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THE SHOE FITS: CINDERELLA AND WOMEN'S VOICE

by

Farrah Victoria Kurronen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program
in French in the College of Arts and Humanities and
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Charlotte Trinquet du Lys

Abstract

One of the fundamental stories in fairy tale studies is “Cinderella”: folkloric designation ATU 510A, the Persecuted Heroine. As Fairy tale and Folklore studies continue to evolve, authors beyond Basile, Perrault and Grimm are added into the Cinderella canon to lend a more nuanced approach to the study of this fairy tale. Yet “Cinderella” is still often interpreted as a tale of feminine submissiveness, in which the heroine is little more than a passive ornament or else a likeable social-climber. These interpretations stem largely from the focus of “Cinderella” stories written by men. Though studies of “Cinderella” are expanding, “Cendrillon”, “Aschenputtel”, and Walt Disney’s *Cinderella* remain the foundational tales that are thought of when “Cinderella” is mentioned.

This research addresses the problem that female writers of “Cinderella” remain marginalized within analyses of the tale. This research considers five versions of “Cinderella” from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, from women authors, mediated in five different formats: literary fairy tale, novel, short story, and poetry. Mme D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron” and Mlle L’Héritier’s “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette,” protofeminist literary fairy tales from seventeenth-century France, present Cinderellas who hail from the birth of the modern fairy tale but show personalities that most do not associate with the princess. D’Aulnoy and L’Héritier’s Finettes are dutiful to their family and kingdom, but aggressively pursue their ambitions and secure for themselves both high-status as well as fulfilling futures.

Jane Austen’s eighteenth-century novel *Persuasion* brings a sharp contrast to traditional views of the fairy helper. Louisa May Alcott’s “A Modern Cinderella: or, The Little Old Shoe” is

an American Romantic short story originally published in a little magazine which paints a different perspective on the desires of a nineteenth-century Anglo-women in a Prince. Austen's and Alcott's stories give voice to how they perceive the place women are given in the world and their hostility to the patriarchal structures of their society allude to the rise of 'Defense of Women' literature during their period. Austen and Alcott highlight the restrictions that women face, but do not resign women to the fate of subjugation; instead they insist that women should decide their own fate and never settle for less than they are owed.

"...And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot," a poem by Judith Viorst from the 1980s, challenges the traditional expectations of the Cinderella cycle. At the sunset of the twentieth century, the poem challenges the typical Cinderella motifs and recursive narrative devices with a second-wave feminist perspective on women's perceptions of their ideas on romantic love and self-love and offers a Cinderella who speaks with her own voice.

This research looks at women's culture using the lens of socio-cultural and historical approaches, feminist theory, and global studies to provide insight into each tale. Women authors use the Cinderella tale-type to express the idealized woman, reject literary stereotypes about women, and reveal women's attitude toward love and marriage in their respective cultures. Women who add to the Cinderella cycle use the heroine of their story to assert that women are capable of managing their own affairs and determining their future.

Cinderella is adapted to present the image of a woman who successfully navigates her society to seize a fulfilling future. The concept of a 'fulfilling future' is one that begins in

magnanimity and evolves into Cinderellas who expect ‘princes’ to show caring natures or who reject princes who do not meet their expectations. Feminine identity is embodied through retellings of Cinderella in relation to her sisters, her Fairy, her Prince and women’s attitudes about their social identity and voice. By considering these previously overlooked contributors to the Cinderella narrative, this research provides different perspectives into women’s perceptions of power, autonomy, and love and asks important questions about how women use “Cinderella” to claim their voice.

Dedication

To my family, whom I love dearly.

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This project would never have been possible without Dr. Charlotte Trinquet du Lys. Without Dr. Trinquet du Lys I would have never discovered the depth of my passion for fairy tales. There was never a moment when she would not lend me an ear, or a book, or both. She has helped me grow so much and I could not have asked for a more helpful and understanding chair.

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More so than anything I must thank my Mom, Dad, and Russell. Thank you for believing in me and for your constant encouragement. Thank you for cheering me up when I was defeated and for celebrating with me once I was completed. Thank you for telling me to ask questions when I needed help, for assuring me I would, in fact, actually finish, and for telling me to turn it in finally. I could never be discouraged while I had your ever-constant support and assurances that I would succeed with me. You all mean everything to me. My love for you is immeasurable.

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Introduction

A lovely night, a lovely night
A finer night you know you'll never see
You meet your Prince, a charming Prince
As charming as a Prince will ever be.
The stars in a hazy heaven tremble above you
While he is whispering:
"Darling I Love you"
You say good-bye, away you fly
but on your lips you keep a kiss
All your life you dream of this
Lovely, lovely night.

—*Roger and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, "A Lovely Night"

One of the fundamental tales in fairy tale and folklore studies is Cinderella: ATU tale-type 510A. The Cinderella cycle is organized in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification system of folk tales, and many definitions can be found that attempt to precisely outline of what a Cinderella story must consist of to be considered part of the Cinderella cycle. For the purposes of this research, a "Cinderella" tale is one that has a majority of the following motifs: a dead mother¹, a cruel family, a hardworking protagonist, a Prince, a Fairy, a separation from the Prince, a recognition, a transfiguration, and a Wedding.² The Prince is the romantic interest of

¹ The dead mother could certainly be an absent mother who is not dead. The mother would have to be completely and irrevocably absent from the heroine and thus 'dead' to the story.

² Capitalized motifs are used to denote their specialized definitions within this research.

the protagonist and the Fairy is any loving, maternal figure who acts as Cinderella's donor.³ The Wedding alters Propp's notion that "the hero is married and ascends the throne" and instead signifies that the heroine will find a fulfilling future at the close of the tale (Propp 63). The fulfilling future is subjective to the context in which the story is written but implies that the heroine has claimed her personal "happily ever after."

The addition of authors beyond Perrault, Grimm, and Disney to the "Cinderella" canon bring different nuances of the ATU 510A tale-type to light. When the primary focus of what constitutes a "Cinderella" is based on the works of three men, it is hard to see the various aspects that define a Cinderella story and what makes "Cinderella" such a prominent fairy tale. Although the modern concept "Cinderella" with her cinder-and-ashes name and shoe test dates to medieval Iceland (Hui 354), many contemporary authors of "Cinderella" look only to Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Disney for the foundations of the fairy tale. If scholars of the "Cinderella" canon do not widen their scope of who authors "Cinderella" and what she represents, it becomes difficult for these scholars as well as contemporary authors to see "Cinderella" with a depth greater than a simple tale of feminine submissiveness, in which the heroine is little more than a passive ornament or else a likeable social-climber.

Female writers of "Cinderella" remain marginalized within analyses of the tale. This thesis considers five versions of "Cinderella" from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, written by women authors, mediated in five formats: the literary fairy tale, the novel, the

³ 'Cinderella' and 'the heroine' will often be used interchangeably throughout the thesis to denote the main female character within a Cinderella cycle as well as the name in the tale given to Cinderella. 'The Cinderella' and 'The Cinderella character' will be similarly simplified to 'Cinderella' or 'the heroine'.

short story, and poetry. The scope and range of the tales provides an understanding of how women use the Cinderella cycle to create narratives that show women's contemporary perspectives on feminine identity, marriage, and power. Women adapt Cinderella to present their idea of a woman who successfully navigates her society to seize a fulfilling future. These texts give scholars a body of work similar enough to be compared and analyzed to show how women perceive their culture, including their societal approaches, knowledge, and experience.

This thesis considers five "Cinderella" stories across four centuries to provide an understanding of how the Cinderella cycle is adapted by women-authors to express women's culture from their historical period.⁴ Furthermore, the thesis will highlight what this corpus can tell scholars about how women perceive the world and their place within it. "Cinderella" is used by women authors as a figure to whom women can look for as guide for exemplary behavior. Cinderella is portrayed as the ideal woman against her (step)sisters whose personalities are caricatured to prove that Cinderella's qualities are realistic. The change in Cinderella's Fairy, Prince, and journey to her Wedding throughout the various stories explore the way in which the passage of time changes women's culture and the expectations that women have for their happiness in life and love. When analyzed using socio-cultural and historical approaches, feminist theories, and interdisciplinary global studies, the five stories of Cinderella express contemporary women's perspectives on their power and autonomy in the world and how they choose to voice their thoughts.

⁴ An Appendix is provided at the end for comparison of the motifs and functions five women-authored with Perrault's, the Grimm's and Disney's tales for reference to characters, motifs, and plot elements within the works discussed.

Part I: The Dawn of the Fairies: Finettes in the Courts of Seventeenth- Century France

“In fairy tales as in life, nothing comes to us until we are strong enough to ask for it. To know what we want, we have to know what’s wanting in our lives, but we also have to know that we are entitled to get it. Transformation rests in our hands.”

—Joan Gould, *Spinning Straw into Gold*

Chapter I: The Origins of the Early Modern European Fairy Tale and the Development of a Proto-Feminist, French Cinderella

In seventeenth-century France, the concept of the fairy tale as studied today by scholars did not exist. Fairy stories had existed for many years and short fairytale stories had been written in the Italian peninsula (*Fairy Tales* 14-19). No fairy tale canon or system of dividing tales by types existed at this time.⁵ When the French became familiarized with the tales in *Il Pentamerone* by Giambattista Basile and *Le Piacevoli Notti* by Giovan Francesco Straparola, they did not sort them into categories and then create wholly new tales with strict motif divisions in accordance to those categories as is done now with the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index. Nor did they worry about creating their fairy tales by ‘type.’ Instead the fairy tale authors took different elements and combined those elements as they developed their own stories.⁶

The Cinderellas of Mme D’Aulnoy and Mlle L’Héritier can seem very different from contemporary portrayals of the character as well as from Perrault’s heroine from the same two-year time period. More notorious is D’Aulnoy’s Fine-Oreille as her tale holds the closest similarities to Perrault’s “Cendrillon.”⁷ Both D’Aulnoy’s and Perrault’s Cinderella face a shoe test and attend a ball in addition to the other Cinderella motifs and functions listed previously.

⁵ Most fairy tales are not considered folkloric. Folklore stories are those which moved from literary text into oral tradition. Most fairy tales—especially those written by women—were not printed in chapbooks or spread to the peasant classes in other ways to enter the oral tradition. Only fairy tales that are in the oral tradition are folkloric and have a place in the ATU system.

⁶ The formation of the early modern French fairy tale will be developed in *Chapter III: A Defense for Finette*.

⁷ Fine-Oreille is the birth name given to Mme D’Aulnoy’s Cinderella in “Finette Cendron”. Fine-Oreille is given the nickname Finette : “c’est pourquoi on la nommait ordinairement Finette” (D’Aulnoy 175). The use of Fine-Oreille will be used instead of Finette for D’Aulnoy’s tale in to lessen confusion between D’Aulnoy’s Cinderella and that of Mlle L’Héritier.

However, “Finette Cendron” contains more functions than that of Perrault’s “Cendrillon” as the story is longer with a more complex plot. The abundance of functions and motifs in “Finette Cendron” have caused the tale to fall under the categorization of two ATU tale-types. Although “Finette Cendron” is exceedingly longer than Perrault’s “Cendrillon” and contains two ATU tale-types within the story, it is the fact that “Finette Cendron” has a mélange of fairy tale motifs and remains a Cinderella story that provides a basis for the claim that L’Héritier’s “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” also contains a Cinderella cycle. Though their plots differ, both Finettes show remarkably similar dispositions.

Over two centuries after Christine de Pizan wrote “Le Livre de la Cité des Dames,” French women in literary salons continued to oppose the negative stereotypes written about women. In their fairy tales, “Finette Cendron” and “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette,” Mme D’Aulnoy and Mlle L’Héritier create Cinderellas who are their ideal for a powerful, aristocratic French women. It is important to note that these women were solely writing for aristocratic women. The *conteuses* were unconcerned about the experiences of bourgeois or peasant women or for foreign women who were not in their circles.

The Finettes of D’Aulnoy’s and L’Héritier’s fairy tales combine the characteristics of fine ladies, cunning politicians, and brave knights in their personalities. The Finettes portray the ideal for women to strive for and show which characteristics will allow a woman to get ahead in society. Whereas Perrault’s “Cendrillon” presents a Cinderella who is pretty, passive, and polite, the *conteuses* put forward sharp, strong, skillful, and spirited heroines who combat the notion that women are morally corrupt or otherwise an encumbrance to society.

The idealized characteristics of their heroines are shown in contrast to their wicked sisters. Fleur d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit are portrayed as especially cruel to their sister, beating and enslaving her. D'Aulnoy use the sisters' cruelty as an example to show that if a woman relies too heavily on her beauty to manage her fate, then she can end up a wicked creature who becomes dependent on a benefactress. Babillarde and Nonchalante prove that idle women who refuse to hone their virtues will face treacherous consequences.

Also, French fairy tales added to the argument of *La Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*, a debate that has often excluded women's involvement (Although L'Héritier specifically addressed Boileau's position on the matter, among other conteuses who were involved.) (Raynard 116-124). By writing the tales in French, fairy tales stood as an emblem of how the French language could create rich literature. "Finette Cendron" and "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette" play on traditional French literary features found in chivalric romances. The allusions to French romances remind the readers that the French language-writers have always created valuable literary works. The two Cinderella fairy tales employ motifs from French courtoisie literature and give their heroines the traits of a knight. The chivalric nature of the heroines' personalities questions the established gender roles of women and instilled "the strongest traits that belong to both genders in their heroines" ("Women Soldier's Tales" 146). Literature by women was derided in seventeenth-century France, but the fairy tale genre was an especially undervalued. Mme D'Aulnoy and Mlle L'Héritier, among their *conteuse* counterparts, hid their critiques on women's place in society within their fairy tales because their messages could be hidden from shrewd examination.

Chapter II: “Finette Cendron”: The Literary Fairy Tale of Mme D’Aulnoy

Mme D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron” and is a literary fairy tales from seventeenth-century France that presents a Cinderella who hails from the birth of the modern fairy tale but whose personality is not often associated with the princess. Popular thought of the traditional Cinderella figure focuses on her submissiveness and enforces patriarchal themes (“Cinderella: The People’s Princess 27, 43, Aranda 130, Zipes, 360). However, in the courts of seventeenth-century France (where our concept of the modern fairy tale was developed) most depictions of Cinderella were not submissive at all and at times could be quite brutal.

Mme D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron” presents a headstrong and benevolent Cinderella. Unlike her sisters, Fleur-d’amour and Belle-de-Nuit, whose names translate to ‘flower of love’ and ‘beauty of the night,’ Fine-Oreille translates into ‘delicate/sharp ear’—however she is referred to as Finette. Her ability to attune herself to any given situation allows Fine-Oreille to manifest her happily ever after. Fine-Oreille is the youngest princess, yet she is more attuned to the state of the household than her sisters. Fine-Oreille knows that there is a deficiency in the household and spies on her parents, which allows her to plan her escape from the desert in advance: “[Fine-Oreille] écoutait par le trou de la serrure; et quand elle eut découvert le dessein de son papa et de sa maman” (D’Aulnoy 173).

Without hesitation, Fine-Oreille is proactive against her impending abandonment and seeks out her godmother, the fairy Merluche⁸, to help her. Fine-Oreille never asks for anything

⁸ Merluche alludes to another famous French fairy, Melusine from whom, according to legend, the noble house of Lusignan is descended. (“On the Literary” 40)

without offering a favor in return. She bakes a cake for the fairy and promises food to the horse that carries her to Merluche. After using the enchanted ball of thread to save herself and her sisters, Merluche offers her one more gift to return her home on the condition that Fine-Oreille does not save her cruel sisters. Fine-Oreille's benevolence makes her defy Merluche and save her sisters once more. Knowing that Merluche would be firm in her refusal to help Fine-Oreille escape her mother's plot again after returning with her sisters, Fine-Oreille does not seek out her help. However, Fine-Oreille works to be resourceful in other ways. When the peas she left to retrace her steps are eaten by birds and Fine-Oreille and her sisters are truly stuck in the cabbage-filled desert, plants the acorn that will allow her and her sisters to escape their social isolation when the acorn grows into a tree ("On the Literary" 7). Fine-Oreille is the sister brave enough to climb their oak tree twice a day to find salvation from their social desert.⁹ Later she shows her courage and cunning as she tricks the ogre and ogress who had enslaved and planned to eat the princesses and kills them. Finette also tricks her sisters for many nights as she seeks out behind them to dance at the ball under the guise of 'Cendron.'

After she presents herself to the royal family that seeks to wed their heir to the woman who fits the red velvet slipper, she reveals the true extent of both her cunning and benevolence. She reestablishes her place in society *before* her marriage to Prince Chéri. She makes several demands that act to safeguard her interests as she negotiates her marriage contract. Before she

⁹ The desert is both literal as well as metaphorical: "the sisters are lost in a treeless desert where cabbage grows in abundance. This is d'Aulnoy's way of communicating the concept of social isolation, and it constitutes historical evidence as well as a literary cliché" ("On the Literary" 40). Furthermore, the literary motifs of Melusine and the 'social desert' ground the fairy tale in French literary tradition. The literary motifs affirm the side of the Moderns in *La Querelle des Anciens et Modernes* that states French literary history is rich in and of itself without relying on ancient Greek and Roman traditions.

will consent to a marriage with the prince, she has her parents' kingdom restored so that she marries Prince Chéri as a princess and not as the daughter of a fisherman/hunter who “faire des filets dont vous prendrez des oiseaux à la chasse et des poissons à la pêche” (172). Later, she arranges the marriages of her sisters so that they would also be queens: “ses sœurs furent reines aussi bien qu'elle” (197).

Fine-Oreille shows a deft negotiation of her marriage contract so that she will never again be left impoverished. If Prince Chéri dies before an heir is produced, Fine-Oreille will not return to her prior state of being the daughter of a pauper because she has her father restored to his former status as king (“Voix Clandestines” 72). If her parents mismanage their accounts as before, then Fine-Oreille has ensured that her two sisters are both well off as well as in debt to her. Furthermore, once she has married off Fleur-d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, Fine-Oreille should not have to worry about any scandals involving them or their financial security for the most part. Moreover, Fine-Oreille places her future-in-laws in a state of tension because they know their heir will die without his marriage to Fine-Oreille. Fine-Oreille's manipulation of the scene allows her to exploit her advantageous position in a way that reestablishes her family and remind her future in-laws that it is she who benevolently marries their son, saves the succession of their throne, and continues the stability of their empire: “ils avaient plus de cent royaumes, un de moins n'était pas une affaire” (197).

