

5-2012

Happily Ever After Take Two: Rewriting Femininity in Hybridization Fairy Tale Films

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HAPPILY EVER AFTER TAKE TWO: REWRITING FEMININITY IN HYBRIDIZATION
FAIRY TALE FILMS

HAPPILY EVERY AFTER TAKE TWO: REWRITING FEMININTY IN HYBRIDIZATION
FAIRY TALE FILMS

A thesis in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

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Southern Nazarene University
Bachelor of Arts in English Education, 2010

May 2012
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ABSTRACT

The tradition of fairy tales has evolved drastically over the past five hundred years. At the beginning of the 20th century, fairy tale cartoons became widely popular as an independent medium, as well as introductions to larger films. In 1937, Walt Disney started the tradition of fairy tale cinema with the release of *Snow White*. Since that time, Disney has released and re-released eleven princess fairy tale films. Critics and parents alike ridicule Disney for its depictions of women as submissive and subservient. Recent films have used fairy tale tropes, without referring to a specific classic tale, in order to ridicule and establish a new image of woman. By simply using the tropes of the tales, the new hybridization fairy tales attempt to rewrite the depiction of femininity as a whole, without the confines of a specific character. Despite the great strides that these films have made, there is still a persistent depiction of women as weak with a lack of agency. DreamWorks' creation of the *Shrek* quadrilogy provides an example to explore the progress of reworking female fairy tale stereotypes through Princess Fiona, Queen Lillian, Fairy Godmother, and other minor, female characters.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible. I would first like to thank my family. My husband, Nathaniel, has offered countless hours of support, sacrifice, and coffee during this process. My mother, brother, and extended family have always been there to encourage me and push me to further my education. Next, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Susan Marren, for her invaluable feedback. Her willingness to listen to my ideas and ask the hard questions has greatly influenced the direction of my work. Also, I would like to thank my other committee members, Dr. M. Keith Booker and Dr. Danny Sexton, for their interest, feedback, and flexibility. I would be remiss if I did not thank my fellow graduate students, especially Mary Leigh, who have listened to numerous ideas and encouraged me when the process got difficult. Lastly, I would like to thank DreamWorks for producing films that raise questions, as well as engage with and transform the fairy tale tradition.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my niece, Emma Flowers. Her love of princesses, dress-up, and professional wrestling raised questions that led to this study. She is a beautiful young lady who loves to embrace, challenge, and rewrite what it means to be “feminine.”

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INTRODUCTION:

The tradition of fairy tales has evolved drastically over the past five hundred years. In the beginning, people transmitted fairy tales orally, and the versions changed with each telling. With the invention of the printing press, publishers printed various versions of these tales, thus creating authoritative versions. At the beginning of the 20th century, fairy tale cartoons became widely popular as an independent medium, as well as introductions to larger films. In 1937, Walt Disney started the tradition of fairy tale cinema with the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Since that time, Disney has released and re-released eleven princess fairy tale films. Critics and parents alike ridicule Disney for its depictions of women as submissive and subservient. Recent films have used fairy tale tropes, without referring to a specific classic tale, in order to ridicule and establish a new image of woman. These films are known as hybridization fairy tale films. By simply using the tropes of the tales, the new hybridization fairy tales can re-envision femininity as a whole, without the confines of a specific, well-known character. Despite the great strides that these films have made, there is still a persistent depiction of women as weak with a lack of agency. In order to identify the different performances of femininity and evaluate their adherence to or rejection of stereotypes, one must explore the evolution of the fairy tale tradition, Disney's role in the cinematic fairy tale, the fight against Disney-esque fairy tales using hybridization films, and Judith Butler's explanation of gender performance and subversion through parody. DreamWorks' creation of the *Shrek* quadrilogy provides an example to explore the success of reworking female fairy tale stereotypes, as well as the ways in which the individual films, as well as the quadrilogy as a whole, do not fully achieve them.

THE FAIRY TALE TRADITION:

Acclaimed fairy tale scholar, Jack Zipes, explores the origins of fairy tales within many of his works. In his recent study, *The Enchanted Screen*, he details the emergence of cinematic fairy tales. Before analyzing the newest medium of the genre, Zipes includes a brief history of fairy tales from origin to modern day. The summary serves to establish past and present functions of fairy tales, as well as support film as a legitimate and increasingly popular medium for the genre.

According to Zipes, the tradition began hundreds if not thousands of years ago. Unlike contemporary fairy tales, these narratives were oral tales told amongst adults in order to share a variety of information. Beginning in the nineteenth century, fairy tales started to gain a Western, upper-class, juvenile audience; however, the tales were still primarily told by adults. By the mid-nineteenth century, tales changed dominant mediums: oral to print. Despite the aid of the printing press, there was still a longing for the oral tradition. This desire accounts for the formation of folk societies; their primary function was to preserve the oral tradition.

By the late nineteenth century, the changes in audience and medium solidified. Children were the primary audience. Many fairy tales were printed and read to children by their parents or care takers. These changes altered the form and function of fairy tales. The oral tradition allowed the narrative to change from storyteller to storyteller. There was no definitive tale or owner of the story; however, the printing of fairy tales changed this. By printing a tale, a fixed and authored narrative could be owned by the purchaser. Many assume that the change from adults to children simply meant more age appropriate material; however, the stories included similar levels of blood, death, and abuse. The change in audience produced a change in function. While

previous tale conveyed a variety of information, children's fairy tales became a model for appropriate behavior, especially adherence to acceptable gender roles.

In the years between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many media became popular in the transmission of fairy tales: books, newspapers, journals, magazines, and plays. In fact, fairy tales are one of the first narratives to be adapted. Changes within the medium of print also occurred in the late nineteenth century. Instead of simple, print text-books, these books included illustrations. The primary function of the images was to complement the existing text. These images were not intended to add new meaning or to contradict the text of the tale. (Zipes, *Enchanted Screen* 13-14).

From 1890 into the early twentieth century, technological developments allowed film to take part in the fairy tale tradition. Mikel Koven comments on the medium of film as a way to convey the narrative of fairy tales. He asserts that it is the best medium to transmit fairy tales, especially when using animation. Koven also emphasizes that the medium of film gives the appearance of a solid text; however, released editions often work against the notion of fixed text by providing deleted scenes, director commentary, and interview with the actors (177-182). Within Zipes' study, he outlines key filmmakers and works that have shaped the cinematic fairy tale tradition as a whole. While Zipes includes all key figures from George Melies to Tim Burton, he contends that one filmmaker has left a mark on the tradition that still greatly impacts fairy tales today: Disney.

DISNEY'S ROLE IN CINEMATIC FAIRY TALES:

In recent scholarship, Disney has received an enormous amount of criticism regarding race gender, sexuality, multiculturalism, and capitalism. While these concerns cause critics to demonize the company and its productions, very few can deny the incredible impact Disney has

made in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Though Zipes encourages that we “Break the Disney Spell” (Zipes, “Breaking Spell” 21), he admits that Disney’s fairy tales form a large part of the cinematic canon and hold great power in the twenty-first century (Zipes, “Breaking Spell” 26).

While Disney gets many criticisms, none have been as persistent as critiques of Disney’s regulation and enforcement of gender roles, especially gender depictions of female characters. Theorists, like Bruno Bettelheim, focus on the positive effects of modeling proper behavior for children within fairy tale traditions. However, recent scholarship has forced us to reconsider gender portrayal and modeling and their effects. Alexander Bruce’s study, “Princess Without a Prince: A Consideration of Girl’s Reactions to Disney’s Princess’ Movies,” details contemporary female audiences’ reactions that both conform to and fight against the on-screen modeled gender behavior seen in Disney films. Studies such as Keisha Hoerrner’s and Rebecca Do Rozario’s, serve to firmly define what Disney espouses as feminine behavior. They both find that submission, inaction, passivity, concern with physical beauty, and expression of emotion flood all Disney fairy tale films.

These studies confirm the assertion that Disney’s fairy tale films are formulaic. According to Zipes, “Disney follow(s) conventional principles of technological and aesthetic organization to celebrate stereotypical gender and power relations and to foster a world of harmony” (*Enchanted Screen* 23). Disney is content with this formula and does not seek to make changes to its product, despite overwhelming criticism. Disney films not only wish to remain unaltered, but also encourage other narratives and people to maintain the status quo:

Instead of using technology to enhance the communal aspects of narrative and bring about major changes in viewing stories to stir and animate viewers, he employed animators and technology to stop thinking about change, to return to his films, and to long nostalgically for neatly ordered patriarchal realms (“Breaking Spell” 40).

It appears that recent criticisms have forced Disney to evaluate the reception of their formulaic fairy tales. After the release of *Tangled* in 2010, Disney announced it would not put another princess film into production in the foreseeable future (Weeks 1). However, *The New York Times* reported in December 2011 that Disney's newest princess will debut in late 2012 or early 2013. Disney could not abandon the formula that has grossed over four billion dollars in sales (Weeks 3). Despite the continuation, Disney realizes it is time to change. In announcing the newest princess, marketers emphasized how different the new princess, Sofia, is from her princess predecessors. The biggest alteration is the age of the princess; Sofia is only a toddler. Though I believe this change is superficial, it does indicate that even Disney realizes that changes must be made. According to Walt Disney Animation Studios president, Ed Catmull, "films and genres do run their course" (Weeks). He suggests that when someone can reinvent the genre, it will be reborn. Disney saw the death of their formula, and it is attempting to recreate the genre using a new type of princess. While this change seems minor, the need for change has started a cinematic fairy tale tradition, which is growing in popularity and quantity yearly: hybridization fairy tale films.

HYBRIDIZATOIN FAIRY TALE FILMS:

Kate Bernheimer contends "fairy tales have always been reinvented in every age" (qtd. in Weeks). It would appear the next stage of the fairy tale tradition is hybridization fairy tale films. Rebecca Do Rozario defines hybridization fairytales films in the following manner: it's a film that "treats its pretexts as raw material for an original work, and may combine various versions of a tale or several tales, or generate a new film" (2). Hybridization films move beyond mere adaptation of a canonical tale; they attempt to create a new tale using existing fairy tale tropes and conventions. Though these tales have existed and thrived before the late nineties,

recently this type of fairy tale film has become dominant within the tradition itself. In addition to DreamWorks' *Shrek*, films such as *Ever After*, *Tangled*, *Happily N'ever After*, *Princess and the Frog*, and *Hoodwink* all attempt to tell new tales by creating and recreating.

In contemporary cinema, the dominant method of creating a hybridization fairy tale film is through the use of parody. Cristina Bacchilega states that parody operates within fairy tale films through "undercutting fairy tale conventions by contrasting them with realistic ones" (28). This type of parody is evident in most contemporary hybridization films, especially the *Shrek* quadrilogy. According to Bacchilega's definition, conventional elements must be present in hybridization films, or else the presentation of reality would not have a strong contrast point. Because of the shared medium, hybridization films contain many of Disney's formulaic tropes. Diaz asserts, "Disney is still the referent, even when the reference is parodic" (2).

In terms of gender, hybridization films generally present a female character who acknowledges or participates in a feminine Disney trope. The function of the trope in the film is to be challenged by reality, and thus produce a different type of femininity by the process of challenging traditional notions. Maria Takolander avows that these new films "show women 'kicking butt' (and) are often accepted as evidence of the re-visioned gender space we supposedly inhabit" (1). Rewriting gender is not as simple as reversing characteristics of existing stereotypes. There is a clear attempt from hybridization films to help redefine and reconstruct gender depiction within the fairy tale tradition. Bacchilega indicates that there is a struggle: "contemporary hybridization of the fairy tale film reveals a clash of values—a struggle over gender construction and a fight to control the energies of fairy tale wonder" (41). The tension between the need to reconstruct gender portrayal and the desire to use existing tropes within the tradition create a conflict present within hybridization films.

JUDITH BUTLER-PERFORMANCE THEORY:

Before exploring how parody and hybridization operate within the Shrek quadrilogy, it is essential to examine gender construction as a repetitive performance. Judith Butler's theory on gender performance is essential in evaluating gender construction within hybridization fairy tales. Butler contends that gender is "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Gender is not a natural, biological trait, but rather a set of actions that a person performs repeatedly. Butler urges people to move from the concept of an original gender to redefining gender to "a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices" (138). These repeated performances are a construction of and interpreted by a specific culture.

Throughout her seminal work, *Gender Trouble*, Butler addresses the use of parody as an instrument to challenge the concept of original or natural gender and gender characteristics. Butler specifically uses the example of drag as a parody. She argues that the difference between the sex of the person in drag and the performed gender of the person in drag emphasizes the imitative nature of gender as a whole. Thus, the dichotomy collapses and the notion of naturalized gender is undercut by the clear performative gender produced by the parody (137-138).

While Butler highlights the potential of parody to debunk normalized gender, she also posits that not all parody is subversive (139). She describes the result of parody in two different manners. She contends that parody has the potential to be "effectively disruptive" and "truly troubling" (139). However, some parodic repetitions "become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (139). Though Butler does not distinguish the differences in the actual performances of effective and non-effective parody, she does ask questions which

constitute elements of subversive parodies. In order to subvert the notion of naturalized gender, a parody must let at least one of the following areas come into question: pre-defined psychological origins of gender identity and sexuality, stable location for the categories of masculine and feminine, and performance, not biology, as the classification of gender identity (139). With the knowledge that parody can be subversive, I will examine hybridization films and their attempts to reconstruct gender through parody.

The hybridization films of the Shrek quadrilogy are clearly parody films. Also, DreamWorks clearly attempts to break away from a Disney-esque depiction of femininity (Interview with Cameron Diaz). Within the quadrilogy, filmmakers use parody as a method to rewrite stereotypical, Disney fairy tale depictions of femininity. However, instead of consistently challenging feminine gender portrayal, the film relies too heavily on Disney as a reference; thus, they end up confirming, not challenging, the concept of naturalized gender within the cinematic fairy tale tradition. In order to see the ways DreamWorks attempts to rewrite femininity and the ways they simply confirm existing female tropes, I have analyzed the four films by examining the female characters. The first chapter explores the characteristics in the princess trope. Using these established behaviors, I contend that DreamWorks is not only unsuccessful at rewriting Princess Fiona's depiction of femininity, but also makes her adhere to more gender constructions as the quadrilogy unfolds. In the second chapter, I look at the potential for subversion given the rare addition of the female protagonist's mother. Despite this unusual inclusion, Queen Lillian embodies three different female roles, and she accepts rather than challenges the traits that accompany each role. The third chapter explores the potential for the hybrid character, Fairy Godmother, to rewrite depictions of femininity. While DreamWorks successfully creates a new character type, her destruction at the end of the film negates the challenge to the tradition.

Finally, the fourth chapter explores the femininity performed by the minor characters. Dragon is rewritten, but the alteration removes her power because she is female and forces her to exchange power for acceptable feminine behaviors. The parody princesses look different from their Disney counterparts, but end up performing the same gender characteristics. These four chapters prove that the parody of the Shrek quadrilogy serves to reinforce notions of white, heterosexual femininity; it does not successfully rewrite femininity to challenge existing tropes within the cinematic fairy tale tradition.

CHAPTER 1: PRINCESS FIONA

PRINCESS TROPE:

Though fairy tale princesses have been around since the beginning of the oral tradition, their characteristics have greatly altered from medium to medium. Thanks to Disney, the cinematic fairy tale canon has expanded to the extent that film princesses share common characteristics with their oral and print-based counterparts. Before examining how the Shrek quadrilogy rewrites femininity through Princess Fiona, one must examine the characteristics that comprise the stereotypical princess.

