

From Book to Film: *Ella Enchanted*
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Fairy tales occupy a unique position in the literary canon. Although based on literary traditions, they have become an increasingly visual form in American culture due in large part to the works and films of Walt Disney which simplified and familiarized story lines in favor of technical artistry to “wow” the audience and which also sacrificed artistry for invention, tradition for innovation, and imagination for distraction (Zipes, “Towards” 7-8). For the most part, fairy tales of any culture are indicative of the morals and traditions of that culture: “fairy tales provide a unique window into our most central concerns, our sense of social and cultural identity, who we think we are (or should be) – and how we change” (Orenstein 8). Zipes clearly reaffirms this argument when discussing the French origins of the literary fairy tale: “the genre of the literary fairy tale was institutionalized as an aesthetic and social means through which questions and issues of *civillite*, proper behavior and demeanor in all types of situations, were mapped out as narrative strategies for literary socialization (Zipes, “Breaking” 23). For women, this socialization process can be insidious because as Vera Sonja Maass writes, “in their symbolic forms, fairy tales reinforce self-defeating social and psychological behavior patterns in women’s daily lives” (vii). Later, she writes that the older oral fairy tales descended from matriarchal societies which celebrated womanhood “had been transformed into a verbal version bearing a literate code that prescribed the domestic requirements in bourgeois Christian society necessary for a young woman to be acceptable for marriage: self-sacrifice, diligence, hard work, silence, humility, and patience” (5). Maass’ concern seems to be that “characteristics such as self-sacrifice, hard work, and similar traits can be applied to the advantage of others in a variety of circumstances” (5). In the American tradition, cultural fairy tales meant to impose and reinforce modes of social behavior are continually being remade, transformed, and adapted as part of this molding and reinforcement process. However, these cultural fairy tales are not being molded by society and culture; rather, Hollywood is trying to use these stories to mold society and culture. One such film is *Ella Enchanted*, an obvious transformation of the “Cinderella” fairytale. “Ella” is a shortened form of Cinderella, after all. The transformation process and what is transformed is interesting from a cultural standpoint, but an even more interesting study is the adaptation process from book to film because “with each text [and film], avowed adaptation or not, afloat upon a sea of countless earlier texts” (Leitch 63). This process is extremely convoluted within these two forms because there are so many antecedents. In many ways, this is why readers and moviegoers enjoy something like *Ella Enchanted*; “The appeal of adaptations for audiences lies in their mixture of repetition and difference, or familiarity and novelty,” claims Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* (114). In other words, the audience, knowing the basic story already, sees how each form molds and changes the story to fit the adapters/creators individual needs, and this process of transformation is one of the appeals of adaptations. This process can be seen in the book, *Ella Enchanted*, which reinforces a basic theme of female empowerment that can be traced back to oral fairy tale roots in older matriarchal societies (Maass 4), and the movie, *Ella Enchanted*, which tries to be a more Disneyesque “which presented Cinderella in her most ‘perverted’ form – the patient, submissive, defenseless young woman, whose happiness depends on a man who actually defines her life” and dilutes Ella’s transformative journey (Jane Yolen qtd in Maass 5).

Gail Carson Levine’s *Ella Enchanted* was first published in 1997 and can be read as a retelling of the Cinderella tale for modern, young girls with its strong adolescent female

