TALE AS OLD AS TIME: HOW REMAKING CLASSIC FAIRYTALE FILMS BALANCES RECOGNIZABILITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

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Introduction

The Walt Disney Company has spent decades producing movies centered around fairytales, with most of these princess films reaching worldwide fame and acclaim; international audiences have contributed to millions of dollars of gross revenue, attended multiple rerelease premieres, and purchased millions of home copies, all per individual movie.[1] *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* are two such animated Disney films that have become classics loved by children and adults alike. The continuous love shown to both movies even after decades have passed since their productions contributed to their elevated classic status and led to two live-action remake productions of the same titles and storylines. Using Foss's theory of ideology, I argue that Disney reimagined its animated classics as live-action films while balancing recognizability and social progress.[2] Through ideological criticism, this paper seeks to uncover how the telling and retelling of traditional fairytales affects the boundaries of identifiability and recognizability. I investigate how the rebranding of

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[1] IMDB, "Ratings and Reviews for New Movies and TV Shows," https://www.imdb.com/

[2] Foss, Sonja. K. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (4th ed.), *(Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2009).*

well-known princess movies affects the story being considered "the same" while also recognizing the changing expectations of womanhood over time. The research question that guides my analysis is, "How has Disney rebranded its older, classic films into modern live-action remakes?"

This analysis contributes to rhetorical theory through its investigation of the ties between ideology and corporation brand marketing, as ideologies promoted through the media have powerful influence on dominant social views. Before discussing my main findings, I will first cover a description of my artifacts, the relevant literature, and my method of analysis. Following this preview, the main points of this criticism focus on how the similarities and differences among the four animated and live-action *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* films balance what audiences think of when they imagine their classic beloved movies and the integration with modern social ideals such as feminism and the demand for equality. First, I discuss how the theme of expectation reflects the ideology of recognizability. Next, I explore how relatability and desire create the need for the ideology of social progress in Disney's live-action adaptions. Finally, I explain how my findings reveal companies' use of alignment with ideologies to market their products, thus influencing dominant social ideals. I end this criticism by discussing my contribution to rhetorical theory, limitations with my study, and implications for future research.

Review of Literature, Artifacts, and Social Context

Much research has been done in the past on the retelling of fairytales, especially the pictures put out by Disney studios. The continuous messages of romance[3] and decade-long development of the princess identity[4] have defined the evolution of the Disney princess genre. Studies have analyzed Cinderella's changing image

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[3] Hefner, Veronica, Firchau, Rachel-Jean, Norton, Katie, & Shevel, Gabriella. *Happily Ever After? A Content Analysis of Romantic Ideals in Disney Princess Films.* (Communication Studies, 2017), 511–532.

[4] Higgs, Sam. *Damsels in Development: Representation, Transition and the Disney Princess.* (Screen Education, 2016), 62–69.

over the century[5] and how Belle made the jump from book pages to the silver screen.[6] However, no work has been done to compare the animated and live-action *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* titles within the same study. The monetary and public audience success gathered by all four films warrants more research, as this success leads to questions such as "Why does the princess genre continues to flourish?" and "What directions will the Disney company take live-action remakes in the future?" By filling this gap through my rhetorical analysis, I hope to contribute to the literature by discovering what changes the Disney company feels it can make to its own brand and how that reflects an increasingly progressive society, especially relating to agency and value within womanhood.

The stories of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* are well-recognized by avid and casual Disney fans, but are also generalizable stories recognized in current pop culture that came before Disney's interpretations. *Cinderella* is the classic tale of a sister-turned-servant who is granted the chance to go to a royal ball, leading to romance and marriage to the prince of the land. Disney's 1950 version of the story is based on the fairytale by Charles Perrault, although there are many centuries-old variations of the story.[7] *Beauty and the Beast* is the fairytale of a curious young lady named Belle who is trapped in the castle of a prince-turned-beast due to his lack of compassion and love. Belle helps the Beast return to his human form as the two become romantically involved. This story has also been told in many ways, though Disney's rendition from 1991 is inspired by the French fairy tale as told by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont.[8] Both animated Disney films debuted with great success, with *Cinderella* bringing in $263.6 million at the box office and Beauty and the Beast getting a box office draw of $531.9 million.[9] This initial success carried over to home media and award nominations, as *Cinderella* was graced with three

[5] Robinson, Linda A., & Wildermith, Susuan M. *From Rags to Splendor: The Evolution of Cinderella Cover Illustrations From 1800 to 2014*. (Visual Communication, 2016), 54–70.