In her analysis of gender roles in “Sex Roles in Disney Films: Analyzing Behaviors from Snow White to Simba,” Keisha Hoerrner suggests that cinematic princesses, specifically Disney Princesses, are incapable of solving their own problems. The inability to overcome obstacles does not stem from intellectual inferiority, but rather from a meek, submissive attitude (213). In her specific study, Hoerrner finds that the princesses in Disney films exhibit a high number of prosocial behaviors. The characteristics included in this category are as follows: altruism, control of aggression, delayed gratification, ability to explain feelings, reparation for wrong, ability to resist temptation, and sympathy (216). While Hoerrner believes the princess figures perform these types of behaviors often, she asserts that one characteristic of all princesses is their lack of activity. In her study of eleven Disney films, Hoerrner discovered that the female characters performed one-hundred and fifty-seven total behaviors, while the male characters performed five-hundred and seventy (220). The numerical difference suggests that males are not only greater in number, but also in action.

Since Hoerrner's 1996 study, scholars have diligently tried to define the characteristics of a princess. Leslee Kuykendal and Brian Sturm examine what makes a good woman in a fairy

tale. Using Andrea Dworkin's bifurcation of good and bad women, the authors suggest that in fairy tales a good woman is a victim. This notion directly relates back to Hoerrner's suggestion that princesses are unable to solve their own problems. In addition to being victimized, the good women in fairy tales must be possessed by someone, often a male. Ultimately, the happiness of a good woman depends on being passive, victimized, destroyed, or asleep (39). These core characteristics can be found even in Hoerrner's early study. They often appear due to the inactivity of princesses and the clear prosocial behavioral tendency.

Recently, Dawn England, et al. conducted a study similar to Hoerrner's. In order to analyze the princess films in terms of gender portrayal, England, et al. had to establish the masculine and feminine characteristics found in Disney films. Her feminine characteristics applied to the nine films she studied, ranging the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) to *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). One of the primary aspects of a princess is the tendency to focus on physical appearance (559). While white princesses prize being fair, slender, and have light-colored hair, Disney often exoticizes non-white princesses. Princesses are often aligned with adherence to normalized notions of western beauty. In addition to the physical beauty of the female, a new characteristic includes other characters in the film commenting on the beauty of the princess. Because England's study covers newer films, she discovers several characteristics that have recently emerged including a princess' feelings of fear and shame. Both Hoerrner's and England's studies outline the specific characteristics that comprise the trope of a cinematic princess.

Although Disney did not create the Shrek quadrilogy, it does play a foundational role in the creation of Princess Fiona. DreamWorks clearly attempted to create a princess who was different from her Disney predecessors. The studio uses the characteristics Disney has utilized in

the past seventy-five years as a parodic referent for the rewritten princess. The trope of a cinematic princess includes the aforementioned characteristics, and the *Shrek* quadrilogy clearly demonstrates the influence of the trope through a process of negation and acceptance of its traits.

SHREK:

Though *Shrek* clearly attempts to create a princess counter to the cinematic fairy tale trope, the film relegates Princess Fiona firmly back into a Disney-esque role. At first glance, Fiona is unlike any of her Disney predecessors. She is cognizant of the role she is supposed to play and performs it willingly. When Shrek arrives to rescue her, Fiona runs back to her bed, pretends to be asleep, and even remembers to grab flowers to hold in a death-like pose. This scene is a direct parody of the closing scenes of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Fiona knows the expectations of passivity in her rescue; her survival depends on a man. At first, she tries to make Shrek engage in the role of valiant rescuer; however, he refuses to play the part of “prince charming.” Instead of waking Fiona with “true love’s kiss,” he shakes her awake. As the rescue continues, Fiona talks about how Shrek is doing the rescue the wrong way. She asks, “what kind of knight are you?” (*Shrek*). Though the film is mocking traditional fairy tales, Fiona still participates in the trope. She must perform the trope in order to create the parody. Thus, while the film mocks the princess trope, it requires that Fiona play the part in order to create the mockery. Although Shrek can rewrite his role, Fiona unquestionably accepts to perform her role.

After this scene, Fiona starts acting unlike the former princesses. This is the moment when audiences label Fiona as a new brand of princess. On the surface, she forfeits all the notions of the passive princess and assumes an assertive role. For example, after her rescue she literally demands that all three characters camp in the woods that night instead of traveling further. Not only does she engage in verbal aggression, but she also quickly demonstrates

physical strength. She tears the bark off the tree in order to make a door for the cave in which she is going to sleep. Hoerrner labels both of these actions as an anti-social, not prosocial, behavior (216).

This behavioral change develops further in the next scene. Robin Hood and his Merry Men approach Fiona, Shrek, and Donkey. Monsieur Hood grabs Fiona in order to save her from Shrek, the mean ogre; however, Fiona does not want Hood to rescue her. In this scene, Shrek starts to defend Fiona, but she demonstrates her own agency by using martial arts to fight Robin Hood and his Merry Men. J. Unger and Jane Sunderland suggest that Robin Hood presents Fiona with an opportunity to refuse the traditional female role (477). On the surface, this scene appears to overturn the passive female stereotype; however, the film does not wholly rewrite this role. When Robin Hood appears, Shrek states, “Hey! That's my princess! Go find your own!” (*Shrek*). This statement suggests that Fiona belongs to her rescuer; she does not have control over her own self. Fiona does not deny or question this possession. This acceptance of possession directly demonstrates Kuykendal and Sturm's assertion that good women in fairy tales are possessed (39). Again, Fiona's lack of questioning forces her into the princess trope. Though she shows physical aggression, someone still ultimately has power over her.

After the martial arts scene, Shrek shows admiration toward Fiona because of her fighting skills. Even though Fiona shows physical aggression, she still has “feminine responses” (Unger and Sunderland 479). She blushes and shyly turns away. The blush relates to both the prosocial behavior of humility and England's inclusion of shame as part of the princess trope. Though this scene does show characteristics of a new type of princess, it does not fully remove the stereotypical female response or question Fiona's ability or inability to act on her own.

As the narrative continues, once again it departs from former fairy tale films. In classic

Disney princess narratives, there is no on-screen courtship. The prince and princess meet by chance, evil separates them, fate reunites them, and then they marry. Unlike previous films, *Shrek* includes a montage scene that demonstrates the unofficial courtship between Shrek and Fiona. At first, Shrek steps on a tree so Fiona can pass over the water without getting wet. This action mimics the classic courtship action of placing a coat over a puddle. Next, Shrek starts swatting at flies. This prompts Fiona to catch them all and create a spider web fly wrap resembling cotton candy. Furthermore, Shrek inflates a frog and makes it into a balloon. Fiona quickly follows suit and makes a balloon animal out of a snake. Shrek and Fiona run away laughing. This scene provides a glimpse into a two-way courtship, which does effectively rewrite the fairy tale princess stereotype. Shrek performs actions to try to win Fiona's heart, while simultaneously Fiona performs the role of both the pursued and the pursuer. She does not passively allow Shrek to enact these romantic gestures; she engages and reciprocates the romantic advances. In this scene, the film successfully rewrites one aspect of the trope.

One of the most obvious ways the film rewrites the fairy tale princess trope is by creating duality within Princess Fiona. Maria Takolander and David McCooley go so far as to label Fiona a “Jekyll and Hyde female” (1). From the storybook opening, the audience is aware that Fiona is a beautiful princess by day, but due to an enchantment, changes at night: “By night one way, by day another. This shall be the norm... until you find true love's first kiss... and then take love's true form” (*Shrek*). Unger and Sunderland describe the “day Fiona” as the epitome of female physicality (467). In fact, Fiona looks like many of her Disney counterparts. Compared to other human females in the *Shrek* quadrilogy, Fiona is slender, flat chested, young, wears a dress, and has long, maintained hair. The enchantment has incredible potential to rewrite the trope of the princess. It allows her to take on a new, physical form. In standard fairy tales, beauty is the

source of power for a princess (Takolander and McCooley 7). Thus, by having an unattractive princess, Fiona can attain power outside of the western definition of female beauty. However, the film does not use this aesthetic alteration to empower a new type of princess. According to Takolander and McCooley, “While Fiona's alter-ego of an ogress is a potentially powerful one, whenever she metamorphoses into the masculine form, she becomes . . . less powerful” (Takolander and McCooley 3). While Fiona shows aggression in her human form, as an ogress she shows insecurities, regrets, shame, and desire for a normative, heterosexual marriage. Instead of assuming some of the dominant traits of an ogress, the film suggests that Fiona becomes further feminized in her ogress form. The potential to rewrite the role of beauty and power in the princess fairy tale trope lessens the more Fiona assumes stereotypical princess traits in both aspects of her dual form.

Another way that the film fails to capitalize on the duality is the difference between physical appearances. Though Fiona clearly turns into an ogress, she is not a hideous ogress. In fact, she has many rounded, cherub features. Her overall facial features are far more round and less defined than Shrek's. When Donkey firsts encounters Fiona in her ogress form, her appearance scares him; however, once he looks into her eyes, he knows she is the princess. Though Fiona takes on a new physical form, she does not take on the full implications of this new form. She is not scary, ugly, or aggressive. Unger and Sunderland assert that Fiona's status as a “beautiful ogre” negates the possibility of an “ugly heroine” (482). Thus, Fiona's transformation maintains the relationship between beauty and power. Her beauty is still the source of her power. Even though she has taken on a new form, she does not assume new, rewritten characteristics.

After Donkey discovers Fiona's duality, Fiona's quest to fulfill the typical fairy tale

ending increases. As her meeting with her future groom grows closer, Fiona reverts to simply performing her assigned role. She resumes the form of a human princess when she meets Lord Farquaad during the day. He is enthralled with her beauty and immediately wants to start making wedding plans. Because of her fear of rejection due to her duality, Fiona moves the wedding forward to that very day. Instead of receiving help from men to mount the horse and ride off, Fiona simply jumps onto it herself. This action appears to be a moment of agency. She seems to be a new type of princess; however, she is back to not questioning the trope itself. She mounts the valiant steed and rides off into the sunset with her suitor, just like every other princess. However, before she mounts the horse, Fiona is no longer Fiona; she is simply a princess. She is a means to Lord Farquaad's end. In order for Duloc to become a kingdom, Lord Farquaad must marry Fiona. She becomes the object of Farquaad. He refers to her only by her beauty and as a sexual object: "Princess Fiona, beautiful, fair, flawless Fiona. I ask your hand in marriage. Will you be the perfect bride for the perfect groom?" (*Shrek*). Instead of asserting her agency, like she did earlier in the movie, she simply accepts the plot and rides into the assumed happily-ever-after. Fiona not only reverts in her actions, but also her language. When Fiona is playing the part of the typical princess, she uses flowery language with thous and thees. When she departs with Lord Farquaad, she states, "Fare thee well Ogre" (*Shrek*). Her language suggests that instead of rewriting the trope, she decides to resume the part.

After she departs, the song the composers refer to as "Fiona's Song" starts a montage showing both Shrek and Fiona. This montage, like the former one, also shows information left out of many fairy tale films: the preparation for the wedding. Although Fiona does not look excited to be marrying Lord Farquaad, she performs her role as the future bride. She trades in her green dress, which up to this point no other princess has worn. She wears the typical, white

wedding dress found at the end of every Disney princess narrative. She concerns herself with the dress and examines small wedding details like the wedding cake, punch, and flowers. She begins to prepare herself for the typical happily-ever-after ending. She engages in a traditional wedding ceremony with Lord Farquaad; however, before the transforming kiss, Shrek rushes into the church to win Fiona's heart. This presents Fiona with a choice. The ability to choose her suitor at the wedding gives Fiona more agency than any other fairy tale princess before. However, the men in this film still possess Fiona. Throughout the film, Fiona has made several decisions, but all options for her decisions include a male. The males' possession of Fiona throughout the film confines her ability to choose. From beginning to end, Farquaad desires her, Shrek rescues her, Shrek delivers her to Farquaad, and eventually Shrek reclaims her (Takolander and McCooey 3). Christy Williams suggests that female masculinity is less threatening when coupled with normative heterosexuality (106). So, the film places Fiona within situations that will produce normative heterosexuality so her power is less threatening. Though Fiona gets to choose her suitor, her options are limited to fit within standard female heterosexuality.

The end of *Shrek* does not rewrite the fairy tale princess trope, but rather reinforces the happily-ever-after ending as normal. Though Fiona chooses Shrek over Lord Farquaad, the audience does not see her decision to actually marry Shrek; rather, the scene pans back to the swamp to Fiona in a wedding dress. While the wedding is not conventional, Fiona's role still is. She is in her white gown, with make-up, and fixed hair. She looks almost identical to her transformed ogress form in the Dulocian church. At the end of the film, a fairy godmother turns an onion into a carriage. Fiona performs the traditional bouquet throw and rides off into her happily-ever-after with her new husband. By the film's closing, Fiona looks like a non-traditional princess; however, she conforms to the trope in almost every way. She has moments

of agency and action within the film; however, the stereotypical ending negates the actual rewriting of this the princess trope.

SHREK 2:

In the first film, Fiona begins as a single princess who is rescued by her true love and true love's kiss; however, the second film commences with Fiona performing the role of wife. The opening establishes the theme that will continue throughout the entire film. Though Fiona still does not follow strict princess conventions, *Shrek 2* highlights Fiona's confinement to the realm of domesticity. The second film opens with a fairy tale book, which quickly confirms the link to literature based fairy tales. However, the book quickly disappears and the audience is left with Shrek and Fiona's honeymoon montage. Unlike many other fairy tale films, a cinematic depiction allows the audience to look beyond the wedding and into the actual marriage.

Fiona's actions in the opening montage sequence attempt to demonstrate her performance as a non-traditional wife, and on the surface, she appears to break many of the related characteristics of passivity and femininity. Some clear examples of this new type of wife include Fiona's engagement in a masculine rituals. The camera displays both Shrek and Fiona shaving their faces. This is a masculine activity performed by both the husband and the wife. Although this sequence seems to give masculine traits to Fiona, both the first and second films negate this new interchange. In her former temporary state as an ogress, she never had facial hair. And throughout the second film, Fiona is never seen shaving or with facial stubble. Fiona's non-traditional appearance allows filmmakers to ascribe a traditional, masculine attribute; however, her cherub-like features deny the existence of this masculinity. This superficial rewriting of Fiona's character fails due to prior knowledge of Fiona's physical appearance.

After shaving, we see Shrek and Fiona on the beach. The parodic referent for this scene is

From Here to Eternity (1953) (IMDB). In the original movie, the two lovers start out kissing in the waves and eventually move to the beach. When on the beach, Karen Hobbs, the female character, is lying on the beach with her male counterpart, Milton Warden, on top of her. *Shrek 2* reverses the physical positions of the characters. Shrek is lying on the beach while Fiona is on top of him. This small change connotes major changes in gender roles over the past fifty-five years. Fiona no longer has to lie passively under her husband; rather, she can assume a more active role. This alteration seemingly makes Fiona a more active female; however, as the scene continues, the film re-inscribes her as a traditional wife fighting to keep her husband. Unlike *From Here to Eternity*, the waves appear after the couple is on the beach. After the waves roll in, a beautiful, Ariel-like, mermaid replaces Fiona. Primarily, this demonstrates the ease of replacing females. At first, Shrek did not even notice he was engaging in a kiss with a woman who was not Fiona, despite clear physical differences. Only after Fiona asserts her physical aggression does Shrek realize what happened.

In that instant, Fiona has strength, which is traditionally labeled as an anti-social behavior. However, as Elizabeth Marshall and Ozlem Sensoy suggest, Fiona uses her power to maintain her position as Shrek's love (158). She does not physically act to save Shrek or to be the hero; rather, Fiona performs acts of physical aggression against another female to maintain her position in relation to a male. Though the physical strength is there and is traditionally masculine, her use of the strength is a common strategy in the realm of domesticity. Instead of rewriting femininity to allow strength for strength's sake, the film only allows for Fiona's physical aggression when protecting her role as wife.