protagonist, Ella. *Ella Enchanted*, starring Anne Hathaway, was first released theatrically in 2004 and was lauded as “the best family film this year” by Roger Ebert in the Chicago Sun Times (Ebert). As a romantic comedy, the film tries to divorce itself from the Cinderella tale type and create a new and more modern fairy tale. In its attempt to recreate this particular fairy tale, the movie moves away from the strong character and themes that can be seen in Levine’s story. This is not to say that one version of the story is better than the other, but Zipes does make the statement that “as the fairy tale was ‘standardized’ so that it could transcend particular communities and interests, it structurally fit into the economic mode of production during the 1930s and 1940s ... Films were intended to be mass-produced for profit as commodities in a rational process based on cost efficiency” (Zipes, “Towards” 6). The film, *Ella Enchanted*, fits perfectly into the mold of a film mass produced for profit. Of the literary fairy tale, Zipes states, “most fairy tales, however, were not didactic, but as a genre, the fairy tale was clearly recognized as such - as *the discourse* for the entire family in which questions of proper gender behavior, the treatment of children, the employment of power, standards of success, norms, and values could be presented and debated” (Zipes, “Towards” 4). Catherine Orenstein agrees; she writes that “fairy tales are among our most powerful socializing narratives. They contain enduring rules for understanding who we are and how we should behave” (10). However, modern books should not be seen as divorced from the commodification process, but as can be seen, the traditions of each medium are slightly different. Beyond issues of which medium is more literary and which is more commercial, there are also problems with notions of fidelity in the adaptive process because as Thomas Leitch claims, “the field [adaptation studies] is still haunted by the notion that adaptations ought to be faithful to their ostensible sourcetexts” (64). Zipes’ and other theorists’ concerns about adaptation from book to film and beliefs about the nature of fairy tale films and literary fairy tales can be clearly seen in these two separate works.

Levine’s Ella is a headstrong, young woman. Gail Carson Levine states of her protagonist, “when I thought about Cinderella’s character, I realized that she was too much of a goody-two-shoes for me and I would hate her before I finished ten pages. That’s when I came up with the curse: she’s only good because she has to be, and she’s in constant rebellion” (“Gail Carson Levine”). She is forced to obey orders despite her own wishes and desires, and as Ella claims, “If you commanded me to cut off my own head, I’d have to do it. I was in danger at every moment” (Levine 5). Ella’s struggle to rely upon her instincts and judgment is central to the novel. On a fundamental level, Ella’s journey to express her inner world truthfully can be viewed through the lens of cultural feminism. According to Josephine Donovan, Margaret Fuller shaped the cultural feminist tradition of the nineteenth century and spread the idea that women must develop self-reliance (Donovan 48). In the novel, Ella makes adventurous, independent decisions and relies on her knowledge, intuition, and judgment in order to survive various situations. Ella does not back down from the challenge of discovering how to live without bending to each order around her and insists upon finding her way in the world apart from these mandates and expectations. Donovan explains:

Fuller’s idea is that each individual is born as a seed with a unique design (a favorite romantic image); it must be allowed to unfold through one’s life course. This is what she means when she states that women must learn to follow the rule within, and not be dictated to from without. Such self-determination enables a woman to develop personal strength in her encounters with the world... (49)

Much of the action of this novel focuses on Ella's desire to liberate herself from the curse of obedience. The impediments to her journey are numerous, and her moment of triumph eventually comes from personal, inner strength, and self-determination.

Anne Hathaway's character, Ella, also finds herself in a similar dilemma. Eric Idle, as the narrator for the movie, says, "But our story today is different in theme for our hero had no choice or so it would seem" (*Ella Enchanted*). However, this is where all resemblance between the two characters ends. Levine's Ella is able to break the fairy spell by truly understanding herself, her own strength, and her own abilities. Tommy O'Haver's Ella is freed by understanding the meaning of true love and finding her soul-mate. These contrasting messages created by the book and the movie emphasize the differing priorities between the two artistic forms. Levine tries to show young women that they can be strong, decisive, and happy, while Hollywood shows that a young woman cannot be complete without the love of a man. At one point in the novel, Ella's father asks, "But who is Ella?" (Levine 30). The answer to this question as portrayed differently by the book and the movie shows how the producing culture views their audience of primarily young women.

Strong, youthful characters abound in Levine's text, and they encounter similar problems that young girls might face in their own lives, such as bullying, obedience to parents, and first love. Levine's story has the power to show young readers that personal decisions can be directed from inner strength and conviction and not from pressures from family, the media, and peers. Despite the curse obedience, Ella is not a passive character. She does not wait around for Prince Char to find her and rescue her; instead she encounters him while she is busy attempting to rescue herself from the curse. The ability of fairy tales work as a story which might have the power to work as a story of awakening for women has been noted by several essayists. "Kolbenschlag discussed fairy tales to expose the feminine myths of Western culture while reasserting the potential such stories have to awaken and liberate women" (Donald Haase "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship" 6). *Ella Enchanted* undoubtedly reinvents the Cinderella myth in a way which empowers Ella and reasserts the importance of self-reliance and inner strength in order to succeed and find ones way in life.)

