism as a dead movement. Similarly, the 2017 live-action remake will serve me to explore if Disney has advanced from its postfeminist phase to the fourth wave movement, or if it still remains settled in its old ideology. All in all, I believe that Woolverton's scripts—from *Beauty and the*

[11] Curiously enough, Woolverton does not want to consider *Maleficent* a "green movie" because it cost an important amount of money and recourses. Instead, she sees it as "an environmental allegory" (Shaw, Lucas. "Will the 'Maleficent' and 'Lion King' writer finally get to direct her own epic?" *The Wrap*, 30 May 2014, https://www.thewrap.com/maleficent-writer-its-not-a-green-movie/. Accessed 1 June 2021)

Beast (1991) to *Maleficent* (2014) passing through films like *Mulan* (1998)—are part of the movement of re-evaluation that Disney is undertaking (Zipes, "Beyond Disney" 292).

2.2. FAN FICTION BECOMES THE NEW RETELLING

"Some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again." (C.S. Lewis)

In the same way that the feminist movement is often defined by different waves, so does the fairy tale theory in order "to visualize models of fairy tales' dissemination" (Warner, *From the Beast*). Therefore, if "wave theory offers an image of a stone thrown into a pond, radiating in rings outwards where they might meet other ripples and join in chevron patterns with other stones cast in other seas" (*From the Beast*), an oral fairy tale would be the stone, and the rings would be the first written form of it and the subsequent retellings that are created from it. Nowadays, the rings of fairy tales are even wider. As Jack Zipes argues, we are living in an era in which, thanks to "the increase literacy throughout the world" ("Once Upon a Time" 93), the genre of fairy tales, even though sometimes advertised as mere entertainment, is spreading not only in its usual form of printed text, but also "as book, hypertext for the Internet, advertisement for commodities, script for film, radio, and television, comic, cartoon, and cultural artifact" (93). In other words, the fairy tale has invaded not only the realm of literature as we know it, but it has reached territories that literature had never seen with such success, like the Internet. Within the realm of the Internet, it has transformed into meme images, posts in social media, and it has even conquered the realm of fanfiction, interrelating the tropes of both genres. Although in this paper I am not going to deal with fanfiction stories as such, I believe that these are not that different from a fairy tale retelling and that both genres are starting to mix with one another: taking characters and motifs we already know, the authors of both types of genres twist them to their own liking; sometimes changing them to the point that we doubt about the original source, while others it is almost the same. But both fanfiction stories and fairy tale retellings always offer us a new perspective while retaining the basis we all love. Moreover, as it happens with fairy tales and fairy tale retellings, fanfiction stories are closely connected to one group that has been forced into silence: women.

As I have already explained in a previous section with the words of scholars like Jack Zipes or Jessica Senehi, folklore and fairy tales have been associated for many years with the lower classes as a way of subversion. Fanfiction is very similar, for in the words of Ally Boguhn, "it allows us to call out problematic media elements of the texts we love and subvert those narratives—leaving space to reclaim the stories and characters we treasure and make them into something even better" (Boguhn). As she explains, fanfiction is where our favourite characters can be "of different body types, abilities, races, and sexualities" (Boguhn). She continues, claiming that fanfiction "makes some serious progress when it comes to empowerment of marginalized people … [and creates] narratives that reach beyond women's stories centering around a love interest" (Boguhn). Moreover, fanfiction is a collaborative work: it feeds from an original source, it develops from it, and it takes advice from the fandom community it pertains to. As this community is mostly conformed by women, this is clearly a place in which female bonds can form easily: feedback is given in understanding terms; there is engagement and critique, not only of the original sources, but also of the texts that derive from it. As Boguhn claims, "fan fiction can act as a safe space for those who write and read it. Often, those who participate in the community not only find like-minded characters that they can relate to, but also peers who understand them" (Boguhn) and their identity self-reflection; people who they can meet not only via internet platforms, but also on "in-person meetings and conventions that allow them to truly connect with others" (Boguhn). As such, we can connect fanfiction with feminism, for "community building and collective action are key components of feminism" (Boguhn).[12]

Nonetheless, fanfiction is still seen by some—especially by published authors—as less than second-class literature: "Fanfiction is to writing what a cake mix is to gourmet cooking. Fanfiction is an Elvis impersonator who thinks he is original. Fanfiction is Paint-By-Number art" (Carvan) says author Robin Hobb. However, as Carvan herself explains in the article, it can be argued that "the constraining parameters of fanfiction can lead to more creativity, not less" (Carvan). Something very similar

[12] I will explore these factors of feminism in the next section of the thesis, dedicated to feminism ("The Transformative Power of Feminism"), and in particular, the importance of internal dialogue within the community considering the theory of Chamberlain.

believes Jordan West, who explains that fanfiction allows writers "the freedom to write absolutely anything and make it available to thousands of readers, to be truly radical and *transformative*, to tell stories that push boundaries and challenge assumptions" (West, added emphasis). As West claims, this genre is 'transformative', following the pattern of the transformative power of fairy tales and fairy tale retellings that Jack Zipes and others have claimed over the years. LeBihan turns to Showalter's theory to explain the process of women's writing development, consisting of three phases which can also be identified within fanfiction: "*imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition', '*protest* against these standards and values', and finally, '*self-discovery*', 'a search for identity'. Showalter labels these stages 'Feminine', 'Feminist' and 'Female'" (Showalter qtd in LeBihan 105, original emphasis). In fanfiction—and fairy tale retellings— we can observe an imitation of the original text, a protest against it, and finally what Showalter privileges, self-discovery or "a literature of their own" (Showalter qtd in LeBihan 105). In other words, after having used and criticised the source material, both fanfiction and retellings develop a unique style that is enriched by feminist ideas.

Therefore, turning our attention towards the realm of fanfiction does not seem like a crazy move when analysing fairy tale retellings of 'Beauty and the Beast'. Because analysing a fanfiction text would imply a different methodology, this paper will focus on the most similar thing: Ashley Poston's novel *Bookish and the Beast*, a tribute not only to the 'Beauty and the Beast' fairy tale, but also to the realms of fanfiction, and in particular, to the fandom that started to publish this new genre: *Star Trek*. As Mariana Enriquez explains in her article, fanfiction creation started within the fanzines of *trekkies*, "la primera comunidad de fans importante y destacada" (Enriquez)[13]. She continues to explain that fanfiction authors of the time tended to be women, a fact that remains true in the Internet era, especially with the creation of websites like *Fanfiction.net*. Nonetheless, as Enriquez points out, nowadays, the most famous website for fanfiction is *Archive of Our Own*, "a hosting site for transformative fanworks such as fanfiction, fanart, fan videos and podfic" ("Archive of Our Own") created by the Organization for Transformative Works, who also run *Fanlore*—a

[13] "the first important and renowned community of fans" (Enriquez, "El fanfiction o el noble arte de elegir tu propia aventura"; my translation).

Wikipedia-like website dedicated to documenting fandom history and its terms—and show their dedication to academic fan studies with the *Transformative Works and Cultures* journal, the *Fan Fiction Studies Reader* collection, the *Fanhackers* database, and the *Zotero Fan Studies Bibliography*.[14] Moreover, the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), as well as *Archive of Our Own* (AO3[15]) are communities "made up mostly by women" (Fiesler et al. 2574) and whose main values are "agency, inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment" (2575). As Fiedler et al. explain, Naomi Novik[16] was one of the developers most involved with the project of OTW and AO3, believing that fans "need our own site. We need to put our own front page that basically says, "This is the fannish community, and this is by us, for us, and we support everyone" (Novik qtd in Fiedler et al. 2579). As we can observe, this website—and we could say that the majority of the 'fannish' community—believes in values relevant to feminism and which we can also find in many retellings of fairy tales.

Poston's book is, therefore, an unapologetic and shameless story that continues the tradition started by *Star Trek* fans: not only does she honour the fanfiction realm with the title of the series referencing fan conventions (*Once Upon a Con*), but she also creates her own TV show fandom (*Starfield*) which is clearly based on *Star Trek*, and most importantly, Poston advocates for a literature that encourages teenage girls to read and write their own stories in contemporary fan communities like *Archive of Our Own*. In fact, the hosting website *Archive of Our Own* is many times referred in Poston's novel as the place to which the protagonists and her friends turn to for imagining and sharing theories and their favourite couples of the *Starfield* TV show:

[14] Here is a list of links redirecting to the main pages of these websites, journals, and databases.
Fanlore: https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page
Transformative Works and Cultures journal: https://www.transformativeworks.org/twac/
Fan Fiction Studies Reader collection: https://www.transformativeworks.org/fan-fiction-studies-reader/
Fanhackers database: http://fanhackers.transformativeworks.org/
and *Zotero Fan Studies Bibliography*: https://www.zotero.org/groups/fan_studies_bibliography

[15] AO3 is the acronym used by its users to refer to Archive of Our Own, due to the three 'O' letters we can find in the name of the website.

[16] Naomi Novik is a published author who has always advocated for the importance of *fanfiction* and who she herself writes it and publish it in AO3. Her novel *Uprooted* was considered for this analysis as an example of 'Beauty and the Beast' retelling, but in the end was discarded as it was more related to Slavic fairy tales, especially to those in which the witch Baba Jaga is portrayed.

> Your AO3 username isn't as hidden as you think, you know. … I guarantee I can search '*Starfield* Carmindor/Sond hurt-comfort fantasy AU amnesia' and your fic will be at the very top." …I've definitely read her fic and it's smutty as hell. I know her deep dark kinks and will take them to my grave. (Poston 238-239)

But the characters of the story are not the only ones connected to the website. The own author writes in her Acknowledgements of the book how much she owns to AO3 and explains her love for the 'Beauty and the Beast' fairy tale with tags and phrases commonly used in fandom communities:

> I love *Beauty and the Beast*. I love it more than peanut butter, more than coffee shop AUs, more than the G note in *Welcome to the Black Parade*, more than *Yuri!!! On Ice*. I've consumed so many versions of *Beauty and the Beast* over the years—sort of like fanfic, when you really like one particular trope (the angry bad boy end sup being soft Hufflepuff trope), you go hunting for them all. […] Like hunting through AO3, sometimes it takes a little time before you find that story that feels like your favorite song. And if you can't find it? Then write it! (Poston 284-285)

Therefore, we can say that Poston's series *Once Upon a Con* has a clear public target who is continuously captivated when reading her works and finding never-ending references to contemporary popular culture, but especially the numerous references of the language used in fanfiction: "When I recount it, the entire ordeal sounds like a fanfic in the making" (Poston 177). As Jack Zipes explains, "almost all the rewritings of the traditional fairy tales have a greater awareness of the complexities of sexuality and gender roles and have sought to explore traditional fairy tales with a social consciousness and awareness in keeping with and critical of our changing times" (Once Upon a Time" 103). The constant references to sexuality in *Bookish and the Beast* are an important reflection of Zipes' beliefs, erasing the erotic submissiveness we can find in previous Beauties, and instead portraying one who does not doubt about her own desires. As such, *Bookish and the Beast* becomes an important contemporary manifesto for young girls, sending them a message so as not to be ashamed of their desires and their identities—not only do we find references to erotic writings, but also many

different characters who identify as part of the LGBT community[17]—, an encouragement to look for what they want—first in writing, then in their own lives—, and an incentive to raise themselves as equal to their partners, especially if they are young women in a heterosexual relationship. Therefore, this book will be my focus of study as a demonstration of how fairy tale retellings are not over, rather they just transform, like the characters in their stories, and like society does. In this case, our Beauty is not only a bookworm, but a fanfiction enthusiast in charge of her own sexual desires.

3. The Transformative Power of Feminism

Considering the importance of feminism throughout this thesis, I believe it is important to state what I understand that the concept of gender implies for women and what it is feminism for me. Regarding the concept of 'woman', I will use Senehi's definition: a gender concept that does not correspond to "an essential or universal experience, but rather to the cultural ideas and roles that are ascribed to female persons" (xlviii). I, therefore, understand that "women's gendered identities intersect and overlap with other socially constructed identities of race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, and politics, all of which encode power relations" (Senehi 1). Regarding feminism, I employ Gamble's words and define it as the movement that seeks to change the situation under which women "are treated inequitably within a society which is organised to prioritise male viewpoints and concerns … [a society in which] women become everything men are not (or do not want to be seen to be)" (Gamble, Editor's Introduction) and are denied equal representation and opportunities. I will add the notion that anything that is remotely perceived as feminine or female, whether performed by a woman, a man, or a nonbinary person, is perceived as different, Other, and therefore, as inferior—for example, men showing emotions, a topic that will be relevant throughout the length of this thesis. In other words, I believe that the concept of 'woman' is a constructed one

[17] During the novel we discover that both Vance Reigns (the love interest of the protagonist) and Rosie's father identify as bisexual. Meanwhile, one of Rosie's closest friends, Quinn, identifies as non-binary and there is a secondary plot dedicated to her identity. Finally, there are other minor characters who are implied to be gay.

and that feminism looks to dismantle how society "prioritises some forms of identity above others" (Chamberlain 98).

In agreement with Senehi, I believe that folklore allows women to connect "across boundaries of region, race, class, and language, and to talk about their experience as women within their particular social context and a larger international political economy" (liii). This kind of action represents what Hodgson-Wright defines as one of the crucial features of feminism: "that women come together as women in order to provide mutual support against patriarchal oppression" (10). Nonetheless, as Senehi explains, "it is necessary to recognize that women's culture is not always subversive: folklore may communicate messages regarding how women should conform to their social roles and sometimes warn about the repercussions of violating cultural norms" (Senehi l). Cristina Bacchilega agrees with this claim, explaining that "as I read postmodern transformations of the fairy tale, I want to argue that they are doubling and double: both affirmative and questioning, without necessarily being recuperative or politically subversive" (Bacchilega 22). This is represented in the sample of texts I have selected for this analysis. Whereas most of the tales are considered to be subversive, there are some, like the original myth written by Apuleius or Beaumont's adaptation from Villeneuve's text, that could be considered the contrary: Apuleius text sends a message of submissiveness towards women by describing curiosity as an immoral aspect; and Beaumont, in the meantime, wrote her text as a didactic one in which she tried to make young women understand that they could domesticate their husband's sexuality in order to be less afraid of them.

Nonetheless, Senehi also reminds us that "meaning is fluid, and it is not always clear if the meaning of a particular text or performance is, in fact, subversive" (lvii). We must consider, then, that what the rest of authors—Villeneuve, Carter, Donoghue, Woolverton, Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos, and Poston—have left to us in their texts may have not be written with the idea of subversiveness in them. Yet, "texts typically have inherent ambiguities, opening them to alternative interpretations and used by diverse audiences. Texts are multivocal" (Senehi lvii), and as I have read these authors, I have found feminist messages—some more encoded than others—and I believe it is important to make them clearer for other readers. Moreover, not every text corresponds with the same feminist wave—some, like Apuleius', Villeneuve's or Beaumont's do not

even correspond with a feminist wave, and I will be treating the feminist messages I found in them as proto-feminist. As such, I believe it is important to understand the different feminist waves, and which works I associate with each one.

One of the most important debates revolving around the notion of feminist waves is their very name, and as such, a debate I feel should be included in this thesis before analysing the different waves. Many authors seem to believe that even though 'waves' is the concept most used and most accepted between both academics and activists, it carries some controversy (Cochrane, Parry et al., Chamberlain). According to Cochrane, the wave metaphor is controversial because "waves don't necessarily apply worldwide … [and] waves can also simplify the depth and breadth of a movement in a single country". In a similar fashion, Parry et al. considers that by looking at feminism with the wave approach, previous waves are often perceived as "lesser than" (2) the current wave, thus once again simplifying a movement that is often characterised by its complexity. This is a thought shared by other authors like Nancy Hewitt, who perceive "that the numerical progression implies that each new iteration is better equipped, more socially progressive and ideologically sophisticated than its predecessor" (Chamberlain 29)[18].

Although I am attracted to the 'ripple' metaphor proposed by Parry et al., in which feminism is seen as "a big splash [of feminist ideas that then] ripple through and interconnect, rather than only moving in one, linear direction" (3), I agree with the author that due to the fame of the wave metaphor, it is best to continue using it, but never forgetting the difficulties it carries with it. Nonetheless, I find fascinating the approach taken by Prudence Chamberlain, who believes that "waves are not predictable, uniform or monolithic. They are, in fact, capable of multiplicity and diversity" (23) and who connects the wave metaphor to her concept of 'affective temporality', because within both concepts there are "disturbances and feeling" (27)[19]. I believe

[18] Chamberlain does not quote Hewitt directly, but we can find more information about Hewitt's thoughts in her article "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor" *Feminist Studies*, vol. 38 no. 3, 2012, pp. 658-680.

[19] Chamberlain also proposes the metaphor of radio waves, which she believes prioritise communication "and the ability for feminists to 'tune in' depending on their own interests and investments. Most importantly, perhaps, is that radio waves can co-exist with one another …" (29). However, she also turns to the wave metaphor, believing, as we have already said, that we can find multiplicity in them.

Chamberlain's approach is quite interesting for this thesis because it is related to the defence of vulnerability made by authors like Isabel Balza and Judith Butler as a point of departure for a better feminism and better society. Therefore, I will be talking about feminist waves, but with the concept of affection always in mind. As the author herself warns, there is an important difficulty when dealing with affect, and that is "that feminism has a history of being silence though the accusation of too much feeling" (Chamberlain 86). Yet I believe that if the personal is political, as it is famously said within feminist circles, we need to explore our feelings and our vulnerabilities to engage successfully in conversations that will lead us to change and progress.

Using Chamberlain's theory, then, I will first analyse the meaning of 'wave' before moving on to consider what is a feminist wave, and the relation with affectivity. Considering the wave in its verb form, Chamberlain finds that it means back and forth movement, "or quite simply, to be moved" (27). This last meaning is especially important for the author, who interprets it as something "without start and ending point, but focusing instead on the action itself" (27). Therefore, for Chamberlain, waves are useful to define feminism—and other social movements—because they represent action, and in particular, "a form of energy that takes shape within a specific moment" (28). This is, in fact, what relates them to Chamberlain's concept of affective temporalities: feminist waves represent action born out of feelings in a specific period of time that "can form on the margins, or can infect from disparate places that are suddenly activated within the same temporality" (31) which allows feminism to have its own internal dialogue and thus "draw on multiple, and sometimes contradictory energies" (31). In other words, waves are affected by feelings from society and from within the own movement: therefore, waves can be composed of multiple types of women with different experiences and feelings, leading to an intersectional and inclusive feminism—which will be my focus, appreciated in the literary works that are influenced especially by the fourth-wave feminist movement.