The aforementioned scenes attempt to rewrite femininity, but revert to domestic tropes; however, there are a few moments in the opening montage where the film openly inserts Fiona

into the realm of traditional domesticity instead of attempting to rewrite her role. The first instance occurs when Shrek carries Fiona through the threshold. Without hesitation, Shrek lifts Fiona and tries to carry her through the door; however, together they are too big to fit. He eventually just smashes through the gingerbread house. This is the first moment that we see Fiona as wife, and it includes very traditional roles. There is no attempt to rewrite her role. After the beach scene, Fiona and Shrek are around a fire. A gold-banded wedding ring is made and lands on Fiona's finger after Shrek juggles it for a while. In Tolkien fashion, the ring reveals the phrase "I Love You" (*Shrek 2*). Though there is nothing inherently wrong with wearing a ring, only Fiona wears the wedding ring. This ring clearly makes her the wife of Shrek; however, Shrek does not wear a ring in this scene. The wedding ring does not make Fiona a traditional wife; rather, it firmly places her within the realm of domesticity, while leaving Shrek outside the confines of a ceremonial transition.

While the film clearly places Fiona in the domestic realm, the montage also successfully allows Fiona to assume non-traditional female actions. At the end of the montage, Fiona and Shrek are relaxing in a mud bath. Suddenly, the mud starts to bubble, and it is clear that Shrek farted. Shrek turns red and looks at Fiona out of embarrassment. Instead of assuming the common female response, Fiona begins to fart and make bubbles of her own. She is not embarrassed; in fact, she smiles and reduces Shrek's anxiety about his actions. Around the tub, jarred fairies make all sorts of faces in disapproval of this action. It is in this moment that two different types of females exist. The film does not require that one type give in to the other. Aligned with traditional behavioral judgments, the fairies assume the traditional female role. They are highly sexualized, and their confinement forces them to be passive despite the actions around them. However, the film allows Fiona's femininity to exist beyond a trope. She not only

accepts the masculine behavior, but also engages in it. She does not allow outside judgment to change her actions or reactions. In this small moment, Fiona acts in accordance to her label as a “non-prototypical princess” (Unger and Sunderland 464).

This rewritten female role does not last long. When Shrek and Fiona return to the swamp, Donkey first greets the couple by first name. However, when inquiring about Fiona specifically, Donkey refers to her as “Mrs. Shrek” (*Shrek 2*). In the first film, Fiona literally loses her physical identity and assumes the form of her husband (Takolander and McCooey 8). With true love’s kiss, Fiona physically transforms from a human to an ogress. At the beginning of the second film, Donkey’s greeting signifies her loss of identity through naming. She is no longer Fiona, but rather she is the wife of Shrek or Mrs. Shrek. Though the film’s use of Mrs. reflects tradition, this renaming strips Fiona of a revised form of femininity.

As the film continues, the central conflict emerges. Fiona’s parents summon her to the land of Far, Far Away. They want to hold a marriage ball for the happy couple and give parental blessings to the new union. The phrasing of the invitation indicates that Fiona will perform the princess trope. The word “summon” indicates that the king and queen “authoritatively call on [Fiona] to be present” (“Summon”). It is not a request for their daughter; rather, it is a demand. In the reassertion of a patriarchal system, the father wants to give his blessing to the marriage. This seems contradictory to the marriage process presented in *Shrek*. The first film introduces Fiona as a princess who has the ability to choose her own suitor; however, the invitation from the king and queen indicates Fiona might not have as much freedom as the first film suggests. She is still expected to get the blessing from her parents for her marriage. While the parents cannot unmarry Fiona and Shrek, they can sever familial ties as part of the withholding of blessing.

While Fiona accepts this tradition, Shrek takes steps to question this antiquated,

patriarchal requirement. Though Shrek does not protest as an act of freeing Fiona from this tradition, this questioning allows viewers to contemplate the process itself. Shrek declares, “Oh great, now I need their blessing?” (*Shrek 2*). Fiona explains that obeying it is part of being in the family. Shrek continues to question her passive acceptance of this tradition by labeling it as “fine print.” At the end of the argument, Shrek declares that they will not travel to Far, Far Away “and that is final” (*Shrek 2*). The questioning loses some impact because Shrek is attempting to rewrite the tradition of marriage, not Fiona’s obligation as a woman, wife, and daughter.

Fiona rejects Shrek's final ultimatum in the next scene. We see the couple in the carriage on their way to Far, Far Away. Instantly it appears that Fiona has some authority in the marriage. On the surface, Fiona rewrites the role of passivity, as both princess and wife, into an active role; however, Fiona's actions are still well within the confines of domesticity. According to the cult of domesticity, matters of the private home were issues that women had authority in, juxtaposed to the power men had in the public sphere (“Cult of Domesticity”). So, while Shrek refuses to visit Fiona's parents, Fiona has the authority to require the trip since it concerns family matters.

When Shrek and Fiona arrive in Far, Far Away, the geographic location confronts Fiona with all of her childhood expectations. Some of these expectations require Fiona to either accept or question her assumptions about femininity. Throughout the rest of the film, Fiona battles between her two forms: the attempted rewritten female of the ogress and the traditional passive trope of the princess. After arriving at her childhood home, Fiona finds it challenging to balance the performance of a princess in an ogress' body. In addition to her parent's mortification at her physical appearance, Fiona also realizes that some of her behaviors meet with the disapproval of her parents. Unger and Sunderland posit that it is Fiona's actions, not her physical appearance, that challenges her role as a stereotypical princess (467). Unger and Sunderland’s contention is

correct as it applies to the first film. Regardless of physical form, Fiona's actions challenged her role as female. However, in the second film both Fiona's appearance and actions contribute to her role as a princess. When arriving, Fiona's own parents have trouble recognizing the princess due to her physical form. The sight of the new princess and her new husband shock the town. The surprise does not arise out of any inappropriate behaviors, but rather out of unexpected physical forms. In *Far, Far Away*, Fiona is not a stereotypical princess either by looks and or then by actions.

Though her parents accept her into the palace, tension remains within the royal family. While dining, Fiona belches loudly. The king and queen are appalled, but Shrek simply states "Better out than in I always say" (*Shrek 2*). The action of the belch aligns Fiona's manners with her physical appearance; however, there is tension within Fiona herself. Unlike the earlier scene when she farted, Fiona's belch makes her embarrassed and causes her to blush. She recognizes that she is in a different setting that requires her to play a different role. The physical setting of the castle serves as a constant reminder of the role Fiona is expected to play.

While dinner in the palace reminds Fiona of the manners a princess should have, her bedroom reminds her of the life a princess should lead. Fiona's bedroom encapsulates the stereotypes of a princess. In her children's book, *What is a Princess*, Jennifer Weinburg lists the following as characteristics of a princess: kind, smart, caring, and likes to dress up. When Fiona re-enters her bedroom for the first time since being locked away, she is confronted with her role as princess and her childhood dreams. This internal conflict juxtaposes Fiona's actions as an ogress princess and the performance she expected to give when she was younger. When Fiona is alone in her bedroom, her typical princess dreams come back to life, courtesy of Fairy Godmother. Though I will discuss her character in greater depth in chapter three, Fairy

Godmother immerses Fiona back into the role of a stereotypical princess. When Fairy Godmother comes, the non-prototypical princess participates in the realm of Disney princess fantasy. Her furniture moves, talks, and gives advice. Fiona's gown changes from her daily green dress to a ball gown that closely resembles Belle's from *Beauty and the Beast*. In addition, "Fairy Godmother's Song" reminds Fiona of what a princess wants: a handsome prince, beauty, and a happily-ever-after. Although the song tries to force Fiona back into the stereotype, Fiona states that she does not need that type of lifestyle. With the rejection of Disney princess aspirations, Fiona attempts to rewrite the role of femininity for a princess. She rejects the reality Fairy Godmother presents, but starts contemplating her own decisions and current position in life. This moment of doubt does not negate her refusal of conformity; however, it does lessen the overall feeling of contentment with individuality and non-conformity.

After this scene, Shrek and Fiona fight, which eventually leads Shrek and Donkey to set out on another adventure. Their adventure in the first film was to rescue Fiona and bring her back; the adventure in the second film is similar. Shrek and Donkey leave Fiona behind at the castle. The duo sets out to find a potion that will make her life into a happily-ever-after. However, they create the "ever-after" that Fiona has just rejected. Fiona told Fairy Godmother that she did not want beauty, a handsome prince, or a regal lifestyle; however, that is what Shrek delivers. While Fiona successfully rejects the typical princess life from Fairy Godmother, Shrek forces this life on her without her consent. She returns to a passive role in her own life. She cannot stop the magical transformation caused by the potion or immediately choose to reject it. Shrek has once again changed Fiona's identity, while Fiona is passive during the transformation.

The combination of the physical transformation and the physical geographic setting creates a princess whose characteristics are even more stereotypical than in the first film. Unlike

the first film, Fiona does not engage in any non-typical behavior. She does not make decisions regarding the wedding ball, and she unquestioningly listens to her father when he gives her advice about Shrek. Though Fiona knows that Shrek is not acting right, she still believes and treats him like her husband. She does not question his behavior or sudden vanity. The audience knows this man is not Shrek, but rather Charming, and Fiona passively accepts the actions that have drastically changed her life. This physical transformation reinserts power into the hands of the three men in her life, Shrek, King Harold, and Charming, while leaving Fiona passive. The film places her in the realm of the typical princess, instead of attempting to rewrite the character.

Fiona remains a stereotypical princess until the end of the movie. In true fairy tale fashion, Shrek arrives on a white horse to save the princess from an evil plot. Shrek not only forces the transformation, but also rescues Fiona from its negative effects. When Shrek arrives at the ball, Fiona instantly realizes that the handsome human is in fact her husband. Charming attempts to make Fiona permanently conform to the role of princess by sealing her fate with a kiss. Normally, Fiona would be rendered helpless. The potion King Harold is supposed to administer would force Fiona to fall in love with Charming. However, her father chose not to give her the laced tea, thus, saving Fiona from her fate. The kiss prompts Fiona not to fall in love with Charming, but rather to head butt him. This is the first time Fiona resembles the independent, strong female depicted in the first film. In *Shrek 2*, Fiona spends most of the film as a typical princess; however, with the inclusion of the head-butt, the feeling of a rewritten princess character re-emerges.

Once again, the end of the film presents Fiona with the choice between conformity to a trope or a chance to rewrite who a princess is. Like the first film, Fiona chooses to accept Shrek and herself and return to ogre form. Though the ogre form does not necessarily free Fiona from

some of the common conventions of being a princess, she certainly has more ability to act instead of passively accepting her stereotype. While the first two films do not completely rewrite femininity through ogress Fiona, the second film shows the difference between Fiona's actions as an ogress and those as a beautiful princess. The film suggests that Fiona has more autonomy, action, and opportunities to make decisions as an ogress. The final transformation creates an optimistic ending for the film. Again, Fiona chooses to reject common traits such as beauty and a handsome prince. The ending re-establishes Fiona as a princess who has the opportunity not to conform fully to the trope her title affords her.

SHREK THE THIRD:

Despite the optimistic ending of the second film, *Shrek the Third* does not attempt to rewrite femininity through Fiona. In fact, the third film is the least concerned in the quadrilogy regarding the rewriting of femininity at all. E. Guillermo Iglesias Díaz states that Fiona's role is lessened in the third film (6). The lessening can be attributed to the division of the public and private spheres. More so than its predecessors, *Shrek the Third* focuses on Shrek and Donkey's public adventure to find a new ruler of Far, Far Away. The two different story lines include Shrek and Donkey's adventure abroad and Fiona and her female friends' lives at home. The splitting of the public and private sphere only confirms the characteristics of a princess; in no way does the bifurcation include rewritten femininity.

The third film begins with the death of King Harold. On his deathbed, he requests that Shrek take over the kingdom of Far, Far Away. Shrek is reluctant and asks for the next heir to the throne. After a dramatic pause, the king chokes out the name and dies. After the death, Shrek sets out to find the next in-line. Though both fiction and non-fiction use this plot, the film's introduction of it makes one question the rules of succession. In this narrative, Fiona is already a

princess (Bruce 9); she does not marry into royalty. Conversely, Shrek does not have any royal blood, thus, he cannot be king by his own right. According to typical rules of primogeniture, Fiona would be the ruler of Far, Far Away. King Harold and Queen Lillian never had a son. So, the power would then transfer to the oldest, living daughter. Since Fiona is an only child, she would be the next ruler of Far, Far Away. However, the film bypasses Fiona as the heir to the throne and gives that power and position to her husband. Even when he wants to discard this title, it is never offered to Fiona. Instead of rewriting the princess role to be powerful, the film removes the power from the rightful heir, leaving a princess without a kingdom to rule.

In addition to removing power from Fiona, the film positions her solely in a domestic, supporting role. Before the death of her father, Fiona mentions the possibility of hearing “little ogre feet” when the couple returns to the swamp (*Shrek the Third*). Shrek does not want children, and even labels the desire to have them as irrational. Before Shrek and Donkey commence their adventure, Fiona yells to the boat, “I’m pregnant.” In a nervous reaction, Shrek claims he doesn’t hear her and eventually just says “I love you” (*Shrek the Third*). In the most literal sense, Shrek is traveling the public sphere engaging in important business. While at the same time, tradition forces Fiona to stay home, perform domestic duties, and carry children. Instead of basing Fiona on contemporary stereotypes of working mothers and women rulers, the film relegates her to a firm domestic role.

Most of the third film focuses on the masculine adventure, not the domestic realm. The next scene that we see Fiona in is her baby shower. Her mother and a cohort of famous princesses, Snow White, Aurora, Cinderella, and Rapunzel, surround Fiona. This is a typical baby shower full of advice and gifts. Though the other princesses are shown in a non-conventional way, Fiona is portrayed as motherly and passive. The film fails to rewrite

femininity through the supporting females. Since their narratives are already established, they are forced to act only in accordance to the parodic referent. Femininity could be rewritten through Fiona since there is no specific parodic referent; however, the film forces her to conform, which also leaves the role and characteristics of femininity unquestioned.

The only time in the film when Fiona is an active character is when Charming and his cohorts of misfit villains capture the castle. Fiona opens a secret passage and all the women leave the room and hide. However, once they escape danger, no action takes place. There is no inquiry to what is happening and no plan to escape or fight. All of the women simply sit down and begin to talk. By the end of their stay in the secret passageway, the other princesses want to simply wait to be rescued. Though Fiona does not want to wait, she does not propose an action to free them from the waiting game. Even once they escape and Charming recaptures them, Fiona states that Shrek will save the day. This entire scene fails to rewrite femininity because there is a lack of action. Fiona performs a traditional wife and mother role, and she does act in order to overcome obstacles.

The end of the third film seems slightly more concerned with rewriting femininity. When Shrek has been captured, it is the group of women who rush the bar and save him. At first, this role reversal seems to switch power to the women and give them action. However, as Unger and Sunderland suggest, rewriting stereotypes requires more than a mere role reversal (479). Tropes remain intact if female characters temporarily participate in a deemed male behavior. Though Fiona acts in order to save Shrek, once he is saved, she reverts to her established domestic role.

Once Shrek is saved, the narrative moves back to the swamp. There we see the new happy family: Shrek, Fiona, and three little ogres. The ending, once again, seems optimistic; however, it does not necessarily rewrite the role of femininity. At first, we see Fiona doing all of

the domestic duties related to child-care: feeding, cleaning, diapers. Soon after that, we see Shrek doing some of the tasks related to parenting. This seems to suggest that the house might not adhere to traditional gender roles. These actions are what gives the ending a more positive spin. However, this does not mean that Fiona's role, as a woman, has been rewritten at all. She is still actively performing all of the duties related to her stereotype. She caters to both Shrek and her new children. She does chores, cooking, and cleaning. So while Shrek's participation in his own gender stereotype might be challenged, Fiona's is not. As a whole, this film is about the adventure of Shrek and Donkey, not about challenging the character of Fiona to go beyond expectations and limitations. The second and third films make Fiona conform more to the expected stereotype, instead of challenging the trope of princess and later that of wife and mother.