In comparison to Fine-Oreille who uses her strength and skills to overcome the obstacles in her story, her sisters Fleur d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit are passive. The sisters rely on their beauty and noble background to secure their future for them. The sisters enter the ogre's estate sure that their position and beauty will court the occupants' fancy and ensure their well-

treatment. Once in the presence of ogres, Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d'Amour are powerless. After their beauty and fine clothes do not secure them a husband, the sisters' futures are in limbo. Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d'Amour are at Fine-Oreille's mercy and only with Fine-Oreille's benevolence (a quality the sisters lack entirely) that Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d'Amour regain their status as princesses and obtain husbands and thus security for their futures.

The ways in which Fine-Oreille reveals her ability to both outwit and show kindness to others is notable because "Finette Cendrillon" was written by Mme D'Aulnoy as opposed to a male author.¹⁰ Fine-Oreille demands to tell her story before she will marry the prince: "Non... il faut avant que je vous conte mon histoire" (D'Aulnoy 196). Without Fine-Oreille demands to tell her story, she is unable to negotiate an advantageous marriage contract. Fine-Oreille stands up for herself at every point in the fairy tale. She defies her mother's plans and her godmother's wishes. She outwits the ogre family as well as her cruel sisters' plans. At the end of the literary fairy tale, Fine-Oreille, who possesses nothing except a magic trunk of clothes, negotiates her marriage contract alone without hesitation or doubt. Mme D'Aulnoy depicts Fine-Oreille as capable, level-

¹⁰ While it is not impossible that a male-author might have written a protofeminist Cinderella, there is a male author who wrote a "Cinderella" during this time period in France: Charles Perrault. Perrault's "Cendrillon" is not a protofeminist fairy tale. While Perrault appears to appeal to the "vindication of women," the reason lies solely in advancing the position of the Moderns in *La Querelle des Anciens et Modernes* (Raynard 117). Many women fairy tale authors were Moderns and it furthered Perrault's side in the debate to show support to women at times. However, his tales often portray women as weak or malicious characters. Perrault's Cendrillon is pretty, passive and polite and very different from D'Aulnoy's and L'Héritier's Finettes who are sharp, strong, skillful, and spirited. Equally, Giambattista Basile's "La Gatta Cenerentola", written long before the French fairy tales, revolves around a Cinderella who is vindictively cunning and unkind. Though Cenerentola receives her Wedding is not because of any merit of her own but because of the fate of "the stars" "Cinderella: The People's Princess" 31, 38) The male-authors published during the seventeenth century who wrote a "Cinderella" did not create the protofeminist heroines that their female counterparts did.

headed, and as a woman who asserts her voice, morals, and abilities. D'Aulnoy allows Fine-Oreille to be wily (planning her escape from abandonment in the desert), emotional (crying when her sisters leave her for the ball after Fine-Oreille has saved their lives multiple times), feisty (kicking mud at her sisters' faces when she rides by to claim her prince), violent (committing not one but two murders), and benevolent (forgiving every human character who wrongs her in the course of her tale). Fine-Oreille is allowed to be multifaceted and brilliant in a way that her male-authored counterparts never are.¹¹ She takes on the characteristics of the seventeenth-century French aristocracy and as a true princess she is benevolent as all fairytale princesses are during the period. However, she is allowed to be more than a pretty, polite princess as D'Aulnoy allows her to take on the masculine characteristics of ruthlessness and cleverness.

¹¹ Refer to footnote 9: Perrault's Cendrillon and Basile's Cenerentola are flat, negative portrayals of women in comparison to the complexities of Fine-Oreille and Finette's personality.

Chapter III: “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” the case for Mlle

L’Héritier’s Cinderella or, a Defense for Finette

A discussion of Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier’s de Villandon’s “L’Adroite Princesse ou Les Aventures de Finette” within this thesis requires defense for Finette as a Cinderella because the fairy tale is often left out of Cinderella compilations. Not generally listed as an ATU 510A tale as L’Héritier’s story has been yet to be found circulated as a folk tale rather than as the original literary fairy tale, “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” does contain a Cinderella cycle as described in the introduction. The Cinderella tales described in this thesis must meet the qualification of a dead mother, a cruel family, a hardworking protagonist, a Prince, a Fairy, a separation from the Prince, a recognition, a transfiguration, and a Wedding. Similar to D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron,” “L’Adroite Princesse ou Les Aventures de Finette” is a hybrid tale.¹² It is also less known, which could be a contributing factor as to why it has yet to be classified as an ATU 510A tale.

The fact that L’Héritier’s tale is not typically found in compilations of ATU 510A tales could possibly coincide with the fact that many scholars would cite Charles Perrault’s “Cendrillon” (1697) as the ATU 510A at its purest form and most versions of Cinderella, especially in the contemporary sense, model their “Cinderella” after his. L’Héritier uses the motifs common to “Cinderella” tales, and also uses the functions in her tale like that of other

¹² Many fairy tales in France during this period can be classified as ‘hybrid fairy tales’ or fairy tales that do not fit nicely into a single ATU or that fit into more than one ATU. Fairy tales by women (as opposed to Charles Perrault in particular) were often elaborate and fit more than a single ATU plot within the tale.

ATU 510A fairy tales.¹³ In comparative with the construction of D'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" which combines the ATU 327 "Tom Thumb" with ATU 510A "Cinderella," L'Héritier's tale combines ATU 510A "Cinderella" with ATU 310 "The Maiden in the Tower," or "Rapunzel" ("On the Literary" 34).

At the time in which "L'Adroite Princesse ou Les Aventures de Finette" was published in 1695¹⁴ written, our contemporary conceptualization of the fairy tale had not yet been solidified. Ruth Bottigheimer cites the rise of the modern European fairy tale as beginning in the 1550s with Venetian Straparola's "Le Piacevoli Notti" (*Fairy Tales* 91). However, the formation of French fairy tales commenced in the late seventeenth century in literary salons. In the salons, *conteuses* would *mitonner*, or play narrative games. Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton analyze the correspondences of a *conteuse*, Mme de Sévigné, and they find "from all indications, the *conte de fées* emerged from parlor games both at court and in the salons of mid-seventeenth-century France" (Seifert and Stanton 5, *Le conte de fées* 19). In correspondences to her daughter, Mme de Sévigné offers the first hint at the French fairy tale genesis as she describes the court ladies listening to a tale of a princess and her fairy lover in a kingdom of fairies. (*Fairy Tales* 16). Members of literary salons would spin tales or *mittoner*¹⁵ using elements from one another's stories to entertain one another, and this led to many early French fairy tales straddling the

¹³ The ATU 510A tales that "L'adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette" will be compared with to assert its validity in the corpus will include Mme D'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" (1697), Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon" (1697), Giambattista Basile's "Zezolla" in *Lo cunto de li cunti* (1634), the medieval Icelandic story concerning Öskubuska in romance *Vilmundar saga viđutan* (circa 14c), and Walt Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) (Hui 353).

¹⁴ *Oeuvres Meslees* is printed for the first time in 1695; two years before Perrault and D'Aulnoy would receive privileges for publishing their fairy tale collections.

¹⁵ Much of the basis for the claims of *mittoner* activities is speculative. However, Mme de Murat's journal reveals insight into D'Aulnoy's composition of fairy tales within Murat's salon.

boundaries between various ATUs and some remain officially uncategorized because they have not entered the oral tradition and become folktales. (“Happily Ever After”).

Mlle L’Héritier concludes the final paragraph of “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” with a confession to Mme de Murat, “Je vous avoue que je l’ai brodée et que je vous l’ai contée un peu au long ; mais quand on dit des contes... on cherche à s’amuser, et il me paraît qu’il ne coûte pas plus de les allonger, pour faire durer davantage la conversation... les circonstances font le plus souvent l’agrément de ces historiettes badines” (L’Héritier 15).

According to Joan Gould, the *conteuses* played their spinning games and “spinning is a metaphor for transformation, and transformation is women’s work” (xxii). In the same manner that fairy tales are stories of transformations, the *conteuses* transformed the various tales that they had heard and from melding those elements and motifs of others’ tales did spin new ones. The assertion by L’Héritier that “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” (and French fairy tales in general) is a transformation and continuation of French stories furthers the side of the Moderns who state that French literature written in French-style and language is more elevated than that of antiquity.

The ATU system of fairy tale organization is too stringently structured for the categorization of a majority of fairy tales written by seventeenth-century French authors which were too long and elaborate to be put into chapbook circulation. Often the authors would blend the typical motifs of many different tales in their fairy tales when they transformed the tales in the court or the salons. When the ATU tale 510A uses the name of Charles Perrault’s tale “Cendrillon” or Cinderella as the name or the tale type over “Finette” or “Aschenputtal” or

“Zezolla,” it seems evident which tale is used to define the ATU tale type. Today, many researchers use the name Cinderella to signify all of heroines in the ATU 510A tales.

Researchers recognize “Finette Cendron” by Mme D’Aulnoy as a Cinderella tale even though the fairy tale is a mixture of both ATU tale type 510A and 327B (“On the Literary” 34). “Finette Cendron” and “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” share many characteristics, not only in the motifs and functions of ATU 510A tales but also in the strong personalities of their heroines. It is probable that Mlle L’Héritier and Mme D’Aulnoy knew each other well and were acquainted with each other’s fairy tales. There is also some evidence that Mlle L’Héritier inherited the literary salon of Mme de Scudéry and claims have been made that Mme D’Aulnoy would have attended some of her bi-weekly gatherings (Seifert and Stanton 62). The *conteuses* would have been at the very least somewhat familiar with each other’s fairy tales (*Le conte de fées* 25-27).

The construction of Mlle L’Héritier’s “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” is similar to that of “Finette Cendron,” and despite being a blend of “Cinderella” and “Rapunzel” tale-types, its core plot is similar to the one in ATU 510A. The story line and L’Héritier’s protagonist Finette shares common elements with “Finette Cendron.” The story surrounds an intelligent and sharp princess whose name is Finette. She has two sisters who do not merit such a lovely, helpful sister because they are disobedient and foolhardy. Finette aids her bad sisters from the goodness of her heart and chooses a virtuous princely husband. The adventures of Finette in “Finette Cendron” and Finette “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” both include a fairy who gives advice to a ferocious princess who kills the enemy of her family, forgives the deserving (as well as the undeserving), and brings honor and elevation to her family.

“L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” does not have a ball or sisters who deliberately torment the heroine, yet, due to the functions and motifs within, the literary fairy tale still participates in the tradition of Cinderella.

“L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” has many motifs typical to the ATU 510A tale-type. The motif “clever youngest daughter” (L61)¹⁶ is in L’Héritier’s fairy tale as well as in “Finette Cendron.” Finette is more skillful than the prince Riche-en-Cautéle as Fine-Oreille is more skillful than the ogress and Finette’s sisters. Like in “Cendrillon,” “Finette Cendron,” and “Aschenputtel,” in “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” there are “three sisters” (P252.2) and “treacherous sisters (stepsisters)” (K2212). Finette’s sisters are not cruel to her in L’Héritier’s tale, but they show respect for neither their father nor the glory of their family because they “marry” Riche-en-Cautéle without the permission of the king. Finette, like Fine-Oreille, Zezolla, and Öskubuska, receive an “award for cleverness” (Q91) and the prize in each tale is a marriage with a good prince.

If Finette is skillful, then she is also loyal. The “loyalty” (W34) to her sisters is similar in “Finette Cendron” and “Cendrillon” when the heroine helps her bad sisters after she wed the Prince. Finette gives her enchanted “*quenouille*,” or spindle, to her sisters to deceive their father (L’Héritier 12). The enchanted spindle is not that uncommon from another motif very typical to ATU 510A tales: “magic object received from fairy” (D813). The magic object is sometimes a dress (“Finette Cendron”), a carriage (Disney’s *Cinderella*), and/or a glass slipper (“Cendrillon”) and helps the heroine access the prince. However, in “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de

¹⁶ The following references that consist of (letter number) refer to the Thompson-Motif index.

Finette” the magic object motif is subverted. Because the magic object is given under the king’s orders instead of as a gift from the fairy to the heroine and it has the opposite effect of what was intended (Babillarde and Nonchalante take a husband) and does not aid the heroine.¹⁷ Though the gift of the fairy does not aid Finette in the way typically wielded by Cinderellas’ authors, the motif “fairy as helper” (N815) remains: The fairy gives Finette helpful council before her marriage with Prince Bel-à-Voir (L’Héritier 13).

Another motif common to other versions of the tales in the ATU 510 but used differently in L’Héritier’s fairy tale is the motif of “the false bride/ the substituted bride” (K1911). In “Aschenputtel” and “Cendrillon,” the sisters attempt to dupe the prince into marrying them instead of Cinderella and become the false brides themselves. The sisters of Finette die before the marriage between Finette and Prince Bel-à-Voir, however, Finette makes a “belle marionnette” or “une figure de paille” to act as the false bride. Prince Bel-à-Voir must fulfill the vow he made to his deceased brother and stabs the scarecrow that Finette put on the bed. The false bride is revealed and Finette and Bel-à-Voir can live in peace (L’Héritier 14).¹⁸ The motif of the false bride is applied in a new way because although Finette’s sisters do not act as the false brides, the scarecrow acts as a substitution for Finette’s staged murder that allows her husband to remain honorable to his brother’s last wish.

¹⁷ The order of the king is that the fairy must provide spindles to keep the daughters away from men who wish to marry them.

¹⁸ The false bride motif is common throughout women’s fairy tales (e.g. Mme D’Aulnoy’s “L’Oiseau Bleue” and Mme de Murat’s “Le Roi Porc”) and was well-known in the literary salons.

Many versions of the ATU 510A tale-type contain a variation of the motif: “ogre defeated”¹⁹ (G500). Öskubuska fights hand to hand with her future husband, who is described in brutish terms. Fine-Oreille kills an ogress and her husband in a similar manner as the hero does in “Tom Thumb”. Finette ruins the life of the bad prince, Riche-en-Cautèle. A motif of destruction or defeat is not typical for every Cinderella cycle. However, a minimum of two other Cinderella stories contain a variation of “the defeated ogre” as shown with Öskubuska and Fine-Oreille. “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” establishes a third instance of the motif “ogre defeated” in the Cinderella cycle. It can be argued that while the motif “ogre defeated” is not a primary motif in the Cinderella cycle, it might act as a secondary motif; familiar to the Cinderella cycle but unnecessary to delineate a story as part of the Cinderella canon.

When one considers the transformative nature of fairy tales, it makes sense that a fairy tale-type would see subtle changes with the passage of time. Many variations exist of the story of Cinderella and when one considers the history behind the transformative nature of fairy tale authors and Cinderellas, one can recognize “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” by Mlle L’Héritier as a Cinderella fairy tale as well.

¹⁹ In this thesis the motif “ogre defeated” represents the function of the heroine engaging in physical combat against her enemy and winning. In “L’Adroite princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” this includes the tactics employed by Finette to bring Prince Riche-en-Cautèle to physical harm and pain.

Chapter IV: An Aristocratic Cinderella

Although the plot of “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” has more similarities to “Finette Cendron” than “Cendrillon,” the heroine’s personality shares many resemblances to other modern European Cinderellas and various examples can be found within the details of the first three chapters. An especially interesting similarity that many Cinderellas share is their bright, fierce, active personality.

Jonathan Hui affirms the origin of the shoe motif and the ‘cinder-name’ in a medieval saga from fourteenth-century Iceland: *Vilmundar Saga*. The princess Sóley is disguised as Öskukuska and after her transformation from a princess, she has a “fierce fight with Vilmundr,” her eventual husband in the saga (Hui 368). Ruth Bottigheimer describes Neapolitan Cinderella, *Zezolla*, from “*La Gatta Cenerentola*” by Giambattista Basile as a princess who is “determinedly active,” “clever and wily” (“Cinderella” 43). *Fine-Oreille* charms the fairy *Merluche*, tricks an ogre into burning himself alive, and negotiates a beneficial marriage contract for herself, which shows that she is as aggressive and calculating as her fellow Cinderellas.

Finette is described as being as exemplary in both female occupations as in her position as a much-relied-upon advisor to her father, the king. She runs the castle with a deft hand. First *Finette* threatens to murder *Riche-Cautèle*: “Prince, si vous approchez de moi, je vous fendrai la tête avec ce marteau” (*L’Héritier* 7). Then she outwits *Riche-Cautèle*—who is known to be “particularly artful and designing”—and foils his plots throughout the literary fairy tale (Samber and Bewick 22). *Finette* places herself within in the ranks of spirited Cinderellas as she spends the course of the tale executing her plots to elevate the situations of her family and herself.

Öskubuska, Zezolla, Fine-Oreille, and Finette are very different from Cendrillon, but each Cinderella possesses many of the elements and motifs that place each of the princesses in the perpetually changing Cinderella cycle, even the clever princess Finette.

The vivacity of the seventeenth-century French Finettes shows a sharp contrast against many male-authored Cinderellas who can only be described as “pretty, passive, and polite” (*Happily Ever After*). It is not peculiar at all that L’Héritier and D’Aulnoy would write literary fairy tales with “subversive viewpoints” that questioned the worthiness of the conventions of seventeenth-century French politics, society, and gender roles (“Women Soldiers’ Tales” 140).

In their tales “Marmoisan, ou l’innocente tromperie : nouvelle héroïque et satirique,” and “Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné,” L’Héritier and D’Aulnoy present worlds where men are incapable of fulfilling their roles and woman adroitly prove their ability to excel in both the feminine and masculine realms²⁰. The *conteuses* use fairy tales to assert that women can be both beautiful and accomplished in feminine tasks as well as murder ogres, torment evil princes, manage kingdoms, and negotiate their marriages.

