

Allison Craven

---

# FAIRY TALE INTERRUPTED

FEMINISM, MASCULINITY,  
WONDER CINEMA

PETER LANG

Feminism, masculinity and fairy tale figure within an extended analysis of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), in light of the live-action remake, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). The history of the fairy tale, 'Beauty and the Beast', is compared with Disney's adaptation which centralises the figure of the Beast rather than the heroine, Belle. A flagship during a key period of Disney's corporate expansion in the early 1990s, in the first section of the book, the production is situated with respect to gender histories in the corresponding period: the rise of post-feminism and its implicit disavowal of feminism, the mythopoetic men's movement; and the crisis of masculinity. The following section canvasses views of masculinity in second wave feminism and the role of myth and fairy tale in key works of feminism. A critical discussion ensues of twenty-first century wonder cinema in which the influence of feminist ideas is seen to circulate within the pastiche treatments of fairy tales and enchantment.

**Allison Craven** is a Senior Lecturer in English and Screen Studies at James Cook University, North Queensland, Australia. She has published on Disney media, Australian cinema and children's literature in education. She is also the author of *Finding Queensland in Australian Cinema* (Anthem Press 2016).

# Fairy Tale Interrupted



Allison Craven

# **Fairy Tale Interrupted**

Feminism, Masculinity, Wonder Cinema



**PETER LANG**

Bern · Berlin · Bruxelles · Frankfurt am Main · New York · Oxford · Wien

**Bibliographic information published by die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: A catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library, Great Britain.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Craven, Allison, author.

Title: Fairy tale interrupted: feminism, masculinity, wonder cinema / Allison Craven.

Description: Bern; New York: Peter Lang, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016035885 (print) | LCCN 2016053866 (ebook) | ISBN 9783034320870 (Print) | ISBN 9783034324700 (E-book) | ISBN 9783034324700 (ebook) | ISBN 9783034324717 (ebook) | ISBN 9783034324724 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Feminism and motion pictures. | Women in motion pictures. | Feminist film criticism. | Fairy tales in motion pictures. | Fairy tales--Adaptations. | Sex role in motion pictures. | Walt Disney Company.

Classification: LCC PN1995.9.W6 C73 2017 (print) | LCC PN1995.9.W6 (ebook) | DDC 791.43/6522--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016035885>

ISBN 978-3-0343-2087-0 pb.

ISBN 978-3-0343-2470-0 eBook

ISBN 978-3-0343-2472-4 MOBI

ISBN 978-3-0343-2471-7 EPUB

© Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern 2017

Wabernstrasse 40, CH-3007 Bern, Switzerland

[info@peterlang.com](mailto:info@peterlang.com), [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

All rights reserved.

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright.

Any utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution.

This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

Printed in Switzerland

For the two little wonders, SFK and (M)TBA, welcome.

In memory: Ruth and Vince Craven



# Contents

## Introduction

Enchanted Rivals: Fairy Tale, Feminism and Wonder Cinema .....	9
--	---

## *Retelling 'Beauty and the Beast' in the 1990s*

1. Fairy Tale Interrupted; or How Disney's Beast became Beauty .....	33
2. Disney Business and the Rose Taboo.....	49
3. For the Boys: Remembering Cupid, the Prince, and the Crisis of Masculinity .....	59
4. Redux Beauty and the Belles: Feminism and Femininity in Disneyland.....	79

## *Arcade*

5. The Croaking: Enchanted Heroines and Post-feminism .....	99
6. Patriarchy Dreaming: Imagining Masculinity in the Second Wave .....	115
7. Beauty and the Myth; or Goddesses and Father Giants .....	135
8. Facing the Sphinx, Leaving the Princess.....	153

## *Aftermath and After-Party; or the Return of the Unrepressed*

9. Transformational: Pastiche and the Princess.....	163
10. Fairy Tales Alive: Reliving Wonder in Live-action Remakes.....	177
11. Calling All Princesses and Forest Warriors: Empowerment and Inheritance in Post-feminist Wonder.....	191
Conclusion: (Not) Out of the Woods.....	209
Filmography and Stage Productions .....	217
Works Cited.....	223
Acknowledgements.....	245
Index .....	247

## Introduction

### Enchanted Rivals: Fairy Tale, Feminism and Wonder Cinema

When the actress, Emma Watson, announced on her Facebook site her role as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* (Condon 2017), the remake of Disney's animated film (Trousdale and Wise 1991), the 'internet', in one description, 'answered with endless praise' (Cowden 2015). With her history as Hermione in the magical narratives of the *Harry Potter* films, and her off-screen status as a UN Ambassador for Women, and face of the 'HeForShe' campaign, one blogger saw it as a 'win for feminism' (Amable 2015). *Elle Australia* says their 'hearts blew up' to learn that 'our favourite feminist and front-rower' would play the 'beloved bookworm and village bad-ass' (McLean 2015). Watson says that "'Belle and Hermione are my personal heroines'" and that it seems like the closing of a circle, playing Hermione, as a child and Belle, as a woman (qtd in McLean 2015). Conspicuously, the casting of the leading lady gained greater publicity than the writer or director of the production.<sup>1</sup>