SHREK FOREVER AFTER:

While the first three Shrek films focus on creating a narrative by rewriting other, more common, fairy tales, the fourth film, *Shrek 4: The Final Chapter*, literally rewrites the Shrek narrative itself. Due to a deal with Rumpelstiltskin, the story operates as if Shrek had never been born. As a result of this negotiation, Fiona is never rescued from the dragon's keep presented in the first film. This forces Fiona to discard the trope of princess altogether. The film presents Fiona as an Amazon warrior, not a passive princess. While the frame of the narrative continues to adhere to the trope of a princess, the contained narrative successfully rewrites Fiona. One reason this rewrite is successful is due to the parodic referent. Since Fiona is not working against decades of fairy tales characteristics, her character can be completely rewritten. Instead of conforming to the traits of the princess found in the first film, Shrek does not rescue Fiona. She is left to develop her own individual traits instead of conforming to a trope. In order for this

revisioning to happen, Fiona is a princess in title only. She does not conform to the trope, including aspects of beauty and dependence on men.

This film opens with the idea of living happily-ever-after. Fiona and Shrek are in the swamp, married, with three children. At the end of the opening sequence, Fiona states that she wished every day was like today. However, the following montage shows the mundane occurrences of everyday life. While Fiona seems content, Shrek's reactions imply that happily-ever-after is not so happy. After some mishaps at the children's party, Shrek loses his cool and enters into a deal with Rumpelstiltskin. The deal gives Shrek one day as a normal ogre in exchange for one day from his life. Of course, Rumpelstiltskin chooses the day Shrek was born, thus, Shrek does not exist in the original narrative.

In Shrek's alternate reality, witches under control of Rumpelstiltskin hunt ogres. Shrek sees a poster of a female ogre and starts to think about Fiona. In his quest to find her, he is captured and taken to Rumpelstiltskin. Eventually, after Shrek escapes and stumbles with Donkey upon a den of ogres. This secret place is the first place Fiona appears in this alternate reality. Unlike the thin, fair princess in the first film, the film presents Fiona with her hair down and flowing, dressed in shirts and pants, in a warrior pose. Instantly, the audience is aware that the role of Fiona has been completely rewritten through this contract. She still resembles an ogre, but both actions and appearance have changed.

The most apparent way Fiona differs from her original self is her position as a leader. In the third film, Fiona was not allowed to lead anyone; however, in the fourth film, Fiona is the leader of the ogre rebellion. No one questions her ability or power to rule over the rebellion. Actually, everyone knows she is powerful and believes she is the one to deliver them to freedom. The clan trusts Fiona with keeping them safe and devising a plan to capture Rumpelstiltskin. She

is prized foremost for her intelligence and leadership and secondly for her looks.

Once Shrek discovers Fiona's location, he attempts to win her over. Shrek needs true love's kiss to nullify the contract with Rumpelstiltskin. Shrek knows Fiona is his true love; however, his charm does not work on this new Fiona. She is not the princess he originally rescued from the tower. She is independent, strong-willed, and extremely active. She refuses to perform the role of princess. In fact, she is extremely skeptical of the fairy tale myths of true love and happily-ever-after. This new Fiona is not dependent on a man to rescue her. She states, "True love did not rescue me from that tower, I did" (*Shrek Forever After*). Furthermore, Fiona rescues herself when Rumpelstiltskin captures her. Even though Shrek is there, she has the skills and confidence to perform her rescue independently.

Unlike the Fiona who conformed to the princess trope, this Fiona not only questions the idea of princess, but successfully reconciles her monarchical title and ogre form. In order to do this, she is a princess by title only. Her human form does not appear in the fourth film. Instead of hiding her "hideous" ogre side, she fully embraces the results of the enchantment. The only person who knows about her transformation is Shrek. Fiona hides her princess secret from the other ogres. This is a complete reversal from the previous film. She willingly exchanges the trope of a princess for the power of a female ogre.

The center narrative of the fourth film successfully rewrites femininity through Fiona. She knows the role she is expected to perform, but she refuses to perform it. However, this new female is not simply a female with male characteristics. The rewritten Fiona is more than a mere role reversal.

The ending of the center narrative ascribes power to Fiona. She has the ability to use true love's kiss to cause a transformation. She realizes that Shrek is her true love and she does

attempt to save him. Though she successfully performs the rescue, she loses all of the rewritten potential. Once again, this kiss transforms her back into her princess trope. The alternate reality ceases to exist, along with the strong rewritten role of Fiona. The scene pans back to the children's birthday party. The scene redisplayes Fiona as mother and wife. She seems caught-up in domestic duties of motherhood. Though Shrek carries the memory of the alternate Fiona, she no longer exists. Thus, although the fourth film does successfully achieve rewritten femininity, it also destroys its existence at the end of the film. In addition to the uplifting and optimistic ending a bit of skepticism and negativity remain at the end of the film. While Shrek, Fiona, and the children are set to live a "happily-ever-after," the film suggests that there are alternate ways to achieve happiness and some of those avenues can lie outside of gender-defined traits. Since the film does not allow the rewritten Fiona to exist, the audience is forced to accept the Fiona that continues to unquestionably lead the life her predecessor princesses have laid out for her.

CHAPTER 2: QUEEN LILLIAN

MOTHERS' ROLES IN FAIRY TALES:

While a princess is a large part of gender portrayal in cinematic fairy tales, the role of mother also has the potential to confirm or rewrite femininity. Donald Haase outlines four types of mothers found in classic fairy tales. Haase categorizes one type of mother as the female protagonist herself. This category applies to the heroines who become pregnant during the course of the tale (Greenwood Encyclopedia 369). Another type of mother is the “natal mother” or birth mother (Greenwood Encyclopedia 638). This group of mothers is often absent from tales; however, when she is present she is “either a benign or hostile figure(s)” (638). While it is often not the case, natal mothers can be a source of villainy within the tale. Because natal mothers are frequently absent, a third kind of mother, substitute mother, assumes the characteristics typical of motherhood. Substitute mothers are generally stepmothers, grandmothers, foster mothers, or godmothers (639). The last category Haase explores is mothers-in-law. Haase contends that this type of mother is often overlooked in favor of the more common trope of the evil stepmother (Greenwood Encyclopedia 641). When mother-in-laws are present in a tale, they often assume negative characteristics. This centers on the splitting of male attention; the mother must compete with the new bride for her son’s attention (641).

It is clear that many fairy tales center on the natal mother as an absent figure. This absence defines the trope of many other female characters: stepmothers, fairy godmothers, aunts, and grandparents. Marina Warner argues that the absence of birth mothers from fairy tales has historical roots. This absence is a “feature of the family before our modern era, when death in childbirth was the most common cause of female mortality . . .” (213). Warner's explanation applies mainly to classic print-based fairy tales. However, Lynda Haas contends that there is an

absence of mothers in cinematic adaptations and creations of fairy tales. Haas demonstrates the absence of mothers from many canonical Disney, fairy tale films. Some films are simply motherless, while other films originally had mothers and Disney “eighty-six(ed)” them (196). Warner's historical justification does not extend to contemporary elimination of natal mothers. One primary example is *Aladdin*. While the film originally had Aladdin's mother as a central character, Disney later removed her because she was not exciting enough. Whether originally motherless or made that way, most cinematic depictions continue to have few natal mothers.

In creating the *Shrek* narrative, DreamWorks fights against convention and creates a living, natal mother. Though this is a big step in rewriting femininity within cinematic fairy tales, the creators adhere to the patriarchal construction of the natal mother; they force her to be “benign” (Haase, Greenwood Encyclopedia 638). Haas contends that “mothers, when represented at all, are more stereotypically (and ideologically) drawn than any other character” (196). Fiona's biological mother, Queen Lillian, is no different than her cinematic predecessors. She becomes an “object of gaze with appendages” not only for the men in the film, but also the audience (Haas 197). Males and the audience are active by gazing at Queen Lillian, but Queen Lillian is passive as the object of the gaze. She is not active, but rather can only define herself in relation to her husband and daughter. Like many mothers in the films Haas examines, Queen Lillian is unable to define herself outside of her domestic relationships.

Part of rewriting femininity in the *Shrek* narrative depends on successfully rewriting Queen Lillian. Andrea O' Reilly believes that the mother-daughter relationship is essential in Western fairy tales because mothers need to teach their children how to form relationships, especially female-female relationships (456). Due to the maternal relationship, Queen Lillian serves as a model for her daughter. Queen Lillian conforms to the stereotypical notions of

motherhood and cannot form her own identity. Not only does the character of Queen Lillian not rewrite the role of femininity within motherhood, but also she reinforces the validity of existing stereotypes and teaches them to her own daughter, who becomes a wife and mother within the course of the quadrilogy.

THE ABSENCE- *SHREK*:

As the Shrek narrative begins, Queen Lillian is absent. Like many fairy tales, the natal mother of the heroine is gone with no explanation. There is no mention of her throughout the entire first film. Fiona, unlike many of the other cinematic princesses, remains parentless throughout the first film. In addition to the absence of the natal mother, there is no father figure or alternate mother figures: substitute mothers or mother-in-laws. This apparent absence of parental figures suggests that Fiona is more independent than her princess predecessors. Even when she marries Shrek at the end of the first film, her family does not attend the wedding. The absence of any mother figure rewrites Fiona's femininity by seemingly making her independent of family ties. However, this absence does not extend past the first film.

***SHREK 2*:**

The entire second film attempts to place Fiona back into a familial context. While Marshall and Sensoy contend that the film re-inserts the absent mother (159), the narrative inserts not only mother, but also father and a firm domestic space. All of these new elements relocate Fiona within a domestic realm concerned with family and the concept of home. Rebecca Sullivan argues that mother characters function as merely an exposition to the heroine (20). The mother is an important part of understanding the main character, but she has no independent or important role by herself. While Far, Far Away, King Harold, and Queen Lillian do serve as

background information; Queen Lillian's presence is far more active than simple exposition. Though Queen Lillian performs all the typical characteristics related to wife and mother, her character shapes and forms Fiona; her presence, not societal expectations, helps Fiona navigate her new role as wife. Queen Lillian's model is one that conforms to the trope of wife and daughter. Fiona assumes this model for herself, and she slowly evolves from the independent heroine into the wife of the hero. Queen Lillian's presence is responsible for Fiona's rewritten femininity diminishing. Despite the fact that Queen Lillian's model relegates Fiona further into stereotypical femininity and domesticity, her ability to alter another human so drastically clearly demonstrates her active power, despite her submissive behaviors.

Before Queen Lillian speaks, the audience can see she conforms to some notions of typical femininity through dress and appearance. When the camera first focuses on Queen Lillian, she is dressed in a standard, fairy tale pink fluffy dress. While Fiona wears a unique green dress, Queen Lillian wears a dress that closely resembles Aurora's dress from *Sleeping Beauty*. Her attire immediately connects her with one of the most passive cinematic princesses ever created. In addition to her clothing, her hair is neatly kept and dyed. Her hair is pulled back into a traditional, lower style, as opposed to wild and unruly. The restrained and straight nature of her hair indicates her reserved nature. Warner suggests that not only the style and length of hair are important for women, but also the color. Queen Lillian's age suggests that she should have gray hair; however, she does not. Her hair is blonde. According to Warner, blonde hair symbolizes a type of purity and fairness: "It was the imaginary opposite of 'foul', it connoted all that was pure, good, and clean" (364). King Harold's hair has turned white; however, Queen Lillian's hair indicates fairy tale purity. Unlike the young fair-haired maidens of other films, Queen Lillian's blonde hair is unnatural. She literally dyes her hair to recreate the associations of

blondness: beauty, love, erotic attraction, value, and fertility (Warner 367). Though her blondness firmly places her as a good character, her age reminds the audience that she actively reconstructs this image. Queen Lillian continues to perform her role as royalty, even though her age suggests that she does not fit into that role any longer. This continued physical conformity is a trait that Queen Lillian performs, models, and passes on to her daughter.

Beyond physical appearance, Queen Lillian's topics of conversation indicate her performance of not only the role of queen, but also that of wife. After greeting Fiona and Shrek outside, the royal family sits down for a dinner parodying "Meet the Parents." After an awkward start, the queen asks Fiona about her new home. She starts talking about the private sphere of home and hearth. After some prompting, Shrek begins to talk about the space in terms of real estate appeal and land ownership: public sphere. After Donkey breaks the illusion and calls it a swamp, the conversation switches from the public sphere of land ownership back to the private sphere of homemaking. Queen Lillian changes the spheres of the topic. She states, "I suppose that would be a fine place to raise the children" (*Shrek 2*). Instead of talking about the swamp as a piece of property, Queen Lillian only talks about it as the domestic space in which her daughter lives and her grandchildren will be raised. The conversation continues in that vein until the chef announces that dinner is ready. This conversation switch demonstrates that Queen Lillian performs her role of wife and mother in accordance to the typical scopes of conversation. Also, she tries to direct her daughter into properly fulfilling the role of wife and is the first to introduce the concept of motherhood within the quadrilogy.

In addition to her physical appearance and topics of conversation, Queen Lillian also performs the role of wife and mother through her actions. At the family dinner, she is the one who attempts to pacify the rising conflict between King Harold and Shrek. After the discussion

about children, Queen Lillian encourages everyone to eat and not to argue. She states, “Let's not sit here with our tummies rumbling. Everybody dig in” (*Shrek 2*). This statement departs from her usual vocabulary. She attempts to lighten the situation by using colloquialisms. Instead of using the term “hunger,” she chooses “tummies rumbling.” Likewise, instead of saying that everyone should start eating, she states “dig in.” This lexical change demonstrates her attempts to pacify the domestic altercation at the table. Despite her effort, the aggression level between Shrek and King Harold continues to climb. Though Queen Lillian seems silent as the dispute escalates, she joins the conversation when the two men start discussing children. King Harold points out that any child Shrek and Fiona have will be ogres. Queen Lillian states, “Not that there's anything wrong with that. Right Harold?” (*Shrek 2*). As she attempts to mollify the situation, she confirms that any grandchildren, even ogre grandchildren, are acceptable. This relates back to her domestic topics of conversation. However, after she participates in confirming acceptable conversation topics, she once again attempts to pacify the situation by making the king agree with her. Though he does superficially agree with her, the argument continues until it literally ruins the meal. While Queen Lillian ultimately fails at pacifying the situation, she clearly attempts to reign in the domestic disorder. She performs her role as wife, mother, and hostess until the end of the meal.

Queen Lillian not only serves as a model of “proper” femininity for Fiona within the film, but she has also served in this role in Fiona's childhood. Fiona's current behavior reflects the lessons that Queen Lillian taught her in childhood. This proves that Queen Lillian, despite her passivity in general, plays an active role in shaping Fiona both past and present. In the second film, we see a glimpse of Fiona's childhood before the tower. As Shrek thumbs through Fiona's childhood diary, he stumbles upon an entry that introduces Queen Lillian: “Mom says that when

I am old enough, my Prince Charming will rescue me from my tower and bring me back to my family, and we'll all live happily ever after” (*Shrek 2*). Queen Lillian teaches Fiona characteristics of the princess trope. In her statement, she encourages passivity by telling Fiona a man will rescue her. Queen Lillian also stresses the importance of family in a woman's life. She relates this domestic appeal to Fiona when mentioning the return to family. Lastly, Queen Lillian introduces Fiona to the fairy tale element of happily ever after. If Fiona fulfills the type of femininity Queen Lillian posits, she will be rewarded with every princess's dream ending.

This short diary entry reveals a large amount of information about the female-female relationship between Queen Lillian and Fiona. Queen Lillian's advice strongly shapes Fiona. In the first film, one can see Queen Lillian's influence even in her absence. Since she instilled Fiona with the notion of rescue, return, and happily ever after, she is partly responsible for the stereotypical princess seen in the first film. Though Fiona has moments that she breaks away from the trope, Queen Lillian is responsible for introducing Fiona to said trope and encouraging her adherence to it. Following the example presented from childhood, Queen Lillian has the power to shape Fiona into a wife and mother who firmly conforms to existing stereotypes. While Queen Lillian does not use any type of physical power within the film, she does have ideological power over Fiona and acts to introduce her to her new role as wife and her future role as mother.