Literary fairy tales allow seventeenth-century French aristocratic women to express the ways they experience their place in society. The authors believed that virtuous women like their Finettes were intelligent enough to find their own husbands. Through Finette they show the tension within feminine relationships that results from women competing with one another for the most advantageous marriage and thus the most comfortable life. It is important to note that

²⁰ Translations: “Marmoisan, or the innocent deception” by Mlle L’Héritier and “Belle-Belle or the knight Fortunate” by Mme D’Aulnoy

Finette is benevolent to her sisters in each of the fairy tales. The *conteuses* very clearly pit their own Finette against her sisters in that they are all eligible maidens. In L'Héritier's tale, when Finette's sisters 'ruin themselves' and dishonor their family name, Finette does not try to punish them for the diminution of clout of their family name in the political realm as well as when attempting to arrange marriages. She proves that women do not want to be vicious against their rivals. When D'Aulnoy gives Fine-Oreille's sisters and a mother who abuse her emotionally and physically, she allows Fine-Oreille to retain her ability to forgive and watch over her family, regardless of their faults.

In all of this, Mlle L'Héritier and Mme D'Aulnoy create Cinderellas who wield power and masterfully augment their status and that of their family. L'Héritier's Finette is cleverer than her father. She can discern which officials seek to undermine him and steal from the family and her father relies on her to not only point out the treachery to him but to then formulate a plan to outwit the wrongdoer. When he leaves to go to war, he leaves the regency to a minister who also depends on Finette; he sends letters to her tower to inform her of the affairs of the kingdom, asks for advice, makes court to her. Finette manages the damage to her family's honor after her sisters, Babillarde and Nonchalante, become pregnant. Finette travels to the neighboring kingdom where Riche-Cautéle plots vengeance on her. Under the guise of 'Sanatio' a doctor with a remedy to save Prince Riche-Cautéle from death, Finette secretly leaves his sons (that her sisters bore) in his palace and makes her escape (L'Héritier 277-281). With the help of her Fairy's maxim, she devises a plan to stop her imminent murder after her wedding.

D'Aulnoy's Fine-Oreille uses physical strength as well as political intelligence to overpower those people and conventions which would typically repress a seventeenth-century

aristocratic French woman's power. Finette climbs an oak tree twice a day until it is tall enough to see an ogre's home in the distance. The strength she builds up allows her to shove an ogre into an oven and chop off the head of an ogress with one clean swipe. In Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" a boy manages to outwit and cause the death of ogres. D'Aulnoy presents a woman who tricks the ogres and can do the killing herself. Finette is also an accomplished horseback rider who journeys extremely long distances, a trait often associated with knights. Her restraint in using her power over her sisters when she returns to her status as a princess might also be seen as a chivalrous, knightly trait because chivalrous knights in medieval romances often were tested for benevolence when they granted mercy to offenders instead of slaying them.

"Finette Cendron" and "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette" utilize chivalric traditions and subvert the gender roles of the princesses. Fine-Oreille and Finette take on the role of the knight throughout their tales. Fine-Oreille slays an ogre and travels to new kingdoms and increases the glory of her family name. "Acquiring, enhancing, and demonstrating his honor, according to the code of chivalry, is a primary goal of the ideal knight within Medieval French literature" and the plot of Fine-Oreille's and Finette's tale is advanced as the princess seeks to increase the honor of her kingdom and family name (Crotty). At the beginning of each tale, both Cinderella's families fall from grace. Fine-Oreille's father squandered his wealth until the family was degraded to fishing and hunting in the woods away from court civilization. Finette's family is not in financial ruin but Babillarde and Nonchalante ruin the honor of the family name after they become pregnant from Riche-en-Cautèle who abandons them and their sons. Both princesses are put on a quest (to return to society or to seek revenge) and they face increasingly

difficult challenges until at last they restore their and their family's honor through an advantageous marriage.

Fine-Oreille and Finette do not only go on a quest and slay 'beasts,' following the literary tradition of other chivalric knights, the Cinderellas are merciful. In Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth century romance, *Lancelot, ou Le Chevalier à la charrette*, the knight, Lancelot, spares another knight whom he has bested because the knight had pleaded to Lancelot to spare him with the mercy of God and later a damsel asks that Lancelot show the prisoner mercy and release him from his bond to Lancelot (281-282). From his position of power as a knight, Lancelot must temper his strength with benevolence and grant mercy when God's name is invoked (or a damsel's wish can suffice for smaller matters). Continuing this tradition, D'Aulnoy and L'Héritier create heroines who show mercy, but in the style of refined noblewomen the Cinderellas do not need to be pleaded with to show benevolence.

Fine-Oreille has the most reason to disown and punish her sisters. They continuously beat and abuse her throughout her childhood and enslave Fine-Oreille as their servant both before and after she saves their lives. Regardless of Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d'Amour's wickedness, Fine-Oreille continuously shows her sisters kindness. After Fine-Oreille is promised to be married to the only son of a great and powerful king and discovers that her sisters are in the court, she demands that her sisters come to her and then Fine-Oreille tenderly embraces them. She does not punish them in the way that they merit ("les punir comme elles le méritaient") but instead Fine-Oreille promises to send them home to their family's restored kingdom and later her sisters become queens as well. Fine-Oreille portrays the chivalric qualities of a knight when at the end

of her quest she does not seek vengeance on her persecutors but shows them mercy and restores them to their former glory.

Finette is not persecuted by her sisters, but by their lover, Riche-en-Cautéle. However, it is through Babillarde and Nonchalante's actions that Finette's family loses their honor. Finette tricks Riche-en-Cautéle and feels relief for only a moment before she rushes to her sisters to check on them ("Mais sa joie ne l'occupait si fort qu'elle ne pensât plus à ses saurs. Son premier soin fut de les chercher"). When Finette learns how her sisters have dishonored the family is devastated because honor is most precious to her ("Cette princesse passait des moments bien tristes; la gloire lui était mille fois plus chère que la vie, et la honteuse faiblesse de ses sueurs la mettait dans un désespoir dont elle avait peine à se rendre maîtresse."). After her sisters give birth to sons, they worry what their father, the king, will say when he returns home from the first Crusade, but Finette selflessly decides to risk exposing herself in order to conceal her sisters' shame and restore her family's honor. In disguise, Finette leaves her nephews with their father and returns home before her father. When the time comes for the king to check his daughter's glass spindles, Finette lends her spindle to her sisters to hide their actions from their father. Finette risks her reputation in order to protect her sisters because, like a chivalric knight, she is benevolent to those who have earned punishment.

Although Riche-en-Cautéle is Finette's persecutor and not her sisters, he is not the person blamed for Finette's dishonor. However, Riche-en-Cautéle is manipulative and violent and deserving of punishment. Riche-en-Cautéle's cruelty removes the humanity from his character and renders him an 'ogre' or beast-like figure instead. Because Riche-en-Cautéle represents a monster that Finette must defeat during her quest as opposed to her actual adversary (her sisters'

choice to take a lover and ruin the family's honorable name), Finette is free to battle him until his death without the duty to show the beast/ogre/monster mercy.

D'Aulnoy and L'Héritier create Cinderellas who are reminiscent of knights from medieval French courtoisie literature. By endowing their Cinderellas with the qualities of chivalric knights, they question women's abilities in the rigidly gendered courts of France. The Cinderellas make good princesses: they are beautiful, politically savvy, and benevolent. However, they also can fulfil the duties of a knight as they battle monsters, complete their quest to restore their family's honor and show mercy to their adversaries and persecutors. By grounding their fairy tales in the courtoisie tradition, the *conteuses* further establish fairy tales as a literary genre. The French tradition of literature is highlighted in their works and advances the argument of the Moderns in *La Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*.

The tales also emphasize women's political mastery. Fine-Oreille's political prowess is seen in the beginning and the end of "Finette Cendron." When she overhears her parents' plot to abandon their daughters, Finette immediately makes haste to an ally, her Fairy. She navigates the politics of their alliance by presenting her a gift in exchange for aid. When she fails to meet the terms of the Fairy's conditions for aid, their alliance is halted. Finette only fails to meet the conditions because of her strong morals, and the fairy does not abandon her but waits until her aid can be truly useful again.

The last paragraph of the literary fairy tale "Finette Cendron" is dedicated to Fine-Oreille's political prowess. As stated in Chapter II, Fine-Oreille negotiates her marriage contract without the interference of her parents, or any brothers or uncles. She also reestablishes her

family's position in society and even arranges marriages for her sisters. In return for the aid of the Spanish jennet, Fine-Oreille works to strengthen the restored alliance between herself and her godmother by sending her lavish gifts and the news of her new status and that of her family's return to kingship.

Finette's political mastery is emphasized in the beginning of the tale. She is described as her father's most trusted and useful advisor. When Finette is locked in a tower while her father fights in the first Crusade, the minister in charge of the kingdom sends her letters drawn up to her window in the tower by a basket so that she would remain knowledgeable to the kingdom's affairs. Before the king leaves for war, Finette is relied upon to catch ministers who would manipulate the king and help negotiate advantageous contracts. Like Fine-Oreille, Finette is portrayed as the most capable political power within the "Cinderella" tale.

In their fairy tales, seventeenth-century aristocratic French women could play out their desires in a world where women were capable and had autonomy. They could acknowledge the complexities of their social life in the political scheme of the courts. Their "Cinderella" fairy tales show that in an ideal world, a good princess could manage to make successful arrangements in order to secure a chance of happiness in her future. Furthermore, the fairy tales insist that aristocratic women can manage without the help of her father as long as she heeds the wise lessons given to her by the fairies.

The *conteuses* act as fairies to the readers of the fairy tales and impart them with many lessons throughout the tales, but each also point out a specific lesson to their own Finette. For L'Héritier, the lesson to her heroine comes in a form of a maxim: "Princesse, vous êtes sage et

prudente: vous n'avez pris jusqu'ici des mesures si justes pour votre conduite qu'en vous mettant toujours dans l'esprit que défiance est mère de sûreté. Continuez de vous souvenir vivement de l'importance de cette maxime, et vous parviendrez à être heureuse sans le secours de mon art”

(13). Finette’s prudence and wisdom protects her throughout the fairy tale, but the nameless fairy reminds Finette to never grow complacent. The fairy’s advice is life-saving because it is when Finette should be most secure (after the marriage to her Prince) that her constant vigilance is most necessary.

D’Aulnoy does not give Merluche a maxim, but she does provide Finette the skills she needs to overcome her two major trials in her two visits with the fairy. In her visits, Merluche receives a cake from Finette and asks Finette to brush and comb her hair. These skills eventually save Finette’s life. When Finette is enslaved by the ogress, she plots their murders and the skills she learns from Merluche are vital in her action. In her last visit to the fairy Merluche, her godmother, Finette learns the most important lesson of all: how to set strict conditions in agreements. Merluche promises to never see Finette if she returns home with her wicked sisters after Merluche has helped her once before. The fairy holds true to her word which sets a precedent for Finette. When the royal family asks for her hand in marriage to their heir, Finette does not immediately accept the offer even though it appears that the arrangement would be advantageous for her. She bides her time and sets her conditions: that the family will first hear her story and then that the royal family will restore Finette’s family’s lands and titles. Without the lessons of Merluche, Finette would not have had the education which allowed the princess to thrive. In their ATU 510A fairy tales of Finette, Mme D’Aulnoy and Mlle L’Héritier embed

lessons so that other women will also have the knowledge to secure for themselves a future where they will thrive.

Part II: Cinderella in America and England, from the Romantic to Contemporary

Period

“First she’s the prettily dressed child of a wealthy father. Next she’s a stepchild clothed in rags who eventually goes to a ball gowned in silver and silk, with glass slippers— “the finest in the world”— that fit no feet but hers. After she run away from the ball, she takes off her finery and puts on rags again to fool her stepsisters, but the transformation is never reversible. From that moment on, she’s no longer an Ash Girl who sees no way to raise herself from the ashes but the opposite: a Princess in hiding, who pretends to be a household drudge.”

—Joan Gould, *Spinning Straw Into Gold*

Chapter V: The Evolution of Feminist Thought in a Changing Anglo World

The nineteenth century was a time of transition and change in both America and Great Britain. There was much change within the periods that Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and Louisa May Alcott's "A Modern Cinderella; or, The Little Old Shoe" were written. Both American and British society found themselves in a transformation that would forever affect their futures. Industrialization began to seep into every aspect of daily life. Agricultural techniques were revolutionized, textiles that were once painstakingly woven were now mass produced, and foreign trade was at a height that was unrecognizable to those who could compare it to their recent past. This mass-production led to a dependence on both maritime activities and the introduction of the railway system. More people from every social-class moved around their country and the world.

Britain began to industrialize at the end of the eighteenth century. The jarring alternations that industrialization brought to British society, which had previously had its foundations in agriculture, led to cultural pushback in certain groups against the installations of smoggy factories and the social changes that came with the adoption of fast-paced lifestyles. While the United States of America embraced British technological innovations, the momentous change would cause disruption. Before the American industrial revolution was complete, the drastic alterations to the American economic system—in addition to the already tenuous cultural-quarrels—would catapult the country into political upheaval.

Throughout history, when dramatic societal and cultural changes occur, often a division is created between those who are ready to thrust themselves into the future and those who push

against changing values to reflect on what might be gleaned from the past to be saved and treasured in the face of an unknown future. The advent of the nineteenth century was immersed in technological developments and a shift in societal views caused by industrialization and this in turn led to the literary and artistic movement that would come to be called Romanticism.

Romanticism resisted the rapid urbanization brought about by industrialization. The works associated with the movement focused on the spirituality of nature. Romantic art and literature were nostalgic for a simpler time where people were outdoors, full of emotion, and deeply in touch with their inner world. In Britain, Romantic literature seems to have developed at the end of the eighteenth century and tapers off after the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837. American literature does not seem to develop around the themes central to British Romanticism until closer to 1830 and ends within a decade after the surrender of the Confederates at the Appomattox Courthouse in 1865.²¹ The action and setting of *Persuasion* and “A Modern Cinderella: or, The Little Old Shoe” are entrenched in Romantic themes. In both stories, the outdoors are valued and the characters are revitalized from nature. It is through emotional development that the Cinderellas are able to elevate their mindset and transform from malcontented daughter to confident woman. Austen and Alcott do not provide an excess of dialogue for either of their Cinderellas but instead describe their thoughts and show their actions. The authors rely on knowledge of their Cinderella’s inner world to facilitate the transfiguration of the story in opposition to the seventeenth-century Finettes who must vanquish an ogre before they realize their self-worth. Although *Persuasion* and “A Modern Cinderella; or, The Little Old

²¹ American Romanticism is heavily connected with other literary and artistic movements at the time such as Transcendentalism and American Gothic and Alcott’s story is influenced by elements of those literary movements as well as American Romanticism.

Shoe” were written nearly fifty years apart, the two stories draw on the same Romantic themes to create Cinderella stories that are ensconced in their literary and historical period.

Both the novel *Persuasion* and the little magazine short story “A Modern Cinderella: or, The Little Old Shoe” should be read with the context of Romanticism in mind. Unlike Mme D’Aulnoy and Mlle L’Héritier, the aristocratic *conteuses* from the courts of seventeenth-century France, Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott were the daughters of spiritual men who were both educators during some point of their life. Austen’s father was a rector. Alcott’s mother was a social worker and her father was a philosopher. Neither woman was born into the upper-echelons of society. Their outlooks on a woman’s life as depicted in their stories of Cinderella reflect the perspectives of educated, upper-middle class women who lived un-extravagant lives.

By reflecting on the socio-cultural background on which the “Cinderella” stories were written, one can better analyze how the authors incorporate the salient elements of their period with the motifs of the Cinderella cycle. With the historical period and the authors’ social backgrounds, the consideration of the budding development of feminism also lends to the exploration into the influences that prompted Austen and Alcott to boldly critique women’s situation in their patriarchal societies.

Austen and Alcott’s Cinderellas, Anne Elliot and Nan, give a voice to women who are devoted to their families and deeply emotional. The personality of Austen’s Anne Elliot is developed throughout the novel and as her character grows in strength, she begins to find her voice and assert her personhood by removing herself from the demands of her family and her Fairy. Alcott uses a different tactic for her Cinderella. Nan remains diligent in caring for her

family throughout her story, however the Prince recognizes the unfairness of Nan's situation and seeks to lighten her load. Both renditions present a perspective on women's place in the home as well as her self-image and intelligence.

In 1981, over one-hundred years after Austen's and Alcott's "Cinderella" stories were written, American poetess and prose-author, Judith Viorst, publishes "And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" in a collection of her poetry titled *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries: Poems for Children and their Parents*. "And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" is a humorous quatrain that manages to fulfil a "Cinderella" in sixty-one words, but also challenge the structure, journey, and expected Wedding of a "Cinderella" Viorst's poem immediately follows the Women's Movement of the sixties and seventies in the United States.

The themes of women's autonomy, opportunity, sexual freedom, and discrimination are all cornerstones of second wave feminism and implicated in Viorst's poem. "And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" relies on the popular knowledge of the Cinderella cycle to challenge the expectations of traditional Cinderella motifs and permute those motifs to align with a second-wave feminist retelling of "Cinderella." Viorst creates a Cinderella who is completely independent and in charge of her story.

Chapter VI: *Persuasion* in the Cinderella Cycle

Jane Austen's *Persuasion* was published posthumously in December 1817. The heroine of the novel is a young woman old enough to be past her prime, but not quite ineligible for marriage. Anne Elliot's "bloom had vanished early" and the novel makes it apparent that she refuses to seek a marriage even though she could conceivably find a suitable match (Austen 2). Anne chooses to remain a diligent daughter and sister instead of running a household of her own because in her youth she was persuaded to break off her engagement with the man she loves and remains faithful to, as she rejects the notion of marriage between two people who are not in love.

The plot of *Persuasion* might not initially appear to mimic the Cinderella cycle, but the novel does meet the criteria that this thesis lays out for "Cinderella" tales. *Persuasion* contains a dead mother, a cruel family, a hardworking protagonist, a Prince, a Fairy, a separation from the Prince, a recognition, a transfiguration of the heroine, and a Wedding.