[6] Pauly, Rebecca M. *Beauty and the Beast: From Fable to Film*. (Literature Film Quarterly, 1989), 84.

[7] IMDB, "Ratings and Reviews"

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

Academy Award nominations and two animated sequels, and *Beauty and the Beast* won two Academy Awards, three Golden Globes, two animated sequels, and a television series.[10] Although the two films were produced in different decades thus implying different social cultures, both revolved around popular children's entertainment and prominent values of the times, such as what was considered to be proper behavior for women.

Continued popularity in the Disney franchise long after their debuts led to *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* being chosen as the first two Disney princess films to be remade into live-action adaptions of the original Disney stories. *Cinderella* came first in 2015 and was praised as being "faithful to the original film," aligning with the company's claims to be inspired "in part" by the 1950 classic.[11] *Cinderella*'s positive reception paved the way for the live-action *Beauty and the Beast* to premiere in 2017. This "reimagining" of Belle and the Beast's tale was also credited with staying true to the original animated feature, being dubbed a "good recreation."[12] These two later films reflect many elements of success within the world of Disney media: Cinderella and Belle as two specific, popular princesses, the vast princess genre, and the Disney brand itself. These components support the rationale for producing live-action remakes, which could have been viewed as risky due to its previously unexplored market. The stories' past success combined with the influence of feminism in the new films to take on tales that Disney fans knew and loved while adding modern values reflected in the media. Because the Disney brand draws in a wide audience and is aware of its global influence, the company works hard to echo the prominent social values of the time, be they steadfast morals like love or kindness or fluctuating standards like what it means to be or act as a certain gender. In the film *Mulan*, resilient teen Mulan defies the gender roles of China's military and volunteers to fight in her aging father's place, adding the story of an independent, risk-taking princess to the Disney princess catalog. The recent rise in feminism has led Disney to update its princess genre by increasing the introduction of empowered princesses who are agents in their own stories. For example, Elsa and

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Anna of *Frozen* discover the importance of sisterly love over romantic love, and Moana of *Moana* goes on a quest to save her island and her people. Thus, the success of both older and more recently introduced animated Disney princesses who exhibit agency provides some of the context for the live-action remodeling of Cinderella and Belle.

Ideology: Theory and Method

Ideology has been used in rhetorical criticism to focus on the beliefs and values that surround and are extracted from an artifact being analyzed. Foss defines ideology as a "pattern of beliefs that determines a group's interpretations of some aspect(s) of the world."[13] Related opinions combine to represent a larger feeling that is summarized as an ideology. The represented feelings impact daily decisions, judgements, and fundamental values as the world is viewed through the ideological lens. Ideologies play an important role in shaping human thought over the duration of a person's lifetime, as people subscribe to particular ideologies from an early age.[14] People grow up thinking that certain values — for instance, responsibility or loyalty — are more necessary and desirable than others. Some ideologies rise to become hegemonic societal norms within certain cultures, further influencing people's beliefs within that culture. In this way, ideological narratives help create culture as they are used to teach values through lessons and entertain with stories that reiterate those values.[15] This is done through a combination of power coming from influential sources such as companies, individuals, or organizations and support being gained as the powerful influencers spread their opinions among people.[16]

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[13] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism.*

[14] Ordabayeva, Nailya, & Fernandes, Daniel. *Better or Different? How Political Ideology Shapes Preferences for Differentiation in the Social Hierarchy.* (Journal of Consumer Research, 2018), 227–250.