The end of the second film communicates the importance of a wife standing by her husband. Throughout the film, King Harold has acted with poor judgment, almost causing the death of Shrek and the remarriage of Fiona to Charming. In the final scene, King Harold saves the couple by jumping in front of them. Fairy Godmother's spell turns King Harold back into his original state, which is a frog. While he shows shame about his actions and his physical form, the queen unquestionably accepts the change. She asserts, “You're more that man today than you

ever were . . . warts and all” (*Shrek 2*). Instead of asking questions about his past, his actions towards his daughter, or his connection with Fairy Godmother, Queen Lillian accepts King Harold unconditionally; she performs her role as faithful and accepting wife for all to see. She models this behavior for Fiona. One can see this unquestioning acceptance of a non-human form in Fiona's decision to return to Shrek's ogre form. After Queen Lillian's model, she knows she must accept her husband for who/what he is. It is part of her role as a wife.

As discussed in the first chapter, Fiona's attempt at fulfilling the role of non-prototypical princess diminishes in the three later films. Specifically within the second film, Fiona begins to conform to the realm of domesticity. The reason that the princess trope is not rewritten in the second film is Queen Lillian. Instead of encouraging behavior that works against the trope of wife, she shows negative emotions and then serves as a model, instructing Fiona on how a wife should behave. Queen Lillian demonstrates that power and action do not lead to rewritten femininity. In fact, power may produce a stronger adherence to gender expectations and tropes. Queen Lillian's performance as wife engenders the same performance in Fiona.

SHREK THE THIRD:

While *Shrek 2* emphasizes Queen Lillian's role as wife and mother, *Shrek the Third* serves as a transition, leading her from one stage of life into another. The major changes happen through the loss of her role as wife, the responsibility of being a single mother, and her final role as a grandmother. The type of role she performs in the third film is drastically different from that of the second film. The film gives Queen Lillian new roles; however, she does create a new role that rewrites femininity in general, but rather changes from one accepted trope to another. By examining her actions through her life transitions, it is clear that Queen Lillian's character conforms to, rather than rewrites, standard notions of gender behavior.

Before we see Queen Lillian in the third film, she has already transitioned out of one role: queen. The film begins with Shrek and Fiona assuming all the duties of king and queen. The film suggests that Queen Lillian forfeits her duties in order to spend time with and nurse her husband back to health. In order to adequately fulfill her role as wife, she must lose her royal title, at least the actions associated with the title. She no longer performs the role of queen, but rather wholly devotes herself to the role of wife. The loss of royal action affects the overall character of Queen Lillian. She is more passive than in the previous film. Previously, her title required that she play hostess to visitors and be actively in the public eye. Though her actions did center on many domestic duties, she was still an active part of the kingdom. With the relegation of those diplomatic duties to her daughter, Queen Lillian is forced to assume a more passive role.

The next big transition for Queen Lillian is the loss of her role as wife. When King Harold dies, Queen Lillian becomes a widow, losing her identity as wife. Up until the time of death, Queen Lillian is a supportive wife. Even when King Harold loses some of his lucidness, she still supports him. For example, his last statement to Queen Lillian is that she should not “forget to pay the gardener” (*Shrek the Third*). The responsibility for bill payment has never been up to Queen Lillian. They are royalty and have those types of duties performed by hired help; however, Queen Lillian does not say this. She simply states, “Of course darling” (*Shrek the Third*). Quickly after this interchange, King Harold passes away and Queen Lillian transitions from wife to widow. The early stages of this transition include the expected mourning from both Queen Lillian and the kingdom of Far, Far Away. The funeral focuses on Queen Lillian's distress. She is the one who puts King Harold to rest, and she is also the last one left at the funeral as she sadly gazes at the pond.

While Queen Lillian remains a widow for the rest of the movie, she suddenly assumes the attitude and actions of a single parent. There is no defined trope for a single-mother within fairy tale films or even the written tales themselves; however, based on cultural perceptions in the United States, Queen Lillian's new position as single mother is rooted within cultural characteristics. Shirley Hanson states that one type of single-mother derives from the death of a spouse. This mother does not fit the stereotypical single-mother image. For example, these women often are better off financially and do not meet societal disapproval. Queen Lillian fits the definition of Hanson's widow, classified as "independent older widows with one or more healthy children" (15). Stephen A. Grunlan asserts that widowed women with children are far more likely to receive sympathy and support than other single mothers (101). Despite Queen Lillian's child being an older, married daughter, she still assumes the role of single parent within the third film. Because Shrek leaves Fiona at home knowing she is pregnant, a strong support role opens up. Queen Lillian fills this role throughout the middle of the narrative.

Though she still performs the role of mother, Queen Lillian's actions shift between the second and third film. The reason for the change is her status as a single mother. In the second film, Queen Lillian performs the role of passive mother; however, in the third film, she is far more active and does not model motherhood, but rather engages in motherhood; her role is that of protective mother. Queen Lillian now serves to protect her daughter since Shrek left Fiona while she is pregnant. The first time Queen Lillian gives this support is when Shrek is on the ship leaving the kingdom. Queen Lillian subtly puts her arm on Fiona's shoulder as a form of reassurance.

While her role is subtle in this scene, it becomes far more active in the following scenes. When Charming enters the castle, Queen Lillian helps Fiona and her female guests escape.

Though Fiona is the one to open a secret passage, her mother is the one to usher all of the girls into it. She hurriedly states, “quickly girls” and all the princesses escape (*Shrek the Third*).

During this initial escape plan, Queen Lillian serves as the mature voice of reason. She provides clear, concise directions for the girls and problem solves in order to find an escape route. While in the catacombs, the princesses begin to fight and complain about the physical location and each other. Queen Lillian quickly enters the conversation and asserts, “Ladies, let go of your petty complaints and let's work together” (*Shrek the Third*). Queen Lillian's verbal direction guides the girls to an escape. Though this verbal assertion seems minor, it is a complete departure from her character in the previous film. In the second film, Queen Lillian contributed little to the verbal direction of people or conflict. She left that responsibility to her husband. Since King Harold is no longer there, Queen Lillian must speak out for herself and for her daughter.

As the film progresses, Queen Lillian's verbal direction changes to physical action. The type of anti-social behavior, such as physical aggression, Queen Lillian demonstrates in the third film is counter to her previous role. Due to her status as a widow and her need to protect her daughter, she assumes the role of physical aggressor. None of the other females perform this type of behavior. When Charming recaptures the women, he puts them all into the same holding cell. All of the other females are content with just staying and feel there is no way to get out of the situation. Snow White states, “Well, what do you expect us to do . . . we are three super-hot princesses, two circus freaks, a pregnant ogre and an old lady” (*Shrek the Third*). Snow White reduces all of the female characters to their physical appearance, which women are normally judged by. However, what she does not consider is that the female characters are more than they superficially appear. This is specifically applicable in the case of Queen Lillian.

Though she is nominally queen, the events of the film force her to assume new roles. She is no longer a model of proper behavior, but rather the performer of necessary action.

When attempting to escape from Charming, Queen Lillian uses her physical force to break down a wall. All of the princesses appear amazed. One can see that this action lies outside of her previous role because of all the surprise expressed after this action. Even Fiona is shocked after seeing her mother in such a physically active role. In response to her shock, Queen Lillian asserts, “Well, you didn't actually think you got your fighting skills from your father, did you?” (*Shrek the Third*). Fiona beams and shows obvious pride in her mother. On the one hand, this proves that Queen Lillian is embracing a different role than in her past. On the other hand, her statement to her daughter indicates that this type of behavior is not novel and that she has demonstrated it in the past, even if it is not in the recent past.

After overcoming the first wall, all the girls think that they can escape; however, Queen Lillian spots yet another wall. Without hesitation, she performs another head-butt. It appears that she performed this action to benefit others, while her reaction indicates pain to herself. Instead of being impressed with Queen Lillian, all of the girls seem worried about the trauma. This worry stems from Queen Lillian's reaction; she begins to get dizzy and sings to herself. Both of Queen Lillian's activities demonstrate her willingness to perform strenuous physical actions in order to protect her daughter.

After she recovers from this, she joins the girls in an attempt to escape the castle and leaves to save Shrek. Up until this point, even amidst the physical action, Queen Lillian is still dressed in a proper dress, make-up, and reserved hair. However, when she goes to escape, she assumes not only masculine behavior, but also a somewhat masculinized appearance. Instead of reapplying lipstick to her lips, which would fit her character, she smudges the lipstick under her

eyes. This makes Queen Lillian closely resemble a football player preparing for a big game. Her facial appearance changes from reserved to aggressive. In this moment, it appears that Queen Lillian's femininity has been rewritten; however, it still fits the concept of single mother fighting to protect her daughter and her daughter's husband. So, Queen Lillian does not assume this new physical appearance in order to change her look, but rather, she wants to protect her daughter and views the upcoming fight as a tough game or war. She intends to come out victorious.

After Shrek's rescue, Queen Lillian takes on yet another role. Shrek has returned, so Queen Lillian no longer has to perform the role of single parent, sole protector any longer. Despite being royalty by blood, she does not regain her "queen" title, because the males find a new ruler for Far, Far Away. The end of the film firmly situates Queen Lillian in the new role of grandmother. Throughout the third film, Queen Lillian slowly loses her other roles. Her husband dies, which turns her from wife to widow. Shrek leaves, which forces the widow Queen Lillian to act as Fiona's sole protector, a single mother. She then must forfeit that role when Shrek returns. However, the role of grandmother is not only established but maintained through the end of the quadrilogy. At the end of the third film, Queen Lillian bounces one of the baby ogres on her lap while stating "bouncy, bouncy, bouncy boy" (*Shrek the Third*). While she performs this, the baby ogre pukes on her. Instead of reacting to this bodily function in a negative manner, as she did with Shrek and Fiona, Queen Lillian simply smiles and continues. She is more accepting of this behavior because she is not modeling a performance for her daughter to copy; rather, she is performing her new role. Even though it adheres to various expectations of femininity, Queen Lillian's character is dynamic. As the third film demonstrates, she still adheres to accepted social behavior for women her age despite her many role changes.

SHREK FOREVER AFTER:

Queen Lillian is not the focus of the fourth film. In fact, she only appears in four sequences that can be characterized by two distinct temporal universes. She appears at the babies' birthday party and in a flashback negotiating with Rumpelstiltskin. While she plays an extremely minor role in this film, the particular narrative serves as a juxtaposition of her two roles: wife/mother and widow/grandmother. Neither role is rewritten; however, by seeing both roles in the same film, one can observe the changing roles of Queen Lillian.

The two flashback scenes display Queen Lillian as the wife of King Harold and the mother of Princess Fiona. The royal couple goes to Rumpelstiltskin as a last resort to save their daughter from the curse, thus freeing her from the tower. While King Harold accepts the inevitability of this dire situation, Queen Lillian does not trust Rumpelstiltskin. Her physical reactions demonstrate that the man disturbs her. However, King Harold convinces Queen Lillian that they must sign over the kingdom to Rumpelstiltskin in order to save their daughter. Despite Queen Lillian's reservations, she agrees with her husband's logic and the need to save her own offspring. This adherence to social codes demonstrates the type of wife Queen Lillian is. Though she has reservations, she willingly forfeits them in order to appease her husband and possibly save her daughter. At the moment the couple starts to sign the contract, a man rushes in and informs them that Shrek has saved Fiona. They then refuse to sign the kingdom over and leave.

Shrek agrees to enter in an agreement with Rumpelstiltskin. Rumpelstiltskin offers to give Shrek one day as a normal, terrifying ogre in exchange for one single day in his past. Once Shrek enters into an agreement with Rumpelstiltskin, we see the same setting again as a flashback. King Harold and Queen Lillian are about to enter into a contract. Since Shrek no longer exists, Fiona is not saved and the man does not rush in to stop the signing of the contract.

The king and queen sign over their kingdom. The initial reactions of the king and queen remain the same. King Harold still prompts Queen Lillian to sign the document despite her personal reservations. The difference between the two scenes lies in the fact that Queen Lillian's fears become a reality. Upon signing the document, Rumpelstiltskin makes the royal couple disappear into thin air. Despite Queen Lillian's accurate assessment of Rumpelstiltskin's ulterior motives, her complete devotion to the domestic realm forces her to discard the feeling and obey her husband. While she still performs her specified gender role, the film demonstrates that Queen Lillian was right and her perceptions of the situation were more precise than her husband's logic. This dichotomy shows Queen Lillian's ability to process the world around her; however, it also demonstrates the negative aspects of her submissive behavior.

The other set of scenes in the movie displays Queen Lillian at the birthday party of her three grandchildren. She does not have a speaking role during these scenes. In fact, it is easy to miss her appearance altogether. In the few glimpses of her, she is simply playing with her grandchildren. She has fully assumed the new role, which she was given in the third film. She plays with the triplets and watches them while Shrek and Fiona talk. She is part of their support system. Though this role seems insignificant in the film, it speaks volumes about her ability to play various roles. Though none of the roles she plays is rewritten in terms of gender expectations, Queen Lillian demonstrates the ability and necessity of performing various roles.

As demonstrated in the final three films of the quadrilogy, power and alterations do not equate to rewritten gender performance. In fact, demonstrated power can simply reinforce existing gender stereotypes. Stereotypically feminine characters have power, but it is limited in scope and works to uphold the status quo. Similarly, changes between roles do not create a new type of character; it can simply indicate the performance of various stereotypical roles. While

DreamWorks was innovative in the inclusion of the natal mother, it confines her to stereotypical depictions of a variety of feminine roles.

CHAPTER 3: FAIRY GODMOTHER

DUAL ROLES OF FAIRY GODMOTHER:

The Shrek quadrilogy is not only unique in the presence of a natal mother, but also the dual presence of both a natal mother and a fairy godmother. Generally, the female protagonist only has access to one helper figure. If the mother is not alive, storytellers generally assign a donor figure to the female protagonist. A donor figure is also known as the protagonist's provider, who not only challenges the main character, but also provides magical help (Propp). The most common type of donor figure is the fairy godmother. Specifically in *Shrek 2*, Princess Fiona has both a natal mother and a donor figure. Similarly to Queen Lillian's multiple roles, Fairy Godmother performs according to two diverse tropes: the fairy godmother and the evil stepmother. These two stereotypical roles manifest in Fairy Godmother's appearance and behavior. I contend that while she superficially assumes the role of fairy godmother, her true intentions indicate her participation in the trope of evil stepmother. By examining the historical perspective, as well as characteristics of both tropes, it is clear that Fairy Godmother is a new type of female character because she is a hybrid character that adheres to only select characteristics of the two tropes.

The underlying connection between Fairy Godmother and Princess Fiona is Charming. Fairy Godmother desires to marry her son Charming into the royal family. She desires to be Princess Fiona's mother-in-law. Warner astutely emphasizes the lexical relationship between mother-in-law and stepmother. She indicates that the French word "belle-mere" represents the idea of both stepmother and mother-in-law. Warner also posits that in the years preceding the mid-nineteenth century, one word represented the two words in English as well (218). While Fairy Godmother has no marital connection with Fiona, her desire to be her mother-in-law

lexically connects her with the concept of stepmother. In cinematic tradition, observers deem stepmothers as evil because of their direct competition with the young female protagonist. So, while it seems odd to call Fairy Godmother part evil stepmother, lexical and cinematic precedents warrant exploring her in this manner.

While these two tropes have widely differing characteristics, they share some physical attributes. For example, both tropes characterize the female performing the role as old. Though the degree of aging is different, both types of women are significantly older than the protagonist and demonstrate physical signs of aging.