The death of Anne's mother instigates her Fairy, Lady Russell, to feel it is her place to persuade Anne to end her engagement to the Prince, Captain Wentworth, who at the time was a young man with neither money nor status. Anne's living family is vain, selfish, and at points cruel to her. Anne's father ignores her which is not uncommon in other Cinderella versions if the father is alive. Her sister Elizabeth takes joy in reminding Anne that she is not wanted and replaces Anne with the widowed Mrs. Clay for a companion. Her younger-but-married sister, Mary, is less cruel than she is self-centered. She persuades Anne to care for her sons and dote on her so that while Anne works diligently, she might go to dinner parties or otherwise amuse herself.

Anne's hardworking nature can be seen throughout the novel in her willingness to tend to the hysterics of her sister Mary, her selflessness as she nurses Mary's son so that Mary can attend a party, and in her level-head as she delegates jobs to the party in Lyme which saves the life of her cousin and rival, Louisa. Anne is almost constantly at work throughout the novel as she tends to her family's emotional, physical, and financial welfare.

Anne is reunited with the Prince, Captain Wentworth, when he visits her sister's cottage, but the recognition does not occur until later in the story. Captain Wentworth refuses to recognize Anne as a friend or enemy and ignores her instead. Even before their false-reunion, Wentworth makes only vague inquiries about Anne to her family to insinuate that there was no relationship between the two. When Wentworth "had inquired after her... as might suit a former slight acquaintance, seeming to acknowledge such as she had acknowledged [to Wentworth's sister], actuated, perhaps, by the same view of escaping introduction when they were to meet," Anne believes that Wentworth's lack of acknowledgement of her presence in the cottage was purposeful (23).

Furthermore, Captain Wentworth notes that Anne's appearance does not match that of the Anne he was engaged with. Captain Wentworth's acknowledgement that Anne's appearance makes her nearly unrecognizable to him mimics the Cinderella cycle tradition of the Prince being unable to find his love because she has hidden herself with ashes and the clothes of a maid: "so altered that he should not have known her again" (24). Anne takes up her ashes after she has broken off her engagement: "her bloom vanished early" (2). Anne rejects Charles Musgrove as a suitor, does not accompany her father and eldest sister to Bath each year, and loses her voice. She withdraws into her childhood home and hides herself from the Prince. She transforms into a

woman who “develops her strength through the rigorous exercise of learning what she can live without”: she lives without friendship, love, or beauty and from this she becomes self-reliant (Gould 42). Anne falls into the common pattern of Cinderellas in that she undergoes two transformations; the first one “takes place before the story begins”—her lost love and bloom—and renders Cinderella invisible because she *believes* herself to be (42-43). She abandons her position as the most beautiful daughter of a baronet and transforms into the dowdy, pallid caretaker of her family and refuses to partake in society-life to remain dutifully by the hearth to wait until she gains the self-confidence to transform once more.

Wentworth’s recognition of Anne is tied to Romantic themes: introspection and nature. Anne’s transfiguration occurs slowly in the second-half of the novel as she develops a “higher level of consciousness of her innate self” (43). Although Anne demurs to the place of the dutiful sister right until the last chapters of the novel, her self-perception changes long before then. Anne overcomes various crises for her family which allows her to recognize her own abilities as a capable woman. Anne is largely ignored after the death of her mother, but as she grows more confident in herself, she discerns that her place is not beneath the notice of everyone she meets. Nonetheless, she saves her true voice until she is ready to declare her love for Captain Wentworth. She is Cinderella who has seen herself at the ball, but returns home, “a Princess in hiding,” until she chooses to reveal herself.

The two major moments of Anne’s quintessential Cinderella transfiguration take place surrounded by nature. Though Wentworth treats Anne mostly with indifference, during a walk in the countryside, he sympathizes with Anne’s fatigue and sends her with his sister and the Admiral by carriage to be taken home. Austen notes the scenery and the freshness of the air

which sparks Anne to reflect on her position. When she gains insight from her self-contemplation, Wentworth takes notice of Anne. The official recognition of Cinderella by the Prince occurs after the spirit of the nature surrounding the seaside has fully revitalized Anne. Anne's cousin passes and is taken with her because "she was looking remarkably well: her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced.". Wentworth watches the interaction between Anne and the man who had admired her and notes to himself that "even [he], at this moment, sees something like Anne Elliot again" (Austen 42).

While Anne's physical transfiguration is the result of the rejuvenating qualities of nature, Wentworth's emotional recognition of Anne lies in the transformation of Anne's personality during Louisa Musgrove's accident. When the party in Lyme freezes with distress from Louisa's injuries, Anne directs the men and comforts the entirety of the party so that Louisa is taken care of immediately and efficiently. No longer the tender assistant in the corner, Anne is assertive and unwavering. Wentworth looks to her for instruction. Later, Anne's brother-in-law and Wentworth arrange who is to stay and nurse Louisa and Wentworth asserts that Anne must be the one to stay with Charles because there was "no one so proper, so capable as Anne." When Wentworth and Anne part at the Musgrove's house, Wentworth seeks Anne's counsel and Anne takes pleasure in the proof of the recognition of their friendship by Wentworth by his deference to her judgement. When Wentworth addresses Anne he speaks with "a glow, and yet a gentleness, which seemed almost restoring the past" that affirms his recognition of her as his

former love-interest and affirms her alteration from Cinderella the maid to Cinderella the princess. (46).

Anne slowly sheds the garb of the resigned, unheard Cinderella-drudge in the shadows and begins to show her family and friends hints of her transfiguration into a beautiful, self-possessed Cinderella-princess who knows she can be relied upon in even the direst situations. Her time in the countryside with her sister and by the sea in Lyme allowed Anne to see herself bloom once more. She is admired by all the bachelors in the novel: Captain Wentworth, her cousin, Mr. Elliot, as well as Captain Benwick. She begins to do as she pleases. When she tires arranging the Musgroves's affairs while the family is preoccupied with Louisa's health, Anne persuades the family to leave for Lyme so that she might leave their company. Anne stands against her eldest sister and father's demand that she cancels her visit to the widowed Mrs. Smith. She goes to see Mrs. Smith while her father and sister of call on the Dowager Viscountess.

Anne slowly begins to give her opinions openly when they contradict what makes her family or companions happy. She contradicts Mary in front of Lady Russell instead of placating her younger sister as she normally does and unabashedly tells her father, Elizabeth, and Mr. Elliot that she thinks visiting the Dowager Viscountess is a waste of time. Anne matures as a heroine as she begins to value herself and speak up in situations which had previously silenced her (Morillo 197). At the start of the novel, Anne consistently yielded to others. She yielded to Lady Russell's advice to dissolve her engagement, to her father when he wanted to ignore her household budgeting, and to the desires of the Musgroves while she visited. Following her

transfiguration, Anne strives to create a fulfilling life for herself and when the time comes, she fearlessly claims her Happily Ever After.

This transfiguration of Anne that began in her self-perception leads to Wentworth's renewed interest in her. The Wedding is implied with the reaffirming of their previous understanding through Wentworth's letter to Anne: "Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone forever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it..." (95). The Wedding is also alluded to when Austen asserts: "Whenever any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point" and that "Sir Walter, at last, [prepared] his pen, with a very good grace, for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honor" (100).

Like the *Finettes* of seventeenth-century France, Anne's story is not the elevation tale that we instantly associate with the Cinderella cycle, but a restoration tale: "riches-to-rags-to-greater-riches" (Gould 41). At the onset of *Persuasion*, Anne has secluded herself to the 'hearth' to wait on her family's wants and needs. Hiding her true form as a gentile and capable woman, it is not until Anne's spirit is restored by nature that she has the clarity of mind to allow for real introspection on her self-perception and aspirations for her future. *Persuasion* incorporates the main aspects of the ATU 510A tale-type and can confidently be considered a part of the Cinderella cycle.

Chapter VII: Anne Elliot: The Interior Life of a Woman

Jane Austen employs Cinderella motifs and functions to show the growth of a young girl who is incapable of expressing herself properly into a woman who speaks her mind and can manage her own affairs. Anne Elliot is a woman who cannot perceive her worth. Anne satisfies her days with attempting to run her father's household and keep her family from debt. When her father ignores her budget, the family must leave their ancestral home, Kellynch Hall, and Anne is sent away by her eldest sister, Elizabeth, to dote on her married sister, Mary, while the rest of the family goes to Bath. Anne withdraws into herself and refuses to settle a future for herself. It is not until Anne begins to feel confident in herself that she asserts herself and her opinions and secures her Wedding.

Although Anne commences the story as a woman incapable of pushing her desires into reality, she is nevertheless an exemplary model for woman's personality and behavior. Anne is hard-working, resilient, and thoughtful. She manages crises with a deft hand and is kind to everyone she meets. Anne's steady head and firm principles are presented beside the exaggerated personalities of her sisters to show her inner depth. As in the seventeenth-century fairy tales, the sisters of Cinderella have outrageous personalities that contrast Cinderella's idealized woman. Elizabeth and Mary are portrayed as the stereotypes of women typically found in male-authored literature and Austen loathed those stereotypes. Austen believed that women were generally depicted as either emotionless or hysterical and creates well-rounded women in her novels against the backdrop of such stereotypes to show the absurdity of the male-authored stereotypes which assert women are never rational people. When Cinderella is presented against her

nonsensically wicked sisters, the audience can rationalize that Cinderella's personality is more realistic than the stereotypes that her sisters represent.

In *Persuasion*, Anne shows that a woman can be emotional and controlled, compassionate and decisive, and highly-perceptive of the world around her. In contrast, eldest-sister Elizabeth is cold. She is absorbed in her own vanity and obsesses over social rank like Sir Walter Elliot, the father. Mary, the youngest of the sisters, is given the characteristics of a child even though she is married with children of her own. She is emotionally unstable, constantly feigns illness for attention, and is depicted as useless in every instance. Elizabeth and Mary are caricatures of the most dramatic stereotypes of women in literature: the conniving woman with no emotion and the foolish, hysterical woman. Such male-authored stereotypes of women were common in literature of the period (especially in literature written by men) and depicted as less than men because in their altered state they could not be considered redeemable (Morillo 198).

For comparison, Mary remains consistently hysterical and bratty throughout the novel whereas her husband Charles only begins as a useless man with boyish charm but is later redeemed because while he might be mostly useless, he can be dependable when truly needed. When Louisa is hurt in Lyme, Charles attempts to do what he can to help her and asks Anne to stay with him to nurse Louisa. At the same time Mary collapses in distress and wants to stay with Charles in Lyme. Mary does not wish help Louisa but believes she deserves to stay instead of Anne because it is her place Charles's wife. While Charles's simplicity is redeemed by his concern for his sister, Mary becomes even more childish as the story continues. Female-characters who typify the extreme stereotypes of women's incompetency were never allowed to

offset their negative qualities. Austen incorporates the male-authored stereotypes into her novel to show that women are not ridiculous in the ways that men portray them to be.

By developing Anne's character against her overdramatized sisters, Austen makes a case for a revolution "against the conventions she inherited" by using the very parodic strategies and literary structures of the time and shows that such constructions are "patently irrelevant" (Gilbert and Gubar 120). In the first volume of *Persuasion*, Mary is the primary sister with whom Anne is juxtaposed. Of the three sisters at the beginning of the novel, Mary's position is most advantageous. Married to her cousin and with two sons, Mary has secured a stable life; however, she is the least stable of all the characters in the novel. Mary continuously complains that she is unwell and is unable to cope with anything—least of all her own emotions. Mary pouts constantly: she hasn't been given her share, her children have been "ruined", she's been abandoned (Austen 14). Mary is not cruel like Elizabeth, but her extreme selfishness brings misery to Uppercross.

Austen uses Mary's character to represent the 'silly, overbearing woman' stereotype found throughout male-authored literature that asserts women are ridiculous and incapable of constancy. In contrast to the depiction of other wicked-stereotype sister, Elizabeth, Austen casts Mary's selfishness as foolish instead of vindictive. Mary is not represented as malicious; instead her flagrant episodes of helplessness act as a burlesque to the "inconceivably naïve and ridiculous woman" she portrays, not unlike Mrs. Bennet and Lydia in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Ruoff 54-61). Mary cannot be taken seriously by her family or the reader; she favors "social priorities" over her family, even her injured son. In Lyme, Mary seemingly attempts to pull the party's attention toward herself after Louisa falls with an emotional display over

Louisa's condition. Mary demands comfort from her husband as if she were unobservant to his own emotional struggles at seeing his sister in an unconscious state (Austen 44). Mary is the least reliable character in *Persuasion*. She cannot be trusted to control her emotions, particularly her jealousy and hysteria. She is lazy and selfish and her spirit falters because of it. Mary feigns illness and exposure to nature cannot cure her uninspired spirit because Mary does not delight in the nature and lacks the ability of introspection.

Faced with the same situation in Lyme, Anne's reaction is completely different from that of her volatile sister. Anne remains compassionate and gentle, but she is firm in her decisions and in control of her faculties which allows her to direct for the others to help Louisa and calm the individual members of the party down. Anne physically and mentally supports the group. She holds Louisa, soothes the others, and creates a plan to quickly resolve the difficult predicament (44). As a result, Anne is recognized as capable, composed, just, and her judgement is hereto differed (46).

Anne is constant, assertive and decisive, but never comes across as masculine. Austen maintains Anne's femininity to attest that women—and feminine women, not just women who are entirely coded as masculine to further enforce the existing dichotomy between the masculine and feminine—possess the qualities that are normally considered ill-suited to their gender. Anne is in control without dominating and is respected in a way a man might be, without ever being referred to or seen as masculine (Ruoff 54-61). Anne “triumphed over a society that attempts to silence [women's] voices, by apparently obeying rules of feminine propriety” (Giordana 110). Austen uses Anne to prove that the feminine can be reliable and powerful. Austen plays on the “aggressively patriarchal traditions” that would have dictated Captain Wentworth possessing

Anne's moment of brilliancy and composure. If Austen had followed those traditions, then Anne would have fallen even more madly in love with Captain Wentworth's dashing bravery.

However, because Austen subverts those traditions and allows Anne to save Wentworth's love interest instead, Captain Wentworth is enamored with Anne's composure and confidence, and *he* falls more in love with *Anne*, the knight who saves the damsel—proving that women are not weak, artificial characters but people who are self-possessed and quick-thinking (Gilbert and Gubar 116). Austen's subversion of the role of hero and damsel emphasizes Anne's power and asserts that woman can be suitable and at times more proficient than men in reason and rescue.

What makes Anne so extraordinary as a Romantic female-character is that she is given a “strength, which includes self-forgetfulness, self-control, and the ability to act” (Butler 276). In contrast, Mary embodies a feminine stereotype that renders her more like a petulant child. Anne composes herself and works through various distressing social situations without breaking down in the way that Mary does. Anne disproves the idea that women are susceptible to their emotions and cannot be leaders. Austen superimposes her image of the idealized woman in Anne against the absurdity of a woman like Mary. Because Mary's character is excessively unrealistic, the stereotype she represents comes across as equally unrealistic and ill-conceived. This renders Anne's image of a kindhearted and loving but strong-willed and dynamic woman far more realistic than it might have otherwise been received in the period in which it was written.

The extent of Mary's selfish dramatics allows Anne's character to feel realistic, but Mary's emotional displays do not make Anne appear perfect. Anne might be intelligent and nurturing but she is also flawed. However, when drawn against the fact that Mary possesses so few positive traits, Anne's flaws feel realistic but not overly condemnatory. Furthermore, Anne

actively works to be collected and even-tempered. Anne has emotions just as strong as Mary's, but she has a wholeness to her being that allows her to control her emotions rather than allowing her emotions to control her. Anne attempts generosity, whereas Mary is self-serving.

Mary neatly follows the "traditional lore...[coming] from no single source... [that] women are fickle, changeable, inconsistent" as she lacks moral substance and her character acts as a contrast to Anne's consistent principles and reliability which affirms Austen's case for women's rationality and humanity (Ruoff 54-61). Mary proves her lack of reliability throughout the novel and generally faults her nerves. Mary has fits of hysteria due to her nerves and they provide her a conduit to the attention she desperately craves from those around her.

Though Anne at times has anxious nerves and is prone to her own impatience and "acute sense of suspense," she can overcome them and act when needed to help others (Butler 278). Anne's nervousness stems from her fear of judgement and lack of self-worth. After being dismissed by her family following the death of her mother, Anne has little that can assuage her self-doubt. Even in minor social circumstances Anne is reminded that "she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste" (Austen 18). Anne surmounts her self-doubt slowly as she settles her nerves to reacquaint herself with Captain Wentworth, befriend the Crofts, and stay for a prolonged period at Uppercross; Anne's mettle opposes Mary's inclination to succumb to her 'nerves' whenever she finds her nerves to be convenient.

The lack of attention paid to Anne creates the environment that causes Anne to retreat to her hearth so that she might hide away from the world as a lowly maid who is nervous of social

interactions and inclined to avoid them. Anne loses her vigor over the fourteen years following her mother's death and her dissolved engagement exacerbates her withdraw from society. Anne chooses not to marry the suitable and amiable Charles Musgrove out of her devotion to and love for Captain Wentworth. By rejecting Charles Musgrove, Anne rejects the respectable life of a wife and her only chance at "self-definition" in her society (Gilbert and Gubar 127). Anne further recedes from society when she chooses to remain at Kellynch Hall each spring when her father and Elizabeth go to Bath.²² Anne's seclusion stems from her faithfulness to the man she loves (if she does not meet new suitors she will not marry) and her lack of confidence which finds its origins in Anne's deceased mother and broken engagement.

Mary similarly secludes herself from others because she feigns illness or because she feels they are beneath her notice. Mary's attempts at seclusion via her pretend illness are ploys for more attention. Mary hopes that by locking herself away at home her family will take pity and visit and dote on her. Though she claims that she does not receive visitors as often as she would like, Mary snubs her husband's aunt because her social status is not high enough. Mary goes so far as to insist that she would rather sit alone on a rock at the top of the hill than to have to enter Charles's aunt's home one more time. Mary does not have to remain alone, but her

²² Bath was a fashionable city from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Second only to London, Bath was a city where one could engage with high-society and a prime holiday destination for a family hoping to meet eligible bachelors or debutantes to marry their children to. By remaining in the countryside, Anne has little chance of finding a fiancé. Bath is the metaphorical ball that Anne refuses to attend for many years, however, at the start of *Persuasion*, Anne is banned from joining her family and replaced with Mrs. Clay, her sister's companion. Elizabeth's edict that no one will want Anne in Bath is Cinderella's interdiction that she cannot join her sister in society. It is only once Anne violates that interdiction and leaves Uppercross to join her family (and her sister cannot protest after the long passage of time that Anne has been away) that Cinderella's Prince proposes to her in Bath, the site of many balls that led to eighteenth and nineteenth-century British women's engagements.

decision to seclude herself from the social connection is driven purely from snobbery and self-importance.