Now, turning to the different waves, we have to remember that although we are going to deal with dates, waves do not have a clear beginning nor a clear ending, and that even though they seem to dissolve with time, feminism is still working every day. In other words, feminist waves reflect "the spontaneous nature of activism" (Chamberlain 39) that gains momentum and rides it during a specific period of time,

and they continue to form because feminist aims remain the same since the first wave: equality for women (Chamberlain 38). If waves continue to form it is because they are still needed and a group of women feel it that way, contributing to the rise of a new incarnation of wave.

The first wave of feminism is especially remembered for its focus on women's suffrage (Parry et al. 3), but as Cochrane explains, the vote was not the only aim of the nineteenth-century feminists: they were also fighting for "new ideas for how to live; exploring lesbianism and other relationships outside marriage; writing economic treatises; finding new ways to handle childcare; fighting racial segregation; and long working hours" (Cochrane). However, the vote eclipsed all these other proposals, and as such, it is seen "as a big win—but just like a loss" (Cochrane) because the entire first wave is simplified by the media for this event—important as it was, it left society feeling like feminists had already won enough, and feminism remained under the radar for almost a whole century. Chamberlain believes that this is what happens when "some of the affects disappear as particular problems are addressed, fundamentally changing the way in which the wave is formulating and operating" (91). Since the wave was characterised during its time by the vote, once it was achieved, the energy sustaining the wave started to dissolve until the wave disappeared completely. Nonetheless, the first wave set out the concerns of future waves, not only in regard to gender, but also in regard to intersectionality. Even though the term 'intersectionality' was not coined until the year 1989, there were already women of colour considering the importance of race and class within feminism, as can be seen by the famous speech of Sojourner Truth *Ain't I a Woman?* (1851).

Now, the second wave of feminism was characterised mainly by the fight for "equal pay, equal education and opportunity, 24-hour nurseries, free contraception and abortion on demand" (Cochrane), but also by the importance of dependence in economic and legal terms, women's right to define their own sexuality, freedom for violence and sexual coercion inside and outside marriage, "and an end to all laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women" (Cochrane). During this period, feminism analysed the 'problem that has no name', a concept found in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). However famous and important for the rising of the second wave in the United States,

Friedan's book was criticised for its homophobia and the group of women it portrayed— "a group of women with enviable education, whose husbands earned enough for them to live as suburban housewives" (Cochrane). It is no wonder then that, although second-wave feminism was working on ending many axes of inequality for women, it was still perceived as "a largely liberalist movement focused on advocating issues mostly relevant to the lives of White, middle-class, heterosexual women" (Parry et al. 3). As such, Sojourner Truth's speech was very influential for bell hooks, who at the start of the 1980s would publish a book with the same title, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981), to question similar concepts in relation to this new wave of feminism, in particular how "black women were marginalised both in women's movements and anti-racist movements" (Cochrane). In fact, hooks' criticism remains important for today's feminism. As Cochrane signals, feminists' protests continued during the 1980s decade, but Margaret Thatcher's election and the focus on individualism during the period lead to a less powerful collective force.

With this ending of second-wave feminism, the 1990s were characterised by what is known as post-feminism. Cochrane points out Susan Faludi's *Backslash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (1991) as the main book of the period, in which Faludi "noted that the media had started using the term 'post-feminism' in the mid-1980s, and had insisted that a younger generation 'reviled the women's movement'" (Cochrane). As Parry et al. define it, post-feminism

> is a term that suggests the work of feminism is complete and no longer relevant or necessary … [and which] works to promote hostile reactions to earlier forms of feminist action and research and negatively construct feminism and feminists as undesirable, restricting, controlling, and dogmatic. (4)

This vision of feminism agrees with Chamberlain's theory, which affirms that "feminists are immediately considered killjoys because they refuse to convene around the happiness of a society that is still inherently misogynistic" (77). As such, post-feminism had to insist on the fact that "equality had been won" (Cochrane), which made feminism be perceived as part of the past and "shifted the responsibility for women's success from the collective to the individual, reinforcing the notion of Western society as predicated on the model of meritocracy and strengthening the relationship between postfeminism and neoliberalism" (Rivers 20). As such, groups like the Spice Girls

gained fame with their 'girl power' message, "reducing feminism to a marketing slogan, a branding device, denuding it of any politics" (Cochrane). Moreover, "the media developed an obsession with women in crisis" (Cochrane) and the cult to size zero put the focus on women's bodies with more intensity than ever, trying to make women invisible both metaphorically and literally (Cochrane).

However, just as postfeminism was gaining momentum, the *Bikini Kill Zine* published 'The Riot Grrrl Manifesto' in 1991, which had declared itself as a movement against capitalism and other "bullshit like racism, able-bodiesism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism" (Cochrane). In a similar fashion, Rebecca Walker—daughter of Alice Walker—wrote the essay *Becoming the Third Wave* (1992), in which she declared the birth of a new wave that connected "women's issues of race, sexuality, class, and ability" (Walker qtd in Cochrane). In this article, Walker declared that

> To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them. (Rebecca Walker qtd in Parry et al. 4)

In other words, Rebecca Walker was founding a third wave who was in direct fight with the individualism proposed by postfeminism, a movement "firmly located in the socio-political culture of the late 1980s and early 1990s, … overwhelmingly grassroots-oriented, individualistic, radical, diverse, and informal" (Parry et al. 4). But although the movement was in contraposition with postfeminism, it was not oppositional to the previous second wave movement. Instead, "she [Walker] claims it is necessary to draw on her mother's energy" (Chamberlain 24), once again drawing from the importance of the collective and not the individual. Moreover, as Chamberlain signals, the article "does not address chronology, methodology, activism or identity" (24) but instead reflects on the different experiences that led Walker to an anger that resulted in action. As such, the third wave movement is clearly connected to Chamberlain's theory of affective temporalities, because as she explains,

> the social movement does not just thrive on solidarity, closeness, the intimacy made public, and the hopefulness associated with *transformative* politics. Instead, there are negative affects such as anger, frustration and disappointment, all of which are similarly intensified within the affective temporality. (Chamberlain 102, added emphasis)

Chamberlain treats this type of activism as *transformative*, for they allow us to transform society, even though it is at a slow pace. As such, we can connect feminism—especially third-wave feminism and later on, fourth-wave feminism—with the transformative power of fairy tales and retellings. But coming back to Alice Walker article, Chamberlain also focuses on the term 'becoming' in the title, perceiving it "not as constituting a failure of commitment, but as a space for political thinking … [that] resists fixity and opens the possibility for a multiple types of politics: one that is able to evolve in relation to changing affectivity" (Chamberlain 26). Therefore, third-wave feminism is characterised not only by its inclusivity and intersectionality, but also by its sense of progression. It reflects the notion that "it is necessary for feminism to avoid a sense of comfort, combining both negative and positive affects, so that there is a sense of internal development" (Chamberlain 103). That is to say, since the third wave feminist movement was characterised for the importance given not only to gender but to concepts of race, sexuality, disability, etc., it was a movement that raised many different feelings, good and bad, inside and outside the movement. As such, third-wave feminism was characterised by a multiplicity that ensured "that there is greater inclusivity within feminist itself, acknowledging that different feminists will feel differently given their unique experiences and backgrounds" (Chamberlain 88).

Finally, imitating Rebecca Walker, Kira Cochrane announced the arrival of the fourth wave in an article for *The Guardian* in 2013, in which she considered that feminism had never died, but rather had gained notoriety once again during that year (Rivers 8).[20] Nonetheless, Rivers points also towards Jennifer Baumgardner, who "was writing about the fourth wave of feminism in 2011 and actually dates its arrival as early as 2008" (22).[21] What many authors (Cochrane, Parry et al., Chamberlain) agree upon is

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[20] The article Rivers is referring to is "The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women", *The Guardian*, 10 Dec 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women. Accessed 5 June 2021.

[21] According to Rivers, we can find more information about Baumgardner's claims of the beginning of fourth wave feminism in her book *F'em! Goo Goo, Gaga and Some Thoughts on Balls* (2011).

that the fourth wave is mainly defined by its online presence and dissemination, as well as by the concept of intersectionality—which nevertheless was coined by Crenshaw in 1989, as we have already stated, and which was also an important factor of third-wave feminism. According to Cochrane, "the advent of the internet has seen the consciousness-raising process begin again" with thousands of women involved thanks to factors like anonymity, which allow women to share experiences that otherwise would be silenced. But anonymity is not the only thing that defines fourth-wave feminism. Parry et al. describe it around four tendencies: "(i) blurred boundaries across waves; (ii) technological mobilization; (iii) interconnectedness through globalization; and (iv) a rapid, multivocal (i.e., humorous, angry, sad, reflexive) response to sexual violence" (Parry et al. 5). Finally, due to its connections to the internet and thus its globalization, Rivers characterises the fourth wave as "an everyday feminism … [that] is not a feminism accessible only to those in academia" (3). However, this takes Rivers to consider the movement "as less of a wave that has gathered strength from those that have gone before it, than as a distinct and separate ideology that has emerged to deal with a specific set of circumstances, namely prevailing sexism" (Rivers 23). Rivers continuously references celebrities like Taylor Swift, Beyoncé or Miley Cyrus, associating them with both postfeminism and fourth-wave feminism, claiming that their lifestyle promotes an "individualized, neoliberal, and capitalist vision of 'success'" (25).

In my opinion, this is still clearly identified with the postfeminism promoted by the media, whether in the music industry or in other types of media: a movement that claims the death of feminism while using its label as a cool factor and promoting the possibility of women achieving all their life goals, which curiously enough, still involve house chores. In other words, even if these celebrities are enjoying their fame during the fourth wave, their ideas are still clung to a postfeminism that encourages women with the idea of 'having it all' without considering the axis of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, etc. Moreover, as Rivers explains, "this success in the male-dominated environment of the music industry is still dependent on presenting a youthful and highly sexualized image of femininity" (25). Therefore, although it is sold as 'feminism', it declares war on the main ideas of the movement: rather than advocating for equality within the house, a healthy sexuality, and a healthy perception of bodies, it promotes success in all areas, and a sexualised and normative view of bodies—not only of

women, but also including men in the equation, who are starting to feel the pressure of the beauty industry. Finally, it is a feminism "of personal achievements, and in turn, personal responsibility" (Rivers 25), therefore going back to the notion that women are to blame for their own bad situation, making women see other women as competition. This individualism erases one of the basic concepts of feminism: collectiveness and sorority. As such, this media movement cannot be labelled feminism. Although this is happening now, it is not new: we can observe the same movement of individualism with Naomi Wolf, who in *The Beauty Myth* (1990) explained how the media was trying to enforce division within the feminist movement, only to four years later herself promoting that same division in her book *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How to Use It* (1994), in which "women suddenly went from being a collective, oppressed or restricted by a society, and crucially, industry, that dictated how they should look and behave, forcing them into competition with one another, to individual agents, capable of 'choosing' to manipulate the 'beauty myth' to suit their own ends" (Rivers 19). Chamberlain explains how this is happening with fourth-wave feminism, explaining that "there is a sense of simultaneity where the brands allow for women to feel empowered, both within a personal sense, but also in a public sphere too … however, this does [not] change the fact that advertising, corporations and branding exploit women when it is most expedient for them" (164).

Finally, Rivers seems to perceive fourth-wave feminism as a movement with little or no relation to academic feminism and feminist history, thus claiming that it is somehow a failing feminist movement (Rivers 23). However, I believe that, as Chamberlain explains, this is a feminism that "allows for a revision of the almost dialectical nature to the Western history of feminism" (21) and that as third-wave feminism, has been born from extreme feelings of anger and sadness at the continuing situation of women's inferiority. It is still in the consciousness-raising phase, as Cochrane claims, and thus, the feminists involved in this fourth wave are still learning about their predecessors. Moreover, I believe that it is important to value their efforts, whether or not they decide to learn about feminist history: after all, their movement has become global and quicker, and it is accessible for more people not only because of its online presence, but because there is no need for difficult terms to feel included in the movement. Finally, as Cochrane indicates, this is not an uneducated movement, they

just learn in different mediums. Instead of learning from books, they learn from online and social platforms, and are very conscious of the concepts used in feminism.

> The one theory embraced by [Laura] Bates[22] and the majority of young grassroots activists I speak to is intersectionality, which seems to be emerging as the defining framework for the fourth wave. … The word is sometimes criticised for sounding too academic—an exclusive word for what many define as a model for inclusion. The notion that intersectionality is confusing, or difficult to grasp, leaves Lili Evans incredulous. When she first heard that criticism a year or so ago, she says, 'I was like, I'm 14, and I learnt about it on Twitter, in 140 characters per tweet. It's not that hard, it's human decency.' (Cochrane)

Even though the fourth wave feels "generally more active than academic" (Cochrane), we can observe that these young women continue to read and even write around feminist history, something which Nina Power considers: "there are teenage girls today, … who have a perfect grasp of feminist language and concepts, and are developing their own ideas in school feminist societies" (Power qtd in Cochrane). Moreover, they are aware of the concept of privilege, "recognising where they stand in social power structures and ensuring they advocate and make space for those who are marginalised" (Cochrane), bearing in mind not only people of colour like in the third wave, but also trans people, as can be seen with campaigns like #GirlsLikeUs[23]. The Internet, then, has connected feminists across the world and allowed them to debate their different experiences in a different way. As Cochrane explains, "the size of the projects that can be built online is *transformative*", which once again takes us to the relation of feminism with the transformative power of fairy tales and retellings. However, Chamberlain brings attention to the fact that the Internet has also accelerated the process of backslash, but "rather than slowing its progress or even reversing some of its achievements, it is serving to fuel ongoing debate" (Chamberlain 165). Yet, it is important to consider how this means that fourth-wave feminism is fighting every day

[22] Laura Bates is one of the most important faces of fourth-wave feminism, along with Jessica and Vanessa Valenti. The three of them are mentioned not only in Cochrane's book, but also in Rivers' and Chamberlain's. Moreover, these authors mention projects like Everyday Sexism Project (a blog created by Bates), Feministing (a web created by the Valenti sisters), #MeToo, the Slut Walk, No More Page 3, among others.

[23] #GirlsLikeUs was a campaign lead by Janet Mock on Twitter during March 2012, whose objective was "to empower trans women to live visibly and connect in sisterhood and solidarity" (Mock qtd in Cochrane).

with “an environment of abuse, fear, and a sense of invasion” (165) due to the gift of anonymity, which can be used not only to fuel women’s empowerment, “but also enables trolls to continue campaigns of abuse without any chance of retribution” (165). Something similar happens with the raise of trans inclusivity within feminism, with some affects “centering around exclusion, suspicion, fear and unhappiness” (Chamberlain 174). Moreover, as Chamberlain suggests, the advantages that the Internet provides to fourth-wave feminists bring with it other disadvantages that need to be taken into account: it is easy to click and sign petitions on the Internet, making it seem as if feminism is something everyone talks about, but the movement has to go beyond the realms of the computer to have a material change in laws, opportunities, and social aspects—when the person is able, for let us remember that this feminist wave has allowed people with disabilities to participate for the first time in feminist issues thanks to access to the Internet (Chamberlain 177). Therefore, even if this wave is “still in the consciousness-raising stage, still making problems visible to a new generation of women and girls” (Cochrane), it is developing at an incredible pace, accepting criticism from within and without the movement, and with it, adding more inclusivity to it than ever before. With this fourth wave, feminism sets the path to bring together more people, and if we analyse it from an affective temporality perspective, it can be said to be a very strong one that does not seem to be dissipating in the short future.

4. BLESSING OR CURSE: THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

“Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.” (Jonathan Swift)

Since the early times of history, women have been relegated to the house and valued as property that was useful only as a transaction. Relegated to the position of ‘object’, women were subjugated to their beauty: the more beautiful one was, the more opportunities of marrying in wealth, which in turn meant fewer dangers for her integrity. As such, it is no wonder that ‘Beauty and the Beast’ tale types are so popular among women of all ages: even nowadays, we are constantly pressured to remain beautiful, not for us, but for men. Even nowadays, women are treated as objects who have to be careful about how they sell themselves to society. But today is even more

complicated: in the past, there was only the possibility of being an object; today, we are tricked into believing that this unattainable beauty that society imposes on us is for our own pleasure, because we are tricked into thinking that we are now subjects of our own bodies. But are we? Are we really the subjects of our bodies if we condemn them to all kinds of "pills, paint, potions, cosmetic surgery, fashion" (Gamble, "Postfeminism" 42) that are only hurting us and transforming us into objects who buy other objects? Is 'beauty' really what we want to achieve? Or is it still a concept that traps us as a new kind of 'angels of the house' and diverts us from uniting in an intersectional manner because we are too focused and distracted by how our bodies are perceived by the rest of society and the notion of 'having it all'?

4.1. BEAUTY AS RIVALRY

In *Cupid and Psyche* we already find this kind of adversity: beauty appears at first as the goal, as what will grant wealth and happiness. Yet Psyche is so beautiful that she is regarded as a divine being, and as such, too pure to bargain with.

> In the mean season Psyche with all her beauty received no fruit of her honour. She was wondered at of all, she was praised of all, but she perceived that no king nor prince, nor any of the inferior sort did repair to woo her. Every one marvelled at her divine beauty, as it were some image well painted and set out. Her other two sisters … were royally married to two kings; but the virgin Psyche sitting at home lamented her solitary life … (Apuleius 3)

Psyche's situation shows the dichotomy that many women suffer: either we are saints, or we are prostitutes, either we are pure or we are perverted, there is nothing in between. In this case, Psyche remains virgin, unmarried, precisely because her divine beauty is thought to be unattainable for mortal men; as a quasi-divine being, she must remain pure. No matter that other gods like Zeus are always persecuting virgin maidens or married women, they are men, and it is their right. When it comes to women, such divine beauty must remain divine. And as such, it tends to bring hatred: "although she pleased all the world, yet hated she in herself for her own beauty" (Apuleius 3). Because Psyche has been educated to see herself as an object, she finds no joy in her beauty, which condemns her to linger with no husband. No matter that she marries Cupid, who confesses that "little regarding the commandment of my mother, who willed me that

thou shouldst be married to a man of base and miserable condition, did come myself from heaven to love thee, and wounded my own body with my proper weapons to have thee to my spouse" (Apuleius 10), for, in their apparent happiness, she breaks her promise and discovers her husband's identity, for which she has to endure the hard activities commanded by the goddess Venus. In this sense, Venus punishes again Psyche. First, she decides to curse her with a horrible marriage—even though she did not succeed—and then, she obliges Psyche to undergo task after task to prove herself worthy, all because Venus blames her for the way she has been forgotten by humans due to Psyche's beauty, something which she cannot control. Similarly, Psyche's sisters manage to manipulate her due to the same envy that we can find in the goddess: whereas Venus rejoices in the oblations presented to her, the sisters ambition the wealth that offers a marriage with a god. Out of envy for her beauty, Psyche suffers one treason after another, demonstrating that female rivalry occurs as a consequence of the integrated and misogynistic conception of women as objects. Venus may be a goddess, but this is not the first myth in which she fights to be regarded as the most beautiful goddess in Olympus, for that is what she thinks will make her truly valuable: "then in vain did Paris that shepherd, in whose just judgment and confidence the great Jupiter had affiance, prefer me above the residue of the Goddesses for the excellence of my beauty" (Apuleius 2). As powerful as Venus may be, she is affected by this mortal conception; and so, if a goddess acts in this manner, how can we expect the two sisters to behave differently?