Praise for a Disney fairy-tale character as an avatar of human achievement reached an earlier apotheosis in the acclaim for Elsa, the heroine of *Frozen* (Buck and Lee 2013) who was described in *Who* magazine as 'a pop-culture icon for feminism, girl power and independence' and was '[n]amed *Time* magazine's Most Influential Fictional Character of 2014' ('Best and Worst 2014', 42). Disney, and similar corporate story tellers, have glamourised fairy tale heroines as icons and role models of modern femininity for decades. Disney has attracted criticism over the years for portrayals of heroines and villainesses alike, so it is something of a turn-around to find their heroines now icons of feminism. It is testimony to a long-term repositioning of Disney as a purveyor of progressive values, presumably in the interests of the maintenance of its market dominance.

---

1 In an interview in 2015, Watson says, 'Some of the best feminists I have encountered are men, like Steve Chbosky who directed me in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*' (Day, Hoggard and Bromwich 2015). Chbosky co-wrote the screenplay for the live-action *Beauty and the Beast*, along with Evan Spiliotopolous.

The heroism of Belle and Elsa summons Jean Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal, the third stage of the image in which the simulacra gains hold of reality (1983, 10–12). Consumer society, in this theory, is composed of a 'precession of simulacra', or images to live by. Disneyland, he lamented, is the 'perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation' (23).<sup>2</sup> The fears of Baudrillard stem from the debates about technology in the earlier twentieth century, and the project of the Frankfurt School to problematise the material real in the face of the expansion of mass culture. Disney animation was a sometime object of their debates about the role of media technologies in the restructuring of subjectivity (Hansen 1993). These debates have long been overrun by cultural theory of spectacle that supposes the pleasure and discernment, rather than dupery, of the media consumer. Yet the capacity of media corporations to saturate markets with fantasy cultural products presented as heroic life stories, and with the voluntary intermediating support of global internet communications, is a spectacle of such disturbing power that only a fairy tale might match its wonder.

## What's a Fairy Tale, Nemo?

To speak colloquially of 'fairy tale', as above, is to widen the folkloric and literary uses. Fairy tales are 'traditional narratives of wonder and magic' (Greenhill and Rudy 2014, 4). They may contain fairies or enchantment, shapeshifting and transformation, a moral function, and a setting in an 'imagined antiquity', or 'Once upon a time' (Warner 1994, XV–XVI). It is part of the influence of Disney on popular culture that a fairy tale is assumed to resolve to happiness. But happy endings are arbitrary; some fairy tales lack closure altogether. It is the sense of wonder and the marvelous that sets fairy tales apart from other literary genres. The power of the narrative is in the mood, typically 'optative', or announcing what might be (Warner 1994, XVI). This optative quality gives rise to the potential for 'subversion' and 'adaptability' of fairy tale (Bacchilega 2013, 7).

---

2 The object of critique is America; Disneyland, he argues, is presented as imaginary 'in order to make us believe that the rest is real' (25).

This definition only partly accounts for the uses of fairy tale in wonder cinema. Belle's return in the remake of *Beauty and the Beast*, and the vehicle of Elsa's ascendance, *Frozen*, are among examples of the steady stream, or even a 'deluge' (Bacchilega 76), of Hollywood-generated, blockbuster-style feature films since the 1990s that retell or adapt European fairy tales, and which the term 'fairy-tale films' has come to name (Greenhill and Matrix 2010). This cinema of wonder has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention, not least for the variably perceived influence of feminism in a number of the productions.<sup>3</sup> Related observations perceive the tendency to treat fairy tales as in some way 'real', or 'blurring the boundaries of and raising questions about the relationship between fantasy and reality' (Bacchilega 109).

Hollywood has long traded in wonder, in enchanted narratives or traces of fairy tale, as amply demonstrated (Greenhill and Matrix 2010; Zipes 2011; Bacchilega 2013; Short 2015). Disney is no new player, and some might say they started it, or at least the blockbuster style fairy-tale film. This cinema of wonder pre-dates Hollywood and Disney in the film *féerie* of early cinema (Greenhill and Matrix 2010; Zipes 2011; Moen 2013); and extends well beyond it in contemporary national cinemas around the world (Zipes, Greenhill and Magnus-Johnston 2015). It proliferates in allied media, notably transnational television, in a range of enchanted, gothic and supernatural narratives. Indeed, the 'rereading' of fairy tales in television formats has been 'even more extreme than in the cinema', according to Greenhill and Rudy (16).<sup>4</sup> In realist cinema, Sue

---

3 A number of the sources cited in this book contain observations along these lines, including: Preston 2004; Pershing and Gablehouse 2010; Joosen 2011; Cecire 2012; Bacchilega 2013; Greenhill and Rudy 2014; Short 2015.