Anne suffers some of the vices of her sister, but the causation for her negative qualities are given validation: Anne's vices are the product of her psychology, and Anne actively works to overcome these unfavorable qualities. In comparison to the overexaggerated flaws of Mary, Anne's flaws feel tolerable and make Anne seem real rather than dislikable. Austen makes the point to show women as men's equals. Anne has flaws just as the male-characters do, but they are more rounded and realistic. Mary's flaws are so innate to her being and aggrandized they make the stereotype of women that Mary embodies not below-man but below-human because she lacks intelligence, capability, and self-restraint which Anne demonstrates is possible in women. Women like Mary are 'unredeemable,' but Austen suggests that to assert that there are Marys to be found, or at least found easily, is unlikely. Anne is the model of what a woman should strive to be: controlled, kind, and competent.

Anne returns to her father and Elizabeth in volume two of *Persuasion*. As volume two takes place after Anne's transfiguration into a Cinderella rooted in Romantic traditions, Anne has less interaction with her sister and the novel puts a heavier emphasis on Anne's introspection. The images of Elizabeth are clear, however, and work to form Elizabeth into a caricature of the bitter, vain woman. Elizabeth is the cruelest character towards Anne. She is over twenty-eight, unmarried, and while she enjoys her elevated status as eldest sister, she often neglects her duties as mistress of her childhood home. Anne is unmarried without the added benefits of running the home and the status of 'father's favorite.' Despite their similar situations, the differences between the sisters' personalities are vast.

Anne strives to manage the Elliot accounts and care for her family. However, to Elizabeth, Anne is “nothing” and she does not concern herself with Anne’s future (Austen 57). Without any reason but spite, it is known that Elizabeth is delighted when Anne will not be given a present when the family returns to Kellynch Hall and later openly states, “I am sure that Anne had better stay, for nobody will want her in Bath,” with no attempt to conceal her contempt and utter disregard for her sister (Austen 4,13).²³ Elizabeth cares for no one, and in a “world bound by proprieties dictating that so many things ‘should not be said’,” Elizabeth has no issues with infringing upon the comfort of others (Warhol 6). Elizabeth is the classic wicked sister who hates Cinderella simply for her existence. Elizabeth’s animosity is “hurtful in an especially feminine way” because she not only rejects Anne as her sister but also seeks to publicly demean Anne and pointedly distances herself from Anne (Gould 47).

Elizabeth’s primary flaw is her snobbery. Elizabeth’s condescension does not stop at her sister; she derides the social position of her companion, Mrs. Clay, without thought. Elizabeth is portrayed as a haughty, unempathetic woman. After Anne visits a poor widow, Elizabeth and her father discuss the how unsavory Anne’s friendship is and determine that such acquaintanceships are beneath the family. Elizabeth’s companion, who is also a poor widow beneath the rank of the Elliots, is present. Elizabeth does not defend friendships with poor widows even though Mrs. Clay, who is present in the room, is of the same social class, she merely asks for the opinion of

²³ It is Anne’s arrival to Bath that commences her entrance into society. Only then can her Prince propose. This is similar to D’Aulnoy’s *Fine-Oreille* who can only find a husband after she has left the (social) desert. While Austen’s Anne thrives in nature, marriage is the basis of women’s social positioning, therefore it is necessary for Anne to enter society in Bath, the city of high-society and balls, and leave her self-imposed exile in the countryside where she has hid since her broken engagement and violate her sister’s interdiction that Anne is unwanted in Bath (and thus at the balls).

Lady Russell (Austen 62), with the knowledge that Lady Russell often looks down on those of lower rank as well.

Elizabeth's disregard for Mrs. Clay's feelings during the conversation shows that while Elizabeth may make an exception for Mrs. Clay, at her core she thinks less of both Mrs. Clay and people of her social status. Mrs. Clay realizes that Elizabeth and herself can never truly be equals in Elizabeth's eyes and that she is only a companion out of convenience and not an actual friend. Mrs. Clay leaves the room to escape the embarrassment that has indirectly passed at the hands of her Elizabeth who could not see past her snobbery long enough to defend 'poor widows' and allow Mrs. Clay a shred of dignity in the home she had been keeping with the Elliot family (63). Elizabeth is depicted as the typical shrewish woman in literature, unfeeling for others and uncouth in her remarks.

Anne is not entirely unlike Elizabeth in snobbery, but she never looks down at people specifically for their lack of rank or fortune and she never allows her victims to hear her harsh appraisals. In a reversal of Elizabeth's tendency to find agreeability only in people of rank, Anne finds her family's connection to the Dowager Viscountess, Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret to be harmful as her family's behavior regarding the Cousins Dalrymple to be shameful. Anne confides in her cousin and suitor, Mr. Elliot, that the Dalrymples were "nothing" with neither "superiority of manner, accomplishment, or understanding" and while Mr. Elliot agrees with Anne's assessment of their character, he insists that their birth and good manners made them agreeable connections (59).²⁴ Mr. Elliot then implies that it is better for Sir Elliot, Anne's father,

²⁴ Austen includes a subversion of the 'Grand Tour' in *Persuasion* as she sends her Cinderella from her home to Uppercross, Lyme, back to Uppercross and finally to Bath, the prime destination of English

to busy his time with people of high rank like the Dalrymples than those beneath him like Mrs. Clay. Anne, too, dislikes Mrs. Clay; however, Anne's disdain stems from Mrs. Clay's to seduce Sir Elliot into marriage to raise her own status as well as the fact that Mrs. Clay also is the conduit by which Elizabeth ignores Anne. Anne's snobbery is always due to a person's lack of manners and personality rather than their lack of rank.

Unlike Elizabeth who seeks to flatter her position by publicly deriding people who she feels are beneath her notice, Anne works hard to keep her negative thoughts hidden and is polite to everyone regardless of whether she thinks their behavior is intolerable. She has enough empathy and kindness that she works to overcome her disdain and makes friends with those she once thought of as lesser-than. At the beginning of Anne's stay in Uppercross Cottage, she thinks the Musgroves are inelegant, uneducated people with a penchant for clutter and little taste in decorating (16). Anne finds them pleasant enough, but she appreciates that her birth allowed her the opportunity to become cultivated and she prefers her understanding and elegance even while she wishes her family shared the Musgroves' enjoyment of mutual affection.

Anne never voices her belittling opinions about the Musgroves and by the end of the novel she grows very close to the family. When Louisa is taken ill in Lyme, Anne stays at

society. The typical Grand Tour would have been taken by men, but by the early-nineteenth century, wealthy, upper-class women might also go from Paris to a Germanic country to Venice and/or Florence and/or Rome with a rich spinster aunt. In *Persuasion*, Anne is the budding spinster aunt and she takes her journey alone. Not to the continent, Anne's journey from her home to her mid-points to her final destination in Bath covers approximately 103 miles. Anne does not refine her feminine accomplishments on her "Grand Tour," nor does she polish her manners. Instead, when Anne goes to Bath—the city where young, English women would go to enter society and become ladies—she is outspoken and does as she pleases. Anne's "Grand Tour" does end with her engagement, but she does not become a prim lady. Anne's tour allows her to realize her inner worth, speak out against her family's opinions, and become a more independent woman.

Uppercross to manage the Musgroves' affairs and the necessary arrangements for the family. It is with the Musgroves that Anne grows the most and realizes her self-worth. She is in the family's company when she reads Captain Wentworth's love letter and when she became overwhelmed after she read it, the Musgroves dote on Anne and encapture her in the tenderness of their family that she always wished to be a part of (96). Anne surmounts her disdain for the Musgroves' lack of elegance and in them she is able to find the family she had longed for.

Anne is allowed development in her character whereas Elizabeth begins and ends the novel with self-serving snobbery. In opposition to the Romantic inclinations that the novel praises, Elizabeth longs for city life and anticipates time spent in Bath. She rejects nature and is never seen admiring the gardens of Kellynch Hall or enjoying a stroll in the countryside. Elizabeth's relish in social-standing and putting on airs signifies her partiality to city-life over nature. Elizabeth clutches onto the perceived precedence that the earthly social world offers her, and Austen portrays her as spiritually lacking (Wiltshire 38).

While Anne sometimes judges others harshly, she overcomes her assessments of others to treat them with kindness. She is rewarded with their affections in turn. As opposed to Elizabeth's indifference for others, Anne proves her integrity, her fortitude against the pressures of her family, her gentleness with those who need her most, and her modesty about her rank. While Anne judges her peers, she also accommodates social situations to make people feel at ease, values hard work, and treats others justly (Morillo 211). Elizabeth instead is only selfish, unfeeling, and entirely unredeemable. She is not capable of kindness.

A character with a degree of cruelty as high as Elizabeth's is unrealistic but works well in this story as Elizabeth provides an archetype that Anne can be set against. Anne does not love everyone. Anne is judgmental and imperfect, but she strives to be decent and polite. Anne is Austen's model for what women are and ought to strive to be. Anne is feminine, she has elegance and social graces and at the same time she can be firm and even aggressive as she commandeers crises and "saves the day." She can be highly emotional, but she is self-possessed. Anne secludes herself from society but faces her fears out of respect for her family's wishes. Anne can be judgmental of others but shows them kindness. Anne is not meant to be a perfect woman. Anne is meant simply to show women's potential. *Persuasion* is a deeply introspective novel. Anne discovers who is and how she is set apart from her family. Austen emphasizes traditional archetypes of women in literature in Mary and Elizabeth so show what an unrealistic standard they set for women.

Persuasion is a novel with distinctive female characters. Protagonist Anne's sisters are overly satirized depictions of female tropes in literature: Elizabeth is a cold-hearted social-climber and Mary a fickle ninny. Without depth, Mary and Elizabeth perpetuate an ideology of women as irrational, unreliable beings instead of people with deep and intricate inner lives. The emphasis on how unrealistically exaggerated and one-sided the sisters' personalities are works to show the humanity in Anne. Anne shows a more truthful likeness of women; she is the sole realistic sister and her character is meant to accentuate the reality that women have rich interior lives.

The Cinderellas of seventeenth-century France purported that women could decide their future and managing their own affairs. Anne Elliot, too, chooses her own fate. However, Anne's

story centers around the issue that she is pushed and persuaded by others to let them choose her path. Anne's growth is in her realization that she is capable and best-suited to the task. It is through Anne's introspection and self-reliance that she appreciates her dreams, her voice, and herself. Only then is Anne able to determine her fate. She rejects the paths set out for her by her family as either their spinster aunt or next Lady Elliot. She holds firmly to her principles and dreams to pursue her Wedding and her Happily Ever After.

Chapter VIII: Alcott's Busy Women

Eight years before *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott published a quasi-draft for the famed novel as a short-story in *Atlantic Monthly*: “A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe.” The short-story takes on the basic structure of the Cinderella cycle, but subverts many of its motifs: the shoe is not an elegant glass slipper but a “vulgar old shoe” and the sisters love Cinderella dearly—their ‘wickedness’ excused as youth and irresponsibility (Cohen-Safir 26). Alcott uses the familiarity of the Cinderella cycle to tell a story that highlights subjugation of women under the nineteenth-century American patriarchy and women’s need (or lack thereof) for men embedded with Romantic themes and imagery of nature and introspection.

“A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe” begins with a backdrop teeming with nature: “green hills,” mossy rooves, babbling brooks, “orchards,” birches, “patriarchal elms,” meadows and blackbirds (228). Compared to the paradise outside, Alcott’s Cinderella, Nan, is relegated to “that domestic purgatory on a summer day, —the kitchen” (229). The kitchen is described as having been possessed by a “malignant spirit” and works against Nan as she tries to cook for her family (229). Her kettles boil over, the meat does not cook, the oven overheats, and her irons scorches, causing Nan to grow “hotter and wearier, more hurried and more hopeless” until she breaks down and weeps from frustration (230). Although Nan is portrayed as the diligent housemaid, her tasks are not given a Romantic tone; they are depicted as arduous and Nan as full of despair.

Further in the story the Prince leaves the three sisters. Nan, being the “domestic servant” of the sisters, has an old, ratty shoe worth giving up and her sisters cox her into throwing the old

shoe at the Prince as he leaves for good luck (Cohen-Safir 26). The throwing of the shoe is likened to the novel *David Copperfield* where an old shoe is thrown after David for good luck. The allusion to a Dicken's novel signifies that the misery of Dickensian social conditions could be likened to those of women (27). Domestic work is so rigorous that Nan later becomes ill for many weeks from exhaustion. The sisters, Nan, Di, and Laura all possess skills of one sort or other, but instead of leaving their home to seek their fortune as John Lord and Phillip do, they are stuck in the purgatory of their home and must wait to be taken by a husband or doting spinster aunt if they want to leave. At the throwing of the shoe when John Lord leaves, the sisters have left the interior of the house to tell him goodbye; but the girls never leave the confines of the gate.

The house acts as a symbol of womanhood and women's domain. The house is beautiful and ornamented like a lady should be; the house is "many-gabled, mossy-roofed, and quaintly built" and "picturesque and pleasant to the eye" (228). However, this symbol of womanhood is guarded like Finette and her sisters in their tower in "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette." Alcott describes the house in both reverential and policing terms. While the house is picturesque, it also locks the daughters away from society and Alcott creates a symbol out of the domineering trees: "patriarchal elms stood sentinel upon the lawn, as they had stood almost a century ago [during the Revolution]"; the sentinel elms signify that the patriarchy had been policing the domestic sphere since the foundation of the United States (228). Alcott makes the reader aware of the restricted position that women find themselves in. Nan and her sisters are not free to do as they wish; instead they are kept under guard in their family home and subjugated by the confines of proper womanhood. Each sister has a skill: Di is a scholar, Laura is an artist, and

Nan is the domestic wonder and household manager, yet none of them are allowed to go into the world to elevate their place in society or refine their talents. Considering Alcott's acerbic commentary on the confinement of the sisters, Nan's throwing of the shoe at the gates of her father's property does not to be so much of a good-luck wish for John but instead a plea that he might take her with him.

Alcott acknowledges women as foundation of the nineteenth-century American home. While she calls attention to the "limits and discomforts of the paternal roof," she also provides a snapshot at how young, unmarried women "learn to live beneath it." Alcott laughs at the nature of its "construction, pointing out exactly how much of that construction actually depends on the subjugation of women" and how little women rely upon men at all (Gilbert and Gubar 121).

Nan's father is depicted as a passive man who enjoys languorous activity and trusts his daughters to keep the house in order. He works to support the family, but still leaves that domain partially to his daughters: when he leaves to go preach, Nan miraculously "appears with a beautiful sermon, and suspicious ink stains on [her] fingers" (Alcott 233). The father knows that the young women can manage the house; he reminds them to pay the cow hand and tend to the vegetables, but they are proficient at running the home without him.

After their father's death, the young women prove that they don't rely on him to survive as they manage the house for a year without losing it. In fact, in the first moments of their grief over losing their father, Nan pulls out the family accounts and immediately works with her sisters to square their finances. She announces that they are poorer than they thought, but she quickly devises a way to create an income for them. She has no plans to sell their home to

survive and even plans to spend her days in it after her sisters get married, travel, and leave her. Nan is fully confident in her ability to keep the family and their house afloat (246).

Nan is competent from the on-set of the story. However, her sisters begin as lacking some essential virtue or other, despite being extremely talented in other areas. Di and Laura are both younger than Nan and, in their youth, they are often irresponsible and leave the brunt of the domestic chores to Nan. Nan is at Di and Laura's beck and call as they pursue their hobbies while she attempts to subdue the unruliness of the kitchen. It is not until John Lord teases the girls and scolds them lightly that they acknowledge that they have neglected their tasks in favor of leisure. Nevertheless, when Nan becomes ill from the exhaustion of the domestic chores and the management of the family's accounts, Di and Laura grow from irresponsible girls to more stable young women and attain for themselves some of Nan's positive "womanly attributes" (247). The sisters are able to step into Nan's role—Laura as the motherly nurse and Di as the dutiful housemaid—and prove that they too are capable of managing the affairs of the family.

The fairytale ending of "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" has shades of satire to it (Cohen-Safir 33). Nan is labeled "the angel in the house" yet she is the least realistic character of the story. She can claim every good quality, but her largest fault is not forcing her sisters to be more accountable for themselves or maybe 'working too hard.' She is given very few lines of dialogue; even her engagement scene is dominated by her sister, Di, who begins to talk excitedly about the purpose for John's arrival but gets sidetracked with an apology for her selfishness and the acknowledgment of a debt the sisters owe to John. Nan simply sits in her chair knitting during the interaction between John and Di. John never interrupts Di but waits until she is finished to turn to Nan and show her the little old shoe.

After John's aim becomes clear, Nan covers her face and weeps; her knitting falls to the floor and Alcott describes it "as if it knew her holiday had come" (251). This commentary seems to have been made ironically because in the following speech by John, he proposes to Nan, asking her to be his "angel in the house" (252). Nan finally speaks: "Oh John, I never can be sad or tired any more!" Her proclamation of eternal rest is in direct contrast to the duties of "angel in the house" (a feminine ideal coined from Coventry Patmore's poem of the same name) which are plentiful. Patmore asserts that a true "angel of the house" must please her husband, fling and yoke herself often, pardon her husband's harshness, and weep," which differs strikingly from Nan's exclamation that she will live a life of rest and happiness. Cinderella gets her Prince, but her Wedding will still consist of her tiring work, despite her statement otherwise.