Villeneuve follows this example of female rivalry born out of jealousy in a curious manner, for it is not only Beauty the one who awakens jealousy among other women. As we shall see, the mothers of both Beauty and the Beast / Prince are regarded as some of the most beautiful women in their respective countries, and they both awaken some passions that sometimes result in evil acts of jealousy. Villeneuve's story begins with the merchant father losing all his fortune, revealing that, except for his daughter Beauty, his other five daughters "had lost the most attractive of their charms, when, like a flash of lightning, their father's splendid fortune had disappeared" (29). For these five daughters, wealth is equal to attractiveness, and so with the departure of their dowry, their own beauty disappears and with it, "the crowd of ardent adorers vanished" (29). Although I introduce Villeneuve's story in this section in which beauty equals

female rivalry, it is important to note that it will also make sense to include it in the following section, for as we are seeing, Villeneuve emphasises that wealth is something that makes its owner an attractive one with whom to trade. Nonetheless, I believe that Villeneuve was more preoccupied with the negative emotions and relationships that result from all types of beauty—the protagonist is not only physically beautiful, but her behaviour is also to be admirable—and not so much with the fact that beauty is related to transaction. In other words, Villeneuve is critical about arranged marriages throughout the story, but the focus is upon the impact of beauty in relationships—romantic, fatherly, maternal, and fraternal. We can see from the very beginning what we have already slightly pointed out, that Beauty, the younger daughter, is portrayed not only as beautiful on the outside, but also a very mature girl whose behaviour is very attractive:

> The youngest girl, however, in their common misfortune, displayed a greater courage and resolution than the others. She bore her lot cheerfully, and with a strength of mind that was far beyond her years. Like the rest, she had at first been terribly melancholy. … But, after having bitterly deplores her father's ruin, could she have done better than resume her former gaiety, make up her mind to be happy in the new position she was placed in, and forget a world which she and her family had found so ungrateful, and whose friendship had proved so unreliable in time of adversity? (Villeneuve 29)

Already setting a precedent that will be imitated in Carter's retellings when she criticises the patriarchal order, Villeneuve portrays a Beauty that understands that this world is superficial, for it only values that which is beneficial in one way or another. She realises that her family's value was placed upon their wealth, and that once that it disappears, no one seems to care for them, discovering their true faces. We could argue in later sections that this reflection shows us the true monsters of the story. For the moment, we will remain with the development of Beauty's character and the feelings of her sisters, who "one would have thought … would have followed her bright example, but her [Beauty's] cheerfulness and patience only made them the more miserable" (29). Although all six sisters and six brothers had received an outstanding education thanks to their former wealth, only Beauty can understand their privilege even in their current poverty. Her sisters, on the contrary, are invested in the narrative of society which

values wealth as the only currency desirable; and in their misunderstanding of Beauty's actions, which still seems attractive for men, they become jealous of their sister:

> she knew, by a strength of mind seldom found in her sex, how to conceal her sorrow, and rise superior to her adversities. Thus it was that her firmness passed for insensibility in the minds of her sisters. But one can easily appeal from a judgment pronounced by jealousy. Recognised for what she really was by all intelligent persons, the latter were not slow in giving her the preference over her sisters. In the midst of her former splendour she had acquired the name of "Beauty", as well for the real worth and charm of her character, as for the extraordinary grace and beauty of her person; known as she was, by this name alone, what more was required to increase the jealousy and the hatred of her sisters? (Villeneuve 30)

This attitude towards Beauty only grows as the story advances and the possibility of wealth reappears. When she asks her father "the gratification of seeing you return home in perfect health" (Villeneuve 31), she is viewed with "shame and confusion" (Villeneuve 31) by her sisters, who are already engaging in fantasies of restored luxury and cannot understand the precaution of their youngest sister. Tatiana Korneeva resorts to Girard's studies to explain that

> the effacement of social distinctions (or crisis of distinction) results in the members of the community losing sight of who and what they are … In this light, Beauty's sisters' insistence on differentiating themselves from her is significant. … Her sisters interpret this humble request—more mischievously than erroneously—as an attempt by Beauty to distinguish herself (Korneeva 242)

Beauty's sisters lose what defines them—wealth—and so they view Beauty's request as an attempt to be different from them, seeing themselves devaluated once again by their younger sister. Beauty's sisters make her "a surrogate victim, a scapegoat" (Korneeva 243) because they sense a time of crisis and violence upon their family, but there is no way to fight the original source of this misfortune, and "as such, Beauty is marginalized by her sisters, serving as an effective scapegoat on which to exercise their fury over the family's circumstances" (243). Moreover, after the merchant father returns, he has suffered the Beast's threat, under which he has to "Go and see if there be amongst them [his daughters] one with sufficient courage, and loving you enough to expose herself to save your life. … If you cannot do this, promise me that you will return here alone, after

having said farewell to your family forever" (Villeneuve 34). This results from Beauty's petition for a rose, which her father takes from the Beast castle; and thus, Beauty's petition is seen by her sisters as the ultimate reason to treat her as a scapegoat. Since they cannot fight the Beast, they insist on Beauty's duty to comply with the Beast's request.

Transporting us to the Beast's castle, Villeneuve once again "places an unusual emphasis on the visual" (Swain 199), to the point that Beauty is confused about the lesson she must learn about appearances. According to Swain, "Her [Villeneuve] insistence on Belle's nightie visions and her detailed descriptions of Beauty's chambers suggests Villeneuve's belief in the captivating effects of visual art and her adherence to the elitist ideal of sensual pleasure and enchantment" (201). However, the enjoyment of the visual "is in tension with a fundamental mistrust of beautiful surfaces and their potentially deleterious effects" (Swain 201). Villeneuve seems to be quite ambiguous about her message of distrusting appearances and critiquing the importance given to beauty. This seems to reflect her own reality: as part of the Paris elite of the salons, she must conform to some of the social norms of her era while she tries to write a subversive tale in which she questions arranged marriages. Swain seems to believe that

> Beauty learns that the person she was with her father and her sisters is the person she must also be with her husband: a virtuous and dutiful woman who is devoted to her family and who disdains the artificiality and meaninglessness of worldly and visual pleasure. If Belle struggles with her desire for the beautiful and "unknown", she finally accepts the view that they are "chimeras" that she must reject. (217)

Swain claims that this lesson is learned due to the characterisation of Beauty's mother, who "abandons the public, powerful world into which she was born and twice confronts death in order to adopt a life centered on her husband and child" (210). In my opinion, Beauty continues to be part of the generation of "powerful, independent" (210) women that Swain identifies with the Beast's mother and Beauty's fairy godmother; and not part of the generation of daughters that "are being taught to marry, devote themselves to husbands and family, and be content with their lot" (Swain 210). Villeneuve is writing a transitional tale in which she is at the same time as revolutionary as Madame d'Aulnoy and as conforming as Madame de Beaumont—discussed in a few paragraphs. That is, Villeneuve wrote the story in a time in which being as daring as Madame d'Aulnoy was

not possible, but writing subtly her messages allowed her to encode lessons of equality that sometimes are invisible under the conforming layer similar to Beaumont's version. In other words, Villeneuve really predicates mutual respect and devotion, and her Beauty is not "being asked to abandon her dreams in order to exercise in married life the same role she played vis-à-via her father" (Swain 207). Moreover, Swain claims that Beauty's mother and Beauty herself do not represent powerful, independent women; but in my opinion, they are: not only does Beauty's mother undergo with success the "Fastes terribles" ritual, but Beauty is capable of abandoning the comfort of her merchant father's house and live in the Unknown—the Beast's palace. Both acts represent a search for freedom, however different, and even if they choose to marry, they do so with tender men who see them as equal and not as the 'angels of the house' Swain seems to propose. It is important to understand that female empowerment can be achieved through good marriage—meaning equal share of chores, equal access to the familiar economy, and equal opportunities—and therefore not only represented by images of single women, which is what Swain identifies in the figures of the Beast's mother and Beauty's fairy godmother (Swain 210). Korneeva also insists that Villeneuve's story portrays a marriage which

> would not have been possible if the heroine's royal origin had not been revealed … [whereas] Beaumont, on the contrary, is more convinced that if a young lady possesses the requisite high moral qualities, she still has a chance of receiving a good marriage proposal, even if there is no fortune to recommend her. (241)

However, I disagree, for I believe that Villeneuve's decision in upgrading Beauty's social status to royalty is another way of explaining the importance of equality in marriage. Beauty and Beast must be at the same level to be compatible: having Beauty gaining riches before marrying the Beast confirms that she is marrying for love and not for wealth. Villeneuve makes subtle changes that may seem as conforming to high society standards, but which, in fact, are revolutionary if looked closer, for she is advocating for real gender equality in all aspects of life. If we cannot understand that both types of endings are useful to empowerment, then we will not really end female rivalry, because we will still believe that one type of women—in this case, single women—are more independent and thus, empowered, than others—in this case, married

women. Therefore, we need to achieve a female bonding where no matter what our goals are, our female colleagues will help us achieve it.

Turning our attention towards Beaumont's version, we find a Beauty apparently very similar to the one portrayed by Villeneuve, and yet, very different if we look deeper. As Warner points out, in Beaumont's tale "we can see foreshadowed, already, the Victorian angel of the house, whose task it is to tame and gentle male lust and animal instinct" (Warner, *From the Beast*). If we saw that Villeneuve's conception of beauty was part of a transition period, Beaumont's adaptation situates itself in the next period after the transition. As Lauren Talairach-Vielmas explains, "Leprince de Beaumont's tale demonstrates how the evolution of fairy-tale discourse through the centuries follows the development of the bourgeoisie, gradually setting itself apart from the aristocracy" (274-275). Beaumont's Beauty is clearly identified by her physical attractiveness since the beginning, arising the jealousy of her sisters even before Villeneuve's protagonist: "His daughters were extremely handsome, especially the youngest. When she was little everybody admired her, and called her "The little Beauty"; so that, as she grew up, she still went by the name of Beauty, which made her sisters very jealous" (Beaumont 149). Although their father "spared no cost for their education" (149), it is only Beauty who even before the wealth misfortune occurs already immerses herself in books, something her sisters laugh at. This characterisation contrasts that of the original tale: whereas Villeneuve emphasises that Beauty is both interested in looks and intelligence, Beaumont's adaptation chooses a "self-abnegating, submissive, and hard-working heroine, who prefers virtue to looks" (Talairach-Vielmas 275). As such, it is no surprise that Beaumont's Beauty, although afraid of the Beast at first, is soon able to "discovered some valuable qualifications in the monster, and seeing him so often had so accustomed her to his deformity, that, far from dreading the time of his visit, she would often look on her watch to see when it would be nine, for the Beast never missed coming at that hour" (Beaumont 154). She still, like Villeneuve's Beauty, does not understand what the monster hides behind that appearance, but seems more prone to marry him after he lets her visit her family. There, she discovers what Beaumont tries to transmit to all her readers: that a husband may seem like a monster, and yet be more gentle than those who seem beautiful or intelligent at first sight:

> Beauty dressed herself, and in the meantime they sent to her sisters who hastened thither with their husbands. They were both very unhappy. The eldest had married a gentleman, extremely handsome indeed, but so fond of his own person, that he was full of nothing but his own dear self, and neglected his wife. The second had married a man of wit, but he only made use of it to plague and torment everybody, and his wife most of all. Beauty's sisters sickened with envy. (Beaumont 155).

As Korneeva explains with Girard's analysis, "by emphasizing the malice of Beauty's sisters, the obvious "villains" of the story" (245), both Villeneuve's and Beaumont's tales "rehabilitate the figure of the father, making the sacrifice of his daughter to the animal-groom seem legitimate" (245). By doing this, both tales reflect the position of female figures in patriarchal societies: "Shifting the focus onto female envy and jealousy is often just a way of exonerating men, the major perpetrators of crisis and women's oppression" (Korneeva 245). In other words, both Villeneuve and Beaumont portray a "feminine *figura Christi* [that] testifies to the fact that both writers had a strong belief in female potential" (Korneeva 245, original emphasis); but at the same time, they reflect a behaviour among women that is still in vogue in today's society: by seeing ourselves as mere objects, we as women believe that we have to fight to be the best object, and as such, we compete with one another, devaluating not only ourselves but also our female companions. This results in feelings of envy, jealousy, and acts of violence and manipulation between women, clear signs of female rivalry.

Therefore, instead of uniting to fight the source of oppression—men seeing women as objects and beneficiating from our exchange—women tend to divide and continue to suffer the patriarchal values. As Korneeva explains, these tales may represent this female rivalry, but they also "provide preliminary diagrams of social mechanisms that need to be restructured" (245). One good example of female bonding that already appears in Villeneuve's version is the relationship between Beauty's fairy mother and her godmother, not only between them, but also with Beast's mother and with Beauty herself. The connection between these four women contrasts intensely against the female rivalry that is expressed by Beauty's sisters and the Beast's fairy godmother who ends up cursing him. Therefore, Villeneuve's tale presents us hope within the topic of female bonding, for even if there may be occasional wicked women among the main characters, there are also hints of great alliances between women that can thrive to later

unite with respectful men. This restructuring of the tale and the disappearance of female rivalry may not be present in Beaumont, but it continues in the next retellings: the more modern the retelling, the more female bonding and less female rivalry we find.

4.2. BEAUTY AS TRANSACTION

Starting with Angela Carter's "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon", we find ourselves in a more modern setting—unusual in fairy tales and their retellings, which often choose to travel back in time in order to achieve an atemporal sense to the story—in which Beauty is defined as caring for her father and, most importantly, possessing a skin similar to that of Snow White: "This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow" (47). This elevates her to the position of ideal bride, emphasized by the phrase "the road is white and unmarked as a spilled bolt of bridal satin" that follows Beauty's own description (47). This connection to white continues in all things associated with her character, for as a change, the rose she asks for is not red as in many versions of the story, but white (48). As such, it can be inferred that Beauty is in fact a pure girl, perfect marriage material: she is kind, caring, does her chores with diligence, is young, has never been with a man (as far as Carter lets us know), and she is modest—she does not know how beautiful she is, or better said, how she is seen as beautiful. This is a characteristic that clearly positions her as a very different Beauty, for all the previous ones were quite aware of their looks, for better or for worse. However, her perception will change with time, and it is important to remark how this occurs due to the way the Beast looks at her. As Bacchilega says, "If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, Beauty is also in the hold of a narrative eye which claims to represent her in specific phases of her psycho-sexual and social initiation" (81). The critic explains that Carter's narrative presents us a "naturalizing vision first found in the external focalizer and then in the lion's green eyes, she not only transforms and reincarnates the beast, but through an act of "magical reciprocity" she comes to see herself as he and the external focalizer/narrator wish to see her" (94). In other words, Beauty transforms from an innocent girl to a mature and sexualised woman, as we can see in her own transformed perception of herself:

> She was learning, at the end of her adolescence, how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers was plumping out, a little, with high living and compliments. A certain inwardness was beginning to transform the lines around her mouth, those signatures of the personality, and her sweetness and her gravity could sometimes turn a mite petulant when things went not quite as she wanted them to go. You could not have said that her freshness was fading but she smiled at herself in mirrors a little too often, these days, and the face that smiled back was not quite the one that she had seen contained in the Beast's agate eyes. Her face was acquiring, instead of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expensive cats. (Carter 57)

This Beauty is setting a precedent for the next Beauty that Carter will present in the following story, a new one compared to the previous Beauties of other authors: she is a Beauty who owns herself, who recognises herself as an object in the looks of others but who decides to admire and not to condemn herself by this beauty, thus becoming a subject who decides when to enter a relationship and proclaiming her own desires. Although this first Beauty of Carter ends up marrying a transformed Beast, his human form still retains some physical beastly characteristics such as "an unkempt mane of hair and, how strange, a broken nose … that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts" (60). This ending, although resembling the typical 'happily-ever-after', seems different and will continue to expand on the next story: not every beast needs transformation.