Although the tropes have aging in common, there are far more points of difference. According to Jill Birnie Henke, et al., traditional fairy godmothers exhibit the following characteristics: absentmindedness, ineptness, limited strength, and bumbling (244). Fairy Godmother does not exhibit any of these traits. She is extremely organized, strong, and always says the right words in order to maintain a facade. However, one way in which she is a fairy godmother is her use of magic and potions. This is an essential characteristic of the donor figure of fairy godmothers according to Propp. Rebecca Sullivan contends that fairy godmothers are not human (4); however, in *Shrek 2*, Fairy Godmother must be at least part human because she produces a human offspring. Fairy Godmother can be classified as a fairy godmother due to physical appearance and her aid to Princess Fiona through magic. She conforms to these two dominant characteristics, while rejecting many traits that connect her cinematic predecessors.

Fairy Godmother fits the characteristics of an evil stepmother much more thoroughly than those of a fairy godmother. Fairy Godmother clearly displays the following attributes of an evil stepmother: she is manipulative, powerful, concentrated on physical appearance, has lost sexual desirability, and tends to draw attention to herself. Though Fairy Godmother is aging, she is

highly concerned with beauty and her physical appearance. Sullivan asserts that there are two distinct types of female fairy tale villains: aging, seductive beauties and ugly hags (4). Sullivan continues by stating that there are two sources that motivate evil women: power and beauty. Fairy Godmother is obsessed with both of these categories. Though Fairy Godmother disguises her aging using make-up and popular fashion, her desire to cause destruction is not so easily disguised. After her first appearance, it is clear that Fairy Godmother poses a threat to the happiness of Princess Fiona and Shrek. She desires to separate them and have Fiona marry Charming.

Shrek 2 does not rewrite the trope of the fairy godmother or that of the evil stepmother. Both tropes clearly exist in the film and showcase dominant characteristics. However, what has changed is the embodiment of the tropes. Instead of having two women to perform the two tropes, the film creates a woman who possesses the ability to perform both tropes simultaneously: a hybrid. According to Jeana Jorgensen, “As a reaction to canonical fairy godmothers, fairy godmothers appearing in recent pastiche texts continue to provide aid to (and sometimes challenge) the protagonists, but they also take on new roles in new narratives” (218). Fairy Godmother assumes a new role by combining two commonly accepted ones. Neither trope is rewritten within the film; combining the tropes creates a new character or creates new characteristics that an existing trope cannot easily define or categorize. This revisioned character allows duality to be an accepted aspect of femininity. By examining her appearance throughout *Shrek 2*, one can see Fairy Godmother's ability to play the two roles independently, as well as simultaneously. Her dual nature creates a new character type that allows new aspects to be added to femininity in cinematic fairy tales. While this new character exists, the film's ending comments on the ability to sustain this type of character.

THE IMAGE OF FAIRY GODMOTHER:

Before the film introduces the character of Fairy Godmother, we see her image. Though her image does not convey intentions or character, it does differentiate her from the canonical fairy godmothers of Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. The typical fairy godmother is older and desexualized. In order to distance a fairy godmother from desire, she is usually dressed in a loose fitting, monochromatic wardrobe. She is overweight and wears little make-up or other cosmetic adornments; however, this is not Fairy Godmother. As Jorgensen states, Fairy Godmother is a concrete character with dynamic characteristics and personality (220). The first image we see of Fairy Godmother is her billboard downtown. Before seeing her image, the simple presence of a billboard separates her from her canonical counterparts. Fairy Godmother markets her skills, potions, and happily ever afters to the citizens of Far Far Away as a commodity. Propp classifies fairy godmothers as donor figures: aids who willingly, and non-profitably, help the heroine overcome obstacles. However, Fairy Godmother does not help the citizens of Far Far Away without a price. The inclusion of consumerism distances Fairy Godmother from the trope because she does not unconditionally aid the protagonist.

Beyond the mere presence of the billboard, Fairy Godmother is depicted like none of her cherub-like counterparts. In fact, her advertising image is based on the 1980s Hollywood billboards of Angelyne (Vardhan 3). Angelyne was a non-celebrity who decided to purchase billboards to advertise herself. Once she began to advertise herself, she quickly became a Hollywood icon and eventually had a small on-screen career (Schwartz). Not only does Fairy Godmother follow Angelyne's advertising strategy, but she is dressed in Angelyne's signature color, as well as posed in Angelyne's most famous pose. Instead of modeling the loose fitting, monochromatic clothes of her predecessors, Fairy Godmother adorns a form fitting, pink,

feather, and glitter gown with a dipping bust line. Moreover, she does not have gray hair and wrinkles. Her hair has clearly been dyed to match her dress: pink glitter. In addition, the image appears to be photoshopped since she does not have any blemishes, fine lines, wrinkles, or age spots. In addition to her clothes and age, Fairy Godmother models exotic, gold wings. Though typical fairy godmothers have wings, they are simply white and most of the time hidden or rarely featured on film. Fairy Godmother's billboard wings are not only golden, but also doubled. She has a total of four wings. The mixture of the aforementioned alterations serves to exoticize Fairy Godmother before we meet her actual character. The billboard demonstrates not only her monetary motives, but also her clear departure from the physical appearance that accompanies the fairy godmother stereotype.

While this initial image shows a clear separation from the fairy godmother stereotype, it does not firmly locate her within the trope of the evil stepmother. Granted, many evil stepmothers are heavily concerned with outward beauty; however, this trope also depends on the character to be past her sexual prime. As Warner posits, a stepmother is often an “unsexed woman” (222) . The billboard presents Fairy Godmother as a sexed woman concerned with physical beauty. Beyond her concern with physical appearance, one cannot associate the billboard Fairy Godmother with the trope of stepmother. However, between the fairy godmother trope elements and the stepmother area of beauty, it is clear that Fairy Godmother's character depends on both of these tropes; she does not fit either trope independently, but rather she uses elements of both tropes simultaneously. However, though her character is a new hybrid type, the film does not rewrite either trope that she uses. Instead of altering the individual tropes and combining them, the film simply combines two existing tropes to create a new character type.

FAIRY GODMOTHER- THE ANSWER TO FIONA'S PROBLEM:

After we see Fairy Godmother's billboard, it is several scenes before she appears in physical form. When we see her, she is coming to aid a crying Princess Fiona. This time, Fairy Godmother's physical appearance is drastically different from her billboard. The difference between the billboard image and her physical appearance demonstrates the duality of Fairy Godmother. When Fairy Godmother appears to Princess Fiona, she assumes all the stereotypical characteristics of a typical fairy godmother. Instead of wearing the pink, form-fitting dress, she wears a subdued, A-line, blue dress. Though this dress does sparkle and shows a slight amount of cleavage, it is far less ornate and revealing than her billboard attire. In fact, her dress resembles a modernizing of Cinderella's fairy godmother's dress and Aurora's fairy godmother's, Merryweather's, dress. She enters as a donor figure. She comes to help Princess Fiona out of her desperate situation. However, she does so by parodying the gifts given by Cinderella's fairy godmother. For example in "Fairy Godmother's Song," she sings about mice making carriages, glass pumps, new carriage with a coachman, and beauty that will attract a prince (Adamson). At first glance, it appears that Fairy Godmother is a typical fairy godmother in more than name. She knows what type of wishes to offer and how to make dreams come true. She herself plays into and creates fantasies that revolve around the standard wishes of a young princess; however, the song reveals more about Fairy Godmother that extends beyond the trope in which she participates. While she suggests stereotypical changes, she also emphasizes the sexual aspect of a prince and princess situation. Many fairy tales do not explicitly discuss sexuality. While the princess stands for implicit sexual desire, sex and/or a physical relationship do not enter the picture. In her song, Fairy Godmother indicates that sex will be a part of the prince and princess relationship by stating, "For a happy ever after give Fiona a call" and "Lucky day! A bouquet!

You and the prince take a roll in the hay!” (Adamson). By including these phrases, Fairy Godmother once again performs outside of the trope.

AFTER FIONA - THREAT TO MONARCHY:

Fairy Godmother parodies the role of the traditional fairy godmother to Princess Fiona. However, soon after their encounter, the film fully introduces her villainous side. Though she still maintains the title of fairy godmother and the power that accompanies the position, she relinquishes the other docile characteristics and uses her power outside of the donor role in order to manipulate and control the people and relationships around her. Jorgensen asserts that fairy godmothers must obtain support from the monarch (219). However, once Fairy Godmother has the trust and support of the monarch, much like an evil stepmother, she threatens to destabilize the monarchical family. She not only threatens King Harold, but also manipulates the physical forms of Princess Fiona and Shrek in order to control and alter lives to fit her purpose: to make her son royalty.

After discovering that Princess Fiona is already married, Fairy Godmother quickly leaves the room. She appears outside the balcony of the royal bedroom and forces King Harold to join her in her carriage. Immediately, this demonstrates the type of power she has over the monarch. While at one point she did obtain support from the monarch, she now has control over them and the kingdom. She is shocked about the existing marriage and demands that Harold help her get rid of the current spouse: Shrek. Fairy Godmother's power over Harold causes him to take action and hire an assassin to rid the kingdom of Shrek. Like many other fairy tale villains, Fairy Godmother's power over others allows her to control the kingdom and cause destruction without getting her hands dirty.

After the conversation with King Harold, the audience discovers that Fairy Godmother has had a heavy hand in trying to marry her son, Charming, into the royal family. Thus, Shrek's presence threatens her existing scheme. When Fiona was younger, Fairy Godmother suggested that the king and queen lock her in a tower. The plan was for Charming to rescue Princess Fiona and thus become royalty. This type of planning and manipulation had to include someone from the royal family: King Harold. Though revealed at the end of the film, the audience soon realizes that Fairy Godmother helped create King Harold's happily ever after, and she threatens to take it away if Harold does not completely agree and carry out her wishes. This power suggests that she used her self-interested manipulation to gain the support of the monarch and uses the same power to threaten to destroy him. Her power can destroy the monarch in two disparate ways. The first is by revealing King Harold's true identity, as the frog prince, and the second is forcing Fiona to marry Charming, a man she finds less than appealing.

After her initial contact with King Harold, Fairy Godmother meets with him again to talk about how Princess Fiona is reacting to the change in "Shrek." King Harold is honest and states that Fiona is not warming up to Charming and that maybe they should simply stop. Charming and Fairy Godmother are both outraged, and once again, they threaten King Harold. Fairy Godmother reveals more about her role in the monarchy: "If you remember, I helped you with your happily ever after. And I can take it away" (*Shrek 2*). After this threat, Fairy Godmother leaves King Harold to finish the dirty work while she goes and prepares Charming for the ball. This contact with King Harold further demonstrates Fairy Godmother's power over the monarchy and her willingness to destroy it in order to achieve happiness for herself and her family. These exercises of power align the power of Fairy Godmother with the manipulation exercised by an evil stepmother.

As a threat to the monarch, Fairy Godmother is only a fairy godmother through title and power. Her purpose is no longer to help the protagonist, but rather to manipulate and destroy the royal family. This desire, as well as her desire to join the royal family through marriage, firmly establishes her as a villainous mother-in-law or evil stepmother. According to Sullivan, if an older woman is present, she must be vilified (3). In the director's commentary, the directors discuss the character choices made when developing Fairy Godmother. From the beginning, they knew she would be the villain; however, her role alternated from psychotic to a Bond-like villain. Sturm asserts "powerful women in fairy tales are generally ugly if not also evil" (39). After her appearance to Princess Fiona, the film portrays Fairy Godmother as a fairy godmother in name, but an evil stepmother in her application of power.

Outside of the blatant threats to King Harold, Fairy Godmother also attempts to destabilize the monarchy by destroying the marriage between Shrek and Fiona. Instead of trying to protect the male and female protagonist, she is actively working against them in order to establish a new power structure. While she appears as the typical Fairy Godmother to Fiona, she only acts villainously toward Shrek. In fact, her plan is initially to destroy Shrek. However, when that plan fails, she simply tries to keep him out of the picture long enough to unite Princess Fiona with Charming. As far as Shrek is concerned, she does not exhibit any signs of being a fairy godmother outside of her potions and magical powers. The difference between Fairy Godmother's treatment of Shrek and that of King Harold demonstrates the two types of power she possesses as a villain. Henke, et al. state that there are two types of power that evil women use: "power-over" and "power-to" (243). With King Harold, Fairy Godmother demonstrates her power over his action and even his past, present, and future. Because she helped him in the past, she holds a power-over him and is able to control him. However, she does not have power-over

Shrek. From the beginning, he recognizes her as a powerful force, but does not trust her. However, once he tries secretly to use her power, he gives her the opportunity to use her power to change him and Fiona. Shrek enters Fairy Godmother's potion factory and steals the “Happily Ever After” potion. Though he does not realize it at the time, he has given Fairy Godmother insight into his motives and intentions. This knowledge allows her to use her power and manipulation to change and alter the life of Fiona and Shrek. She has the power-to capture Shrek and to separate him from Fiona. Though Shrek realizes that her potion has the power to alter him physically, he does not realize that his choice of potion gives her the power to alter his everyday actions and relationships.

Although Fairy Godmother's plot to separate Shrek and Princess Fiona seems selfish, it is another way that her power attempts to destabilize the monarch. The breaking of a royal marriage will have an effect on the different levels of the monarchy. In Shrek's case, her attempt to destabilize the monarchy requires Fairy Godmother to step in and actively perform the role of villain. Her demonstration of power over the monarchy and power to destabilize the monarchy demonstrates her role as a stepmother-like villain who is “obsessed with power and status” (Marshall and Sensoy 160). However, her power as a villain is deeply rooted in her source of power as a fairy godmother.

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER- FAIRY GODMOTHER'S DEMISE:

As with all villains, Fairy Godmother must die. According to Sullivan, an aging woman as a villain is acceptable, as long as she is punished at the end (17). The ball at the end of the film presents Fairy Godmother's dual roles. While Shrek and King Harold know of her villainous side, the town and the women in the royal family are unaware of it and of her role as Charming's mother. By examining her role as fairy godmother, her song choice, and her actions as the

narrative villain, it is clear that Fairy Godmother's duality brings about her demise at the end of the film. While combining characteristics produced a hybrid character, this character cannot exist within the narrative arc and possibly the fairy tale tradition as a whole.

When Fairy Godmother arrives at the ball, she arrives in style, with flare and the approval of the citizens of Far Far Away. She is wearing the traditional fairy godmother dress she dons when first meeting Fiona. She presents both the traditional fairy godmother speech, as well as characteristics to support her parodic function. When she first exits her carriage, she says, "Can I get a whoop whoop" (*Shrek 2*). This is obviously not in traditional fairy tales, however, it does firmly fit within a rewriting of the fairy godmother for a twenty-first century audience. Next she states, "May all your endings be happy and...Well, you know the rest!" (*Shrek 2*) She reinforces her role of fairy godmother by mentioning happily ever afters. Her presentation at the beginning of the ball only shows her performing the role of fairy godmother. She does not try to overtly manipulate, alter, or control any specific person or situation.

We see Fairy Godmother dedicate a song to Princess Fiona and "Prince Shrek." However, during this appearance, she changes from her traditional blue dress to a red lounge singer dress. Though she does not look as seductive as she does on the town billboard, she does change in terms of physical appearance and beauty. She appears to be wearing more make-up and her physical posture includes lying over a piano and sensually tossing her hair to and fro. She is not displaying any villainous traits; however, it is clear she is no longer performing the role of traditional fairy godmother. In fact, the song she begins to sing sets the mood for Charming to seduce Princess Fiona into giving him a fate-sealing kiss. While the public in Far Far Away still views Fairy Godmother as good and a donor figure, the viewing audience is privy to her deception and manipulation of the situation. She is not attempting to help Princess Fiona;

Fairy Godmother is destroying Princess Fiona's marriage in order to gain status for herself and her son. At the moment of her wardrobe transformation, Fairy Godmother performs both roles simultaneously. She still looks and sounds like a fairy godmother, but her actions and intentions indicate her desire to work against the protagonist and eventually destroy the existing marriage.