The movie, on the other hand, is oriented more to a mass audience. The characters are older - Anne Hathaway was 22 when the film was released - the curse is exaggerated in a comical sense because Ella is constantly forced to break out into song or stop in mid-air, and an added chase scene, not necessarily found in the book, adds to the excitement of the movie (*Ella Enchanted*). All of these are examples, as Lester Asheim claims, of how any translation from book to film reduces or constructs scenes to meet the needs of mass audience appeal (Asheim, "Mass" 340-343). Hutcheon, an adaptation theorist, agrees because as she writes, "a novel, in order to be dramatized, has to be distilled, reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity" (36). Another contrasting example is in the consistency of how Ella follows commands, "In my book, Ella follows the meaning of commands. If she were told to hold her tongue she'd be silent. In the movie Anne Hathaway actually grabs her tongue and holds it. So it goes the other way in the movie, but it's consistent" ("Gail Carson Levine"). The movie seems to be created more for comedic moments than for any real discussion of obedience.

One of the more blatant differences between the book and the movie is the character treatment of the ogres and Ella and Prince Char's encounter with these meta-human creatures. Levine's Ella has her first encounter with the ogres in the royal zoo accompanied by Prince Char.

They are described by Levine: “Ogres weren’t dangerous only because of the size and their cruelty. They knew your secrets just by looking at you . . . they were irresistibly persuasive” (Levine 43). Prince Char is able to save Ella in this first encounter only by accidentally giving her a command to stop (Levine 46). Obviously, the reader gets this information from simple and direct narration: “In the telling mode – in narrative literature, for example – our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text . . .”, but imparting this kind of information in a more visually active form might be difficult: “. . . with the move to the mode of showing, as in film and stage adaptations, we are caught in an unrelenting, forward driving story” (Hutcheon 23).

In the movie, the ogres are comical, but they are just as dangerous as Levine’s. Although they no longer have the power to read minds, they are more physically imposing. They are portrayed as clumsy, large Neanderthals with their backsides hanging out of their pants (*Ella Enchanted*). The ogres, despite their clumsiness, are able to ambush Ella and her elf friend, Slannen. The ogres are not as intelligent as the ogres in the book and only accidentally fall upon the trick of commanding Ella. This change creates a more family friendly scene because the ogres are no longer such an insidious threat as they are in the book. This simplification of the ogre’s nature is an important change because, “since the movie audience cannot, like the reader of a book, pause to digest a difficult concept, turn back to clear up a confusion, reread when a passage is difficult, or dictate the speed at which he will assimilate the material to fit his own particular abilities,” it allows the audience to understand easily the danger of the ogres without having to go into the book’s lengthy description (Asheim, “Simplification” 293). The ogres are visually interpreted by physical cues. In other words, the change in the ogres might have been a way to simplify the action for a movie audience, but it affects the more insidious nature of absolute control that is portrayed by their counterparts in the book.

Ella’s second encounter in the book finds her rudely awakened by a group of ogres, and she has to obey their every command, once again. They have already parceled out her body parts before she is fully in control of her wits (Levine 101). Ella uses her gift with languages and her quick mind to out-smart the ogres. She imitates the ogre speech, which she independently studied at school, and says, “How can you eat me? You’re too full to eat – all of you are. Your bellies are as heavy as sacks of melons . . . You feel tired. The ground is so soft, so comfortable” (Levine 102). She becomes a minor trickster figure that has her own power and abilities. Prince Charmont arrives to clean up, but he still must ask for Ella’s help in continuing to pacify the ogres. Ella comes out on top during this second encounter with the ogres without the help of Prince Char proving that she is not a pawn or a victim, but a young woman able to craftily manipulate the world around her. According to Carol Gilligan in “Woman’s Place in a Man’s Life Cycle,” the traditional fairy tale allows the male hero to use his knowledge to save the day, but the female characters must wait passively for a man to enter her life. “Since the adolescent heroines awake from their sleep, not to conquer the world, but to marry the prince, their indent is inwardly and interpersonally defined.” (Gilligan “Woman’s Place” 204). The message espoused by Levine differs from the traditional fairy tale in that Ella actively uses her knowledge of languages and culture. Ella is not stereotypically feminine, and she breaks with gender norms by testing her individual strength without a male accompaniment. Additionally, her connection with Prince Char is related more to their similar interests than to her appearance. Ella does not disguise her sex, react passively, or hesitate when considering a cross country

journey. In the end of the novel, Ella discovers a 'happily-ever-after' love with Prince Char, but he is simply an added benefit that she gains along the way to personal freedom.