In her next story, "The Tiger's Bride", Carter takes us back to the distant past of fairy tales, but its message is even more contemporary and radical than the previous story. Here, Beauty acknowledges from the very beginning her positioning as object, but more importantly, she critiques such treatment crudely: "My father lost me to The Beast at cards" (61). She is regarded since birth as a "Christmas rose" (63), something to be valued for its beauty, something she does not like: "And The Beast gave me the rose from his own impeccable if outmoded buttonhole when he arrived … This white rose, unnatural, out of season, that now my nervous fingers ripped, petal by petal, apart as my father magnificently concluded the career he had made of catastrophe." (63). This second Beauty that Carter presents us challenges expectations from the very beginning: she has affection for her father, but she does not love him; for she is well aware that "my father valued me at less than a king's ransom; but, at *no more* than a king's ransom" (65, original emphasis). Therefore, when the father loses this "pearl beyond

price" (65), and between cries asks for a rose to remember her daughter, the white rose is "all smeared with blood" (66). This bloody rose symbolizes the journey of Beauty's maturation the same as the key of Bluebeard's wife represents her transgression into the chamber. However, Beauty is somehow conscious of where she is entering, because her old nurse "told me about a tiger-man she saw in London" (67), and believes her position should be one of submission, not of disobedience. As Bacchilega explains, "the humanistic, patriarchal gaze, conditions her responses, even though she realizes that this order victimizes her" (98). The best example of this "confused perception" (98) comes when the Beast demands to "see the pretty young lady unclothed nude" (Carter 70). Beauty believes that *La Bestia* only sees her body as an object—for she still sees herself as one, the same as her father—concretely, an object of desire. She thinks that her body is being fantasized, objectified and othered by The Beast (Bacchilega 98), and for the first time, she tries to challenge this perception. Nonetheless, her response still incites such view:

> You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; … So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. (Carter 71)

According to Bacchilega, this kind of answer is looking for a specific response in The Beast: "she assumes she is forcing *La Bestia* to behave as beasts are expected to" (98). That is, she believes that The Beast should rape her violently, and thus she would be once again a victim of her beauty. She is still learning to own herself; Beauty starts by challenging The Beast, thinking that it would make her feel in possession of her own body, but if he acted as she is expecting, she would remain a victim. Bacchilega explains that The Beast's behaviour demonstrates that he is not a beast, but "a *monstrum*" (98), that is, "there is a mystery to be solved, a wonder to be appreciated even if the husband is a *bête*" (167). In this case, the 'monstrum' refers to the wonder of The Beast's gaze, which instead of objectifying her when she finally reveals her naked body, "liberates her from … her own otherness" (99). The tiger-beast, who is othered by his beastliness, helps her realise that her beauty has objectified her to the point that she also feels othered. Not only does she feel "at liberty for the first time in my life" (Carter

78) when she unclothes, but she does not recognise the "pale, hollow-eyed girl" (79) in the reflection of the mirror moments later. Once this realisation comes upon her, that her body is her own, she comprehends that she must let go of her objectified past self. Taking her machine maid, which was until now her own reflection and now transforms into the reflection of her past self, she decides to "send her back to perform the part of my father's daughter" (79). From that moment on, Beauty decides to celebrate her nakedness, something she is unaccustomed to (79), but which will lead her to her new final self. Entering The Beast's room, where "the purple dressing gown, the mask, the wig, were laid out on his chair" (80)—thus The Beast is also naked—she is also entering the room in which she will be "the subject of her own transformation, her own rebirth" (Bacchilega 99), transforming into a creature with "a nascent patina of shining hairs" (Carter 81). She is no longer an object of transaction, but a subject of desire.

4.3. BEAUTY IN THE BACKGROUND, BONDING IN THE FOREGROUND

Emma Donoghue's retelling, "The Tale of the Rose", starts to set the precedent of beauty as a concept in the background. Her protagonist, unnamed like all in her collection of retellings, tells us in the beginning that she was beautiful, but that she did not care that much. Instead, she wanted a challenge, she wanted magic:

> I was beautiful, or so my father told me. My oval mirror showed me a face with nothing written on it. I had suitors aplenty but wanted none of them: their doggish devotion seemed too easily won. I had an appetite for magic, even then. I wanted something improbable and perfect as a red rose just opening. (Donoghue 27)

Donoghue's Beauty is all the time differentiating herself from her predecessors, even from the revolutionary Beauties of Angela Carter. Donoghue's is the first Beauty we see that owns herself even when she has to go to the Beast's castle: "Now you may tell me that I should have felt betrayed, but I was shaking with excitement. I should have felt like a possession, but for the first time in my life I seemed to own myself. I went as a hostage, but it seemed as if I was riding into battle" (Donoghue 31). Not only does her father believe that he will be able to exchange the rose for anything that is not her daughter—"For a red rose and his life and a box of gold, my father had promised the beast the first thing he saw when he reached home. He had thought the first thing might be a cat. He had hoped the first thing might be a bird" (Donoghue 30)—but her sisters

do not feel envy or jealous of her beauty or her determination. Instead, they cry and "couldn't understand why my father carried no gun to kill the beast" (Donoghue 32). For the first time in all retellings that present us Beauty's sisters, they are not another enemy in Beauty's journey. Even though they are not a portrayal of female bonding either, they are already setting a precedent of no female rivalry that should be valued. Nonetheless, this Beauty shows an important ego, similar to that of Carter's Beauty in "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon". This Beauty somehow transforms into a man when she relates how her self-perception changes while in the Beast's castle:

> I looked deep into the pool of my face, and tried to imagine what the beast looked like. The more hideous my imaginings, the more my own face seemed to glow. Because I thought the beast must be everything I was not: dark to my light, rough to my smooth, hoarse to my sweet. When I walked on the battlements under the waning moon, the beast was the grotesque shadow I threw behind me. (Donoghue 35)

She is contemplating the Beast as the Other, and thus relocating herself as the norm. In her situation, she is the norm, for she is not a monster; but outside the castle, she remains a woman, an inferior being. By positioning herself in this superior position, she is imitating the patriarchal order she has known all her life in which women are relegated to the inferior position of Other than men. As Thornham explains, "men have claimed the category of Self or Subject exclusively for themselves, and relegated woman to the status of eternal Other. The category 'woman' has thus no substance, being merely a projection of male fantasies (the 'myth of the eternal feminine') and fears" (29). She is now delighting herself in her own fantasies and fears about how and what is the beast she lives with. That is, she takes on the higher position usually taken by men, and projects unto the beast her fantasies and fears, everything she is not. Her problem is that she is not able to understand the beast, and thus in her fear of the unknown, the beast remains a monster. However, as the story reaches its end, she realises that "This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not learn except by trying to read the story" (Donoghue 39). Once she is open to new knowledge about the world, however frightful and monstrous it may seem at first sight, she not only remains in the castle willingly, but we are left with an ambiguous transformation that recalls Carter's "The Tiger's Bride" finale:

> After months of looking, I saw that beauty was infinitely various, and found it behind her white face. … And as the years flowed by, some villagers told travellers of a beast and a beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the battlements, and others told of two beauties, and others, of two beasts. (Donoghue 40)

In other words, Donoghue sets the precedent of a new Beauty who does not value beauty as the previous ones, who has no jealous or envious sisters, and who is able to learn that sometimes the monster is not a monster, but a reflection of our own repressed feelings.

As we turn to Disney's cinematographic adaptations of the tale, we have to take into account that they were produced in different times, and as such, they may pertain to different feminist waves. On the one hand, the animated version of 'Beauty and the Beast' of 1991 "is more vividly aware of contemporary sexual politics than any made before" (Warner, *From the Beast*) with a script written by the revolutionary Linda Woolverton, the first female screenwriter in Disney. The influence of figures like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Madonna, and Sinead O'Connor (Warner, *From the Beast*) allowed Woolverton to write a story very different from other Disney fairy tales: instead of a quiet and submissive character, the screenplay "put forward a heroine who finds romance on her terms" (Warner, *From the Beast*), apparently linking the film to the third wave feminist movement. Yet Paula Zapata signals that the 1991 adaptation film appears during the "Girl Power" feminist movement (Zapata 7), that is, a postfeminist period. As I will try to demonstrate, the 1991 film appears as a ground-breaking feminist movie, something unprecedented in Disney, yet it ends up portraying the pseudo feminism of the postfeminist wave. On the other hand, the live-action remake of 2017 was written by two men—Stephen Chbosky and Evan Spiliotopoulos, who nevertheless based their screenplay in Linda Woolverton's original—and is starred by Emma Watson, known not only for her role of Hermione in *Harry Potter*—also a bookworm protagonist—, but also because she has declared herself as a feminist, demonstrating it with campaigns like *HeForShe* as part of her ambassador role in the UN, or *Our Shared Shelf*, a campaign in which she shares with her fans feminist readings that she has enjoyed, becoming a real-life Beauty (Zapata 8, 78). Therefore, this hints that the second Disney movie about this tale seems to have progressed from the postfeminist era to a fourth wave one. As I analyse both of the films, I will explore

if this remake demonstrates an approach towards the new wave of feminism of the twenty-first century, or if it remains as a postfeminist film.

Bacchilega believes that what attracts women readers (and spectators in the case of these two films) towards the character of Beauty is her “dignified, resolute, courageous character” (77) and how she can turn “her victimization into heroism” (77). This is, without doubt, something Linda Woolverton demonstrates in her 1991 script, “supplying Beauty herself with all the wilfulness and determination to make her mistress of her own fate” (Warner, *From the Beast*). Nonetheless, it is important to note that this is part of the ideals of postfeminism, characterised by “issues of victimisation, autonomy and responsibility” (Gamble, “Postfeminism” 36). But Beauty is not only defined by “her dash, her impatient ambitions, her bravery, her self-awareness, and her integrity” (Warner, *From the Beast*), demonstrating that she is more determined than other Disney princesses; she is also quite different to them in her physique: “she is dark-haired … and walks with a swing” (Warner, *From the Beast*). In fact, Zapata finds interesting the fact that there is a change of outfits during the 1991 film, which goes up to four dresses: the initial blue dress; a more sophisticated green dress shown during the library scene; a pink and red winter outfit shown during the snow scenes in the castle; and finally, the gold dress of the dance (Zapata 72-73). This multitude of dresses positions Beauty once again as a different Disney princess: usually, the princesses presented by the Disney company wear only one outfit, sometimes a second one more elegant for important scenes; but never so many as her. As such, Beauty becomes a Disney princess with more presence and whose dresses indicate the passing of time, an important factor that indicates the slow pace of the relationship she is going to have with the Beast. Something similar occurs in the 2017 remake, but with some slight changes: as Zapata signals, the blue dress has an undergarment that resembles trousers instead of skirts, and her ballet flats have been substituted for brown boots (Zapata 75), characterising her as a more modern and practical woman. This type of effort into Beauty’s characterisation may seem very feminist, giving Beauty a set of choices. Yet, the emphasis on the clothes signals a link with postfeminism, quite focused on the ‘have it all’ notion, which here would include clothes, beauty, ambition, and a husband represented by the Beast. Even though the remake changes some of Beauty’s clothes to appear freer to move, more apt to adventure, there is still an important focus on all the

outfits she wears during the movie, maintaining the link with postfeminism even in the remake.

But most importantly, Beauty is defined by her love of books, something the character of Gaston is clearly against, believing that it would make her think. And this is precisely what happens: because Beauty is a bookworm, she wants to see in real life the worlds she has already visited in her imagination. Nonetheless, different critics believe that Beauty's love for books is undermined by the love plot of the movie. June Cummins, for example, explains that even though the film "begins with a focus on Belle's intellectual and inquisitive nature" (24), linking her desire for adventure and education with Jerome Buckley's definition of the male Bildungsroman, and therefore, Beauty's story as "one of growth, of a girl's maturation into womanhood" (24), the film culminates with what is depicted in the book we can see Beauty reading in the first scene: "it can be argued that this look into Belle's book anticipates Belle's own story, it also emphasizes the depth to which the structure of the romance plot penetrates the movie" (Cummins 25). This train of though is also criticised by Mónica María Martínez Sariego, who thinks that the film presentation of Beauty as a reader of fairy tales perpetuates patriarchal stereotypes such as "el encuentro con el príncipe azul" [24] (Martínez Sariego 1116). Sariego explains the connection of this opening scene with the film *Yentl*, in which the protagonist first appears in a very similar scene where the bookseller associated women's books with illustrated books (Sariego 1115-1116). Therefore, Sariego views Beauty's reading habits as linked with patriarchal stereotypes because, first, she reads fairy tales, and second, because these are illustrated fairy tales. Although I understand the criticism in relation to the problematic connection of fairy tales with Beauty, regarding her reading as somehow inferior and conservative, I would like to emphasise the main focus of this thesis on fairy tales and their subversive function, especially when associated with oppressed groups like that of women, to which Beauty forms part of. In other words, even though I agree with both Cummins and Sariego, it is important to remember that not all fairy tales are as conservative as the ones Beauty seems to read in the 1991 film. In fact, the 2017 remake tries to resolve this problematic in various ways. First, the bookshop Beauty attends to becomes smaller in the live-action, meaning that Beauty's reading options are greatly reduced. Therefore,

[24] "the encounter with Prince Charming" (Martínez Sariego 116; my translation).

even if Beauty wants to expand her knowledge, she encounters the obstacle of having fewer books—this, in my opinion, adds to her wanting of adventure and exit of her provincial town, for a bigger city will offer more adventures both in different books and in different real life situations.

In relation to her father, Zapata points out it is curious how progressive the 1991 adaptation is in terms of the father-daughter relationship, for Beauty has no problem in being honest about what she thinks of Gaston (Zapata 73). His father, Maurice, thinks that he is handsome, to what Beauty answers "He's handsome all right, and rude and conceited and... Oh Papa, he's not for me!" (Woolverton). However, Maurice does not show signs of being troubled by this kind of attitude. On the contrary, he assures Beauty that his new creation would "be the start of a new life for us." (Woolverton). Yet, Cummins disagrees with Zapata's views, signalling how the father figure is simplified and infantilized to the point that it dilutes the dramatism of his capture, and, more importantly, "is absolved of all responsibility when the Beast locks him up and later throws him bodily out of the castle" (Cummins 26). In other words, even though Beauty and Maurice's relationship may seem progressive because he does not impose upon his daughter the patriarchal values of the town they live in, he is nonetheless free of guilt, and as such, the plot eliminates the possibility of reading into his figure in the same manner as I did with it in Villeneuve's and Beaumont's version, in which his figure is rehabilitated thanks to the malice present in Beauty's sisters. Moreover, this is something that is not resolved in the remake, although Maurice is portrayed as a more active character who tries to rescue her daughter with the help of Gaston.

Furthermore, Beauty's own self-perception is also very important in the films. She understands that the town people see her very differently, which does not help in her desire for remaining in it, longing instead for adventures outside the village. As we can see when her father is introduced in the 1991 adaptation, this oddity seems to be a characteristic of the family: Maurice appears with "bizarre goggle contraption" (Woolverton) and is believed to be crazy by the whole town because of his inventions. As we have already established, the 2017 remake expands what makes Beauty different to other women of the village, and the live-action makes her not only a bookworm but also an inventor—her father in this version creates music boxes. As such, Beauty is presented in both films as a very reflexive and creative person, someone who would not

be tricked easily and who knows what she really wants in life. Zapata considers that we can see these aspects of her personality, together with her bravery, during her stay on the castle of the Beast:

> Muestra valentía en numerosas ocasiones, desde el momento en el que decide enfrentarse a un monstruo desconocido, hasta cuando planta cara a Bestia y le pide que controle su genio o lucha contra los lobos. … Se observa su curiosidad cuando explora el ala oeste del castillo y su capacidad de cambiar de opinión en torno a la figura de la Bestia. … Esto nos hace pensar que se trata de un personaje con capacidad de autoanálisis, una cualidad que se sale de la regla propia de Disney, en la que una mujer es dulce, buena y sonriente. (Zapata 73)[25]

This is supported by Cummins, who sees Beauty as "an improvement on earlier Disney heroines" (27) because she is defined by having "interests, goals, and aspirations" (27), along with a strong sense of curiosity, initiative, rebellion and bravery, which are shown in the scenes related by Zapata (Cummins 27). However, Cummins believes that all these ground-breaking characteristics of Beauty "are not rewarded or acknowledged as the tale closes. [Rather,] The emphasis is on Belle's nurturing tenderness, her beauty, her sexuality, and her happily-ever-after commitment to the Beast" (27). Therefore, even though she sometimes doubts herself, as when she asks her father if she is that different, it is very interesting how she defends her own identity throughout both films. Zapata highlights how in the new film, Beauty not only considers herself a farmer but "not simple" (Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos 16), but how she also emphasises that she is comfortable in her own skin and does not desire to be a princess (Zapata 77), something she demonstrates when her wardrobe, Madame Garderobe, tries to dress her as one. "Esta nueva Bella no es una princesa, no es su deseo parecerlo. Se encuentra cómoda con quien es, aunque sea una incomprendida" (Zapata 77)[26].

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[25] "She shows courage in various occasions, from the moment she decides to confront an unknown monster, to when she faces Beast and asks him to control his temper, or when she fights the wolves. … We can observe her curiosity when she explores the West Aisle of the castle, and her capacity to change of opinion in regard to the Beast figure. … This makes us think that she is a character with auto analysis capacity, a quality outside Disney's norm, in which women are sweet, good, and smiling." (Zapata 73; my translation)

[26] "This new Beauty is not a princess, nor has any desire to appear as one. She feels comfortable with who she is, even though she is misunderstood" (Zapata 77; my translation)

In a similar fashion, when she realises his father is going to be imprisoned in the psychiatric, she tears her yellow dress to be quicker and don't have any distractions (Zapata 77). This type of Beauty is clearly identified with the *Girl Power* movement that influenced Woolverton, in which a feminine style is essential for female empowerment: Zapata insists that her clothes are comfortable and useful, building up her strong character in the same manner that do books, a decision that clearly ties the character with the ideology of postfeminism (77). Since the triumph of the movement relied "in its ability to define itself as an ironic, pseudo-intellectual critique on the feminist movement" (Gamble, "Postfeminism" 38), Beauty seems to be the perfect characterisation: apparently very different from other women, she is still valued for her beauty and appearance. Even though the change of outfits described above can be positively interpreted due to the importance given to time, it also hides the negative aspect of how Beauty needs different dresses, whereas the Beast is seen with the same outfit almost the whole film. Yet the remake tries to distance itself from the postfeminist ideals as we can see with the magnified love for books: not only does she read for her own enjoyment, but she creates machines to help her doing her chores and have more free time for her reading, and, more importantly, to teach young girls how to read—a great sign of sorority that the new film adds.

The lack of female bonding was in fact one of the aspects that Cummins criticised, lamenting both the lack of the "fine lady" that appears to Beauty in her dreams, and her sisters, who usually serve to contrasts Beauty's character. Therefore, although there are no sisters or female friends alongside Beauty as in other retellings, her attitude in the remake towards the young girls of the village when teaching them how to read shows an aspect of sorority and preoccupation for others quite important to feminism: Beauty is showing these young girls that there is more than the role society has assigned to them. Similarly, the disappearance of the "fine lady", which according to Cummins "could have incorporated an important example of female bonding and support in the Disney film" (26), because it is the only female character that "is concerned with Beauty's ethical and mental development" (26), is resolved in the remake with the figure of Agathe.

Introduced at first with the pejorative adjective of "spinster" by Gaston, Agathe is a single and poor lady that lives in the same town as Beauty, and who greatly

exemplifies the notion of female bonding and sorority that was missed in the original Disney adaptation. Although they are not shown talking between them at any moment during the show, both are depicted as different, uniting them in their yearn for independence. Both look for the same, subjecthood, and both are pushed away by the village. Additionally, Beauty gives Agathe the bread she cannot afford to buy, and later on, Agathe helps Maurice in the woods he has been abandoned in by Gaston. Furthermore, she subtly represents the missing fairy of Villeneuve's version or "fine lady" of Beaumont's tale that Cummins lamented. Although she does not help Beauty understand the need to look beyond appearances with dreams, I believe that her own appearance as a single and poor woman is enough, for Beauty is the only one to treat her with respect. Therefore, Agathe serves as the fairy figure to teach both Beauty and the Beast. Therefore, it can be said that there is an improvement in Disney's Beauty, for independence and assertiveness are greatly valued, as well as curiosity and sorority, connecting her with a new type of feminist woman. Even though there are still aspects of postfeminism in the film, such as the love plot, the remake is advancing towards a fourth wave feminist perspective, portrayed by Emma Watson, who is Beauty inside and outside the screen, transforming her into a role model for young and adult women at the same time.