[15] Palczewski, Catherine Helen, Ice, Rich, & Fritch, John. (2016). *Rhetoric in Civic Life* (2nd ed.), *(State College, PA: Strata Pub. 2016).*

[16] McKenzie, Paula. *An Ideological Criticism of Mary McLeod Bethune's "Democracy" Speech.* (Florida Communication Journal, 2012), 13–22.

Adults tend to side with beliefs that validate their current opinions, further leading them to gravitate towards dominant ideologies promoted in the public eye.[17] The power that ideologies hold over their believers is often taken for granted, as the values that uphold the ideologies seem natural, not oppressive or constricting.[18] People as a collective forget that ideologies are socially constructed and contribute towards both a sense of what is right and that what they believe simply feels right without constriction or force.[19] This coercive power has the opportunity to influence what becomes hegemonic as a culture begins to prioritize certain ideologies over others. This process is often maintained and cultivated through the use of widespread media, such as mass media or entertainment. For example, the constant practice of coveting and purchasing materials has reiterated the ideology of consumption which infiltrates United States culture.[20] In recognizing the subtle influence ideologies have on world lenses that allow for peoples' one-sided understanding, Leal claims ideologies can be seen as "distorted representations of a 'distorted' reality."[21] Despite the negative connotation that belief in or the labeling of an ideology can hold, Deligiaouri gives the reminder that facts in the real world cannot be ignored despite the differences in cultural ideologies.[22] Facts and statistics stand on their own regardless of what is accepted in various cultures; the only independent element is the cultural interpretation of what those facts may mean according to the dominant ideologies. In this way,

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[17] Ordabayeva and Fernandes, Daniel. *Better or Different,* 227–250.

[18] Wells, Celeste. C. *Diapers Full of … Pampered, Hugged, and "Luved" Babies: Teaching Ideological Criticism Through Diapers.* (Communication Teacher, 2016), 72–76.

[19] Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*

[20] Leal, Leila. S. *Ideology, Alienation and Reification: Concepts for a Radical Theory of Communication in Contemporary Capitalism.* (TripleC (Cognition, Communication, Co-Operation): Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society, 2018), 688–695.

[21] Leal, *Ideology, Alienation and Reification*, 688–695.

[22] Deligiaouri, Anastasia. *Discursive Construction of Truth, Ideology and the Emergence of Post-truth Narratives in Contemporary Political Communication*. (International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics, 2018), 301–315.

ideologies can be used to critique hegemonic social dynamics such as where power is centralized, what the use of power is focused on, or how power is exercised.[23] This is especially relevant when the entities that promote and circulate hegemonic beliefs do so on a mass scale, as done by corporations through wide media influence. However, ideologies are not static and change within a community over time, thus affecting how people evaluate the world over time.[24]

Method

This rhetorical analysis centers on four films: the Disney animated films *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast,* and the Disney live-action remakes of the same films. In viewing these films, I paid attention to the scenes' dialogue, characters, and plot while coding for both similarity and difference. During my coding process, I focused on comparing the animated films to one another, comparing the live-action films to one another, and comparing the animated films of the same titles (the animated *Cinderella* to the live-action *Cinderella*, and the same for the *Beauty and the Beast* films). I additionally compared the animated films to the live-action features to further explore similarities and differences. I limited my analysis to strictly these four Disney films and did not compare these stories to past or other versions of the fairytales.

This analysis is legitimized by the success of the older, animated films contributing towards the creation of the live-action adaptions. Disney has continued to create live-action remakes of their beloved animated movies, thus suggesting the importance of the up-and-coming, separate genre of the rebranded live-action film. For example, live action *Aladdin* and *The Lion King* will premiere in 2019, with *Mulan* and a *Maleficent* sequel following in 2020.[25] The consistency of Disney's modernized content indicates that the company is staying aware of current social values. This implies that the brand will continue to impact the social atmosphere through their

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[23] Wells, *Diapers Full,* 72–76

[24] Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*

[25] Gajanan, Mahita. "A Complete List of Live Action Disney Movies Through 2020." Last modified October 1, 2016. http://time.com/4525871/disney-live-action-movies/

circulating content that has been used to teach and promote societal values, such as kindness, loyalty, curiosity, bravery, and love. The corporation's modernization also reflects the national and global rise in feminism, which continues to critique the values and beliefs like responsibility and personhood, promoted by the media and dominant ideology. Finally, there has been past research on Disney films and material, but no research on the specific comparison of the company's animated classics to its remakes. This new element of comparison may generate new findings and implications related to the modernization of well-known traditional content.