The song she chooses to sing reinforces traditional gender roles. She does not choose this song because she fits into a predefined gender role, but rather she is trying to transmit these social limitations to Fiona in order to further persuade her to kiss Charming. As discussed in chapter one, Fiona shows some signs of independent thought concerning Charming. She knows something is not right, but she continues to follow the ruse because other people convince her of her role. Fairy Godmother uses this song to convince Fiona that she does need a man, and “Shrek” is the one to save her from the world around her. The song, “I Need a Hero” attempts to re-instill virtues of passivity, weakness, and dependency in Fiona. Fairy Godmother assumes that the song, her son, and the potion administered by King Harold, will allow her plan to go off flawlessly. Her song choice allows her to play the outward role of fairy godmother while simultaneously executing her plot to destabilize the monarchy.

When Shrek re-enters the scene, he complicates Fairy Godmother's plot. He forces her to reveal her true nature as the villain of the plot, as well as her role as a mother to Charming. Up until this point, the citizens of Far Far Away have accepted her because of her power that seemed to graciously help them. According to Sullivan, power used in a helpful way creates an unequivocal acceptance of an older female character (21). When she reveals herself as a mother, the townspeople are shocked. This stems from her role as fairy godmother. Fairy godmothers are donor figures; they are not human (Sullivan 4). Thus, the townspeople are shocked about Fairy Godmother being human, and the existence of the child brings together concepts of sexual

activity and age. Older women are not depicted as sexual; however, the sudden knowledge of offspring forces people to consider her as, at one point, sexually active (Jorgensen 222). The revealing of her maternal role distances her from the possibility of fulfilling the role of fairy godmother.

In addition to her role as mother, she also demonstrates her villainous plan, which aligns her with the role of evil stepmother. This action firmly displaces her role of fairy godmother and forces her to assume only the role of villain. Fairy Godmother states why she wants Charming to kiss Fiona. When the kiss does not occur, she indicates that King Harold was supposed to help by lacing Fiona's tea with a love potion. This demonstrates that she has been plotting all along the narrative and has demonstrated duality throughout the film. Because she could not create the perfect happily ever after for her son, she chooses to destroy Fiona in an attempt to exercise power. With both the power-over and power-to, she believes she can still create a happily ever after for Charming. However, King Harold steps in and foils her plan once again.

At the end of the film, the aspect of her wand becomes very important. Her wand, like many fairy godmothers' wands, symbolizes power. At the end of the film, Shrek and the minor characters work to get the wand away from Fairy Godmother. While her name will always be Fairy Godmother, the characters are working to take away the most essential element of a cinematic fairy godmother: her wand. When the wand and power is gone, Fairy Godmother will not be a fairy godmother, but rather simply a villain. Charming recovers the wand and gives it back to his mother. In her final attempt to rid the world of Shrek, she sends a bolt of power. Fairy Godmother intends this bolt to kill Shrek and/or Fiona. However, in an act of bravery, King Harold jumps in front of the couple. While the bolt hits and affects him, his breastplate reflects the bolt and sends it back to Fairy Godmother. At first, she seems unaffected by the spell.

However, the backlash quickly turns her into nothing but bubbles that eventually pop, visually demonstrating her defeat.

In essence, Fairy Godmother causes her own demise. At first, it seems that her hybridity can exist within this universe; however, it can only exist when everyone else is unaware of it. Once Far Far Away discovers her dual nature, she no longer exists. It seems like Fairy Godmother is a new type of character because she is both a fairy godmother and an evil stepmother figure. Though the film does not rewrite the individual roles, the combination of the roles creates a new type of character. Throughout the film, Fairy Godmother is able to play both roles independently and simultaneously. However, when she reveals both roles at the end of the film, the presence of a hybrid character fails. She does not belong to a single trope, thus she has no space in this tradition. Neither trope was rewritten, nor did the new character exist beyond the second film. The possibility of a hybrid character disappeared with Fairy Godmother's demise. Neither of the films that follow implements this strategy. The failure of hybridity suggests that a character cannot exist outside of a defined trope.

CHAPTER 4: MINOR CHARACTERS

THE OTHER WOMEN- MINOR FEMALE CHARACTERS:

My analysis of the three main characters makes clear that DreamWorks' attempts to rewrite femininity through a cinematic hybridization fairy tale film was not successful. In addition to the main characters, there are two different sets of minor characters. The first minor character is Dragon. While she has little screen time after the first film, she plays a vital role in the continuation of the overall narrative. The other set of minor characters includes the famous, canonical cinematic princesses: Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel. Both minor character sets play reoccurring roles. Like the main female characters in the quadrilogy, the film alters the minor female roles superficially. By examining each character's traits and then the character's actions within the quadrilogy, we can see that the minor roles have not been rewritten in terms of gender identity and performance.

DRAGON:

When the film introduces Dragon, it presents the typical medieval function of a dragon. The opening storybook states, "She (the princess) was locked away in a castle guarded by a terrible fire breathing dragon" (*Shrek*). The words and image of the dragon immediately demand the audience reflect on actions and characteristics of narrative dragons. Jacqueline Simpson analyze fifty different dragon tales in her article, "Fifty British Dragon Tales: An Analysis." Within this study, she outlines some of the common dragon motifs. A typical narrative dragon exhibits some of the following characteristics: destroys men and animals, breaths fire, flies, eats girls, likes milk, heals its own wounds, and has one vulnerable spot (79). Because of these characteristics, people think of dragons as male. However, the Shrek quadrilogy specifically

makes the fierce dragon female. At first, the film hides the dragon's gender; however, when Dragon encounters Donkey, a male, her gender becomes all too evident. While Dragon starts the quadrilogy as a source of power, the males of the film literally domesticate her, and the film relegates her to the role of wife and mother.

Before we meet Dragon, the film introduces us to her role within the opening fairy tale book. This image establishes audience expectations for this character. The dragon in the opening book symbolizes the dragon found in European dragon and knight tales. In this opening shot, the dragon is fiery red in color. It has a huge flame coming out of its mouth heading toward the knights. This dragon has wings, slit eyes, dorsal spikes, and a long tail.

This image of a fierce, male dragon continues into the beginning of the film. When Shrek and Donkey enter the tower, Dragon deliberately hides in the shadows and does not display any amount of detail. Though the audience knows that there is a dragon, it does not know any of the characteristics of this particular dragon. Dragon demonstrates aggression while chasing down Shrek and Donkey. When Dragon captures Donkey, he attempts to get out of the situation with charm; this strategy works all too well because the film reveals Dragon as female. The “terrible fire breathing dragon” image transforms into a purely feminized dragon. Dragon has all the physical markings of a typical dragon: fire breathing, dorsal spikes, scales, wings, and a long tail. These are the physical attributes that the film constantly puts in front of the audience; however, when Donkey discovers she is female many other characteristics emerge. Instead of the red dragon found in the opening storybook, Dragon is pink with a tinge of purple. Her facial features, while still dragon-like, are under a heavy application of make-up. In addition to the make-up, it appears that Dragon has either extremely long lashes or possibly cosmetic lashes. When Donkey discovers she is female, Dragon abandons many of her furious actions only to

assume the typical female response to flirting: blushing, shyness, and eye batting.

The presence of a female dragon is a potentially powerful gender reworking. Similar to Fiona's ogress form, a female dragon contains the potential of a powerful, female character without villainous qualities. Dragon conforms to the physical traits of a male dragon. She has all the correct physical components, and she has the same goals: guard the princess and defeat anyone who attempts to capture the princess. Superficially, it appears that the film does rewrite Dragon. She is clearly powerful and clearly female; however, the film removes the power when they emphasize the feminine. Unger and Sunderland contend that Dragon is both female and feminine (67). When Dragon assumes feminine behavior, she loses power. Though many knights attempted, none had slain or captured her; however, after she reveals both her sex and gendered behavior, Shrek is able to successfully capture Dragon and escape the dragon's keep with the princess. Though filmmakers could have rewritten Dragon as a female, feminine, and powerful dragon, they created a character whose femininity removes her power. In this particular case, filmmakers did rewrite the stereotypical dragon; however, they did so in an atavistic manner. Instead of encouraging a strong, female character, they create a female whose weakness arises from the performance of her gender.

When the film emphasizes her gender, Dragon becomes weak and eventually domesticated. The domestication process begins in the dragon's keep. Before escaping with the princess, Shrek literally confines the Dragon with a metal link chain. At this point, both Shrek and Donkey are aware that Dragon has a personality, needs, and feelings; however, they disregard these human aspects and simply chain her up, much like the modern domestication of a dog. In addition to domestication, the males in the film literally trap and restrict her to a domestic space; she is unable to leave her home. By not mentioning Dragon until the end of the film, the

film implies that Dragon is confined and domesticated for most of the first film.

Dragon appears again at the end of the film; however, this Dragon is not the one first introduced in the film. After the males capture her, Dragon has no power at all. In fact, the rest of the film she is simply a tool that enables Shrek and Donkey to fulfill their goals. Her first reappearance is when Donkey is sitting alone at a pond and reflecting on his rejection by Shrek. Dragon reappears, without any explanation, and begins to console Donkey. We do not discover anything about Dragon other than that she now plays a supportive role for Donkey. She remains this way throughout the rest of the quadrilogy.

Next, Dragon helps Shrek and Donkey travel to Duloc. In order to arrive in time to save Princess Fiona from marrying the wrong man, both males put a bridle on Dragon, mount her, and ride her to Duloc. This is one of the clearest demonstrations of domestication. She has truly lost everything that made her character powerful. Instead of being an independent, strong character, she is now a tool that the characters in the film use to further their own agendas. By this point, the only dragon characteristic she has left is flying. She does not spit fire or pose a threat to anyone until the end of the film.

The last scene in Duloc shows Dragon eating Lord Farquaad. Consistent with the rest of the quadrilogy, someone must dispose of the villain. When Shrek and Fiona are in danger, Donkey and Dragon bust through the church window; Dragon seems angry. For the first time since the beginning of the film, she once again looks like a “terrible fire breathing dragon” (*Shrek*). After entering the church, Dragon quickly eats Lord Farquaad. Once again, we can visibly see signs of dragon characteristics. Even though we can see characteristics, the power Dragon displays is quickly negated. Instead of being powerful in her own right, we quickly see that Dragon is a possession to be used when necessary. Donkey states, “I have a dragon, and I'm

not afraid to use it” (*Shrek*). Donkey knows that Dragon is a female. Earlier in the film he refers to her using the personal pronoun of “her.” However, at the end of the film, Dragon is simply an object he uses, thus he refers to her by “it.” While Dragon does re-emerge with many prosocial behaviors, it is clear that Donkey has domesticated and altered her into a tool rather than an independent character.

The last scene of the film showcases Dragon's gender as well as her conformity to social conventions. Before Shrek and Fiona ride into their happily ever after, Fiona throws her bridal bouquet. Despite the other princesses fighting over the bouquet, Dragon catches it. She then looks at Donkey, ready to begin a traditional relationship with him. Donkey looks away terrified, but after a reassuring look from Shrek, Donkey accepts Dragon as his wife. The rest of the quadrilogy implies their marriage, even though we do not see a wedding ceremony. Dragon becomes Donkey's wife because she is female and she relinquishes her power to him to use at his discretion. She becomes completely complicit and submissive to the will of Donkey and to a lesser extent Shrek.

Dragon plays a miniscule part in the rest of the quadrilogy, especially the second film. At the beginning of the second film, Donkey describes Dragon as “moody and stuff lately” (*Shrek 2*). He is willing to leave Dragon in order to get away from the unexplainable emotions she expresses. The film suggests that Donkey leaves Dragon at home to pursue happiness. In fact, he enters into the public sphere of Far Far Away while Dragon stays in the domestic space of home. This is a common gender role bifurcation. The only other time the film mentions Dragon she is not a character, but rather a role in a story. Even though Dragon has become more than just a dragon to the main characters, she reverts to just a dragon in the second film. Fiona talks about Donkey and Shrek saving her from the dragon, and Donkey brags about his role in the rescue and

his defeat of the dragon. He does not talk about Dragon as his wife, but rather as a narrative device. Dragon is a trope, not a character.

Dragon re-emerges at the end of the film. This is the first time we actually get to see her and learn more about her character. At first, we see her in tears. Dragon and Donkey apologize to each other and then Dragon reveals some shocking news; they are parents. The film first uses Dragon as a narrative device, and then when her character emerges, it relegates her to the role of mother. Once she becomes mother, her character development does not change for the rest of the quadrilogy. By the second film, we know everything about Dragon. She is a wife, mother, mode of transportation, and a tool that Donkey can use to gain control over a situation. The powerful dragon introduced in the beginning of the first film gives way to a domesticated dragon who is confined to the domestic realm.

The third film highlights Dragon in a more obvious way; however, her role within the film stays consistent with her previous roles. While Shrek and Donkey take another adventure in the public sphere, Dragon and her offspring stay with Fiona and the other female characters in the private sphere. Later in the film, Dragon appears at Fiona's baby shower. These two appearances once again expose Dragon's alteration from a source of power to a source of domestication. She stays in the private sphere while her husband goes out to save the day, and she appears at the baby shower, which has primarily female attendees. While she seems passive during the film as a whole, there is one point when she regains power. When Charming begins to attack the kingdom of Far Far Away, Dragon takes flight to protect the kingdom. In this scene, the audience sees a dragon that resembles the one portrayed at the beginning of the first film. Once again, she uses her power to protect Fiona against outside forces. Despite her attempt, she is captured and locked away with her children. At the end of the film, Dragon re-enters in time

to save the day and dispose of the villain. During the confrontation between Charming, the villains, and the heroes of the fairy tale films, Dragon finally puts an end to Charming's quest to rule the kingdom. Again, the film uses Dragon as a tool to restore the correct power at the end of the film. Similarly to the first film, Dragon disposes of the villain so the characters can create the correct happily ever after. Instead of eating him, like Lord Farquaad, she simply knocks over a rock that crushes him. Dragon's power is still present, but controlled in order to be used for the sake of narrative advancement. She can only use her power when others need her to in order to restore the narrative to a positive or correct ending. The film does not end by showing Dragon using her power, but rather shows her in the swamp helping Shrek and Fiona with their new triplets. The film cannot end with a powerful dragon, so they relegate her back to her maternal role as a final image.

The fourth film shows even less of Dragon than the previous three films. Despite less screen time, the fourth film shows two different dragons: reality and alternate reality. Similarly to Princess Fiona, Dragon is seen before the contract with Rumpelstiltskin and after. We first see Dragon in "reality". She once again is a mode of transportation for Shrek, Fiona, and the triplets. They ride her and her children to the triplet's birthday party. Her passive actions seem to be in the forefront. However, after the contract, Dragon is completely different. Instead of being domesticated by Donkey, she is the vicious pet of Rumpelstiltskin. Even though she belongs to someone else, she maintains her physical power and intimidation. While we can tell that Dragon is a female, she is not feminine. She has traded in her big eyes and make-up for fire breath and human entrees again. Despite being owned, she is able to balance both being a female dragon and still acting like a powerful dragon. While other films have made her forfeit her dragon characteristics in her assumption of female identity, the alternate reality allows her to be both

female and dragon successfully. Unlike the first film, the fourth film does not attempt to hide her gender. Also, it does not attempt to restrict her power within the realm of domesticity; the alternate reality is the only space that Dragon can be fully dragon and fully female. However, like Princess Fiona, the film returns Dragon to her domesticated self at the end of the film. When reality is restored, she is seen at the children's birthday party. Her physical power has once again been tamed, and her made-up face, long eyelashes, big eyes, and roles as mother and wife re-emerge as central to her identity.