Chapter IX: Cinderella, what does *she* say? A Re-Imaged Fairy Tale for Late Twentieth-Century America

“...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella’s Foot,” a poem published in 1981 by Judith Viorst, utilizes a mélange of Cinderella motifs and recursive narrative devices to provide a snapshot within the Cinderella cycle that challenges the traditional Wedding of “Cinderella” tales and emphasizes the increase of women’s autonomy and power at the end of the twentieth century in the United States. Pointedly humorous, the poem delivers a contemporary twist to the existing narrative traditions that stem from ATU 510A fairy tales. Viorst keeps a light-hearted tone, but her poem is also reflective of the second-wave feminist ideology and activism that reshaped American culture from the sixties through the late eighties.

The three main motifs that make this story a “Cinderella” are the fancy clothes, the glass slipper, the placement of the slipper onto Cinderella’s foot, also known as the ‘shoe test’.²⁵ Due to the popularity of *Walt Disney’s Cinderella* (1950), most American readers (if not globally) of Viorst’s poem would have been familiar with “Cinderella” motifs and narrative elements which allows Viorst to rely on audience knowledge of the Cinderella cycle and cut out the majority of the “Cinderella” plot leading up to the shoe test scene that the poem surrounds²⁶. Viorst uses the motif of the fancy clothes to allude to the overarching narrative functions that we know

²⁵ Cinderella’s name should arguably count as a fourth motif that indicates the poem is a part of the Cinderella cycle, however it would be redundant to the chapter.

²⁶ *Walt Disney’s Cinderella* was released five times before the publication of *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries: Poems for Children and their Parents*. The most recent re-release to the publication of Viorst’s book was in 1981, the very year the book came out.

Cinderella follows. The fancy clothes signify the Prince's ball which allows the reader to use their prior knowledge of the "Cinderella" fairy tale to create their own version of the events that led up to Cinderella's attendance at the ball. The story begins in pseudo media res, because Viorst can rely on the audience's knowledge to recap the story on their own without her explicit guidance.

The glass slipper motif is subverted in the poem. Traditionally in the tales of Charles Perrault and Walt Disney, the glass slipper symbolizes the elevation of Cinderella's status from lowly maid to elegant, graceful princess. Viorst's Cinderella does not require elevation. In her refusal to claim the glass slipper as her own, Cinderella affirms her worth in her current position. The increase of economic opportunities and laws to increase women's rights allowed more women to live independently. Viorst's Cinderella reflects the effects the Women's Movement of the Sixties and Seventies on women's psyche. Because the status and security of women have been elevated, Cinderella does not need to rely on an advantageous marriage to gain power. She has no need to seek out a different place in life

While Cinderella has no intentions of accepting the Prince, she must still go through the process of testing the slipper on her foot. This is symbolic of women's continued pressures in the nineteen-eighties to marry and form a post-WWII nuclear family, despite second-wave feminists' claims that housewives who had no purpose outside of the home became depressed and deeply unsatisfied with their lives. Cultural and societal pressures to marry appear to have worked, however, the advancements in society made for women in the sixties and seventies allowed women to more easily dissolve their unions if they were dissatisfied with their marriages and support themselves and possibly their children afterwards. Divorce rates in America were at an

all-time high in the early eighties. Many women tried on the slipper of matrimony, only to realize that it was stifling and “felt to tight.”

“...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella’s Foot” challenges the traditional Wedding in ATU 510A tales. Although each of the previous Cinderellas explored had their own rendition of a fulfilling future, their future involved a wedding with the Prince for some reason or other, be it political or for love. Many contemporary “Cinderella” retellings assume that Cinderella’s Wedding must be a wedding. The humor of Viorst’s poem lies in her challenge of the presuppositions that Cinderella must marry a Prince. Viorst’s Cinderella rejects the Prince and marriage entirely in her pursuit of her Wedding. This rejection of the Prince and marriage disrupts the recursive narrative that implies that Cinderella’s fulfilment rests in some part in marriage. Cinderella’s Wedding is her autonomy and her power to weigh her choice between Prince and no Prince, and she decides, with no input from a Fairy or anyone else, that no Prince will lead her on her path to fulfill her dreams.

The humor of “...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella’s Foot” also lies in Cinderella’s thoughts during the shoe test. Cinderella does not reject the Prince because she has another true love, nor does she reject him on the basis that he is an immoral prince, or particularly unkind. Cinderella makes her decision based purely on her lack of attraction to him: “...he had a funny nose/And he certainly looked better all dressed up in fancy clothes/He’s not nearly as attractive as he seemed...” (73). Cinderella’s independence allows her to choose her spouse by any qualifications of her choosing.

When Cinderella refuses the traditional wedding that accompanies most Cinderellas Weddings, she does not necessarily choose solitude. Written during a period of heated debate over women's domesticity, sexuality, and autonomy, Viorst's poem calls to question what will Cinderella's Wedding entail. Does Cinderella reject the Prince because she rejects domesticity and the pressure to marry quickly and would rather enter the workforce to gain the power to support herself so that she might live freely without the pressures that marriage would create? Does Cinderella reject the Prince because she does *not* feel the pressure to marry right away? Is she unafraid to wait for a more enticing offer of companionship? Or perhaps, it is none of these scenarios. Perhaps Cinderella simply finds the Prince to be less attractive than she had remembered. She enjoyed her evening spent with him, but now decides she is ready to explore grander palaces. Cinderella does not offer her motives as an explanation for her actions. Viorst creates a Cinderella who has the freedom to do as she pleases with accountability only to herself. Cinderella is autonomous. She does not rely on or report to her family, a Fairy, nor least of all to a Prince.

Cinderella speaks directly in this poem. She voices her opinions on the Prince in the same register that she might express regret at buying an ill-suited dress just because it was on sale. She is not thrilled with her past choices, but, as there is no harm done, she discards any more thought on the matter and moves on. The "Cinderella" stories of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries include a narrator to act as the voice of a Fairy for the reader to understand Cinderella's perspective and reasoning. Viorst's Cinderella speaks in first person and can tell her story without mediation.

Viorst's Cinderella takes on the same name of Disney's heroine who took his from Charles Perrault's Cendrillon, who likely took his from Basile's Cenerentola. However, in opposition to the male-authored heroines who are frequently characterized as "pretty, passive, and polite," Viorst's Cinderella is not polite. Cinderella's appearance is never discussed in the poem, and her singular action is the rejection of the Wedding of most Cinderellas before her. "...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" emphasizes women's personal development rather than the development of a love story and offers a women-centered perspective on romantic love and self-love. Viorst creates a new image for Cinderella: a 1980s, American Cinderella who can speak for herself.

Part III: New Stances on Classic Figures

“It is helpful to know the proper way to behave, so one can decide whether or not to be proper.”
— Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted*

Chapter X: Does the Fairy Know Best? The Repurposing of the Helper-Figure from Seventeenth to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Typically, the Fairy is thought of as the figure who guides Cinderella on her path to her Wedding. The Fairy knows what is best for Cinderella. The Fairy is almost always a likable, kindly character. She is a passing figure but dominates the scenes where she is present. The Fairy is benevolent in her aid to Cinderella and shows Cinderella the kindness that is missing in Cinderella's life after the death of her mother. Fairy or not, Godmother or not, most "Cinderellas" have a helper-figure that gives Cinderella the push that she needs to transfigure into the confident princess that breaks her family's interdiction and goes to the (literal or metaphorical) ball.

In all except one of the "Cinderella" tales addressed, the heroine has a Fairy who gives advice. Sometimes, the advice leads the princess to her Wedding and other times Cinderella defies her Fairy to capture her Happily Ever After. However, the fairy's advice does not get better or worse between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It is the role of the Fairy that changes.

In "Finette Cendron," Fine-Oreille disobeys her Fairy, but Merluche bides her time and when Fine-Oreille needs her most, she provides an escape from the life of Fleur d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit's slave. However, Merluche can be interpreted as omniscient. She offers Fine-Oreille the opportunity to overthrow her sisters and save herself, knowing that Fine-Oreille's innate goodness will not allow her to. Merluche refuses to help Fine-Oreille again if she returns home with her wicked sisters, not because Merluche wishes to forsake Fine-Oreille and see her

wither in the desert but because Merluche knows that continuing a cycle of rescue will not benefit her goddaughter. Merluche is certainly omniscient when she sends the cheval d'Espagne to carry Fine-Oreille to the ball (D'Aulnoy 195). Yet although she is all-knowing, Merluche does not kill the ogre couple for Fine-Oreille nor does she deliver Fine-Oreille from her sisters' cruel hands until Fine-Oreille decides herself that she will go to the ball, finds herself an outfit and opens the door to set off. As the Fairy, Merluche allows her Cinderella to grow into herself before she aids her.

Even before Fine-Oreille has passed her trials, Merluche allows Fine-Oreille to push herself before she will help her. It is not until Fine-Oreille has completely exhausted herself that the cheval d'Espagne is sent to carry her the rest of the way and that might be simply because Merluche was impatient for her arrival. The Fairy in "Finette Cendron" dotes on her Cinderella but gives aid exactingly. The Fairy is all-seeing, all-knowing and all-wise. Without her Fairy, D'Aulnoy's Cinderella would be unable to obtain her Wedding.

Fine-Oreille's two visits to Merluche hone the skills she needs to vanquish the ogres, which pushes Fine-Oreille to later defy her sisters and claim her Wedding. Fine-Oreille first visit's Merluche with an excellent cake so that she might ask for Merluche's help. Born a princess, Fine-Oreille may never have worked to develop "excellent" cooking skills if not for her need to impress Merluche. When the ogre wants to know how to tell if the oven is hot, Fine-Oreille tricks him into falling in the oven and burning to death. It is Merluche who first drives Finette to become familiar in the kitchen which allows her to think up her plan to get rid of the ogre. When Fine-Oreille returns to her fairy godmother from her first abandonment in the desert, Merluche asks her to be her lady's maid and Fine-Oreille skillfully arranges dresses Merluche's

hair. When her sister's attempt to calm the ogress down after the death of her husband, Fine-Oreille offers to give the ogress a makeover that will make her as beautiful as a star. When the ogress is distracted by Fine-Oreille arranging her hair (the skill Fine-Oreille refined with Merluche), Fine-Oreille chops off the ogress's head with one powerful swipe of an ax. Although Fine-Oreille disobeyed her Fairy when she repeatedly saved her sisters, it is only with the skills that her Fairy gave her that Fine-Oreille overcomes her obstacles and becomes prepared to pursue her Wedding.

The Fairy in "Finette Cendron" is portrayed as wise and benevolent. Merluche helps Fine-Oreille develop her skills and after her Cinderella has restored her family's fortune, position, and honor, Merluche accepts Fine-Oreille's gifts and tells her parents of their restoration. Merluche's most important lesson is the one she models to Fine-Oreille: when one holds the upper-hand, do not forget to ask for something in return.

In "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette," the Fairy is present for only a few moments in Finette's life, but her words are impactful and allow Finette to be *sage* as she outwits her Prince, Bel-à-Voir. Finette saves herself from death at the hand of her bridegroom when Bel-à-Voir attempts to murder her to fulfill the vow he made at the deathbed of Riche-en-Cautéle. By outwitting the prince, Finette saves Bel-à-Voir's soul from the sin of an unjust murder.

For L'Héritier's Fairy, the lesson to her Cinderella comes in a form of a maxim: "Princesse, vous êtes sage et prudente: vous n'avez pris jusqu'ici des mesures si justes pour votre conduite qu'en vous mettant toujours dans l'esprit que défiance est mère de sûreté. Continuez de vous souvenir vivement de l'importance de cette maxime, et vous parviendrez à être heureuse

sans le secours de mon art” (13). Towards the end of the fairy tale, Finette is hesitant in her marriage to Prince Bel-à-Voir because she remembers how her bridegroom’s brother hated and plotted against her. Finette remembers the fairy’s maxim and only then does she decide to create the false bride to trick her new husband. Bel-à-Voir eventually stabs the false scarecrow bride to honor his vow and avenge Riche-Cautèle. L’Héritier creates a powerful Cinderella who is tactical and shrewd in her own right, but she reminds readers to always keep in mind the advice of a Fairy, or the advice given in fairy tales written by wise, experienced women.

The Fairy in Jane Austen’s Romantic novel *Persuasion* sharply contrasts with traditional views of the Fairy as the helper who inevitably knows what is best for her Cinderella. Austen’s Cinderella also defies her Fairy, Lady Russell, in a similar way to D’Aulnoy’s *Fine-Oreille*, but the nature of *Persuasion*’s Fairy is far from omniscient and is in fact Cinderella’s biggest obstacle in securing her Wedding.

Though Anne Elliot’s personality appears initially in the novel to follow in suit with traditional masculine-interpretations of a submissive Cinderella, Austen subverts Elliot’s yielding personality with discontent and rebellion. Anne begins the story as the passive Cinderella who allowed her godmother to persuade to break off her engagement with the man she loved. Anne quietly and politely goes to her sister Mary to care for her and her children when she isn’t wanted at home. Be that as it may, Anne is deeply malcontented. Austen gives insight into Anne’s inner thoughts, which allows the reader to understand that Anne’s meekness is a result of her self-consciousness (a result of her mother’s death and her Fairy’s persuasion to end her engagement with the man she loved) and not an inherent quality.

Before Anne's most pointed show of independence, she relies less and less on her Fairy's opinion. Anne still values Lady Russell's opinion. When she learns that her potential suitor, Mr. Elliot is a scoundrel, her first instinct is to relay the news to Lady Russell for advice on how to proceed with their relationship. Lady Russell had previously encouraged Anne to accept Mr. Elliot as a suitor and Anne wants more of her Fairy's guidance on how to rescind her attentions towards Mr. Elliot. Although she seeks her Fairy's advice, Anne does not rely on her advice in the way that she did when she was a girl. Anne already sets in her mind that Mr. Elliot is completely ineligible. She has already decided her future does not lie with him before she seeks her Fairy's counsel on how to move forward.

Anne's largest show of rebellion is her dismissal of her Fairy's advice at the end of the novel. While in Bath, Lady Russell pointedly ignores Captain Wentworth's presence and refuses to pay him courtesy by nodding hello or smiling. Anne is embarrassed by Lady Russell's dismissal of Captain Wentworth and refuses to accept her Fairy's insistence that he is not good enough to be acquainted with the family. Anne warmly refers Captain Wentworth to her father and Elizabeth, and Captain Wentworth is honored with a card to the Elliot's party the following evening.

The proceeding afternoon Anne, in her newfound confidence, debates Captain Harville on whether men or women's love is more robust, more tender, or longest-lasting. Their discussion is within hearing distance of Captain Wentworth whose emotions are so overwrought from their conversation that he leaves the room without a look at Anne. He returns shortly to gesture towards a letter he left for her on the table as a declaration of his love. All thoughts of her

Fairy leave her mind when she runs into Captain Wentworth shortly after reading his letter as they affirm their mutual feelings for one another (Austen 93-99).

Despite her dismissal of her Fairy's advice, Anne does not scorn her Fairy nor abandon her. Anne insists to her Prince that he should not harbor anger against the Fairy for persuading her to end their engagement and that he should try to be her friend. Cinderella feels sympathy toward her Fairy's hurt pride. Lady Russell is not portrayed as particularly bitter over Anne and Captain Wentworth's engagement otherwise. She, like all Fairies before her, loves her Cinderella completely and matches her opinions and hopes to what will bring her Cinderella her Wedding (100).

Austen's depiction of a nineteenth-century Fairy matches her views on the nineteenth-century meddling aunt or mother. While the Fairy may have your best interests at heart, one must always rely on oneself. A woman must know herself and to have the firmness and tenacity of spirit to pursue her dreams. The Fairy has shifted from supernatural to human in both her form as well as in her abilities. Austen contends that Cinderella must look to herself as her pillar of strength and cannot rely on anyone else to know what is right for her.

Alcott's Fairy is subversion of the typical helper-figure. The Fairy that helps Cinderella is not her godmother, but her future mother-in-law. Mrs. Lord does not give her advice to Nan, but to her son John, insisting that he wait to propose to Nan until he is in a position to marry her so that he does not break Nan's heart while she waits for him. By convincing her son to wait to propose to Nan and to test his affections for her, Mrs. Lord sets Nan's eventual marriage to be one where her husband truly cherishes her. Although the Fairy does not directly give Nan advice,

Mrs. Lord does show Nan the mother's kindness and love that Nan had been missing. Mrs. Lord takes the role of the Fairy and mixes with the "good mother" (as opposed to the "bad" or wicked (step)mother). Mrs. Lord sends goodies to Nan, Di, and Laura and provides the adult female companionship that Cinderellas need to grow and find their place in the world. Alcott's Fairy is not vital to Cinderella's story, yet she helps Cinderella to have more enjoyable and pleasant life and shows her the kindness of the good mother.

Viorst's Cinderella has no helper and thus no accountability. Cinderella makes her own choices and finds her own way. There is no mention of a Fairy who sent Cinderella to the ball and no woman in Cinderella's life that she considers as she contemplates her rejection of the Prince. Viorst's lack of a Fairy or any sort of helper-figure reminisces of Alcott's message that a Fairy can be dangerous to women because there is no one right path to follow. Viorst's Cinderella navigates her journey to her Wedding on her own with no one else's authority to overpower or persuade her against her choices.

D'Aulnoy's and L'Héritier's Fairies were representations of themselves: the benevolent lady who knew how to manage her own life and sought to help younger girls to learn how to navigate their restrictive society. Austen's Fairy is a lesser figure and in no way supernatural. The Fairy is Anne's support and tether to her late mother, but she does not always know best. Her goals are not the same as Anne's. 'Fairy' comes from the Latin term for the Fates: the mythological Roman beings who presided over a person's destiny. Through *Persuasion*, Austen insists that a woman can be her own Fairy, manage her own affairs, and decide her fate for herself. The same message is ultimately found in traces of the stories of Finette as well as in Viorst's poem. D'Aulnoy, L'Héritier, Austen and Alcott take on the role of the Fairy to their

audiences as they incorporate messages to the young women who might read their stories and benefit from their advice. No matter their role, Fairies are almost always present in retellings of Cinderella.