Finding Balance in the Contrast: Recognizability and Social Progress

In understanding the power of ideological presence and how it shapes our worldviews, one can see why the Disney company values the permanence of recognizability and the modernity of social change. Companies often invoke popular ideologies to resonate with their target audiences. The ideologies of recognizability and social progress are balanced so that *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* retain familiarity to their stories while adding in just enough revolution to keep up with changing times. This balance is achieved through the consistent themes of expectation, relatability, and desire.

As ideologies, recognizability and social progress represent current values in the United States perpetuated by the continuous belief and circulation of the ideologies' respective values. The ideology of recognizability is supported by cultural importance placed on passing familiarity on to family members, close friends, and generalizable public trends through the years. Comfort is found when something is recognizable and relatable — a brand, a story, a feeling, or an idea. This comfort then inspires the circular pattern of continuing to pass on that feeling of relatability, and therefore the beliefs associated with it. The ideology of social progress is revealed in the current political climate of moving towards overarching equality and inclusion. The rise of recognizing past fault and actively working to change oppression and exclusion has brought about a focus on respecting all forms of humanity. This active push towards progress is reaching beyond politics into religion, education, workplaces, private life, and into all spheres of global awareness.

Thus, the overarching belief in equality and improvement forms an ideology of social change that pushes humanity towards forward thinking as it spreads worldwide.

Recognizability: Comfort in Familiarity

Within this analysis, recognizability represents what stayed the same between the animated to live-action transitions of the films, as well as what was kept from the original movies for both remakes. Recognizability consists of the theme of expectation: what is literally expected by the audience members in the plots surrounding Cinderella and Belle's lives.

The theme of expectation encompasses the need to maintain the original fairytale plots, reiterate the classic princess romance narrative, and ensure that the Disney brand saves face by upholding the "Disney brand" imagery. Because the plots of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* are generally recognizable beyond Disney's interpretations, the storylines must remain consistent to the public narratives in order to *be* the same stories. Thus, Disney's remakes follow their own previously produced patterns in order to stay recognizable not only as the stories of Cinderella and Belle, but also as the Disney versions of the tales. For example, the ballroom dance scenes of both *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* have become iconic as the two princesses swirl around in their now famous blue and yellow ballgowns, respectively, swaying with the soon-to-be loves of their lives. These ballroom dances are expected to be within the stories because they represent turning points in the plots. At the ball, Cinderella connects with the prince as a prince for the first time, thus influencing her perception of the possibility of a future with him. The Beast's invitation to Belle to dance with him confirms to viewers the that the dynamic between the two characters has changed, moving from a quarrelsome cohabitation to an affectionate partnership. In both instances, the dance scene serves as a turning point for the plots that is expected by the viewers in order to follow the well-known and well-loved narrative.

The element of romance is also important to audience members watching *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*. In order for the stories to stay true to themselves, the tales must have the underlying yet essential romantic pursuit between Cinderella and Prince

Charming and Belle and the Beast (known in his human form as Adam). While there is much more substantive value to these fairytale stories, such as standing up for oneself and having courage and endurance through tough times, what would the tales of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* be if the act of falling in love was absent? Cinderella and Belle may arguably be the same women, but the overall fairytales that people have become familiar with would cease to exist. Still, even though the subtraction of romance would change the major plot lines of the films, small details would too be affected. For instance, the moment that Lumiere sees Belle step foot into the Beast's castle, he assumes that she is the one who will fall in love with the Beast to break his animalistic and inhuman curse. The entire castle's welcoming of Belle revolves around the prospect that she could learn to love the Beast. In Cinderella's case, the animated feature shows that Cinderella and Prince Charming are immediately infatuated with one another upon meeting at the ball. The live-action movie goes beyond this and introduces the future couple to one another during a hunting expedition in the woods. After briefly speaking and parting ways, the prince is seen later talking to his friend about how he cannot stop thinking about the girl he met in the forest and what it would be like to marry for love. The idea that romance blossoms naturally stays a prominent theme throughout the movies and indulges the audience in their expectation that the princesses will easily and willingly fall in love when the princes find the women of their dreams. This theme stays true to the Disney stories of Cinderella and Belle, as well as to the larger princess genre trope in general.