However, in the film, Ella's first encounter with the ogres finds her hanging above the pot about to be stewed when Prince Char valiantly comes to her rescue. Although Ella does play a small part in the battle to rescue herself, it is the heroics of Prince Char that save the damsel in distress. She has become more like an "America's Cinderella [who] has been a coy, helpless dreamer, a 'nice' girl who awaits her rescue with patience and a song" (Yolen 297). He wonders what she was doing and if her plan was to lull the ogres into a false sense of security. Her reaction to his statement is to give a quick retort, "Who's to say it wouldn't have worked if you hadn't come barging in," that shows her childishness. Ella is unable to create an intelligent and witty answer in the face of Char's smugness. At this point, Char becomes Ella's companion for the rest of her journey. His flippant remark, "It makes it so much easier saving you if I don't have to commute," creates a tone of feminine helplessness that pervades the movie (*Ella Enchanted*). As noted by Gilligan, "The sex differences depicted in the world of fairy tales...indicate repeatedly that active adventure is a male activity" (204). In the film, Ella is not capable of handling adventure without the help of a male. This scene is a far cry from Levine's heroine who is capable of making her way in the world despite the dangers lurking beyond the domestic confines of her home and boarding school.

Another major difference between the movie and the book is the idea of obedience. The book mainly deals with female obedience and what that means for young women, and according to Gilligan, "Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view" (206-7). Levine's Ella, even as a child, begins to understand the monstrousness of the curse that she is under and the confusion of her personal needs with the demands of those around her. During one scene, Ella is commanded to eat, and she does. She remarks that "swallowing was a struggle. Each bite weighed on my tongue and felt like a sticky mass of glue as I fought to get it down. I started crying while I ate" (Levine 4). She is unable to limit herself as she knows she must. More importantly, she is unable to define clearly her strengths outside of the curse. Ella states, "Instead of making me docile, Lucinda's curse made a rebel of me. Or perhaps I was that way naturally" (Levine 5). She is unsure whether it is the curse or her own natural tendencies that define her character. Ella's deepest struggle throughout the novel is for the basic, essential right to make decisions for herself.

In the middle of the tale, Ella locates the fairy Lucinda and asks her to remove the spell of obedience. Lucinda not only commands Ella to continue to be obedient, but she also commands her to be happy about this plight. At this point in the novel, Ella is damned to wear a plastic, happy smile no matter how dramatically the reality of her life conflicts with what she needs. One of the most distressing moments in the novel, occurs when Ella's father insists that Mandy serve elvish mushrooms to Ella and Edmund, Earl of Wolleck, a man older than her father with a face "...thin as a greyhound's with a long nose above a drooping mustache" (Levine 135). These mushrooms were used to "induce feelings of liking and love in those who eat them" (Levine 132). Though used by the elves to settle civil disputes, Ella's father hopes to induce feelings between the two long enough to secure a marriage so that he can be rich again. In this section of the novel, Ella's father treats her as little more than property, a predicament of women in previous centuries around the world. According to Gale Rubin, "A woman is a

woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human Dictaphone in certain relationships. Torn from these relationships, she is no more the helpmate of a man than gold in itself is money..." (28). Ella, in relation to her father's desire to trade her for financial security, experiences an extreme form of oppression which deserves attention. Rubin states, "The 'exchange of women' is a seductive and powerful term...it suggests that we look for the ultimate locus of women's oppression within the traffic in women..." (37). Rubin goes on to assert how easy it is to find multiple examples of trafficking in women. "Women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought, and sold. Far from being confined to the 'primitive' world, these practices seem only to become more pronounced and commercialized in more 'civilized' societies (Rubin 38). By leaving this scene out of the film, possible conversations between parents and young viewers about the treatment of women, both historically and presently, are not possible. In the novel, our young heroine, Ella, is drugged and set-up, and manages to escape the horror of such an exchange only because "Upon close questioning, the earl had confessed that most of his property had been consumed by fire. He wasn't rich enough for us." (Levine 141). After processing the evening with Mandy, Ella is able to determine whether or not she truthfully feels happy about being obedient. Ella quickly realizes that being "...a begging puppet and a delighted slave..." did not bring her actual happiness. (Levine 140) She feels the weight of the curse of obedience all the more. The film omits the scene with the Earl of Wolleck and jumps directly into her father's choice to marry Dame Olga for money. The novel, however, shows us the extreme danger Ella faces under the curse of obedience in a patriarchal society. Despite being spared from a marriage to a wealthy, much older man, Ella is unable to claim her willful nature as her own for quite some time. It is her strength and belief in her cause that allows her to go beyond the restrictions of her curse. Levine's Ella says, "I found a power beyond any I'd had before, a will and a determination I would never have needed if not for Lucinda, a fortitude I hadn't been able to find for a lesser cause. And I found my voice" (Levine 226). She is unable to understand her true motivations under the curse, but once she is able to define herself and her wants, she is able to break the curse and become free. She says, "Now it was over. Ended forever. I was made anew. Ella. Just Ella. Not Ella, the slave. Not a scullery maid. Not Lela. Not Eleanor. Ella. Myself unto myself. One. Me" (Levine 228). Ella is free because she is free to be herself. Levine's *Ella* is about emancipation and self-fulfillment. In the novel, Ella finally understands that her emancipation is her own personal responsibility. The movie shows Ella struggling with the curse of obedience, but it does not illustrate how much internal strength is required on Ella's part to liberate her life from the curse of obedience. "...Isolation and self-development through communion with one's own truth, according to Fuller, makes one better able to relate to others, to love out of strength, not weakness" (Donovan, 49). At the end of the novel, Ella is capable of loving Prince Char, her father, and her ridiculous step-sisters and step-mother because she accesses inner strength.

The movie also examines the idea of obedience.. The obedience caused by the curse is readily apparent in multiple scenes when Ella follows orders with regret and visible anger. Also, obedience to tradition and law is seen in the character of Slannen, the elf. His people, the elves, have traditionally been singers and entertainers, and by law, they are forced into this tradition by the evil Sir Edgar, the despotic uncle of Prince Char (*Ella Enchanted*). The movie also deals with slavery as a form of obedience. Hathaway's Ella encounters the enslaved giants along her journey to find Lucinda. Laws and military force keep the giants obedient against their will.

The movie focuses on the evils of unjust forced obedience and equates Ella's obedience in the same manner. At one point during the giant's wedding reception, Ella is forced into song. She sings Queen's "Somebody to Love" which has a line that is written as, "I just gotta get out of this prison cell, one day I'm gonna be free" (*Ella Enchanted*). Hathaway sings it with such passion and emotion that she is clearly equating her curse to the giants and elves lack of freedom. The movie does not portray obedience in the same vein as the book. Ella is no longer trying to struggle to define herself in the face of a debilitating curse; she is making liberal comments on some of the societal and cultural problems that are facing her world and the real world. Although this might not seem to fit into Asheim's claim that universal implication is usually removed from films, it does actually hold true because with Ella's elimination of Sir Edgar's power all these evils are vanquished, also ("Mass" 337). It really cannot be universal if the threat can be destroyed by defeating one individual.

In an amusing scene, Ella becomes one of two political voices screaming outrage at the atrocities brought on by Sir Edgar while everyone else is basking in the cultural and celebrity phenomenon that is Prince Char. Ella is screaming, "Down with Ogreside," but at the same time, Char's fan club is screaming, "I love you Char" (*Ella Enchanted*). This is a funny comment on celebrity and the lack of political activism among youth, but it does nothing to impart any truth to Ella's situation. This amusing attempt at some form of modernization does try, "to assure complete understanding and empathy from a contemporary audience," and as Asheim asserts, "Such changes usually serve to keep the film version closer to the intent of the original, from the standpoint of audience reaction" (Asheim, "Simplification" 294-295). However, this is obviously not true in this instance. Had the movie incorporated the scene when Ella was almost forced into marriage with a man older than her father, the viewers might have understood her political activism on a deeper level. Ella is able to feel sympathy for the Ogres because she, herself, was almost traded for monetary gain. Ella almost became a victim of the same economic exploitation experienced by the Ogres, and due to the experience she is able to feel compassion for others regardless of their race, class, or gender. Instead of gaining a deeper understanding of Ella's commitment to making sure that all living beings have the basic right of freedom, viewers of the film are simply given a quick glimpse at her desire for greater justice and equality as she holds up a sign and is quickly dismissed.