Fairies are foundational to the Cinderella cycle and show that young women must rely on their foremothers to guide them into society. However, as time goes on and women become increasingly independent with more power over their own lives, autonomy is stressed over the guidance of a Fairy. Women must discover for themselves what path they wish to take and must not rely on an exterior force to decide their fate and what their future ought to hold. The role of the Fairy has been repurposed from the seventeenth-century guide who helped her Cinderella navigate her society to the nineteenth-century mother-figure who loved Cinderella but did not always know best. In late twentieth-century America, Cinderella trusts that she knows best for herself and the Fairy is no longer a necessary figure in her tale.

Chapter XI: The Dilemma of Princes

In the stories of Cinderella analyzed in this thesis, the Prince is a character who rarely is developed within the tales. More often than not, the purpose of the Prince is either a means for Cinderella to elevate her position and gain power or otherwise a catalyst for change within Cinderella's self-perception. In "Finette Cendron" and "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette," Prince Chéri and Prince Bel-à-Voir are useless, feminized compared to the chivalric Cinderellas, and merely ornamental tools for Cinderella to reach her Wedding. *Persuasion's* Captain Frederick Wentworth is moody, takes on the persona of the damsel in Lyme, and works more as a Prince by whom Anne's goodness and women's ideal marriage can be shown from than as a round character in and of himself. "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" offers a Prince with no special social position, but John Lord, the most developed of the Princes, offers to women the depiction of an equal partner who values Cinderella's work. In "...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot," the Prince is rendered obsolete and only exists for Cinderella to choose whether to accept or reject. Cinderella is not a figure who chases a Prince for elevation, but rather the Prince is used to further the purpose of the fairy tale. Tales of "Cinderella" are meant to show young women how to navigate their patriarchal society and achieve their Happily Ever After.

Seventeenth-century Princes, Chéri and Bel-à-Voir, are true princes of the blood, but they are neither political, warrior-like, or even particularly masculine. The Princes' names are feminized. Whereas Fine-Oreille is given a name to signify her astuteness and awareness in contrast to her sisters' names with only allude to beauty, Prince Chéri's name translates to Prince Darling. In the same way, Finette's name speaks of her most notable (and positive) quality as

opposed to her sisters' most notable (negative) characteristics of being too flirtatious and lazy. What is the most notable quality of Finette's prince? He is beautiful to look at: Prince Handsome. Neither Prince sounds like a true match to the fearsome Finettes who slay ogres, go on quests, manipulate court politics, and restore their family honor.

Handsome and Darling are useless where their Cinderellas are active. The men in the seventeenth-century fairy tales are ruled by their wives, mothers and daughters. The fathers of the Cinderellas (who were once Princes) are incompetent and rely on their daughters to restore their family's status and maintain their kingdom. Prince Chéri does not fall in love with Fine-Oreille, but with her shoe. He becomes so lovelorn over the shoe that the doctors announce that the prince will die. Prince Chéri's mother refuses to give up and announces the search for the maiden to fit the shoe. Chéri does not seek Fine-Oreille, she comes to him after she has decided that her marriage to him can restore her family's position and grow her own power and give her more autonomy over her life. Prince Bel-à-Voir is willing to kill his beloved bride to honor a foolhardy vow made to his dying brother and it is only Finette's quick thinking that saves her life and his heart.

Both Princes are feminized. In contrast to their Cinderellas who are violent, aggressive, and assertive, the Princes are weak, moan about their love and sadness, and must be saved by the princess. Prince Chéri and Prince Bel-à-Voir are not meant to be equal partners to their Cinderellas nor do they themselves make her life better. The seventeenth-century Princes are merely tools for Cinderella to increase her power and status and wealth.

The nineteenth-century Princes are positioned less as tools for Cinderella to advance herself but as her partner and equal. The Princes are meant to act as lonely Cinderella's companions and as active in her life. The nineteenth-century Princes who are means in themselves not just a means to an end (more power). While Captain Wentworth provides an escape from Anne's cruel family, he is her 'true love' and marriage with him promises an equal partnership. Before Anne chooses to accept John Lord, he first proves himself as not only her caretaker but also her partner.

Anne denies two suitors in favor of waiting for a reunion with her Prince.²⁷ Austen illustrates that Anne's marriage with Charles Musgrove would have led to an uncultured, country lifestyle with a husband who was more interested in sport than in Anne. Likewise, the potential of being the future Lady Elliot would have chained Anne to a cruel husband who cared only about advancing his own position and would have treated her poorly. Anne's fate after choosing Wentworth to be her Prince is illustrated in Part I of the novel when Anne meets Captain Wentworth's sister and her husband, Admiral Croft. The Crofts represent the ideal union that Anne seeks in her prince: one of equals. When the admiral nearly crashes their carriage, Mrs. Croft does not hesitate to take the reins from him and fix their course and her husband is proud of her for it. As Mrs. Croft is the Wentworth's sister and both Captain

²⁷ In a world where a woman's most important decision is who she will marry, Anne is never pressured to get married. After rejecting Charles Musgrove, Anne's father never insists that she go to Bath with the family in search of another match. In fact, the only marriage advice Anne receives in the novel is who *not* to marry. Lady Russell attempts to persuade her not to marry Captain Wentworth and later Mrs. Smith offers her relief that Anne has no interest in Mr. Elliot. The lack of pressure on Anne to marry further emphasizes the notion that marriage to Captain Wentworth is Anne's choice. While Anne has the option of various suitors throughout her life, she also has the option to remain single and reside with her sister or Father as a spinster.

Wentworth and Admiral Croft are naval men, Anne's marriage with Captain Wentworth promises a more fulfilling life than with her other suitors. Anne's choice of Prince is meant to be extremely deliberate because "in her world, as in Austen's, the most critical choice for any woman was selecting a spouse" (Morillo 215).

Captain Wentworth, though fashioned as Anne's equal, is still feminized like Prince Chéri and Prince Bel-à-Voir. He is moody and emotional over his broken engagement of many years while Anne controls her upset feelings. He, too, is lovelorn and writes to Anne a letter that encapsulates his overflowing and dramatic love for Anne. However, unlike Prince Chéri, Captain Wentworth seeks out his Cinderella. Captain Wentworth does take on the role of the damsel that must be aided like the seventeenth-century Princes. In Lyme, Lousia falls unconscious and Captain Wentworth is frozen and unable to act. Only Anne's actions remedy the situation and afterwards Captain Wentworth looks to Anne in admiration and love.

Although Mr. Elliot seems like the logical Prince, he offers Anne a higher social status than a naval captain's wife, Anne chooses a marriage of equals, like the Crofts—where she her assertiveness and activeness will be appreciated—with Captain Wentworth over the deceitful, lazy, vain life of the peerage. Austen's Cinderella works within the confines of the patriarchal world find a partnership that will give her a more active role in her married life. Anne chooses a life of travel with the man she loves over the opportunities to reign as lady of the manor or belle of the country. Austen's Prince, despite his faults, reminds readers that, regardless of social position, despite all else and above all else, one must hold out for love.

Louisa May Alcott's "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" implements Romantic elements alongside ATU 510A motifs to create a narrative in which contemporary culture meets literature. This Cinderella version provides a woman's perspective of the desires of the nineteenth-century Anglo-American woman. "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" articulates the changes in middle-class women's notions on love and marriage.

While the feminine interactions of the stories are paramount to understanding women's conceptions of their role in their world, Cinderella's expectations for her Prince show insights into women's self-perceptions of their worth. Alcott's Nan realizes she deserves a domestic partner rather than a master when her Prince lends a hand in the kitchen. Alcott shows her readers that women do not have to do it all; their husbands can work in the house as well. The Prince shows that kindness and a propensity to do housework is as necessary (if not more so) than status or wealth when a woman considers marriage.

The Romantic short story originally published in an American little magazine paints a nineteenth-century American Prince who is vastly different from the Princes of France and England described thus far. While those Princes were ornamental to the tale and a means for Cinderella's advancement, John Lord is Nan's partner and caretaker. The Prince enters when Nan is in the depth of her despair. While her family leisurely passes the day, she is left to tend to the domestic duties of the household, fails miserably, and weeps. The Prince, John Lord, descends upon the scene with "honest eyes, kind lips, and helpful hands" and almost magically rights the kitchen to a productive state; he entertains Nan and sends her out to her father for a moment's reprieve from the heat and the tiresome tasks (230-232). His eagerness to work in the

home and lessen Nan's burden transforms him from a plain "house-friend" to "the comeliest, most welcome sight" and worthy a suitor to Nan (230).

Though his name "John Lord" brings to mind both rank—"Lord John"—and Romantic spirituality—"Our benevolent Lord." John Lord is neither a man of high birth or a member of the clergy. He is a simple, middle-class, son of a hardware shopkeeper. Di demeans John's work and lack of ambition, but he qualifies his dreams that they are respectable and honest. Of John's qualities, honesty is most-emphasized. His first attribute is his "honest eyes" and he describes his ambitions as maintaining an "honest name," leading an "honest life" and revering "honest work." Only after does he add "self-denial," "cheerfulness of heart," and "conquering his rebellious nature" (236). John is a middle-class man, but Alcott reminds her readers that the middle-class can produce a Prince as worthy as any other fairytale hero.

Practically perfect John Lord is a well-suited match for faultless Nan. Even while developing an ironic and slightly satirical tone in her final pages of the story with reference to Nan's work being over with the arrival of marriage, her allusion to "the angel in the house" also sends a message on how Cinderellas decide the worth of their Princes.

Nan is a Cinderella who is a representation of the perfect, demure, patient, diligent lady. When she becomes engaged, it is only after she has found a Prince worthy of her exemplary behavior. She agrees to marry John because he has proved his perfection back to her. He never devalued the work that she did. Instead, when he sees that she is worn, he urges her to find a moment of respite while he takes over. He goes as far as to teasingly shame her sisters so that they can appreciate Nan's labors and take on some of her load. John asserts his value in middle-

class principles and leaves for a year to prove his own hard work and diligence. Alcott subverts the allusion to “the angel in the house” by showing that there cannot be one angel but two: that a Cinderella of angel caliber requires a Prince who is her equal and worthy of her labors.

Nan runs her family’s household with ease and no help from any outsiders, male or otherwise. She plans for a life with no Prince: “I shall stay in the dear old house; for no other place would seem like home to me. I shall find some little child to love and care for, and be quite happy till the girls come back and want me” (246). For all her meekness, Nan is not the “passive creature who waits for the Prince to rescue her” (Gould 55). In fact, she does not anticipate a Prince in her life at all. She is “an independent member of the household, the one who can support herself as a scullery maid if need be, and therefore [can feel] free to accept or reject a man as she chooses” and once she determines that John Lord is worthy of her love, she freely chooses him as her equal (55). John Lord earns Cinderella’s love because of his perfection. Cinderella willingly give up her fully self-sufficient autonomy to be his wife because her Prince has earned her love.

Nan and John Lord provide readers with an example of a healthy, successful relationship. Cinderella is reassured that her Prince will honestly work to maintain their home and save her from exhaustion when need be. The Prince knows that his capable Cinderella can manage their affairs and will love him tenderly. Alcott uses their relationship as a model to convey to young women that they should be cautious when accepting a man’s hand in marriage; that it is important to bide one’s time to be sure one’s love and their partner’s worthiness of such love before they agree to marriage.

Both nineteenth-century Cinderellas have more choice in their husbands than their seventeenth-century counterparts, however they still must work within the confines of their patriarchal society that insist they marry. The French Cinderellas are embedded in the patriarchal court society and rely on solely on marriage to cement their status in the world. The nineteenth-century Cinderellas eventually take a Prince, but the Princes function as their partners and the Cinderellas are able to manage their lives for longer than their French counterparts before they must take a husband.

Viorst's Cinderella has a Prince but inevitably rejects him and chooses to conceal her identity for him. The Princes of the previous centuries all fell sick (in some form or other) from their overwhelming love for their Cinderella, but Viorst's heroine no longer must worry about tending to a Prince's affections to secure her societal position. Cinderella's Prince is given neither thoughts nor emotions. Viorst offers a truly contemporary and second-wave feminist Cinderella. Not only is Cinderella carefree in her choice on whether to accept or reject the prince, but she *does* reject him outright without a thought on whether another one will come along or if she wants a marriage at all. The Wedding has nothing to do with marriage and personal fulfillment comes in Cinderella's power to do as she pleases. The prince is no longer necessary to Cinderella's story.

Chapter XII: The Voice of Women in a Changing World

In seventeenth-century France, fairy tales often had the reputation of being ‘lesser’ literature, both because fairy tales were Modern and written by women. Because of their dismissal by scholarly men and because many aristocratic women read them, fairy tales acted as an outlet for aristocratic French women to subtly voice their critiques about the monarchy, French culture, and court society with less scrutiny than if the *conteuses* had chosen another genre for disseminating their works.

Fairy tales allowed women to share their stories in a restrictive world. Women’s education was not emphasized even among the aristocracy. However, the *conteuses* could share their point of view of the world in their “Cinderella” fairy tale as they read them aloud in their literary salon to other aristocratic or even bourgeois women before attaining a privilege from the king to publish their fairy tales. After being popularized in print, D’Aulnoy and L’Héritier’s stories would go on to being shared in chapbooks and spread for all people.²⁸

In the same way that the fairy tale genre was thought of as unserious and overly feminine, the novel (especially when written by women) in Austen’s time was also disregarded by many people at the time. Austen manages to critique her society in a way that appears gossipy and lady-like which allows her to appear as though she is enforcing the traditional roles of women in

²⁸ D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron” would be spread first by Bibliothèque Bleue chapbooks and then orally, making its way first to Quebec and later Missouri as found by Charlotte Trinquet during ethnographic and linguistic research (“On the Literary”)

L’Héritier’s “L’Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette” would be published in 1860 in a Bibliothèque Bleue chapbook, but the story would be credited to her uncle, Charles Perrault.

English society even while she criticized their lack of opportunities and unfortunate reliance on marriage to secure their future. Alcott's short story heavily critiques the oppressive patriarchy that women in America live under but simmers her condemnation of her society situation with parody.

Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott use their stories to express their views to a world that often holds little weight for women's opinions. Their Cinderellas are ideal women: loving, tender, hardworking, and with a fortified spirit. However, Austen's Cinderella's journey is to struggle with her identity while Alcott's Cinderella must deal with the management of her family until she is given an opportunity to choose whether she wishes to maintain her role. Austen's Anne Elliot is sent away from her home to a sister in Uppercross and then sent again to Bath as it suits her family's whims. Alcott's Nan is stationary for the duration of her tale, never leaving her front gate. Austen and Alcott write their "Cinderella" in a voice of their own. In societies where women are not valued as insightful, inspired creatures, Austen and Alcott use their stories as an outlet for their views on the world of women.

Austen presents Anne Elliot to her readers as an almost silent, servile sister, but throughout the course of the novel she gains her voice and strength. Not perfect, but nevertheless complex, Anne depicts the interior journey of a young woman who must reject others' images of her before she can value her opinions and her dreams. Anne's psyche is repressed at the onset of the novel. She has many opinions as to how her father ignores her attempts to manage the family's finances and her family's vanity on their status, but she never speaks to it, not even to her confidant and Fairy, Lady Russell.

At her sister's cottage in Uppercross, Anne remains quiet in the company of her cousins; she is content to sit and play the piano while they engage one another in dance and conversation. It is not until the arrival of the Crofts, in whom Anne sees the model, egalitarian relationship, and later her trip to Lyme—where Captain Benwick is eager for her conversation and opinions on literature—that Anne leaves her mousey tendencies, takes charge of her situation, and uses her voice in a meaningful way.

Anne leaves pleasantries in favor for conversations where she can express her ideas and feelings about the world. It is not until volume two, which takes place after Anne's transfiguration in Lyme, that Mrs. Smith is introduced. Anne and Mrs. Smith come together to enjoy one another's company and gossip, but in their gossiping, they are allowed to express their views of the world. They can condemn men who waste their fortunes, they discuss the living conditions of widows abandoned by society, and freely express their thoughts without fear, censure or ridicule. Even amongst her suitor, Mr. Elliot, Anne loses her fear of speech and boldly asserts that she considers the Dalrymples to be nothing and unextraordinary.

Anne dismisses the image that others wish her to take up (Gilbert and Gubar 177). Charles Musgrove and parents see in her the wife/daughter-in-law they wanted. Lady Russell wishes Anne to marry her cousin to become the future Lady Elliot and take the position that her deceased mother once held. Captain Benwick sees in Anne his future quiet, literary wife. Mary wants Anne to remain a spinster who can tend to her own children when she grows bored of them. Anne realizes that she has not actively chosen a path for herself. She exists in waiting, never to take control. When she faces her lost-love, Anne goes into a period of introspection that allows her to evaluate her life, her worth, and her ability to grasp at her dreams. She openly

associates with Captain Wentworth despite her father, Elizabeth, and Lady Russell's slight disapproval.

Toward the close of *Persuasion*, Anne is independent and free to use her voice because reproach no longer inspires fear. As the story proceeds, Anne has more and more lines, her thoughts are shared, and her words gradually more poignant than polite. Anne assumes power literally in Lyme and figuratively in her newfound ability to speak (Giordana 107). Anne is given longer, assertive and more eloquent dialogue. She is slowly able to "release the energies of articulation that [she] has been forced to keep bound up" (Wiltshire 45). As Austen loosens Anne's tongue, she creates an environment that allows women to express themselves and be taken seriously. Anne proves that women can be rational people who are not unlike the men who normally dominate prose. Anne's claim over her voice culminates in a moving speech on the strength of women's love. Anne insists that men are incapable of understanding women because they so rarely listen to women. Austen uses Anne's speech to reiterate the importance of her own novel, one in which a woman writes about women's thoughts and struggles.

Louisa May Alcott provides a soft-spoken Cinderella. Nan is a capable woman who manages her family's home, but her tenderness overwhelms her emotionally and later physically in the tale. Alcott does not give Nan an overthrow of spirit from a meek to very talkative woman. She does, however, provide one in Di. Di is outspoken and sometimes foolishly so, but she is unafraid in the company of her sisters and childhood playmate, John Lord, to speak her mind on a variety of topics. When she is reproached for some of her thoughtless, patronizing monologues, Di has the emotional security to reflect on the criticism and alter her view as she finds fit. She

does not break into hysterics and she is not seen as ridiculous by John or her sisters. Di is embarrassed at insulting her friend's late-father, but the conversation continues.