A more obvious reason for Disney's live-action remakes fulfilling the fans' expectations of its classic movies is the need to please the fanbase, therefore perpetuating their support of the Disney company. In keeping the overall plots and distinctive elements the same, the characters and stories remained recognizable while growing to reflect modern times. For example, the live-action movies kept the defining characteristics of each princess, like Cinderella's kindness and Belle's bold actions and words. In maintaining the core values of the princesses in the live-action adaptations, the princess characters stayed true to the Disney versions of themselves. Similarly, to maintain their branding of the princesses and the familiarity of their stories, iconic movies scenes from each animated film were translated

into the live-action versions, like the pumpkin turning into a carriage in *Cinderella* and the "Be Our Guest" song and dinner sequence in *Beauty and the Beast*. In keeping iconic elements that scream "Disney" for the live-action movies, the company avoided a complete rebranding and instead delivered updated but true-to-the original adaptions to satisfy Disney fans.

The overall theme of fulfilling the audience's expectations encompasses the ideology of recognizability by contributing to what Disney fans would expect from their favorite entertainment source. The elements of the fairytale plot, the romance, and maintenance of the specific Disney storyline were all selected to stay unchanged in the live-action remakes to purposefully promote the synchrony of the brand. Disney sees the importance that expectation holds in viewers' eyes and cannot risk letting faithful fans down. By maintaining recognizability, Disney is securing positive ratings of its content, leading to a positive rating of the corporation overall. When Disney fans recognize a Disney story, like *Cinderella* or *Beauty and the Beast,* this recognition continues to promote support of and faith in the Disney brand to deliver content that is desirable, relatable, and lovable. The company can then use that recognizability in its own favor, knowing that fans trust in Disney to deliver the content that they expect from the brand.

Social Progress: Necessity of the Representation of Now

Social progress within this analysis reflects what was altered from the animated films for the new live-action remakes. It is constructed of the themes of relatability and desire. Relatability refers to the explanation of characters, more realistic character dimensions, and the ability to emotionally connect with the characters and their situations. After discussing the theme of relatability, I will elaborate on the theme of desire.

Relatability Reflecting Modernity

Within the theme of relatability, two subthemes of character explanation and realistic dimension allow viewers to connect with the characters, dialogue, and feelings in a scene. The fist subtheme, character explanation, refers to the live-action movies' integration of

character depth and background information. In the animated versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast,* what happened to Cinderella and Belle before the movie begins (other than what is revealed during the film introductions and opening scenes) is unimportant and irrelevant to the plots. The women are simply accepted for who they are by the audience because there is apparently nothing else the audience needs to know. This changes in the live-action adaptions. The voiceover that consistently narrates Cinderella's feelings throughout the live-action film reveals more character depth as the audience gets a peek directly into Cinderella's thoughts — an element completely absent from the animated *Cinderella*. For example, in the live-action movie, the voiceover informs viewers that Cinderella feels pity for her stepsisters when they abuse her and tear her dress apart. The added character explanation in the remakes also benefits the audience as they learn more about the princesses' background and family information, such as when Belle learns how her mother died. This is a contrast to the animated film, where there is no mention of Belle's mother at all. The added background information and character depth combine to reveal more personhood attached to both women. We now see exactly what makes Cinderella kind and why Belle is unafraid to be independent. Character depth is no longer implied but is explicit. This creates a stronger base for audience members to attach to, leading to more opportunities to connect with the characters.