Lastly, we turn to our last novel under analysis: Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast*. Set in on our contemporary time, the twenty-first century, it allows us to explore the concept of beauty from a fourth-wave feminist perspective. In it, we can observe the prototypical girl of romantic comedies films who does not think of herself as beautiful enough portrayed in the protagonist, Rosie Thorne, but who at the same time does not value that fact in extreme: "I'm not a heroine in a rom-com, and guys like that don't fall for girls like me." (Poston 104-105). Yet she sometimes longs to be someone else, to live in a fairy-tale and have her meet-cute with a Prince: "They knew I was a romantic at heart—my mom fed me a healthy dose of fairy tales and romance novels when I was little—and they knew I was a sucker for every rom-com known to humankind, and so they tempted me with lies of Happily Ever After" (Poston 10). But she is beautiful as she is, and those who love her do so not for her beauty, but for her charming character and what she transmits to everyone:

> “I just want her to be happy,” I mutter, realizing it’s true the moment I say it. Because every time I close my eyes, I see the way she looks at that library full of stories, and I’ve never seen anyone look so hopeful and alive and… *home*, somewhere before. There’s a warmth in my chest—it’s been there for a while now—that is soft and sure, and I realized last night, as I watched her walk into her apartment, what the feeling was. Happiness. The kind I’ve never felt before. (Poston 215)

The way Rosie behaves, expressing with all her heart what are her passions—mainly books, especially the *Starfield* ones; but also science fiction TV shows and films, fanfiction, fairy tales and romance, her best friends—inspires others like Vance Reigns to become better persons, but especially to be as happy as she is. But as every human, Rosie Thorne has her bad days and sometimes it is she who needs to be comforted. Poston presents us with a new kind of protagonist in this retelling of ‘Beauty and the Beast’: Rosie has no sisters, but she has two best friends who are always by her side and who in no moment act out of jealousy or envy. Rather, Rosie’s friends are an extension of the protagonist, with their little differences, who are always trying to encourage each other to follow their dreams: Annie is more passionate about romance and erotic fiction, whereas Quinn is a nonbinary person determined to “overthrowing the patriarchy” (Poston 76). Both of them are defined by some of the passions of Rosie, and the three of them portray some of the characteristics of fourth-wave feminism, for they understand that “intersectionality is to recognise that no two women can say their lives are the same” (Cochrane) and yet, the three of them remain together because they all feel the pressures of patriarchal ideals. This wave, as Chamberlain explains, is one in which “feminists who identify as second and third wave are still participating in, and driving, activism” (21). Therefore, there are some concepts from the third wave, like intersectionality, that still remain important for them. As such, the girls in *Bookish and the Beast* comprehend that “we are products of all the contradictory definitions of and differences within feminism, beasts of such a hybrid that perhaps we need a different name altogether” (Heywood and Drake qtd in Gamble 43).

Moreover, all three of them are one of the best examples of a good female bond, of sorority. Whatever happens, they will be there for each other: sometimes they do not talk about their problems right away, instead waiting for the right moment and thus respecting their boundaries; but at the end of the day, they are “Like a good bra, they lift

me up to stand tall." (Poston 267). As a representation of the fourth wave of feminism, it is no wonder that we find that one of them, Quinn, is nonbinary; but was it more important is how both Rosie and Annie encourage them to "become Homecoming royalty instead, preventing one Garret Taylor from becoming Homecoming King" (Poston 75), a title they change to "nonbinary Overlord" (75) in order to be more inclusive. This is one example of how one sexist tradition can be subtly subversive: the Homecoming Dance remains as something in which the three of them, but especially Rosie, feel the societal pressure to appear with a date; but at the same time, they are breaking with gender roles by inventing a new royalty position for the Dance. As stated, this pressure is mostly felt by Rosie, who is constantly asked out by her classmate Garret Taylor, who doesn't seem to understand the word 'no' (Poston 181).

Nonetheless, she is more self-confident than she believes, and most importantly, she knows she is not an object and values consent above everything else. Rosie wants to date someone with whom she can be herself and who knows her to the core. She is much more than what Garret seems to think, and she knows it, so she is not going to settle for him when she knows she can get better. She yearns for a mysterious boy he met at her favourite science fiction convention, the ExcelsiCon. Both of them connected not for their appearance—both of them were wearing masked costumes—but for their real passions and beliefs. He is the type of guy that Rosie wants to have in her life, because he cared about her and did not reduce her person to that of someone who had lost an important person in her life:

> How come the only people who want to date me are the ones who don't know me at all—don't even want to know me? I'm the girl with the dead mom, I guess that's enough, isn't it? I guess that's what I liked about the guy at ExcelsiCon. He didn't know I had lost a piece of my heart. … He looked at me. He got to know *me* as we walked in downtown Atlanta and ate scattered and smothered hash browns from Waffle House and played Twenty Questions. … It was a night, for a moment, when I wasn't boring and dull Rosie Thorne, still waiting for her life to begin. (Poston 100-101)

We can see that Rosie, even though she may seem like the typical protagonist of a romantic comedy film, has nothing to do with the typical Beauty character in the sense of being passive and submissive. She does not answer the questions posed to her by Garret Taylor; instead, she asks the questions to her true love interest.

> Even though Mom is gone, she's still in every word of my story, because hers lives on in me. It lives on in the books that she read, and the ones she shared, and the people she met. Like mine will. There is a whole universe out there waiting to tell our stories. And for the first time since she left, life doesn't feel like the end of a sentence. It feels like a prologue, and I have my two best friends beside me to follow wherever that adventure takes me. (Poston 269)

Supported by her friends, her loving father and the memory of her mom, Rosie turns out to be a truly determined Beauty who is decided to choose her partner and write her own story along with her two best friends. In that way, I see her as an important representation of fourth wave feminism, for she is conscious of the way society wants her to behave, yet she is not willing to conform to it. Rather, she uses the Internet—in her case, websites in which she reads fanfiction—to read and write about what she aspires to be: a young free woman.

5. MONSTROSITY

"The world seems full of good men, even if there are monsters in it."
(Bram Stroker, Dracula).

As Warner points out, "fairy tales speak through beasts to explore common experiences—fear of sexual intimacy, assault, cruelty, and injustice and, in general, the struggle for survival" (*Once Upon a Time*). In the stories that we are analysing, the unfamiliar—treated as monstrous, as bestial—tends to live "apart from human society —in the depths of the forest, or in a far distant castle", and often serves to re-signify the meaning of 'the home' (Warner, *Once Upon a Time*). In other words, our female protagonists view their male companions as monstrous not only because they are monsters—whether in a physical, psychological or a mixed sense—but also because going with them means abandoning the familiar home and undergoing a journey of maturity in an unfamiliar setting. In Warner's words, Beauty and the Beast tale types follow the example of Bluebeard ones, for

> the plot follows the heroine's transition, her passage from her native home to her new marital household … The castle possesses the allure and the dread of the strange, other place to which she is going. As in penny dreadfuls and Gothic romances, fairy tales dramatize the beast's castle, the place of foreboding where the heroine will be enclosed. (*From the Beast*)

But what is a 'monster', a 'beast'? Even though "the word 'monster', from the Latin *monstrare*, to show [emphasises] that monstrousness is above all visible" (Warner, *From the Beast*) many stories avoid the visual description of the Beast character. This may have something to do with the fact that, as Warner tells us, "those powers who govern the multiple currents of supernatural power are sometimes recognizable as dangerous, sometimes disguised as friendly, sometimes ambiguous. They can be seductive, they can tempt us with presents …, or draw us into a conspiracy of terror" (Warner, *Once Upon a Time*). In other words, the definition of beasts is "always in flux, and even provide[s] a gauge of changing evaluations of human beings themselves, of the meaning of what it is to be human, and specifically, since the Beast has been primarily identified with the male since the story's earliest forms, what it is to be a man" (Warner, *From the Beast*). Sometimes, the monstrosity of these men is such that there are no words to describe it, other times, different senses are more important to describe their bestiality. Nonetheless, in all the chosen stories for this project, there seems to be a shared concept that a monster is what takes you violently from home, literally or figurately. The fluidity comes when it is time to describe their physical appearance, their behaviour, or any other characteristic; then, monsters—and therefore men—can be anything: from a beautiful, winged man (Cupid) to a famous and annoying actor (Vance in *Bookish and the Beast*), passing through an elephant-like monster (Villeneuve's Beast) or a feline humanoid (Carter's Mr. Lyon or tiger beast) and even a female lesbian beast (Donoghue's "The tale of the rose"). As Caroline Webb and Helen Hopcroft explain, "at the heart of most fairy tales and folktales lies the desire for transformation" (316): sometimes from poor to wealthy, others from social outcast to powerful position, and others from beast to human. This is a desire that exists in all types of beasts, whether they are male or female. Because, however monstrous at first sight, fairy-tales teach us that beasts can metamorphose into beautiful things: sometimes it is by our mere recognition of the beast as an equal, others by a real shape-shifting phenomenon—of the beast itself, or the female protagonist—, but in any case, these

transformations "disrupt the apprehensible world in order to open spaces for dreaming alternatives" (Warner, *From the Beast*).

Therefore, this section will analyse and compare the differences of how what is considered monstrous has evolved over time, and most importantly, how and why it can become beautiful again, for "fairy tales usually restore the victims of metamorphosis to their original form. Or they transfigure them to be far more beautiful than before" (Warner, *Once Upon a Time*). This evolution seems to agree with Tatar's words about how "tales of animal brides and animal grooms have suffered neglect today in part because we have new ways of figuring the monstrous other" (Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*). Although this study demonstrates that this tale type continues to be of importance—contradicting Tatar in this sense—it is true that today, "our anxieties about creatures that will take over the planet are embodied more often in cyborgs, robots, and androids than in animals" (Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*), who appear in our imagination more as endangered creatures than as predators. This decreasing fear of the animal monster will be further discussed in the following section regarding desire, for as we have already established, animal beasts have been viewed as dangerous not only because of their physical and psychological bestial treats, but also due to the transition they imposed from the familiar to the unfamiliar—especially in regard to female sexuality. Moreover, the monster, as Tatar has already indicated, is now closely related to cyborgs and technology, a fact that Isabel Balza also recognises in her papers by discussing the importance of Donna Haraway in the modern conception of the monstrous (Balza, "Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica" 39). As Balza claims, the concept of monster "hace presente nuestro estatuto de seres carnales y permite elaborar un lugar conceptual para las múltiples diferencias y variables, no ya anomalías alejadas de un canon. Aquí no ha lugar el racismo ni la homofobia, el sexismo ni la discriminación de los otros diferentes" (39)[27]. She continues to explain that what used to make the monster repugnant is what will be now revendicated and that that is the cause of its importance to feminism: "es porque siempre ha representado la ruptura de las categorías, la destrucción de las fronteras y la presencia de la impureza … Porque, como

[27] "makes present our status as carnal beings and allows to elaborate a conceptual place for the multiple and variable differences, no longer considered anomalies of a canon. Here there is no place for racism nor homophobia, sexism or discrimination against the different others" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica 39, my translation).

afirma Halberstam, necesitamos reconocer y celebrar nuestra propia monstruosidad" (39-40)[28].

5.1. THE CURSE OF APPEARANCES

Starting with the myth of Cupid and Psyche, we find a monster husband that was never a beast. Nonetheless, as discussed in the previous section, the female rivalry that arises in Venus, born out of the envy for Psyche's beauty, takes the goddess to curse her with a marriage with "the most miserable creature living, the most poor, the most crooked, and the most vile" (Apuleius 3). Yet Psyche appears to have good fortune, for she ends up marrying the beautiful Cupid, even if she cannot know who her husband is. However, although grateful to his kindness and the wonders of his castle, he remains unfamiliar, unknown; in other words, Cupid "appears as a fantasy" but it's at the same time "a monster, a powerful threat" (Warner, *From the Beast*). This ignorance of the real identity of Cupid, together with the naïve personality of Psyche and the evilness of her sisters, tricks Psyche into wrongly believing that her caring husband is really "a great serpent full of deadly poison, with a ravenous and gaping throat" (Apuleius 8) that resembles the prophecy that Psyche received of her marriage: "Remember the oracle of Apollo, who pronounced that thou shouldest be married to a dire and fierce serpent" (8). Fearing for her life, Psyche discovers the true identity of her lover, who flies away from her due to her treason. After that, Psyche looks for help among her sisters, but both of them, feeling "the prick of carnal desire and wicked envy" (11) and superior to their beautiful sister, run towards Cupid's castle with hopes of earning a better marriage. Yet they meet death, as mere preys "to the birds and wilds beasts, as [they] worthily deserved" (11), for they are the real monsters: two humans full of wicked ambition, manipulative and envious of someone as kind and close to them as their sister Psyche. Therefore, not only the sisters could be seen as monsters, but so could the goddess Venus. In other words, it could be said that the real monster in the myth of Cupid and Psyche is the notion of female rivalry, which often births out of the importance society gives to a beautiful female body. Consequently, the moral lesson that can be driven out from the myth would be towards female bonding and collaboration rather than a

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[28] "it is because it has always represented the breaking of categories, the destruction of frontiers and the presence of impurity. … Because, as Halberstam claims, we need to recognise and celebrate our own monstrosity" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica 39-40, my translation).

continuation of female competition for the love of men—whether these are husbands or sons.

If we turn our attention towards Villeneuve's Beast, we have a very different monster defined by its sounds. As Beauty's father takes a rose from the Beast's garden, "a terrible noise made him turn round" (Villeneuve 33), who speaks to him "in a terrible voice" (33). Although described as having "a kind of trunk, like that of an elephant" (33), the Beast is characterised by sound, and sometimes by silence. When left alone after their encounter, Beauty's father still hears "a great noise … in the adjoining apartment" that frightens him so much that he needs "to recover from the alarm which this sudden noise had caused him" (34). Contrary to the Beast, the merchant, afraid, responds "in a modest and timid voice" (34), demonstrating his own fear for this monster. Something very similar happens the first time that Beauty arrives at the castle: "A frightful noise, caused by the enormous weight of his body, by the terrible rattling of his scales, and by an awful roaring, announced the coming of the Beast. Beauty was seized with terror" (Villeneuve 39). Demonstrating her courage, she soon recovers and "as soon as she saw the Beast approaching, whom she could scarcely look at without shuddering, she advanced to meet him with a firm step, and saluted him very respectfully" (39). Yet, however frightful the Beast may appear by the sounds he makes, his silence plays an important role in the way Beauty perceives him. After the first roaring when she arrives, the Beast seems to be almost silent in their next encounters. As Warner explains, "though he treats her [Beauty] well, she finds him boring because he can utter only a few words and repeats them endlessly" (Warner, *From the Beast*). Because Beauty is a very intelligent person, she looks for entertaining conversation with her ideal partner. Discovering that the "terrible tone of the monster's voice was attributable only to the nature of his organ of speech, and that the animal was naturally far more inclined to be stupid than to be savage" (Villeneuve 43), Beauty starts to see the Beast very differently, although not as he would wish: she finds him boring and stupid, while he wishes to be seen in the same way as he appears in Beauty's dreams, a tender and intelligent prince.

Something very similar happens with Beaumont's monster, but Beauty's perception of him changes quicker. At first, when she meets "such a frightful Beast" (Beaumont 151), she cannot help but be "sadly terrified" (153) of his presence and the

thought of being his dinner. As well as Villeneuve's Beast, Beaumont's monster is characterised for being not only ugly, but also "a poor, silly, stupid creature" (153). Nonetheless, Beaumont's Beauty, as Adrion Dula indicates (204), soon remarks that the Beast's kind behaviour and actions make her see him with different eyes: "I own I am pleased with your kindness, and when I consider that, your deformity scarce appears" (Beaumont 153). As Dula explains, the character of the Beast appears in both Villeneuve's and Beaumont's version to "lack conversational eloquence" (202). This, according to Dula's reading, may be interpreted as the Beast "having a diminished mental capacity or a social disability in addition to his physical difference" (202). This seems to be in accordance to the name that is given to him in the early modern French adaptations, where *Bête* "can mean both animal and stupid" (202), a double meaning that is lost in the English translation, where the Beast "often connotes ferociousness rather than stupidity" (202). Dula interprets this characterisation as a negative portrayal of disability, but it is important to remember that "in the literary fairy tale of the *ancient regime*, the Beast's low, animal nature is more usually revealed by his muteness, uncouthness, inability to meet Beauty as a social and intellectual equal" (Warner, *From the Beast*, original emphasis)[29]. However, Beaumont's Beauty admits that "although he lacks wit, he more importantly shows wisdom in recognizing his own flaws" (Dula 204), such being quicker than Villeneuve's Beauty in recognising that the Beast may be a beast in his physical form, but not a cruel monster. All in all, both Villeneuve's and Beaumont's Beasts are portrayed not only as ugly but as ignorant men, which is what makes them beasts in the first place. However, whereas Villeneuve insists that the Beast is such because he is being punished for denying the advances of his older fairy godmother, thus implying once again the importance of equal marriage, Beaumont's message seems to imply that arranged marriages may seem frightful for young women, "they [women] will come to love him" (Warner, *Once Upon a Time*).

[29] Villeneuve explains the almost complete muteness of the Beast in the second part of the tale: it seems that he is forbidden to express his intellectuality because that would lead to an explanation of his curse, and Beauty must learn to see beyond appearances. Therefore, Dula's analysis of disability, although interesting and appliable to Beaumont's adaptation, is not completely true of Villeneuve's novella.