Another difference between the book and the movie is the character of Sir Edgar. First, the book does not have a Sir Edgar. In the movie, Sir Edgar is played by Cary Elwes with a sneer, a menacing voice, and a black goatee and mustache – tried and true characteristics of a cinematic villain. To finish off the character, Edgar's constant companion is a talking, hissing snake which is an obvious reference to any Judeo-Christian audience of original sin. Sir Edgar becomes a caricature of evil that the audience can despise and hate. Asheim claims that in any translation from book to film this technique of personification of an abstract idea as a character contributes to a more specific presentation of information (Asheim, "Simplification" 298). In other words, the book too loosely and vaguely defines evil for Hollywood which needs simplistic and almost caricature like depictions of good and evil. The movie needs to characterize evil so that a mass audience could easily identify it. The book, however, is more subtle in its treatment of evil. The characters in the text are a more truthful mix of good and bad. Obviously, Hollywood feels the audience is more comfortable confronting a cartoon evil rather than an evil that might be part of themselves. In other words, "The solution then becomes merely a matter of

besting the villain, that done, the problem no longer exists and the audience need not consider its broader implications” (Asheim, “Mass” 337).

The treatment of secondary female characters in the book and movie are also dangerously different. The book treats its female characters fairly – a mix of good and bad characters is integral to the book’s narrative. It is the treatment of the good female characters that sets the book apart from the movie because strong female characters inhabit the world of Levine’s book. Mandy, Ella’s fairy godmother, strongly holds onto her convictions in the face of heartache and sadness: “‘I can’t, lady,’ she said. ‘It was big magic to cast the spell in the first place. But it would be big magic to undo it too. Who can guess what would come of it?’” (Levine 196). Mandy also has strength enough to try to undermine the will of Sir Peter. When he asks her why she didn’t use the elvish mushrooms, which she knew were magical, she says, “‘I don’t know these elvish ones, sir. Maybe they’re not fine enough’” (Levine 134). Although it is easy to imagine a young woman with a talent for languages being advised by well-meaning grandmothers, aunts, mothers, and fairies to spend time searching for a successful husband instead of studying, Mandy is charmed by Ella’s intellectual curiosity and encourages her growth. Throughout the novel, Mandy shows the strength of her will and character. Even the somewhat evil characters are given fair treatment in Levine’s story. Lucinda is a character that many might consider evil, since it was she that placed the curse of Ella, but in the book she is able to understand the error of her ways and repent her mistakes. After learning her lesson, she is asked if she will ever bestow any more gifts, and she replies, “‘Never. I wish I could take them all back’” (Levine 194). She is able to grow and change, and become a better person. Overall, all the female characters are treated fairly, and a young female reader will be exposed to many strong female characters.

The movie, *Ella Enchanted*, does not treat its female characters fairly or even well. “...Today we would say, women’s vision is holistic. But, because men do not see these subtle connections, women’s perceptions are ridiculed and denied....Such denial of women’s realities is, needless to say, oppressive and destructive to the women themselves (Donovan, 50). Both fairies, Mandy and Lucinda lack ability and reasoning in the film. Mandy, who in the book is given the strength of her convictions, is a clumsy magician that cannot cast the simplest of household spells without tragic consequences. Her greatest magical mistake was turning her boyfriend into a magical talking book (*Ella Enchanted*). Her clumsiness is the reason that Mandy refuses to do big magic in the movie. Lucinda, in the book, is allowed to see and correct the error of her ways, but . in the movie, Lucinda is portrayed as clueless fairy who is pulled over for flying while intoxicated and then kicked out of her fairy retirement home for bad behavior (*Ella Enchanted*). In the end, Lucinda is not allowed to know the error of her ways, nor amend her wayward actions. The female characters are not allowed to grow and transform themselves in the movie, and young female viewers are bombarded by females who are characterized by clumsiness, lack of moral character, and lack of intelligence.