  The second subtheme of realistic dimension is given to most characters and their interactions within the live-action moves, not only the princess protagonists. More male characters with deeper relationships and conversations better reflect the world we currently live in by putting genuine, emotional male friendships on screen. No longer do male characters play secondary roles with no feelings or values of their own. Or in cases like Gaston's in *Beauty and the Beast,* where his values are shown in the animated version, there is no longer just his one-sided interaction with others. Instead, men are shown having true friendships where conversation goes back and forth with insight, advice, and opinions. For example, in the live-action *Cinderella*, the prince has a discussion with his father about his love for the maiden he met when riding his horse in the forest. This type of male intimacy was lacking in the animated film, with no scenes showing emotional discussions that go beyond surface level

small talk. This increases the visibility and normalcy of deep male friendships in the real world for viewers. Another positive element of realistic character dimension within the remakes is that audience members see stronger foundations for romance being built. Although the infatuation still unfolds naturally between the couples, there is a larger visible base for the attraction, making it easier to see exactly why the princesses and princes are attracted to one another. For example, in the live-action movie, Belle and the Beast are seen sitting together discussing their favorite Shakespeare plays. This makes their ability to relate to one another — a key element of attraction — more obvious when compared to the animated film, in which the only presupposition to their romance is the fact that they live in proximity to one another. The fact that Cinderella and Belle's romantic interests are made more grounded in substance such as similarity, understanding, and emotion creates an air of more genuine attraction that is therefore more realistic. Overall, the updated realism of characters with actual reasons for doing what they do and saying what they say gives the characters more depth as a whole, making it easier for audience members to see themselves in people on the screen.

Overall, the theme of relatability benefits audience members because they are able to connect with the stories they are watching. Through deeper character explanation, the family backgrounds and personality traits of the princesses are made explicit, thus making their experiences easier to relate to. The heavier presence of male interaction and love stories that have tracible evidence indicate Disney's acknowledgement that these movies are not just made for little girls; the stories have been enhanced through social awareness of their audiences that include adults, children, and people of all genders. These small, subtle changes indicate that the Disney brand is aware of what audiences demand in stories being produced today: the ability to relate to the story on a deeper level of connection that goes beyond identifying with a character by projecting oneself onto a single trait or having the same hair color as the protagonist.

Desire for Depth and Diversity

The second theme within the ideology of social progress is desire, which outlines what the audiences wish to see in Disney's

media content. This includes the subthemes of the continuing romance narrative, character explanations, and personal representation. When it comes to the romance narrative, plots that continue to emphasize falling in love persist because people still tie love stories to the princess genre. Even with the modernization of the live-action stories, people still want the remakes to represent the whole princess genre — thus implying the element of love remaining in the plot. The fairytale element of finding love with prince charming was retained in the live-action storylines of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* because finding love is crucial to both Cinderella and Belle's stories. Taking out the love trope or making Cinderella and Belle completely independent would change the entire plots of the stories. Therefore, even with the progression of princess films shifting importance away from finding a man to fall in love with, *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* do not have this liberty. From the production of the films *Frozen* and *Moana*, we see that the Disney company itself recognizes the importance of expanding the princess genre to no longer revolve around the act of falling in love and living happily ever after. However, Disney reveals its awareness of the fanbase's desire to see their beloved classic films in a new way that still retain their familiarity. This insight plays as a strong marketing move that balances the need to produce new content that is aware of pushing boundaries while still respecting that people have unwavering love for stories they grew up with.

The subtheme of character explanations is evident in the heavy use of narration in both live-action remakes, leading one to believe that the audience members want to know what is going on in characters' heads or between scenes even when the characters themselves do not tell us through visual or audio cues. This was especially prominent in the live-action *Cinderella*, as Cinderella's values and thoughts were mostly revealed through narration. The narration provided a peek into the princesses' brains, as well as into the minds of other characters that did not get as much background information explained or screen time showcasing their emotions or actions. The use of narration in addition to scenes with more revealing information in general — through character dialogue and monologue or visual cues — indicates the desire of the audience to know more detail about what is going on in the films. This reflects the modern desire to be well-informed; people want to know intricate details in

order to better understand personalities, actions, relationships, settings, and other elements of storytelling. Modern culture has put emphasis on the importance of knowing as much information as possible. By including more character explanations in the live-action remakes, Disney appeals to the audience's need for more understanding, generating a more interesting storyline and more satisfied audience.