5.2. THE OTHER AS MONSTER

As Webb and Hopcroft explain, "Carter reinstates a wider understanding of the place of the human in the biological world. This challenge highlights how ideas of "human" and "nonhuman" identity have traditionally been constituted through folktales and fairy tales, which frequently draw on the trope of animal transformation" (315). This animal transformation tends to portray the Beast as a human who has been cursed into the form of a beast, and which later, with the help of a lady, transforms once again into his original human form. Carter challenges this trope in her stories: although her first Beast undergoes such transformation, his beastly form is never regarded as dangerous as in previous versions of the tale; whereas her second *La Bestia* is, from the very beginning, a character marked for its otherness. That is, Carter makes us question throughout her two "Beauty and the Beast" tales the conception of 'monster' and 'beast' in a wider sense: first, with the help of different senses than the visual; and second, positioning both beastly characters as shy and characterised by a sense of embarrassment for their 'otherness'. As such, Carter's Beauty characters are faced with the problematic doubt of what makes a monster being a monster, and if the monstrous condition is a desirable one for them. Following the example of Villeneuve, Carter's Mr. Lyon is characterised as a monster more by its sounds than any other sense. Its first appearance, in fact, gives a hint of its bestiality by its distant noise, and a slight glimpse of his looks appears to us through the description of the gate:

> And, from a distance, though from what distance he could not tell, he heard the most singular sound in the world: a great roaring, as of a beast of prey. In too much need to allow himself to be intimidated, he squared up to the mahogany door. This door was equipped with a knocker in the shape of a lion's head, with a ring through the nose. (48)

The means by which Mr. Lyon tries to avoid human contact, trying to scare people with his distant roaring instead of his looks let us know that he is, in fact, ashamed of his monstrosity, that he feels distressed with his otherness—something that will be confirmed later in the tale. Although Mr. Lyon does not hesitate to confront Beauty's father with his looks— "the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes green as agate, on the golden hairs of the great paws that grasped his shoulders" (Carter 51)—, when he presents himself before Beauty, there is "some kind of sadness in his agate eyes, that looked almost blind, as if sick of sight" (52). This phrase

corroborates that Mr. Lyon does not feel at ease with his beastliness, rather, he tries to hide it as much as he can from others: "He grudgingly admitted what she had already guessed, that he disliked the presence of servants because, she thought, a constant human presence would remind him too bitterly of his otherness" (52). Even though Beauty affirms that "wild things have a far more rational fear of us than is ours of them" (Carter 52), she is unable at first to see beyond his appearance, thinking that in any moment, his paws could do her apart as with any herbivore, considering herself "Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial" (52). Nonetheless, as the Beast "forced himself to master his shyness … so she contrived to master her own" (54), but never enough, for every night "his strangeness made her shiver; and when he helplessly fell before her to kiss her hands, as he did every night when they parted, she would retreat nervously into her skin, flinching at his touch" (55). Whereas Beauty gains more and more confidence throughout her stay at Mr. Lyon's house, to the point that she later sees her reflection in a very egocentric manner, Mr. Lyon does not follow in her confidence journey. Instead, he only becomes more embarrassed of his own appearance: "Dust, everywhere; and it was cold. There was an air of exhaustion, of despair in the house and, worse, a kind of physical disillusion" (Carter 59). If Mr. Lyon was embarrassed by his beastliness before, after Beauty does not return, he believes what he has always suspected: that he is not worth it, that his beastliness is something to be embarrassed by; and therefore, he lets himself die. Nonetheless, Mr. Lyon ends up transforming into "a man with an unkempt mane of hair and, how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts" (Carter 60) thanks to the kindness of Beauty in a very typical "happy-ever-after" way. Yet he still retains some beastly aspects, although these are described as a "heroic resemblance", as if his beastly past were a heroic challenge and not something to be ashamed of. In the end, therefore, Carter shows us in this story a quick dénouement, almost unbelievable, but which serves as an opening to the real acceptance of the beast within in her next story.

In her second "Beauty and the Beast" tale, Carter portrays a very different Beauty and a very different Beast. We have already discussed how this Beauty is conscious of the patriarchal values that determine her own views on society and herself. This Beast, a kind of tiger-man in this case, is also very aware of his beastliness and it

seems that he is, like Mr. Lyon, kind of embarrassed because of it. Not only does he wear “a mask with a man’s face painted most beautifully on it … a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human” (Carter 64), but he is also characterised by his strong scent: “He must bathe himself in scent, soak his shirts and underlinen in it; what can he smell of, that needs so much camouflage?” (63). In the same fashion as Mr. Lyon, this Beast’s castle is also empty of life, although not of servants: “It was a world in itself but a dead one, a burned-out planet. I saw that The Beast bought solitude, not luxury, with his money. … The Beast had chosen to live in an uninhabited place” (68-69). He is clearly ashamed of himself, but he is trying to create an intimate bond with Beauty. As Bacchilega explains, “the familiar tabu against looking affects both” (96) characters, for while Beauty refuses to be seen naked when asked, the Beast remains wearing the mask. This petition of nakedness, which Beauty tries to challenge at first, brings about a “single tear … at the corner of the masked eye. A tear! A tear, I hoped, of shame” (Carter 71). It is indeed a tear of shame, but Beauty misunderstands the reason behind it: it is not that the Beast is ashamed of his request to see Beauty’s body, but that he believes she is repugned of his body as much as he is of it himself. Nonetheless, the Beast seems to understand that a sight of nakedness must be reciprocal, “a willing exposure” (Bacchilega 96), and so he takes Beauty to “a place of perfect privacy, beyond a brake of winter-bare rushes, a hedge of reeds” (Carter 76). Here Carter once again emphasises the connection with the previous story, while highlighting the reciprocity the Beast expects of this act:

> The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers.
>
> A great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt was barred with a savage geometry of bars the colour of burned wood. His domed, heavy head, so terrible he must hide it. How subtle the muscles, how profound the tread. The annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns.
>
> […] The valet moved forward as if to cover up his master now the girl had acknowledged him, but I said: ‘No.’ The tiger sat still as a heraldic beast, in the pact he had made with his own ferocity to do me no harm. … Nothing about him reminded me of humanity.
>
> I therefore, shivering, now unfastened my jacket, to show him I would do him no harm. (Carter 77)

The Beast chooses to reveal his own body to the judging sight of Beauty, and thus, parts away with his shame of monstrosity. As he is able to understand that although a beast, he is not a monster, but just a tiger-man who would do no harm, so does Beauty understand it. Even more, Beauty finds in this beastliness a way to part away with how she is treated by society, and so she decides to join *La Bestia* not only in his nakedness, but also later on in his beastly form, transforming to become a tigress of "beautiful fur" (Carter 81).

Analysing the question of monstrosity in Donoghue's tale takes us to the theories of Halberstam and Butler that Isabel Balza employs in various of her articles: "Halberstam señala cómo en el siglo XIX la sexualidad se convierte en la marca dominante de la alteridad, identificándose la sexualidad aberrante como una condición de la alteridad" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 36).[30] This takes us to what Halberstam calls "tecnología de los monstruos" (36),[31] in which a series of negative emotions regarding gender, race, sexuality, nationality or class has been condensed in one body. (Halberstam qtd. in Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 36). In this short tale, Donoghue plays with the concept of monstrosity in relation to gender and queerness with the figure of the beast who, as we shall discover, is not our typical animal beast, but since it condenses some of the negative feelings above mentioned, it becomes a monstrous body that is repudiated and criminalized and thus, seen with horror and abjection (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 36). As Balza continues to explain, this figure is considered monstrous because it represents the breaking and deformity of natural and moral laws ("Tras los monstruos" 36).

Confronting the beast that Donoghue presents us is therefore confronting with "la alteridad que nos constituye, con esa diferencia que necesitamos para articular nuestra propia identidad" (36-37). Turning to Kristeva's own words, "the abject is not an object facing me, which I name or imagine. … The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to *I*" (Kristeva 1). This part of our identity is nonetheless a mystery, something that escapes our knowledge. Donoghue presents her beast following this idea of the unknown: "There had been no wedding or christening in that castle for a

[30] "Halberstam signals how in the XIX century, sexuality becomes the dominant mark of alterity, identifying the aberrant sexuality as a condition of alterity" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 36, my translation)

[31] "technology of the monsters" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 36, my translation)

whole generation. The young queen had been exiled, imprisoned, devoured … by a hooded beast … No one had ever seen the monster's face and lived to describe it." (Donoghue 32). Here we can observe that there is ambiguity about the whereabouts of the queen and the physical appearance of the beast, thus confirming that all that the castle contains pertains to the realm of the unknown, and as such, is represented as dangerous and monstrous; but it can also contain important knowledge, one that might help the protagonist to construct her identity wholly. Nonetheless, confronting with this kind of knowledge is more complicated than it may appear: the protagonist yearns for "the key to the story" (Donoghue 34), yet when she watches the beast, she is only able to see "everything I was not" (35). In other words, the protagonist projects her fears onto the beast, making it remain a beast. Kristeva explains that abjection is caused by that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Within this text, we can observe that the monster first appears like that, for the protagonist is unable to see the beast as anything other than "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady" (Kristeva 4). Whenever she thinks of the beast in this manner, she does so while sitting "before the gold mirror" (Donoghue 35), which takes us to Lola Robles' analysis of the monster. Robles considers the monster a mirror in which we can observe "tanto lo que no querríamos ser nunca como aquello en lo que desearíamos convertirnos, aunque no nos atrevemos a reconocerlo, pues se trata de nuestros impulsos más prohibidos" (8),[32] our inner desires, censured by both individual and collective taboos. As such, it represents not only our fears but also the disruptive knowledge, something that is considered unknown because we do not want to accept: if we do, it will make us reconsider what is and isn't normal.

The beast represents this threat, and so the protagonist ignores all the signals, avoiding such confrontation. Yet the beast does not cease in its intents to be seen in its true form, and when the protagonist parts to her home to visit her father, the beast confesses: "I must tell you before you go: I am not a man" (Donoghue 37). Sadly, the protagonist mistakes this confession: thinking of "trolls, ogres, goblins" (37), she does not realise that what the beast means is that behind the beast's mask there is a woman.

[32] "both what we would never desire to be and what we would desire to become, even if we don't dare to admit it to ourselves, for it involves our most prohibited impulses" (Robles 8; my translation).

Returning to Balza, we can say that this female beast is considered as such because "tal y como los monstruos destruyen las leyes y el orden de la naturaleza, las mujeres, cuando ocupan cargos que no les son asignados, destrozan las leyes y el orden social" (Balza, "Crítica feminista" 66)[33]. That is to say, she has transformed into a beast because she was the missing queen, a woman in a position of power with no male companion, and moreover, she is looking for a female partner. All of her actions are transgressive, she acts as a destructor of the law and the social order: she is a monster, a beast. In the end, however, the nameless Beauty returns to the castle and discovers the truth: "I saw that the beast was a woman" (Donoghue 39). She is now ready to accept this new reality, while admitting that it would take time and learning:

> This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not learn except by trying to read the story. … I was a slow learner but a stubborn one. It took me days to learn that there was nothing monstrous about this woman who had lived alone in a castle, setting all her suitors riddles they could make no sense of, refusing to do the things queens are supposed to do, until the day when, knowing no one who could see her true face, she made a mask and from then on showed her face to no one. (Donoghue 39-40)

As Balza emphasises, "Dentro de la estirpe de las mujeres monstruosas, tenemos, por ejemplo, a las prostitutas, las lesbianas o las hechiceras. Es decir, toda aquella mujer que por alguna razón se aleja de la norma establecida, ya sea la norma sexual o genérica, es tildada de monstruosa" ("Crítica feminista" 67). This is why Donoghue finishes the story ambiguously: we do not know if there has been a transformation from beast to human, from human to beast, or if things remain as they were; but as the protagonist narrator retells: "some villagers told travellers of a beast and a beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the battlements, and others told of two beauties, and others, of *two beasts*" (Donoghue 40, my emphasis). However, as Balza also notices it: "lo que permite que la monstruosidad no aterrorice, sino que sea causa de alegría es que la variedad de la naturaleza no asusta ya" ("Tras los monstruos" 37)[34]. In other words, not everyone who hears the story will be able to delight in the variety of nature,

[33] "just as monsters destroy laws and the natural order, women, when they occupy positions which are not assigned to them, destroy the laws and the social order" (Balza, "Crítica feminista" 66; my translation).

[34] "what allows monstrosity to not be terrifying, but rather be source of happiness, is that the variety of nature no longer frightens" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 37; my translation).

but those who do, will find beauty in what was considered monstrous. This is the case of Donoghue's Beauty: "After months of looking, I saw that beauty was infinitely various, and found it behind her white face" (40). At first, lesbianism is seen with horror and abjection by the protagonist because it is something different, something that makes her confront her unknown inner desires, repressed by society's concept of morality. But at the end, Donoghue's Beauty can accept her desire for the female beast (and the beauty in it); he now recognises that the variety of nature is a source of happiness, and that sexuality is after all part of our nature: therefore, it is varied, and should not be restricted to heteronormativity. As Leroir claims: "Todos somos mutantes. Pero algunos somos más mutantes que otros" (Leroi qtd in Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 42).[35] And Donoghue's story brings with it acceptance of this type of mutants.

5.3. THE DISGUISED MODERN MONSTER

According to Warner, the Disney animated adaptation of 'Beauty and the Beast' "ran the risk of dramatic collapse when the Beast changed into the prince" (*From the Beast*) due to the change of perception of the social outcast during the 1990s. She explains that during this decade "any return to full human shape might have degraded rather than redeemed the hero, limited his nobility rather than restored it" (*From the Beast*). In fact, it seems that many of the spectators preferred the "enchanted monster" to the "sparkling candy-coloured human" (*From the Beast*). It is no wonder then that although the screenplay was written by Linda Woolverton, who had a strong desire of portraying a strong female character in the Disney franchise, "the Beast steals the show" (Warner, *From the Beast*) with both his physique and his attitude, all demonstrating how big he is, an affirmation also made by Zapata (79) and Cummins (23). Nonetheless, Zapata also clarifies that his characterisation was intended to portray his good side by making him caricature-like and quite exaggerated so that he would be perceived as kind even in his moments of great anger (Zapata 79). Maybe because of the intention of caricature, there is much discussion in regard to what type of animal the Disney Beast represents (Figure 1), but what remains true is that his "nearest ancestor is the Minotaur, the hybrid offspring of Pasiphae and the bull, and an ancient nightmare of perverted lust" (Warner, *From the Beast*). According to Warner, it particularly resembles the American buffalo

[35] "We are all mutants. Only some of us are more mutants than others" (Leroi qtd in Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 42; my translation).

to connect it with "perceptions of natural good—for the American buffalo, like the grizzly, represents the lost innocence of the plains before man came to plunder. … though he is condemned for his 'animal' rages, he also epitomizes the primordial virtues of the wild" (Warner, *From the Beast*).

Figure 1. Animal parts of Disney's Beast.[36]

Curiously enough, the Beast in the 2017 remake is even more "spoiled, selfish, and unkind" (Woolverton) than in the original, now adding the characteristic of being a womanizer of princesses as the first scene lets us infer (Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos 2). Moreover, as Zapata points out, he does not believe in Beauty's ability to break the curse because she is a farmer, not a princess (81). Cummins also criticises the portrayal of the Beast "as an ignorant monster instead of as an intelligent being" (26), something which she believes "substantially changes the meaning of Beauty's acceptance of him" (26). This is similar to what Martínez Sariego disapproves, commenting on how Beauty is capable of civilizing the monster, teaching him how to eat, how to behave, and how to read, which sends a problematic message: "que un hombre que ejerce la violencia machista puede ser transformado en un príncipe de intachable comportamiento por una mujer que sepa manejar su carácter" (1112). [37] Nonetheless, the remake once again is

[36] Image retrieved from https://lifestyle.americaeconomia.com/articulos/ocho-secretos-que-revelan-las-peliculas-disney?platform=hootsuite. Accessed 19 May 2021.

[37] "a man who exercises sexist violence can be transformed into a prince of impeccable behaviour thanks to a woman who knows how to manage his character" (Martínez Sariego 1112; my translation).

quick in resolving this conflictive aspect, for the Beast in the 2017 film is more educated; instead of walking in his four paws as the animated Beast does, he is always seen walking like a human and shows great pride in his "expensive education" (Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos 61). As he gets to know Beauty, he slowly opens himself up to her, "comenta su soledad con ella y no tiene miedo a la vulnerabilidad" (Zapata 81)[38]. He is an example of the rupture with toxic masculinity which is represented by Gaston. Instead, the Beast is a sensible man who has suffered under his curse and had almost lost hope before Beauty's arrival. This is emphasised during the remake, in which a song is added to understand his personality with more depth: "*Evermore* representa vulnerabilidad humana personificada en un hombre, algo poco común en la factoría Disney y propio del postfeminismo, en el que los seres humanos se tratan como lo que son, seres humanos, no hombres o mujeres" (Zapata 81).[39] Therefore, if the first film subtly suggested that the Beast was a man of good heart, the remake confirms that he is not a monster, but rather that he has been indoctrinated by his cruel father and spoiled by his servants. He just needs to learn not only to show his vulnerabilities, but to accept them and change them into his strengths.

As such, the real beast of the story is portrayed by Gaston, the insistent suitor for Belle's love who wants to marry her because she is "the most beautiful girl in town" (Woolverton) and claims that he deserves the best of the best, represented by Beauty. He is portrayed as the Beast's antithesis, Zapata explains; he is physically attractive but an egocentric and simple man, whereas the Beast has a good heart but is trapped by his curse (Zapata 82). As Warner indicates, Gaston is "a lyncher, who preys on social outcasts … [and who is] capable of deep treachery in pursuit of his own interests" (Warner, *From the Beast*). He shows this kind of attitude not only preying on Beauty, but also in his hunting of the Beast. In the first case, he does so to demonstrate that he is a womanizer and that "No one says 'no' to Gaston!" (Woolverton). He sees Beauty as an object of desire, never as her own subject, something which Cummins also criticises (25). This is exemplified many times during the film in both versions, but a shocking

[38] "comments his solitude with her [Beauty] and is not afraid of vulnerability" (Zapata 81; my translation)

[39] "*Evermore* represents human vulnerability personified in a man, something uncommon in the Disney franchise and typical of postfeminism, in which human beings are treated as what they are, human beings, and not men or women" (Zapata 81; my translation)

one is when he presents his ideal future to Beauty: “A rustic hunting lodge, my latest kill roasting on the fire, and my little wife, massaging my feet, while the little ones play with the dogs. … We'll have six or seven [children]” (Woolverton). In the remake, he even tries to frighten Beauty comparing her to a spinster like “poor Agathe” (Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos 16). On the other hand, Gaston turns to violence as a coping mechanism for his jealousy. If in previous adaptations of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ we saw the feeling of envy and jealousy corrupting the souls of Beauty’s sisters and erasing a path towards female bonding, in the Disney version we see this kind of attitude in the character of Gaston, only that his behaviour is not corrupted by these feelings, rather they expand what was already inside him. As Warner claims, “the film wastes no sympathy on Gaston … [who] takes the part of the real beast: […] socially deviant in his supremacist assumptions, unsound on ecology in both directions, abusing the natural (the forest) and culture (the library)” (Warner, *From the Beast*). He transforms into a manipulative monster who even abandons poor Maurice in the woods in the 2017 reworking. Zapata summarises his personality in one sentence: “Gastón no solo no sabe perder, sino que no está dispuesto a que nadie más gane en su lugar” (Zapata 83).[40] That is why the Beast appears to be redeemed: he understands that Beauty can only make her choice if she is free; otherwise, he would be imposing his own desires in the same manner than Gaston. Therefore, Disney teaches us that not all monsters are beasts, a moral that would be repeated in our next and final text. Nonetheless, is important to recall Cummins’ criticism, which although congratulates the depiction of Gaston to imply that “handsome men are not necessarily good men” (26), Disney fails in his lesson because it is only targeted towards women, whereas there are “no great strides in teaching boys that girls need not be beautiful in order to be desirable or interesting” (Cummins 26).