Obviously, filmmakers rewrote the role of dragon within this film. However, the rewrite does not liberate the film from imbedded gender portrayal, but rather reinforces gender identity and performance within the quadrilogy. Instead of creating a powerful, female dragon, the film equates femininity with a loss of power. So, when the film alters gender associated with the trope, they end up removing the power associated with the trope. While this technically is a rewritten trope, the alterations serve to reinforce stereotypical gender traits and performances. Instead of creating an independent, strong, and active female, the film turns a character with those traits into a passive and controlled character. It is important to note that throughout the film, Dragon is one of the only characters who cannot communicate through language. She cannot speak the same language as everyone else. She expresses herself through grunts, groans, oos, and awws. Takolander and McCooley describe Dragon as a silenced female voice (6). I contend it is not the language barrier that silences Dragon, but rather the film's insistence on domestication. While Dragon was independent and powerful, she was seen, heard, and understood by the characters with whom she interacted. However, as domestication slowly began and entrapped Dragon, she lost her ability to communicate or be heard. She did not have any independent thoughts, desires, or actions to communicate. Rather, she did what other characters

asked of her. Thus, while I believe that Dragon is a silenced figure in the film, I believe that silence is imposed by domestication, not simply her lack of language skills.

THE PARODY DISNEY PRINCESSES:

While the film creates new main characters that parody cinematic fairy tale tropes in general, it also includes canonic characters in a new light. There is no doubt that filmmakers include and alter the Disney canon of princesses from their original cinematic appearance; however, they do not truly rewrite the princesses' gender portrayal within films. Though the Disney princesses are different than their original characters, they are still firmly rooted within their parodic referent, thus their gender portrayal remains consistent with their original characters. By examining the characters of Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel, it is clear that while they are superficially changed, their gender performance remains consistent with their cinematic originals.

Snow White is the original Disney princess. When released in 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* helped launch Disney as a contender in children's animated full-length feature films. England, et al. contend that four of Snow White's main feminine features include affection, passivity, fear, and nurturing (562). Though minimized within the Shrek narrative, these characteristics still appear and help Snow White stay trapped by her original gendered depiction. We originally see Snow White in the first film as a corpse. She is in her glass box sitting on a table in Shrek's swamp. Shrek states, "Dead broad off the table" (*Shrek*).

Immediately, the film gives the audience the same Snow White that appeared in 1937. She does not have the ability to be rewritten because she is in a passive, poisoned death state. Instead of introducing a new Snow White, the film simply reuses the cinematic princess as she first appeared. Later in the film, the Magic Mirror introduces Snow White as a potential mate for

Lord Farquaad. The Magic Mirror describes Snow White in the following manner: “Although she lives with seven other men, she's not easy. Just kiss her dead, frozen lips and find out what a live wire she is. Come on. Give it up for Snow White!” (*Shrek*). The Magic Mirror describes Snow White in a different way than Disney. There is a major alteration in the character with the introduction of sexual innuendo. However, ultimately, Snow White is described as passive due to the language of death. Though the mirror indicates the possibility of activity, Snow White is dependant on a man to wake her up in order for her to be active. Again, this description hints at one of her main characteristics: passivity. During the film’s end, Snow White re-emerges as competition with Cinderella for the bridal bouquet. Both girls are trying to catch their happily ever after. Though this does not directly relate to a specific characteristic that England, et al. outline, it does relate to the princess trope as described in chapter one.

Snow White makes a brief appearance in the second film and plays a major role in the third film. In the second film, Fairy Godmother simply mentions Snow White as a success story. Once again, Snow White is dependant on an outside source in order to achieve a happily ever after. Though she is obviously not a prince, Fairy Godmother’s help indicates a certain lack of action or ability in Snow White’s character. In the third film, Snow White plays a major speaking part. The third film, more so than the previous films, alters the physical appearance and language of Snow White. This film seems to be the most transformative; however, Snow White’s actions are still rooted in her imitative characteristics. The film establishes Snow White as a good friend of Princess Fiona. We see her in attendance at Fiona’s baby shower. Through her dialogue at the baby shower, it is obvious that Snow White still has characteristics of affection and nurturing. When Snow White asks Fiona to open her present, she states, “I got you the biggest one because I love you the most” (*Shrek the Third*). While this upsets the other princesses, it does show Snow

White's tendency to be affectionate and define herself by giving to others. The gift Snow White gives seems contradictory in terms of nurturing. She gifts Shrek and Fiona with a nanny dwarf, stating she has six more at home. On the one hand, gifting the dwarf means that Shrek and Fiona do not need to give direct affection to their children. This seems to take away from the nurturing tendencies of parenthood; however, Snow White's consideration of nurture for the children directly reflects her personal concern for nurture. Each princess gives a gift, which reflects her canonical character. By giving a dwarf, Snow White attempts to assure that the newborns will be taken care of. Although her language and interactions with the other princesses seem contemporary, the underlying characteristics from her canonical counterpart remain.

The other characteristic she is known for is fear. When Charming comes and takes over the castle, the new Snow White continues to show fear and passivity. Upon knowledge of the invasion, Snow White declares "Everybody stay calm. We're all going to die!" (*Shrek the Third*). This statement clearly indicates that Snow White, more than the other princesses, is frightened about the upcoming events. Even when the princesses take shelter, she still has a doomsday attitude: "So I guess the plan is we just wander aimlessly in this stink hole until we rot" (*Shrek the Third*). The idea of rotting recalls her previous statements concerning fear of death. While the film alters her language, her attitude and characteristics are consistent with her previous role. In moments of fear, her passivity becomes dominant. When the women are trying to figure out an escape route, Snow White declares that everyone should "assume the position" (*Shrek the Third*). This declaration makes all the girls fall back to their damsel in distress positions. Snow White lies down, closes her eyes, and puckers her lips. She is waiting to be rescued by a prince, like the canonical tale. She cannot think of another way to escape the situation. Instead of taking action, she is willing to simply lie down until someone takes action

for her. This is reflective of Disney's Snow White.

Snow White's bond with nature appears to be completely rewritten. In Disney's version of her narrative, she uses her singing ability to gather all the birds around. However, in *Shrek*, instead of having the animals around for companionship, she uses them to attack the evil trees. While she is calling them, her face suddenly changes and she begins singing Led Zeppelin. This causes the birds to attack the evil tree. Her beauty and passivity mislead the guards and villains in the area. She is able to use this characteristic and start the fight between the good fairy tale characters and the villains at the end of the movie. Because she uses her own stereotype to gain access to the castle, she still performs her original role. Since a parody requires a referent, she still must perform some of her previous characteristics. Even though these actions lead to a different result, she still participates in some of her canonical traits. The new result does not mean she attempts to subvert her canonical traits. She does not question her performance. She does not use her skills to comment on their naturalized state. Rather, she uses the actions she is familiar with and a different outcome emerges.

In addition to Snow White, Cinderella also plays a significant role within the quadrilogy. According to England, et al., Cinderella is most known for her ties to home and chores, as well as her submissive nature (563). Like Snow White, despite the physical and lexical difference, Cinderella's gender depiction stays consistent with her Disney paradoxical referent. In the first film, the Magic Mirror describes Cinderella in the following way: "Bachelorette number one is a mentally abused shut-in from a kingdom far, far away. She likes sushi and hot tubbing anytime. Her hobbies include cooking and cleaning for her two evil sisters. Please welcome Cinderella" (*Shrek*). The inclusion of food preference and her like of hot tubs seems to emphasize a change of character. This is one major alteration in the description; however, the other parts of the

description stick faithfully to the Disney version of Cinderella. This description reflects her traits of submissiveness and labor; she is submissive to her stepmother, and she cleans up after her stepsisters. Though the mirror presents some new details, she is still rooted in the same traits as her Disney counterpart.

The third film superficially alters Cinderella, but she still adheres to the traits of the cinematic canon. When she attends Fiona's baby shower, she gives a gift that relates to her concern for domestic cleanliness: a plastic bag and a pooper scooper. She states the gift is "for the poopies" (*Shrek the Third*). Though her language does not reflect Disney's Cinderella, her strong tie to domestic upkeep still persists. While she is altered superficially, some gender depictions are still firmly attached.

Later in the film, Cinderella is concerned with the cleanliness of their escape tunnel. When mere survival is at hand, she is concerned about the dust and the dirt of the secret passageway. She says the dirt and grime remind her of being a hobo. This attention to cleanliness persists even after their capture. When locked in a guarded cell, the camera displays Cinderella on hands and knees scrubbing the floor. Her goal is to make the floor shine. In the end, the floor is so shiny she can literally see her own reflection. When Snow White demands the princesses take their positions, Cinderella wipes off a seat and sits with her legs crossed. Despite a new story, Cinderella's characteristics remain the same at the core.

During the fight scene at the end of the movie, her traits once again come in to play. She uses her stereotypical identifiers as weapons. She uses her glass slipper as a boomerang that knocks out a few villains. Later, she rushes the stage waving a mop. Her glass slipper firmly ties her to her parodic referent. Once again, this strong connection reminds us of her gendered characteristics such as submission and inactivity. Her mop ties us back to her domestic chores.

Though these iconic representations create a new appearance, they still keep her firmly rooted in her parodic referent, thus not rewritten in terms of gender performance and identity. She depends on these characteristics, and she does not question their root or validity.

The other two main princesses are heavily featured in the third film, but not the first two films. While Sleeping Beauty is mentioned in the second film, Rapunzel is not mentioned in any film other than the third film. Starting with Sleeping Beauty, England, et al. outline the following characteristics based on her Disney portrayal: affectionate, pretty, and tentative (562). Of course, her name also contributes significantly to one of her major actions, or rather inactions: sleep. While Shrek's Sleeping Beauty is different from the Disney version, the new film still uses the same fundamental characteristics in order to comment on the previous film, thus imbedding some gender depiction. Sleeping Beauty's description of Fiona as "just precious" (*Shrek the Third*) hints at her affectionate side. Her physical appearance is most altered among all of the princesses. While Snow White, Cinderella, and Rapunzel reflect physical characteristics and clothing choices of their previous movies, Sleeping Beauty does not. While she is still beautiful, she is more homely than Disney's canonical image of her. Her dress is not the bright pink dress from the end of the movie. Rather, the dress looks more like her woods dress from earlier in the movie before she married the prince. Also, instead of having golden hair, which Disney's Aurora has, she has a light brown hair. The non-blonde hair removes the associations of blondness, which include purity and fairness (Warner 364). Unlike the other princesses, her alterations go beyond language and include her physical appearance. Throughout *Shrek 3*, Sleeping Beauty is both tentative and ditzy. She does not make any decisions on her own and often doubts or does not understand the plans of others. After Cinderella's gift, Sleeping Beauty admits that she thought babies did not poop. In addition to the characteristics England, et al. mention, Sleeping

Beauty constantly falls asleep in this film, which suggests narcolepsy. Unlike her parodic referent, Sleeping Beauty falls asleep frequently. While the Disney Sleeping Beauty pricks her finger and falls into a deep sleep, Shrek's Sleeping Beauty simply falls asleep in every situation. There are many times that Doris, Cinderella's ugly stepsister, has to carry her around. Also, Sleeping Beauty will wake up and not realize what is going on. Even within this film, she is mostly inactive. Her role in the final fight scene is to fall asleep and let a guard trip over her. While the film superficially rewrites her physical appearance and language, her characteristics, especially that of sleeping, is still in the forefront.

Rapunzel, on the other hand, does not have a Disney canonical referent. DreamWorks released *Shrek the Third* in 2007. Disney did not release *Tangled*, starring Rapunzel, until 2010. Because of the lack of a Disney predecessor, Rapunzel cannot be evaluated on her characteristics as they relate to a Disney cinematic parodic referent. Even though there is no cinematic counterpart, Rapunzel is still a princess, and thus has characteristics deriving from the trope of a princess. Narratively, she is submissive, weak, and inactive. However, within the film, Rapunzel is actually considered a minor villain. Unlike Fairy Godmother, Rapunzel is young and still considered a sexual character; she is desired. However, Rapunzel demonstrates many of the characteristics of a villain. She is manipulative and powerful. Her actions lead to success for her and Charming. Though Rapunzel looks strong on her own, I believe her power comes through masculine affiliation. She only betrays her friends because Charming asks her to and promises to make her queen in return. Ultimately, the marriage plot and following power convinces Rapunzel to become a minor villain within the film.

Judging by all the minor characters, it is clear that rewriting gender depiction within hybridization fairy tale films is incredibly complex and hard to achieve. While filmmakers did

rewrite the role of dragon, they depicted her primarily as feminine, removing all the power that her identity as a dragon afforded her. This rewrite reinforced gender stereotypes; it did not liberate the character. While all the secondary princesses appear to be different from their Disney counterparts, they are simply the same characteristics in superficially altered characters. The new characters are so deeply rooted in the parodic referent that the attempted rewrite of the princesses is unsuccessful on a character level.

CONCLUSION:

The fairy tale tradition has evolved significantly since the utterance of oral tales. With the newest type of medium, cinematic fairy tales have incredible influence over children and adults alike. The implicit and explicit messages of film influence viewers in everyday life. This impact leads to the need to critically examine film. While much research has been done on Disney films, lesser known film studios produce many films that do not receive much, if any, critical attention. According to Anneke Smelik, there is a great need to focus on gender and the cinema: "Cinema is a cultural practice where myths about women and femininity, and men and masculinity, in short, myths about sexual difference are produced" (7). The purpose of analyzing cinema in terms of gender is not only to identify gender myths, but also work towards debunking these cultural productions. Some studios, like DreamWorks, attempt to work against the cinema stereotypes defined, utilized, and distributed by Disney. By creating hybridization films, these studios seem to accomplish that goal; however, the success is superficial.

DreamWorks' attempt at creating new traits for female characters was a much needed development in the animated, cinematic fairy tale tradition. Despite its aims, however, DreamWorks does not create new characteristics, but rather recycles the old characteristics and transmits the same accepted cinematic fairy tale tropes in a different manner. Princess Fiona is a clear example of how DreamWorks fails to write femininity within the tradition. In the first film, the attempt set her apart from her trope by simply reversing accepted gender roles: masculine/feminine behaviors. However, by the end of the film and further into the quadrilogy, Princess Fiona adheres more to acceptable feminine behavior and stops questioning gender boundaries; she simply accepts her actions as natural and necessary. Queen Lillian is a unique type of fairy tale figure. There are few living natal mothers in fairy tales. Instead of using this

novel addition, filmmakers have Queen Lillian act in several different conventional roles , but she never questions her performance of them. She performs the roles she has been taught and does not question their validity or necessity. Continuing with unique additions, DreamWorks creates a character, Fairy Godmother, who is a combination of two strong female tropes. Instead of letting this hybridity destroy the boundaries of normal behavior, filmmakers destroy the character at the end of the film, taking all the potential subversion with her. Lastly, not even the minor characters are rewritten in order to show some hope of a true transformation of gender portrayal. While filmmakers rewrite Dragon, they do so in a way that makes her femininity the cause of her loss of power. The parody princesses look superficially rewritten, but they all perform their original canonical roles, reinforcing the inescapability of the Disney defined tropes.

Though the attempt to rewrite femininity within the quadrilogy did not succeed, it does not mean that the film fails to provide progress in terms of gender portrayal. I contend that by including so many different types of females and femininity, the film enacts a dialogue that combats the notion of a singular accepted femininity. According to M.M. Bakhtin, dialogue refers to the move from monologic modes to the acceptance of the presence of multiple voices (411). As compared to other cinematic fairy tales, the Shrek quadrilogy provides far more different types of female characters. Instead of presenting one type of femininity, the quadrilogy works at displaying many different types of femininity as well as small moments of attempting to move beyond stereotypical depictions. Many cinematic fairy tales present a dominant discourse that presents femininity in a limited, set way; however, DreamWorks provides many different ways in which females can conform to, work against, and mix different tropes. In his essay “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin defines authoritative language as the word that “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might

have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it” (342).

Instead of being bound by the authority of cinematic fairy tale tradition, DreamWorks’ attempt fights against monologic depictions of femininity and works to create a dialogue that challenges the authoritative language of the tradition. While DreamWorks is guilty of recycling stereotypical gender depictions, its fight against the dominant discourse provides a glimpse into the struggle to reconstruct gender in cinematic fairy tales. In terms of gender portrayal, the Shrek quadrilogy does not provide scholars with a happily ever after; however, knowing the challenge to stereotypical gender construction is underway can provide a happier ending.

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