Nan remains quiet in comparison to Di's many monologues throughout the story. However, she is very accomplished as an "angel in the house." Nan dotes on her family, takes care of the domestic duties of cleaning and cooking, writes her father's sermons, tends to the garden, as well as managing the finances once her father passes. She needs no one to support her and is completely confident in her ability to thrive in her castle after her sisters leave her. She intends to be so well off that she might adopt a small child of her own to raise. Nan is a Cinderella who requires no Prince; she can provide her own Wedding if she wishes.

In view of the fact that Nan is so wholly qualified in providing for herself and her dreams, she has no reason to accept a Prince unless he can prove to be her equal, benefit her in some way, and affect her so much that she wishes to alter her dreams to include him. John Lord is the perfect man. He has a steady business, loves Nan and her family, and most importantly, he values the young women, their thoughts, and their work. In his first scene in the story, John sees Nan's frustration and exhaustion and does not look down on women's incompetence and the meagerness of women's work. He takes up the towel and helps Nan to put the kitchen to rights, then sends her to check on her father so that she might have a moment's relief from her work. Nan is free to choose or dismiss him, but John proves himself as the ideal husband in congruency to Nan, the ideal woman and so, she loves him and accepts him.

Not only does Alcott give Nan the power to choose her husband, but she subverts the motif of Cinderella being whisked away to the Prince's castle. The Prince comes to Cinderella's

castle three times and goes away twice. When Nan visits the Lord home it is to visit John's mother. Alcott subverts the motif of the Fairy sending Cinderella away from the Prince at midnight. While Nan is the obvious Cinderella of the tale, the Fairy is John's mother who primarily gives her advice to her son (although it is heftily for the benefit of Nan) and sends him away from the one he loves. The father dies and Cinderella inherits the castle, the place she cannot bear to leave: "I shall stay in the dear old house; for no other place would seem like home to me," and the Prince must seek out Cinderella in her own castle to be worthy of her hand (246).

In her subversion of these motifs, Alcott hands the power to Cinderella. She may be trapped within the confines of the family property, but she reigns over it like a queen long before the Prince seeks her hand in a union of supportive equals.²⁹ Alcott uses "A Modern Cinderella, or The Little Old Shoe" as an outlet to voice that women's work is valuable, that women have the power to support themselves, if they so choose, and that if women decide to choose a Prince, they should take a husband who is worthy of them.

Austen and Alcott promote the idea that women can be both gentle and firm in their nature and in their spirit. The authors assert that women deserve to be taken seriously as productive people who must decide their own fate. Austen and Alcott write during a period where women are subjected by the pressures of patriarchal societies to remain mostly uneducated and quiet about the issues that impact women's lives, this remains the same situation from the seventeenth century. They use their "Cinderella" tales to voice their dissent in plain sight.

²⁹ The union of equals is not unlike that of the well-matched Crofts from Austen's *Persuasion*; although John and Nan are a far more subdued couple.

Persuasion and “A Modern Cinderella, or the Little Old Shoe” assert that women are more than the insipid, inconstant (or “superficial and inherently immoral”) creatures they are commonly portrayed as in revered literature (Austen 94, Britannica).

Austen and Alcott mask their distaste for the status quo with their “elegant and decorous” ladylike writing styles (Gilbert and Gubar 128). They get away with their subtle rebellion in part because the genres in which they write are already undervalued for being associated with women in the same way as D’Aulnoy and L’Héritier (131). Austen directly addresses the subject of women’s suppressed voice when Anne challenges Captain Harville’s claim that “all histories... all stories, prose and verse... songs and proverbs” contradict her argument on women’s tenacity in love. Austen gives Captain Harville a moment of self-awareness when he adds, “perhaps you will say, these were all written by men” (94). By starting the topic with a man’s acknowledgement, Anne’s proto-feminist tirade is made more acceptable. Anne’s declaration (or Austen’s):

If you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything. (94)

The telling of one’s own story is exactly what Austen and Alcott strive for in their tales of Cinderella, which is reminiscent of Fine-Oreille who demands to tell her tale before she consents to marriage. The conversation between Anne and Captain Harville is the pinnacle of

Anne's voice in the novel. She tells her own story and the story of women everywhere. Austen and Alcott focus their tales on marriage as it is the only avenue for self-definition that their Cinderellas are allotted in their nineteenth-century, heavily patriarchal societies (Gilbert and Gubar 127). Their Cinderellas are mobile only when forces with more agency allow them to be, but their stifled position does not fully restrain them. Nan and Anne prove their ability for independence and from that point the Cinderellas are free to pursue their dreams.

Authorship allows Austen and Alcott a means to escape the heavily restrictive world of the nineteenth century (168). They are free to voice their truths of life. In societies that disregarded their voice and agency, Austen and Alcott use their stories to shirk the traditional views on women and their feminine roles. Austen and Alcott prove that women do not lack interiority simply because men have not previously conceived that women might have intricate inner lives. When given the chance to speak for themselves, women are not as nervous or inconstant, as feeble or unimaginative as they might have appeared before in literature. If looked at closely, women are spirited. They are human.

Judith Viorst's poem is the shortest of the "Cinderella" fairy tales discussed, however the ambiguity over Cinderella's Wedding and fate matched with Cinderella's laissez-faire attitude toward the Prince and her Wedding offer insight into contemporary women's thought. Women in nineteen-eighties America are educated and many are accepted into higher education programs. After the second-wave feminist movements in the sixties and seventies, women can be more confident in voicing their experiences and their views on the world. Viorst's Cinderella is neither meek nor shy and her thoughts are direct. Cinderella is unafraid of her opinions and acts on them without hesitation.

The seventeenth-century stories are almost entirely narrated. The voices of the *conteuses* are clear and they imply that they are the Fairy who gifts their story as their advice for other young women, their Cinderellas. The *conteuses* are the all-knowing fairies who see the faults in court society and are concerned about the well-being of women who are like them, so the fairies bestow their advice on what is wrong and how to be.

Nineteenth-century authors Austen and Alcott have strong narrative voices. Austen's narration can be caustic at times and although Anne is given more gentleness in her thoughts, Austen proceeds to narrate over the scene to insult the characters and tell the reader how to think about certain types of people. Alcott's story is a more blatant critique of the overbearing patriarchal structures in America than Austen's *Persuasion*. Alcott's tale shows how the notion of a fragile, useless, uneducated woman is obsolete in the real world were women have deep passions and strong work ethic. The story provides insight into the development of American feminist sentiment prior to the suffrage movement. Alcott's Cinderella can truly choose to grow into an old maid without the repercussions of being a burden on her family or facing social condemnation. However, Alcott still placates her critiques by aligning Cinderella's Wedding with a traditional marriage ending.

Late twentieth-century poetess, Judith Viorst, gives true voice to Cinderella by taking on her persona within her poem. Women no longer must code their social critiques and cultural perspectives in flowery narration that seems so polite the critiques are semi-masked. Not a Fairy like the authors before her, Viorst is Cinderella: the every-woman who speaks her mind. Viorst offers her stance on Cinderella's tale and suggests that all women can embody Cinderella's message that women can materialize their own Happily Ever After.

Conclusion

“As the curtain descends there is nothing but loving and laughter”

—Once Upon a Mattress, “Happily Ever After”

The tales of Cinderella (ATU 510A: The Persecuted Heroine) are held up as classic fairy tales. Fairy tales present a snapshot of a culture’s inclinations, social structure, aspirations, and fears. Women authors have often turned to “Cinderella” to express their worldview that would have otherwise been left untold. Women-authored ATU 510A fairy tales change their preferred mediation of the tale in different time periods and countries to best reach other women so that their voice might be heard, and their story shared.

In the literary salons of seventeenth-century France, aristocratic Mme D’Aulnoy and Mlle L’Héritier created vivacious Cinderellas under the name of Finette. Finette is always benevolent and takes care of her undeserving sisters. Finette’s sisters are presented as exaggerated images of what women should strive to never become. Finette attempts to elevate her sisters to benefit both themselves and also the honor of their family name and kingdom and does this by embarking on a quest reminiscent of those from French Medieval romances. Both Finettes are aggressive and willing to fight, but clever enough that they generally outsmart their opponents first. The spirited Finettes know what is due to them and exact what is owed. The Finettes marry to elevate their status, but they are no damsels in distress. They save their Princes, who are little more than a tool or a pretty decoration to accompany their Wedding. The protofeminist *conteuses* embody the role

of the Fairies. They teach their audience of aristocratic, French Finettes about women's capacity for power and ability to facilitate her own Wedding.

Nineteenth-century English and American authors, Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, altered their Cinderella's setting and narrative dramatically from their historical French counterparts. Entrenched in Romantic traditions as well as the Cinderella cycle, Anne's and Nan's journeys were less focused on fighting and plotting their way to their Wedding than of discovering their self-worth after a period of introspection in nature. The Romantic Cinderellas allowed nineteenth-century Anglo-women to revel in stories about women very much like themselves—with emotions, accomplishments, skills, and valuable thoughts—who could take charge of their life and decide what *they* wanted for their own Wedding. Authors, Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, revolutionized the roles of Fairy and Prince, creating Princes who must earn their place in Cinderella's heart and Fairies who do not always know best. In light of growing feminist sentiments and an increase of "Defense of Women" literature, Austen and Alcott create narratives that embed their social commentary and condemnation of men's literature and portrayals of women. Nineteenth-century Cinderellas, Anne and Nan discover their voice and have full control of their fate.

Judith Viorst's poem, "...And Then The Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Put the Glass Slipper on Cinderella's Foot" plays on existing, popularized Cinderella motifs and traditions in 1980s American culture to create a "counter-tradition" Cinderella who breaks from the pattern of Cinderellas who marry their Prince as a part of their Wedding. Cinderella relies on no Fairy for advice and no Prince to facilitate her happiness. Viorst plays with quintessential features of "Cinderella" narratives and focuses on a women-centered perspective of romantic love and self-

love. Viorst's poem is unafraid to defy the expectations of "Cinderella." Amidst a cultural backdrop of social provocation, Cinderella is given an increase in autonomy and power from that of even her women-authored predecessors and decides to explore new paths as she seeks her Wedding.

These five Cinderella fairy tales show the ways in which female narratives are, over a span of four centuries, created around the "Cinderella" fairy tale type. Women-authored stories use "Cinderella" motifs as a mode to express women's contemporary perspective on their relationships with other women, their views on what marriage is a means to, the importance of love, and most importantly, women's power and ability to dictate their own future. The Cinderellas prior to the twentieth century work within the confines of their oppressive societies to manipulate their fate and create meaningful futures for themselves. In 1981, Cinderella rejects her patriarchal culture and lives freely, abandoning the anticipated/dictated ending to the Cinderella cycle while relying upon "Cinderella" motifs.

The Cinderella cycle allows women to use recognizable fairy tale functions and motifs to voice their viewpoint on women and their place in the world. All of the tales except Viorst's contain a Fairy, which encourages women to look to their predecessors for advice on how to navigate their society. However, the Fairies are not always perfect in their advice, and it is Cinderella's actions which ultimately advance her story.³⁰ Prior to the twentieth century, the

³⁰ In contrast, the male-authored tales "Cendrillon," "Aschenputtel," and *Walt Disney's Cinderella* portray Cinderella who cannot begin their advancement or possess any initiative without the guidance of a Fairy. The women authors, on the other hand, show that while a Fairy can provide guidance, initiative and action are on a woman's shoulders. Furthermore, the "women-authors of Cinderella" assert that women much work more than men in attempts to enact their Wedding.

women-authors used “Cinderella” as an outlet for their voice in a world where they were otherwise confined by patriarchal paradigms. Viorst presents a new outlet for “Cinderella” tales: a story told in first person. Women-authors no longer hid their voices under the guise of a fairy but are unafraid to assert themselves as Cinderella and boldly vocalize their thoughts.

Research into women-authored fairy tales is vital, not only for our understanding of the genre, but also of how women have perceived their place in the world they inhabit and what they believe needs to be done to better it. Fairy tales, like “Cinderella,” provide authors, but women in particular, with the recursive narrative devices that allow an easy flow of thought as they develop their story’s plot and manipulate the symbolism of fairy tale motifs and functions. Women are so often overlooked in favor of male-authors, whether it is because they have been forgotten, their work attributed to men, or considered ‘less authentic’ or ‘less literary.’ Cinderella has been popularized as one of the most pretty, passive, and polite fairytale princesses, but that is only the case when one forgets to look at what women have to say. Cinderella is never a maiden who awaits rescue by a Fairy or a Prince. Cinderella is a woman who successfully navigates her society to seize a fulfilling future and achieve her own *Happily Ever After*. Cinderella is the princess who speaks with every woman’s voice.

Appendix

MOTIFS, CHARACTERS, FUNCTIONS, AND RECURSIVE NARRATIVE DEVICES IN TALES OF CINDERELLA

The purpose of this appendix is to allow readers to follow the tales discussed in this thesis with ease. The tables offer a quick guide as to who the characters are and how the major events of the stories fall in line with three of the more well-known male authored tales: “Cendrillon,” “Aschenputtel,” and *Walt Disney’s Cinderella*. These tables briefly label Cinderellas and their motifs and functions/narrative devices at a glance for a more clarity when understanding how each tale relates to each other and to the Cinderella Cycle.³¹

| Motifs, Characters, Functions, and Recursive Narrative Devices in Tales of Cinderella | | | | |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|--|
| Table I | | | | |
| Story | "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette" | "Cendrillon" | "Finette Cendron" | "Aschenputtel" |
| Authors | Mlle L'Héritier | Charles Perrault | Mme D'Aulnoy | The Brothers Grimm |
| Year Published | 1695 | 1697 | 1697 | 1812 |
| Cinderella | Finette | Cendrillon, Cucendron | Fine-Oreille, Finette | Aschenputtel |
| Prince | Bel-à-Voir | "son of the king" | Prince Chéri | prince |
| Fairy | wise Fairy | Fairy Godmother | Merluche | Hazel Tree/Bird |
| Fairy's Place in Cinderella's Life | Glass Spindles for Chastity, Punishes Sisters, Gives Maxim to Finette | Fairy Godmother | Fairy Godmother | Embodiment of Cinderella's Dead Mother/sadness and piety |
| Father | Fights in Crusades, Relies on Daughter, Not Sharp | Weak-willed, Governed by his Wife entirely | Weak, Spender, Ruled by Wife | Passive |
| (step)Sisters | Babillarde, Nonchalante | two, unnamed | Fleur D'amour, Belle-de-Nuit | two, unnamed |

³¹ If part of the table is left blank, then the element is not present in the story.

Table I Continued

| Story | "L'Adroite Princesse ou les Aventures de Finette" | "Cendrillon" | "Finette Cendron" | "Aschenputtel" |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Hard Working Protagonist | Fights Riche-en-Cautéle, Manages Politics, | Scullery Maid, Lady's maid | Cooks for Merluce, Lady's Maid, Scullery Maid, Fights Ogres | Kitchen Wench |
| Dead Mother | Dead | Dead | "Bad Mother" Abandons Daughters | Dead |
| Cruel Family | Father locks in Tower, Sisters Ruin Family Honor | Displace her, Make Servant, Live in Attic | Parents Abandon, Sisters Beat and Abuse, Make Servant | Harass, Kitchen Wench, Steal her Stuff, Sleep in Hearth |
| Separation from the Prince | Prince kills False Bride | Flee ball before midnight | Finette leaves ball | Run from Festival |
| Recognition | Reveal after False Bride Test | Shoe Test | Shoe Test | Shoe Test |
| Transfiguration | False Bride | Magic Dress | Magic Dress | Magic Dress |
| Wedding | Restore Honor- Marry Prince | Elevate Status- Marry Prince | Regain Status- Restore Kingdom- Marry Prince | Elevate Status- Marry Prince |
| Pretty, Passive, Polite | | Yes | | Yes |
| Sharp, Strong, Skillful | Yes | | Yes | |

Motifs, Characters, Functions, and Recursive Narrative Devices in Tales of Cinderella

Table II

| Story | <i>Persusation</i> | "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" | <i>Cinderella</i> | "And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Place the Slipper on Cinderella's Foot..." |
|------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Authors | Jane Austen | Louisa May Alcott | Walt Disney Company | Judith Viorst |
| Year Published | 1817 | 1860 | 1950 | 1981 |
| Cinderella | Anne Elliot | Nan | Cinderella | Cinderella |
| Prince | Captain Frederick Wentworth | John Lord | Prince Charming | The Prince |
| Fairy | Lady Russell | Mrs. Lord | Fairy Godmother | |
| Fairy's Place in Cinderella's Life | Godmother | John Lord's Mother | Fairy Godmother | |
| Father | Vain, Does not like Anne, Useless, Spender | Dies, Relies on Daughters | Dead | |
| (step)Sisters | Elizabeth Elliot, Mary Musgrove | Di, Laura | Anastasia, Drizzella | |
| Hard Working Protagonist | Nurse, Budgets, Runs Dull Parts of Household | Cook, Clean, Nurse, Write Sermon, Garden, Finances | Scullery Maid, Lady's Maid, Cook | |
| Dead Mother | Dead | Dead | Dead | |
| Cruel Family | Father Dislikes, Elizabeth Replaces, Mary Uses | Family Over-Relies until Great Illness | Mean and Make Servant | |
| Separation from the Prince | Anne ends Engagement 8 years | John leaves one year | Flees ball before midnight | Cinderella leaves ball (assumably) |

| Table II Continued | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| Story | <i>Persusation</i> | "A Modern Cinderella or, The Little Old Shoe" | <i>Cinderella</i> | "And Then the Prince Knelt Down and Tried to Place the Slipper on Cinderella's Foot..." |
| Recognition | Letter of Devotion | Shoe Test | Shoe Test | Shoe Test Lie <i>Subversion of Motif</i> |
| Transfiguration | Trip to Lyme, Nature | | Magic Dress | |
| Wedding | Marry Prince - Independence from Family | Marry Prince | Elevate Status- Marry Prince | Free to Reject Prince and Move On |
| Pretty, Passive, Polite | | | Yes | |
| Sharp, Strong, Skillful | Yes | Yes | | |

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