As we turn to our last analysis of the monstrous, we remember what Balza explains, “el monstruo verdadero se distinguirá porque aterroriza. Y, por lo mismo, aquél que aterrorice será considerado monstruoso” (Balza, “Tras los monstruos” 36).[41]

[40] “Not only does Gaston not know how to lose, but he is not willing to let anybody else win in his place” (Zapata 83; my translation).

[41] “the true Monster will be distinguished because it will cause terror. Therefore, he who terrorises, will be considered monstrous” (Balza, “Tras los monstruos” 36; my translation).

However, if we analyse the figure of Vance, the beast in Poston's *Bookish and the Beast*, we realise that he is not a real monster, for he is not terrifying: he is a handsome teenage boy whose worst action has been being too reckless for the press. Yet Dula offers us a different version of what can be considered monstrous: she explains that "monsters are often as alluring as they are repelling, and abnormal human bodies throughout history have been made a "monstrous" spectacle to both delight and disgust or to arouse desire or pity in viewers" (Dula 203). Although Vance does not have any physical problems or any kind of disability that would make him a monster under the society Dula explores, he is nonetheless a boy used for spectacle and who maintains his own real self under a mask in order to conform to what is expected of him.

> I am so used to having to entertain people. To use them. To be used. Dates with paparazzi, with scheduled outings and scripted meet-cutes. But when I was with Rosie in the pool house, for the briefest moment I felt like—Like she didn't want anything of me at all, not a piece, not a part, broken off to be hoarded and sold to the highest bidder. (Poston 173)

As Vance himself admits, he is not comfortable with this paper he is been given to interpret, but he has been performing it so long that he ends up believing he is "the villain. The cautionary tale" (Poston 59). However, he is a simple teenage boy with teenage boy desires, some more important than others: "What *haven't* I done? The list is longer than she thinks. I haven't done most things normal teens have at my age. … I've never played baseball with my stepdad. I've never fallen in love." (Poston 94). Vance Reigns is defined as a monster not because he is, but because everyone thinks he is one. In the same way that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, monstrosity in this story is in the eye of the paparazzi cameras. Because he is continuously expected to act in a way that is not his true self, Vance ends up adopting a mask, elevating a wall so that no one gets to know his real self. However, when Rosie appears in his life, everything turns upside down because she is "the girl on the balcony at ExcelsiCon this past August" (Poston 94), the girl he has fallen in love with, the girl who makes him love himself too: "For a moment I didn't hate being *Vance*, being me, because for once I was a person to someone, and not Vance Reigns. He isn't a person. He's a character. He's a vehicle other people can live vicariously through. For other people to pretend to be close to. To pretend to know. Pretend to love." (246). Whereas in most 'Beauty and the Beast' tale

types the Beast is cursed for being disrespectful, Vance's storyline is reversed: because he is under 'bad boy' expectations, he behaves disrespectfully and needs to learn that he can live without his mask, that is, he can be his true self: "No masks, no fake accents, no pretenses" (Poston 275). Even if he understands this thanks to Rosie, who is able to see glimpses of him without his mask and thus encouraging him to take it off completely, Vance Reigns demonstrates that this kind behaviour had always been there:

> I tilt my head, looking at him—really looking, for the first time since I met him. It's strange because I've memorized what he looks like from all of the promo posters and the movie trailers, but it doesn't hit me until just then how… *human* he looks. It's easy to forget that he isn't even eighteen yet. (Poston 166)
>
> … and for a brief moment—I can see him. The boy I fell for on the balcony of ExcelsiCon. "There you are," I whisper. (Poston 212)

Lola Robles argues that this story is one example of how monsters in the twenty-first century are losing their "fantasticidad" (18), meaning their capacity to evoke danger and similar feelings. As David Roas explains, the monster of this century is being domesticated in the sense that we are "despojándolo de su excepcionalidad, lo que provoca un curioso fenómeno (tras el que se oculta una visión inevitablemente conservadora): dotarlo de esa normalidad supone incorporarlo a la realidad, … situarlo dentro de la norma" (Roas qtd. in Robles 18).[42] However, *Bookish and the Beast* is not actually domesticating the monster but showing us that not all monsters look the same. As a matter of fact, the true monster of the story has always been there and remains as a monster until the end: Garret Taylor, who reminds us of the Disney villain of the story, Gaston. Garret's continuous prom-dating proposals recall the every-night questions of the Beast in previous versions of the tale of marrying or sleeping with Beauty. However, the Beast of these stories seems to understand consent, whereas Garret—as Gaston—is incapable of it, and thus he becomes the monster in a story with important tints of fourth-wave feminism. Not only do we find a boy who does not have "the ability to take no for an answer" (Poston 273), but we also find some hints of the everyday threats that young women feel in the streets as personal defence is mentioned in various

[42] "stripping him of its exceptionality, provoking a curious phenomenon (which hides a conservative view): providing it this normality means incorporating it to reality, … situate it inside the norm" (Roas qtd. in Robles 18; my translation).

occasions: "I pull over to the side of the road and pop on my hazards before I get out of the car, my keys between my knuckles like my dad taught me. Not to defend myself against a dog, obviously, but from everything else" (Poston 35). All in all, what Ashley Poston is trying to teach with her retelling is that the real monsters are not those who are afraid to show their vulnerabilities, but those who are fed by patriarchy's values of violence: it can be the mysterious guy who assaults you in the street at night, or it can be someone much closer to you, like a classmate who insists on going out with you until you submit.

6. TRANSFORMATIVE DESIRE

"He now felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasure and happiness around him."
(Hans Christian Andersen, "The Ugly Duckling")

As Warner rightfully points out, "in myth and fairy tale, the metaphor of devouring often stands in for sex" (*From the Beast*). But what is more important: "the woman's fears do not focus on the act itself, but on its consequences, which are also often spoken of in images of eating" (*From the Beast*). When we think of "Beauty and the Beast" tale types, one of the first things that come to our minds is the feeling of fear the female protagonist must have felt. As Tatar describes it, "many an arranged marriage must have felt like being tethered to a monster" (*Beauty and the Beast*), so it is no wonder that women were fearful of their husbands and these tales served as "a socially acceptable channel for providing advice, comfort, and the consolations of imagination" (Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*). Yet these stories, so focused on the sexual act, were not only useful to calm these marriageable girls. After all, beasts "stand for everything we disavow in ourselves—ferocity, bestiality, and untamed urges. Because our relationship to them is saturated with mysterious desires and projected fantasies, our stories about them enable us to probe what remains uncivilized, unruly, and undomesticated in us" (Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*). In other words, beasts represent both the dangerous as what can do harm, and the dangerous as what we desire but refrain from. Beasts, with all their monstrosity, can help us get in touch with our own beauty in a way that

awakens our most inner and secret desires, especially those related to sexual desire, often viewed as 'primitive' and 'animal', and thus interconnected with such beasts. But "where do we draw the line when it comes to desire, and how and why do we set limits on it?" (Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*).

In Warner's words: "Such a divine erotic beast as the hero of the popular fairy tale has offered writers and other artists … a figure of masculine desire, and the plot in which he moves presents a blueprint for the channelling of erotic energy—both male and female—in society at any one time" (Warner, *From the Beast*). In the past, Beauty tended to tame "a man who is dark and hairy, rough and wild, and, in the psychotherapist Robert Bly's phrase, in touch with the Inner Warrior in himself", but nowadays, the Beast appears as "good, even adorable", and it is Beauty who needs him in order to learn: "the Beast has returned to define Beauty in the early medieval feminine character of seductive concupiscence; only now, the stigma has been lifted. The Beast as a beast has become the object of desire" (Warner, *From the Beast*). As such, what Beauty will learn is not only that "the Beast no longer need to be disenchanted" but also how to love "the beast in him, in order to know the beast in herself" (Warner, *From the Beast*). In other words, the Beast may or may not transform physically, but Beauty definitely undergoes a psychological metamorphosis in which she learns about her true desires, most often than not, her sexual desires.

Following Balza's theory, this desire, so often seen as monstrous, is here defended as a positive and necessary part of ourselves: as we have already discussed in the previous section, we need to recognise and celebrate our own monstrosity, and this will lead us to a commitment with our own carnality (Balza "Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica" 40), that is, our own sexual desires which will no longer be restricted by society's norms. As Balza explains, this commitment will make us realise that there is diversity in nature, something that is enjoyable (40); and since desire is part of nature, there is room for all types of desires: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual; masculine desire and female desire; all on the same level of importance, all of them considered not normal or monstrous, but natural in their variety. Finally, this conception of our carnal desires will lead us to recognise our own vulnerabilities, because showing our vulnerabilities is what guides us towards community: "La ontología que Butler se propone construir piensa la corporalidad como el ámbito que permite articular un nuevo

modo de la comunidad política … insistiendo en que es el cuerpo y no ya el alma o la razón lo que de modo privilegiado permite vincularnos unos a otros." (Balza, "Tras los monstruos de la biopolítica 41). This approach, in which vulnerabilities become an essential part of our creation of communities, is also related to Chamberlain's theory of affective temporalities: "It is through participating within the affectively formulated groupings that the individual is encouraged to undergo their own processes. This form of becoming creates collectives, which in turn, engage in their own adaptations and developments" (Chamberlain 78). Therefore, this ontology connects us with our hypothesis: if we as women are able to go beyond female rivalry, we will discover not only a connection of female bonding with our feminist companions, but we will also be able to understand our desires with our partners—especially important if they are male partners—and thus, we will be able to create a community with all genders in which real communication will be possible. In other words, by recognising our carnal desires we recognise that other women are not competitors but allies, and this will allow us to discuss both together as women and alone as individuals our necessities based on our own vulnerabilities. We will be able to recognise our fears, our shames, but also our joys and our strengths; both individually and collectively. By uniting with other women, we will be at the same level as men, and thus, we will discuss with them the same concerns. This way, we will be on the path towards a more equalitarian society.

6.1. THE TAMING OF DESIRE

Apuleius' *Eros and Psyche* is "the earliest extant forerunner of the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale in Western literature, and a founding myth of sexual difference" (Warner, *From the Beast*). But this is not a tale that defends female desire as subsequent versions and retellings will do. Rather, "Psyche remains in the foreground" (*From the Beast*), even when she is an active and determined character. As we read the myth, we can observe that Psyche is a very submissive young woman: she does not fight her apparently awful destiny of marrying a monster; instead, she treats the moment as "her final end and burial" (Apuleius 4). When the consummation of the marriage arrives, she remains in the same attitude, giving her virginity to the invisible Cupid who leaves her alone as soon as morning comes (Apuleius 5). As such, there is no room for developing a healthy relationship between the two: he barely speaks to his wife, and she does not know how he looks; whereas Cupid knows that Psyche is not only beautiful but has a

kind heart. Their relationship is unbalanced, and as such, it cannot truly succeed. Psyche, manipulated by her sisters, decides then to discover the shape of her husband and for a brief moment we can read an active Psyche that is interested in sexual desire: "And when she saw and beheld the beauty of his divine visage she was well recreated in her mind. … she embraced him and kissed him a thousand times fearing the measure of his sleep" (Apuleius 9-10). Nonetheless, her discovery is greatly punished, and she has to undergo several difficult tasks ordered by Venus, which can be read as a punishment not only for curiosity, but for her awakened sexual being. It could be said that at the end she is nonetheless rewarded with immortality and a son ironically named Pleasure; but the punishment for female sexuality continues with her sisters: "pierced with prick of carnal desire" (Apuleius 11) one of them runs towards the castle of Cupid, and the second sister follows her, both of them ending massacred by rocks in the fall from the mountain. Therefore, Apuleius' tale does not advocate for female desire, rather, it advises women to remain submissive to their husbands, not doubting their decisions, and adopting without resistance a lower position.

On the other hand, Villeneuve's story is greatly defined for being one in which female desire is at the same level as male desire, even for a tale published during the eighteenth century. The story, as Warner points out, "campaigns for marriages of true minds, for the rights of the heart, for the freedom of the true lovers of romance" (*From the Beast*). From the very beginning, as soon as Beauty enters the conversation between her father and the Beast, the Beast insists that "whichever daughter you bring must come here of her own accord, or I will not have her come at all" (Villeneuve 34). Although the situation makes Beauty feel guilty and responsible for her father's destiny, and thus her sacrifice is determined by her dutiful behaviour, which results in her not completely going under her own decision, it is remarkable how the Beast will never accept someone who is not willing to live with him:

> "I warn you again", said the Beast, "to take care not to leave her under any misapprehension as to the sacrifice which you have to exact of her and as to the danger which she will have to undergo. Paint my face to her just as it is. Let her know what she will have to do, and above all, let her be firm in her resolution". (Villeneuve 34)

This action sets the precedent that Villeneuve tries to defend all along the narrative: both characters should be on the same level, there should never be one of them superior

to the other. At first, this is reflected in the way Beauty substitutes her father, but as the story progresses, we observe that it is the main message of the narrative: all romantic and sexual relationships should be based on equality between the partners. The most obvious example is the relationship between Beauty and the Beast, for the story is named after them; but this is also shown when narrating the relationship of Beauty's parents, and between the evil fairy godmother and the former Prince that is transformed into Beast. As Korneeva writes, "further complicating Villeneuve's version are Beauty's dreams" (234) in which "a young man, as beautiful as Love is painted" (Villeneuve 41) appears to her. This results in an erotic attraction that as Korneeva explains, "makes the choice between him and the unappealing life with the Beast even more difficult" (234). This kind of eroticism does not exist in Beaumont's version, who shortens Beauty's dreams with the disappearance of the Prince in them and also substitutes the dinner question. Instead of the Beast asking to sleep with Beauty, as in Villeneuve's version, in Beaumont's tale the Beast asks her to marry him. However, both Villeneuve's and Beaumont's versions of the tale relegate Beauty to the position of the object of desire, and as Korneeva explains, the object of transaction:

> Girard explains that the potential solidarity of two men can be both secured and fractured by their triangular relations with a woman … both Beaumont's and Villeneuve's versions show that her role is relegated to the status of object, … The principle of the exchange of women that lies at the core of Girard's characterization of male homosocial bonds bears a striking resemblance to Claude Lévi-Strauss's thesis of the special function of women, which consists in their being exchanged and circulated in order to express, affirm, or create a social link between male partners. (Korneeva 239).

Therefore, we can ask ourselves the same question that Korneeva raises: "Do the *conteuses* reproduce or instead revise and redefine the culturally approved forms of desire dictated by the dominant male discourse?" (235). According to her, both authors "sustain the illusion of the heroines' autonomy and control over their personal experience. The sacrifice of active sexual desire thus becomes a strategy of women's defense against their imprisonment within patriarchal and legal structures, their chance to negotiate the freedom" (Korneeva 246). In my opinion, however, Villeneuve succeeds in creating a tale in which female desire remains at the same level—if not superior—to that of male desire, whereas Beaumont's adaptation focuses on the reward

of “marriage and happiness—that is, wealth” (Talairach-Vielmas 275). Beaumont’s version “suppresses the sexual symbolism of the narrative in order to favor manners” (Talairach-Vielmas 275), whereas “Villeneuve’s story makes clear, however, that love crowns—and masks—the sacrifices the virtuous maiden must make” (Swain 209). In other words, whereas Beaumont instructs young ladies into the domestication of male lust, and thus in the domestication of their own lust; Villeneuve tries to subtly send the message that both female and male desire should be considered for a successful relationship. In the same fashion, the lovers should be of the same age so that they can have meaningful conversations that nourish their connection. This is important for both genders, for Villeneuve explains in the second part of the tale that the Prince was sexually approached by his fairy godmother, who was not only old and ugly, but had no relevant conversation for him:

> I was much embarrassed at this proposition. I was sufficiently acquainted with the world to have noticed that amongst married people those were the happiest in whom there existed a certain similarity of age and disposition, whereas many others were much to be pitied, in whom differences of character had excited feelings of mutual antipathy, thus causing endless misery. (Villeneuve 67)

As the Prince himself notices, there needs to be equality between romantic and sexual partners, something that will guarantee happiness in the marriage. This is what Villeneuve intends to transmit in her tale, that a successful marriage is possible, but only if we aim for an equalitarian one in which both partners are of the same class, the same age, are attracted to each other, and can maintain interesting conversations. Therefore, Villeneuve’s tale is a great example of the importance of both sexuality and vulnerability, which is found in deep conversations.