The final subtheme of representation within the theme of desire is especially crucial in updating Disney's appeal in modern markets by actively representing the company's target audience. As modern Western culture works to eradicate racism, heterosexism, and sexism to be more inclusive and welcoming of all people in real life, consumers call for media companies to produce entertainment content that mirrors this real-life change by including characters that look and act like real-life people in a world of diversity. This includes representation of people of color, LGBTQ relationships, and strong female characters. Both live-action *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* included a racially diverse cast — including people of color in prominent supporting roles, not only the background cast. This stands out as a stark contrast to the animated films, where even the nameless crowds of people were all white. In *Beauty and the Beast,* there were moments featuring LGBTQ positivity. At the end of the film, two men danced with each other during the closing ballroom dance scene. Additionally, although it was never explicitly stated or visually confirmed, there were visual implications that Lefou, the villain Gaston's sidekick, had romantic feelings for Gaston and perhaps attraction towards men in general. Cinderella and Belle were also given much more agency and voice in the live-action remakes, as both characters had more tangible personalities that shone past the one-dimensional women of the animated features. As people rally for equality of people of color, queer people, and women in the real world, the representation of such diversity on movie screens is crucial as well. Representation in entertainment media leads to normalization and acceptance of diversity in real life. Disney must represent all audience members in its productions if the company wants to attract and retain a diverse audience. It is here that Disney must take on the challenge of balancing modern liberal ideals and traditional conservative morals to satisfy both types of audience. Over the past few years, modern society has become increasingly more progressive

and outspoken in its push for equal rights, equal treatment, and equal respect. The Disney brand must become and stay a prominent figure and partner in this liberal push in order stay relevant in the entertainment industry; the lack of doing so will likely result in the fading of supportive fans if modernity is not represented in purchasable content.

Overall, the theme of desire represents the strong voice of Disney's audience that plays a large role in what the Disney company chooses to produce. When people are paying for entertainment, a company must cater to what the audience is willing to pay for and therefore what the audience demands to see. By combining relatability and desire, the importance of the ideology of social progress is revealed as a strong influence from Disney's target audience. In larger culture, social progress is a strong wave that cannot be ignored. Modern culture is quick to fumigate a company that is not inclusive, so the Disney company must keep up with what people want mirrored in consumable content in order to avoid being negatively branded as an entertainment giant that is apathetic to modernity. By catering to the audience's needs for realistic and relatable characters, plots that deliver modernized love stories, and representation of people that have been overlooked or diminished in the past, Disney is able to use the updated live-action stories of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* to retain their marketable conglomerate power while still promoting important social values such as equality and feminism.

As a brief review of my main findings, the desire to reproduce the classic stories of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* was a move that required Disney to pay attention to both its traditional fairytale images and the interests of modern culture. The ideologies of recognizability and social progress may seem oppositional, as they combine old and new, which means they must be carefully balanced in order to deliver consumable content that satisfies the largest possible audience. It is here that balance is important in a dualistic nature. There must be equal fulfilment between traditionalist fans who love Disney for what it is and may have more conservative inclinations of what should be mass-produced and fans who demand more inclusive entertainment that is not afraid to make statements about humanitarian topics. In Disney's live-action executions, the recognizable plots of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* were

maintained with just enough liberalism to keep the audience satisfied on both accounts of traditionalism and progressivism, as called for by the rise of feminism and the push for equality.