Although there are many differences between the book and the film, there are some similarities that are important because they are indicative of cultural norms, beliefs, and needs. For the most part, the modern fairy tale tradition has a happy and positive ending. This was not always true. The European tradition of the Grimm Brothers and Charles Perrault usually had an ending that was less than happy for many of the characters. However, in both the movie and the film, most, if not all, of the characters enjoy a happy ending. In the book, the evil step-sisters

take advantage of Ella's new celebrity: "In time Hattie became reconciled to our marriage and used her connection to us to her best advantage. She never married, but Olive did" (Levine 231). The movie's final dance scene has the two step-sisters, if not enjoy, take part in the celebration (*Ella Enchanted*). This change from the more retribution oriented European tradition shows a "future-time orientation and associated value emphases on 'progress,' 'optimism,' and 'success'" (Dundes 228). In other words, the happy endings express an attitude that is based on optimism and the American need for "something to look forward to. They have been so conditioned since earliest childhood" (Dundes 229). Nonetheless, the film does employ the use of a more comical dénouement than the novel. Zipes argument that Disney films often employ ideas, gags, and themes emanated from a kind of boys' locker room talk since, historically, animators and writers, were male is clearly displayed in the ending of *Ella Enchanted* ("Towards" 5). Although Ella is the rescuer in the final scene, which is a reversal of the traditional male role, the fight scene is amusing and varies greatly from the suspense created in the novel when Ella disguises herself and interacts with Char at the ball, engaging him with her wit and personality. In the film, the emotional connection between the two characters is glossed over, and a happy ending is forced by the fight scene which reveals Edgar as a stereotypical villain. The humor and clumsiness on Ella's part, adds to the movie's suspense in that the audience wonders if she can truly save the prince from the poisoned crown. Contrastingly, the novel shows readers that Ella's greatest moment of courage occurs from accessing her inner strength in order to make her own decision about the direction of her life.

Eric Idle, the narrator of the movie, states, "A fairy tale also reveals some sort of truth" (*Ella Enchanted*). Hollywood's truth is a female that cannot define herself without the help of her prince. It is another interesting point that the movie is framed by a male narrator which overwrites the female story that is the core of Levine's text. The male voice becomes the conscience of the story and thus imposes a patriarchal system of values on the story and the audience at the same time. Incorporating another aspect of Asheim's argument that films try to appeal to a mass audience by incorporating elaborate production, costumes, and staging, the movie ends in a song and dance routine ("Mass" 340). The entire cast breaks into a rendition of, "Don't Go Breaking My Heart," by Sir Elton John (*Ella Enchanted*). The movie finishes with an anthem to female dependence. In this sense, it is truer to the fairy tale and fantasy of Cinderella. On the other hand, Levine's Ella continues her string of independent acts by defining herself with the titles of, "Court Linguist and Cook's helper" (Levine 231). She is not a princess, she is not Prince Char's wife, and she is no longer blindly obedient. The truth is that she is who she chooses. Hollywood wanted to create a romantic comedy that played to the ideals that American culture holds true for children's literature and fairy tales. They wanted to hold women to an ideal of obedience and dependence on the men in their lives. Hollywood wanted to create a modern myth that still held on to the old fairy tale and female behavior didactics. Jack Zipes claims that "in a free market system, it [fairy tales] became packaged as a household good ... and the family fairy tale as commodity was designed to reinforce patriarchal notions of civilization" (Zipes, "Towards" 4). Jane Yolen puts it simply: "The wrong Cinderella has gone to the American ball" (297). Levine, on the other hand, chooses to create a new fable where the heroine is strong and independent. Levine wants to redefine Cinderella into a strong female character for a new generation of girls who will not have to be indoctrinated with the themes and ideas fostered by fables of the past. Each is teaching young women something about being a woman, but they are teaching something different from one another. "But who is Ella," asks Levine's Sir Peter. The answer depends on whether the movie is watched or the book read.

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