6.2. THE DISCOVERY OF FEMALE SEXUAL DESIRE

Carter’s “The Tiger’s Bride” is one of the best examples of the journey of discovery for female sexual desire. It connects us with the previous tale, already pointing to how it is going to resolve: “at home, we are at war with nature but here, ah! You think you’ve come to the blessed plot where the lion lies down with the lamb” (Carter 61). If in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” Carter ended up with “Miss Lamb” (52) achieving his happy ending with a transformed Beast, subtlety hinting towards her sexual desires

—“And then it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man … that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts” (Carter 60)—; here the sacrificial Beauty is going to challenge this view from the very beginning. Beauty experiences a complete transformation: not only does she understand and view the world differently, but she also becomes a tigress of “beautiful fur” (Carter 81). As Bacchilega explains, “The Tiger’s Bride” Beauty starts the tale seeing herself from the male gaze that objectifies her as trade and sexual fantasy (98). However, as the tale advances, she realises that the Beast sees her differently, and she adopts this new look: “she finds her own perception of the ‘fleshly nature of women’ transformed … she is neither ‘natural’ nor, as she fears, a ‘frail little article of human upholstery’. Rather than othering its object, the tiger’s gaze requires instead another subject’s engagement, acknowledges ‘no pact that is not reciprocal’” (Bacchilega 98-99). Now a subject instead of an object, Beauty goes decisively to the Beast, transforming the “silent daughter into the tiger’s bride” and thus subverting “the humanistic and patriarchal order … [by embracing] —literally—an exuberant and undomesticated” subjectivity (Bacchilega 99). She decides “to play with the Beast because his animal nature” (Warner, *From the Beast*) awakens her to the realisation that she now has the freedom to explore and own her desires—not her father’s, not society’s, not the Beast’s ones. By approaching the Beast’s chamber in all her nakedness, she undergoes a complete metamorphosis: psychologically, she owns herself; and physically, she transforms into the literal tiger’s bride. There is a “willing exposure, but one that reveals that tabu against unmasking of any kind and, more specifically, animal sexuality to be socially constructed” (Bacchilega 96). In other words, this Beauty, at first “unaccustomed to nakedness … unused to my own skin” (Carter 79), delights herself in all that seems beastly— “There was a reek of fur and piss” (Carter 80)—and for the first time, is not afraid of the Beast—“He snuffed the air, as if to smell my fear; he could not” (Carter 81). In this sense, Carter achieves “a new *order* that privileges the “naked”, neither as pornographic objectification nor as “natural” state, but simply because it is unmasked” (Bacchilega 100, original emphasis). Beauty undergoes a long journey that starts in “The Coutrship of Mr. Lyon” and ends in “The Tiger’s bride” when she accepts not only Beast’s bestiality, but her own; and as such, both of them can enjoy their own pleasures without shame: they are at the same level now.

Something quite similar happens with Donoghue's "The Tale of the Rose", but with the added twist of queerness. As Pauline Greenhill understands, "for lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, finding themselves in traditional and popular culture can be difficult and problematic. … Many, then, create their own traditions to develop and claim community" (xliii). As we have already discussed, the monster that represents Donoghue's beast is a portrayal of what used to mean—and still means in some parts of the world—being part of the LGBT community, in this case in particular, lesbianism. Balza uses Kristeva's analysis to discuss this: "A partir del análisis de Kristeva sobre la abyección, podemos afirmar que este mecanismo psicológico de rechazo a lo diferente es el fundamento de la constitución de las fobias sociales, como la homofobia, la misoginia, el racismo o el rechazo a los sujetos discapacitados." (Balza, "Crítica feminista" 69).[43] As such, Donoghue's beast produced horror and abjection, but at the end, the nameless Beauty is able to see in a different and more positive light this beast: "el monstruo aparece como figura que representa al nuevo sujeto que se busca en una política de la vida que reconcilia a ésta con su norma. Y en este caso es sujeto y objeto de placer o divertimento" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 30)[44]. Because "the abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgements" (Kristeva 15), Donoghue's Beauty is able to shatter her own repressed feelings and accept them. In other words, both Beauty and the queen-beast are subjects, not objects; and as such, they can enjoy their objects of desire (one another) while recognising their mutual vulnerabilities. Shildrick claims that she "turn[s] away from such normative ethics to embrace instead the ambiguity and unpredictability of an openness towards the monstrous other. It is a move that acknowledges both vulnerability to the other, and the vulnerability of the self" (Shildrick qtd in Balza, "Crítica feminista" 72). As we have already discussed, and as we can see portrayed in Donoghue's short tale, vulnerability is an essential part of the concept of the monstrous that we need to recognise and accept in ourselves so that we can advance together and realise that "beauty was infinitely various" (Donoghue 40).

[43] "From Kristeva's analysis regarding abjection we can claim that this psychological mechanism against the different is at the core of the creation of social phobias, such as homophobia, misogyny, racism, or the rejection towards disabled subjects" (Balza, "Crítica feminista" 69; my translation).

[44] "the monster appears as the figure that represents the new Subject that looks for themselves in a politics of life that reconciles with the norm. And in this case, it is Subject and Object of desire and enjoyment" (Balza, "Tras los monstruos" 30; my translation).

6.3. A DESIRE OF OUR OWN

Even though Disney films are often associated as a product for children, we find in its adaptations of this tale a Beast with many elements of sexual attractiveness, as Warner points out: "He embodies the Eros figure as phallic toy. … Everything about him is big, and apt to grow bigger … The Beast's sexual equipment was always part of his charm—hidden or otherwise" (*From the Beast*). His big physique and his "longstanding identity with masculine appetite nevertheless works for him rather than against him, and interacts with prevailing ideas of healthy male sexuality" (Warner, *From the Beast*). This can be seen in how, in contrast to Gaston, the Beast tries to not impose his desires upon Beauty, although he struggles with it at the beginning, showing his fierceness and violence inherent to his beastly nature. Continuing with the figure of Gaston, Warner believes that Beauty rejects him not only because of his terrible insistence, but also because he is "one of the rustics whom … [she] despises in her opening song" (*From the Beast*). This view posits Beauty in a negative light in which she looks down on the rural, when in reality she would despise anyone, from a rural or a city background, who did not offer her adventures and some kind of independence. This is emphasised in the 2017 adaptation, in which she identifies as part of the rural life without shame, but at the same time asserting her difference: "I might be a farm girl, but I'm not simple" (Chbosky and Spiliotopoulos 16).

Gaston demonstrates to be the Beast's contrary once again: whereas Gaston is attracted by Beauty's physique and is annoyed by her attitude; the Beast initially rejects her to end up loving her due to her behaviour and their similarities. (Zapata 82). In the same manner, it is not the "material and financial" (Warner, *From the Beast*) that makes the Beast attractive, as Warner seems to suggest. It is true that these would make it easier to travel and enjoy adventure, but Beauty is a very recursive woman—as can be stated by the rustic clothes washer she creates in the 2017 adaptation—and she seems to jump into adventure at her first opportunity, without worrying about financial issues. That is why she ends up loving the Beast: he may seem as rude as Gaston, but he learns to value her independence, understanding that if Beauty can remain a subject of her own, she will also become his partner—but never levelling down to the position of object, which is what Gaston expects of her. On the contrary, the Beast undergoes a journey in which he slowly learns how to respectfully ask things of Beauty, and also

giving demonstrations of affection like the showing of the library. In this way, he opens up a path for both he and Beauty to be active participants in the development of this relationship, which relates with Zapata's emphasis on the place for men in feminism (Zapata 77), tying the film with the postfeminist ideology, which "commonly seeks to develop an agenda which can find a place for men, as lovers, husbands and fathers as well as friends (Gamble, "Postfeminism" 36).

According to Zapata, the 2017 film demonstrates how "el diálogo y la comprensión hacen que dos personas aparentemente dispares se den cuenta de que en realidad no lo son" (Zapata 77).[45] She explains that the relationship of Beauty and Beast starts as a friendship that develops into romance; something that also occurs in the original version but which is explored more in-depth in the remake (Zapata 78). This, I believe, takes us from a postfeminist approach in the first Disney adaptation, to a fourth wave perspective in the remake. Moreover, it is with the library that the connection between Beauty and Beast starts to form, and slowly transforms into affection and love. In the animated version, Beauty teaches Beast how to read and they are shown enjoying *Romeo and Juliet*.[46] Connecting with this scene is the one in the 2017 live-action in which Beauty reads Shakespeare's text to a sleeping Beast after the fight with the wolves. He wakes up to complete the line and admits that he has read romantic novels and plays—often associated with femininity—but thinks that Beauty needs to expand her knowledge and shows her the library of the castle. Zapata explains that in the first film this was a gesture to try and impress Beauty; whereas in the new adaptation the Beast is not conscious of how much Beauty loves books, and it is later that he realises, forming a connection more realistic than the original one (Zapata 86).

Cummins previously signals how the Beast is depicted as less intelligent than in previous versions like that of Villeneuve's or Beaumont's, which makes difficult to believe that Beauty learns to love him (26). Cummins also emphasises the fact that when Beauty and Beast read together, the scene seems to emphasize the act "of reading together and thus developing their relationship more than it conveys the idea that Belle is reading to increase her knowledge or pleasure" (25). The 2017 film, however, the

[45] "dialogue and comprehension make that two people who are apparently very different, release that they are not" (Zapata 77; my translation)

[46] As Zapata signals, this is a scene that only appears in the extended edition in Blu-Ray (Zapata 86).

Beast shows the library to Beauty because he believes that she has read a very small sample of genres and needs to expand her reading habits. Although this gesture may at first seem pejorative towards Beauty's reading, this attitude can be somehow excused, for the Beast is still angry with his curse, and this is a way in which the remake makes us aware of how it is not only Beauty who has to learn to see beyond appearances, but also the Beast—something that Cummins criticised, but which we can see is more explored in this film, for the Beast depicts Beauty as a simple girl due to her town origins, and has to learn that she is far more than she may appear at first sight. Therefore, both need to listen to each other and be honest about their preoccupations and desires. One of these preoccupations is, of course, freedom. Whereas Beast is imprisoned in his own body and the castle due to the curse, Beauty is imprisoned due to the promise she gave to the Beast in order to save her father. Only when Beauty gains her freedom again is she capable of evaluating her feelings for the Beast with honesty. As Zapata beautifully explains, "Bella libera a Bestia en el momento en el que Bestia libera a Bella" (92).[47] We can conclude that Disney was able to create a romantic relationship based on a postfeminist vision of the 1991 Disney adaptation (Zapata 89), but which transforms into a fourth wave relationship in which both men and women should be free to be able to involve in a healthy relationship. This vision will be explored more in-depth in the next and final text.

Ashley Poston's *Bookish and the Beast* portrays contemporary female desire by connecting her story with the tradition of fanfiction and its connection to female desire. By setting her 'Beauty and the Beast' story—and her whole *Once Upon a Con* series—in a contemporary America in which the most famous science fiction series is *Starfield*, Poston is clearly identifying her writing roots and her characters' enjoyments with that of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fans, which gained fame during the third wave, characterised by the rising of intersectionality, DIY punk and zine culture (Chamberlain 34). Therefore, Poston's novel, as representative of the fourth wave movement, establishes a continuation, a conversation with third-wave zines while expressing its influence by fanfiction websites like AO3, because fourth-wave feminism is "happening primarily online, with social media cultivating a 'call-out culture'" (Chamberlain 34). As such, it can be said that the whole novel and series is a tribute to *Star Trek* and the

[47] "Beauty frees Beast in the moment in which Beast frees Beauty" (Zapata 92; my translation).

fanfiction tradition started with it. It is no wonder then that when the female characters of the story reflect about their own desires and relationships they do so referencing to websites like *Archive of Our Own* and the fanfiction they encounter there, or other types of romantic fiction, whether in the form of films or literature. When Rosie tells her friends about her first encounter with Vance Reigns, for example, she thinks that "it sounds like something out of a rom-com" (Poston 62). Similarly, when later in the novel Vance ask her out on a date, she retells the encounter to her friends feeling that "the entire ordeal sounds like a fanfic in the making" (Poston 177). In the same way, her friends show no shame in acknowledging that they read erotic fiction and enjoy it, as can be seen with Annie's person when she buys a new erotica book: "Ah, the sweet, sweet smell of germs and page rot and smut." (Poston 79).[48] Following Joanna Russ' article "Pornography by Women for Women, with Love", we can tell that it is not only erotica that these girls read, but pornography, or to use a more neutral term like Russ, "sexual fantasy" (Russ 82) under the name tag of 'PWP':

> Every morning, his dark cerulean eyes remind me how much smut I've read online and how much smut I probably should *not* have read online. I have so much PWP bookmarked on my secret fanfic account that if anyone ever found it they would try to exorcise the demons that are most definitely in me. (Poston 216) [49]

As Russ explains in relation to K/S zines[50], we can infer that the fanfiction readings that Rosie and her friends do are attractive for very similar reasons, whether or not *Starfield* is as homoerotic as *Star Trek* fanfiction used to be: "the lovers' personal interest in each other's minds, not only each others' bodies, the tenderness, the refusal to rush into a relationship, the exclusive commitment one to the other" (Russ 86-87). In other words, it can be inferred that the main attraction of fanfiction sexual fantasies derives from a connection not only of bodies, but also of minds. Without one or the other, relationships

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[48] "*Smut* is a term for fanworks, such as fanfic or podfic, that contain an overwhelming majority of explicit sex scenes or are, in themselves, one explicitly detailed sex scene. In that case it is synonymous with PWP." ("Smut" *Fanlore,* https://fanlore.org/wiki/Smut_(glossary_term). Accessed 7 May 2021).

[49] "PWP is the term that media fandom uses to describe short erotic stories without much lead-in, if any at all. "PWP" stood for "Plot? What Plot?", and the connotation was that the reader was so turned on by the story that they did not notice if there was an action plot involved; […] Later on, the meaning of the term drifted, and the phrase "Porn Without Plot" is now more widely used to define the acronym." ("PWP" *Fanlore,* https://fanlore.org/wiki/PWP. Accessed 7 May 2021).

[50] According to Russ, these are "anthologies of fan-written stories about the relationship between Kirk and Spock … and their premise is that Spock and his Captain are lovers" (Russ 83)

in the story do not seem to be complete: when Vance and Rosie first meet, they do so behind masks and it is their words that make them attractive; but when they later meet without masks, they feel physically attracted to one another even though they do not get along. This is reflected upon by Rosie many times, who tries to reconcile both parts of her romantic interest: "… and I think, if Vance were the spoiled villain of my story, the General Sond I met on the balcony of ExcelsiCon must be the prince" (Poston 99). Once again, there is an emphasis on the importance of vulnerability, for Rosie is willing to get to know Vance if he lets the mask drop: "I wouldn't want to go out pretending to be anyone else … He wouldn't mind going out with me as long as he wasn't himself when he did. Like we couldn't be a match if he was his true self." (Poston 174). This is also supported by Russ, who explains that these stories are based and enjoyed because of their "sexual intensity, sexual enjoyment, the freedom to choose, a love that is entirely free of the culture's whole discourse of gender and sex roles, and a situation in which it is safe to let go and allow oneself to become emotionally and sexually vulnerable" (Russ 89). And that is exactly what *Bookish and the Beast* tries to give its readers: a story that depicts the conflicts that we have not only with others, but with our own identities; but a story of hope because at the end, both characters learn to feel comfortable in their own skins, alone and together:

> … in all the books I've read, the author always described the physicality … but never the soft feeling of… just *being*. Where I feel safe. Where I don't have to be anyone amazing, where I don't have to fit into some stupid mold, where I'm not the girl with the dead mom, or the girl with the hot dad, or the girl who was asked to Homecoming by the most popular boy in school. It's just a space, small and warm, that fits for Rosie Thorne. (Poston 226-227)

Thus, Poston's novel reflects the current fourth wave of feminism, "a popular movement" (Cochrane) in which feminists are raising awareness of the constant violence they encounter in the streets and in their jobs over the Internet. But they do not use the Internet solely to retell stories of violence. Rather, fourth-wave feminists have found websites that allow them to envision a better future. Poston's protagonist, Rosie Thorne, reflects how the reading and writing of fanfiction allows women to take the texts that they like but filling them with ideas of sorority and female sexuality. This type of writing reflects a process of becoming what they want, and as Chamberlain explains,

this "suggests the movement required in order to reach a final destination. It evades the definitive endpoint of 'being' while engaging with ideas of synthesis, adaptability, development and change" (89). In other words, Rosie, by writing fanfiction and later on, her own story (even if metaphorically), she is embracing the main aspects of fourth-wave feminism: the ability to change and include everyone that feels repressed by society norms.

7. CONCLUSION

Arriving at the end of our analysis of these different retellings and adaptations of 'Beauty and the Beast', we conclude that, as Talairach-Vielmas explains, "increasingly, the fear of the Beast, of animality and sexuality, are erased. … On the contrary, the heroines' confrontation with male creatures becomes a means of asserting female autonomy and inverting gender roles and expectations" (290). That is to say, the beasts of these stories slowly progress to be perceived not as imposing husbands, but as equal partners with, if not the same fears and impositions as women, the same background of patriarchal expectations that harm them in different ways. Therefore, as Greenhill reminds us, it is important "to remember that women and men have much more in common than in differentiation" (xlvi). But to discover this, we need to unite, first as women—that is, not perceiving women as competitors, and thus erasing female rivalry—and then, with men. This connects us with the topic of feminism and feminist bonds: as I have tried to demonstrate all along this paper, real conversation about equality—especially about gender equality, but appliable to race, class, sexuality, disabilities, etc—arises when there are opportunities to form bonds, to show our vulnerabilities and connect through our affects.

I believe that fairy tales and retellings, especially when written and approached with a feminist perspective, are *transformative*, because they allow us to explore many different worlds and types of relationships, making us reconsider what do we understand as normal, and what we desire normal to be. As I hope these retellings have shown, it is important to defy societies in which women are seen as inferior and thus relegated to positions of submissiveness. This, I believe, hurts men as well as women,

who suffer from the expectations of having to be strong and non-emotional. Even in the texts that try to make women conform to repressive social norms, we discover that the beasts we find in them are also affected. For example, Cupid cannot enjoy fully his relationship with Psyche, always having to hide his identity and therefore, not connecting with her in all levels. Meanwhile, the beast in Beaumont's version is domesticated, and thus, part of his identity is erased. Better examples in which the beasts, and therefore men, are able to enjoy their identity along with their female partners will be those represented in the versions of Carter, Disney, and Poston. Moreover, Donoghue breaks the pattern with a female beast, considering the factor of female sexuality on another level, but maintaining the fact that partners should be in equal conditions to enjoy their relationship. All in all, I believe that these works enable us to maintain necessary conversations, and in the same way that affective temporalities create new waves of feminism, these conversations allow us to create new possibilities of better and more equalitarian societies. As the own author of *Bookish and the Beast* writes:

> Stories—fiction, extended universe tie-in novels, drabbles on Tumblr, AO3 one-shots, a dusty library bookshelf—they bring us together. We might not all like the same things. Some of us like heroes, some villains, some the Byronic brooding idiots in-between, and that's the kind of magic that makes a bookshelf full of impossibility. And there is always room for more (Poston 285)

In other words, fairy tales will continue to live in our imaginations and be written and rewritten, because no matter how much time passes, they always bring us joy and make us reflect on how to become better people, a better society. It is my belief that the stories here analysed, with their own limitations, all succeed in making us reflect on our relationships with one another, sending the final message that we should try not to be rivals, but to be allies, whatever our gender. It is in community that we progress. And for that, we need to continue the conversations with these and new fairy tale retellings, more inclusive and intersectional every time.

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