Discussion

This rhetorical analysis of the animated and live-action *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* shows the advantage companies receive when they promote and assimilate to popular ideologies of a culture. Ideologies are appealing, and appeal leads to success — including monetary gain. For example, since the *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* remakes premiered in 2015 and 2017 respectively and found great success with their audiences, Disney has put full stock into recreating many of its animated classics into live-action movies soon to premier, such as *Dumbo*, *Lady and the Tramp, Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*.[26] My research suggests that there is benefit for digging deeper into the use of ideological influence by corporations, as we may better understand the reasons behind the content they decide to produce, the attention to details given when creating their content, and their marketing strategies. By acknowledging the fact that entertainment companies pay attention to social trends and weave these trends into their productions to make their content more appealing to audiences, the general public can become more aware of the mediated promotion of hegemonic ideologies within many aspects of culture that pass off as mindless entertainment. Cultivating this understanding may break the cycle of mindless consumerism, creating knowledgeable audiences that are aware of what they are buying into, circulating, and perpetuating in their own lives.

I believe it is also important to address the implications that come from the decision to retell stories versus the decision to create original content. The Disney company is famous for both routes of creativity, and there is room for more in-depth interpretation of the impact of their choices to create their content. Because of collective memory and the influence of identity found in passing down values through stories, there is great power in the act of retelling and reinterpreting stories. This retelling fosters a sense of familiarity and

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[26] Gajanan, "A Complete List"

connection to others as people grow older and choose to pass on lessons they learned though relatable, classic stories. However, original stories are also quite powerful. They provide the opportunity to create characters and plots around current, relevant issues that include accurate representations of modern times. As previously discussed, this representation and relatability matters greatly; the older, classic stories may not be changed or bent well enough to offer an accurate reflection of modernity. Thus, the creation of new tales allows people to connect and identify with situations and characters from the beginning. Still, it is important to watch as corporations with long histories of creating public entertainment, such as the Walt Disney Company, decide to produce new media and navigate the balance of old and new stories. Future research may be done to investigate how much change reflecting modernity can be made to classic fairytale stories before the changes outstep the "boundary" of what is accepted as part of the traditional princess story.

This research did not occur without limitations, the largest being my time constraint. This paper was written for a course at my university, and I had only one semester to create and execute this study. If I had more time to explore my own data, I would have liked to discuss additional findings, details, and examples. However, due to my short amount of time to complete this research, I chose to incorporate findings with the largest amount of supportive data and that were the most applicable and translational to larger society. Another limitation was the lack of research on past Disney analyses. While a few studies exist, I was unable to analyze many in depth in order to provide more background on their findings and Disney's ties to society. Finally, while I did my best at keeping an objective, data-focused mindset, I may not fully disengage my biases as an active member of the society of which I have written about. One may assume that my knowledge and experience as a societal participant may have influenced this analysis, as I was the only author for this project. Throughout this research, I prioritized perspective taking, a critical eye, and knowledge of theory in order to best ground my approach to analysis.

This analysis creates implications for future research revolving around the reflection of modernity on time-tested material and popular entertainment's influence on dominant social ideologies. Future studies may dive further into comparative analysis between

already established stories and their revisions over time to track the changes made and differences kept while theorizing the implications of those changes and differences during their respective time periods. Multiple studies of this sort may help form larger theories about how modernity impacts stories and how their revisions can reveal societal value. Similarly, by continuing to explore entertainment's ties to dominant societal value, correlation can be further tested regarding media's influence on social beliefs. Studying regulation of the public interest related to corporations' interest in consumerism could potentially reveal findings that translate to the formation or adjustment of ideologies. While this analysis only briefly touched on both of these interests, there is much similar, potential research to be done on these subjects in the future.

  In conclusion, I argue that Disney reimagined its animated classics as live-action films while balancing recognizability and social progress. Through these two social expectations, the Disney brand was able to cater to their dedicated audience by presenting familiar content, as anticipated by its fans, while still updating the plots to represent current values, showcasing the company's awareness of modern expectations. The use of ideology by the Disney company shows its awareness of marketability of cultural values and the ability to promote the continuance of desirable dominant beliefs. As entertainment continues to grow around the expectations, relatability, and desires of the modern world, we can expect to see more takes in the future on tales as old as time.

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