4 Television is awash with the host of reality television game shows 'with their Cinderella story lines' (Maguire 2008, 3), and the abundance of small-screen serialisations of fairy tale and supernatural pageants. These range from domestic settings like Disney's contribution, produced for ABC Television, *Once Upon a Time* (Horowitz and Kitsis 2011–), to procedurals like *Grimm* (Various 2011–2015) and *Supernatural* (Various 2005–) to teen romance like *Teen Wolf* (Davis 2011–) or fairy crime like *Lost Girl* (Lovretta 2010–). These productions generate all varieties of shapeshifters, demons, vampires, fairies and other supernatural fauna, and with degrees of integrity or diversity in the folkloric species. Just as these genres artificialise the real, so they commodify wonder but with differing reality effects. If the likes of *Grimm* 'synthesize quotidian' and 'supernatural reality' in a 'third reality' or neo-magic realism, as Schwabe (2014, 295) argues, *Once Upon a Time* poses fairy tale 'as an everyday

Short (2015) and Jerry Griswold (2004) have argued that fairy tales form the basis of a number of Hollywood films since the 1990s, although neither of them specifically frame the trend as so dated.

In investigating the perceived influence of feminism on fairy tale in a selection of fairy-tale films, the focus of this book is on Disney feature films, animated and live-action, and some selected films produced by their major competitors, which, collectively, I term ‘corporate wonder’. The films in question all have the potential for sequel/prequel extensions, and were produced initially for theatrical release and transnational distribution. While these productions do not represent the full extent of what might be termed ‘wonder cinema’, which includes many more titles and an array of independent productions, I focus on a selection of the corporate oeuvre in the twenty-first century that is characterised by postmodern poetics of pastiche, and genre complexity and hybridity, especially the trend to parody or ‘remix’ fairy tales.

In an obvious sense these characteristics are not exceptional because pastiche and intertextuality are much in the nature of fairy tales, which always circulate as ‘intertexts par excellence’ (Greenhill and Matrix 2; and see Preston 2004). Furthermore, pastiche aesthetics are typical of Disney productions that routinely burlesque the fairy tale fictions (see Craven 2012). The fairy tale – in literary, oral or cinematic form – may even survive through mutating and adapting to “‘hybrid genres’” (Zipes qtd in Joosen 2011, 2). But this tendency is greatly enhanced and parodied in wonder cinema. Cristina Bacchilega, while pointing out that ‘genre mixing’ widely occurs in ‘counter hegemonic practices’ of fairy tale retelling, highlights how genre mixing has become a textual feature of fairy tale films, a means of generating ‘reality effects’, and placing the fairy tale in ‘new dynamics of competition and alliance with other genres’ (28). Within these remixes, feminism is filtered among the reality effects in films like *Shrek* (Adamson and Jenson 2001) and *Enchanted* (Lima 2007), to note two that have attracted much commentary. Indeed, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) can be seen as a much earlier forerunner of this practice.

---

story that ordinary viewers can relate to’ (Hay and Baxter 2014, 316), or a ‘reality fairy tale’ (Schwabe 303).

## Wonder and Feminism

Of the twenty-first century examples, Bacchilega sees some of the films as evidence of the ‘impact of feminist critique on the production and reception of fairy-tale films’ (117) and within what she describes as a ‘postfeminist climate’ (18). Conversely, these films also represent the ‘underlying strength of the gender ideology’ contested by feminists (117). The nature of the feminist influence on these productions is more elusive. It is not a coincidence that the period since the 1990s corresponds to the aftermath of second wave feminism in which its influences have infused broadly into global culture. Vanessa Joosen looks back further in documenting an upsurge in interest in fairy tale since the 1970s which she attributes to the 1968 movement (in Europe) and second wave feminism as ‘societal factors’ that influence academic and literary publications on fairy tale (4).

These observations emerge in the field of fairy-tale scholarship in which a degree of consensus has emerged about the sources of interests in fairy tale in the second wave of feminism. A salient moment in which the connections were established, Donald Haase argues, was the debate in the 1970s between Alison Lurie (1970), who argued for the empowering potential of fairy tales, and Marcia Lieberman (1993/1972), who contested the embedded patriarchal values (Haase 2004, 1). It did not rest there as further contributors espoused a ‘middle ground’ (see Short 21–25; Joosen 53). Now an oft-cited marker of the advent of feminist critique of fairy tales in the second wave, not only did this debate occur at the height of the women’s movement but it also marked, Haase suggests, a convergence of feminism and fairy tale studies since the 1970s (31). This is not to overlook first-wave feminist interest in fairy tale (see Seifert 2004), nor that Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, as Maria Tatar observes, was one of the first to identify ‘the profound gender asymmetries in fairy tales’ (2014, 142).

The second wave of feminism was also the source of a particularly vociferous critique of fairy tales in some of the radical manifestos. Susan Brownmiller decried the regressive innocence of Little Red Riding Hood in *Against Our Will* (Brownmiller 1976); Andrea Dworkin attacked fairy tales in *Woman Hating* (Dworkin 1974); and Mary Daly, with one of her more explosive neologisms, posed connections between fairy tales and ‘gynocidal history’ in *Gyn/Ecology* (Daly 1978, 99), to mention a few

instances. An abiding (but not the only) criticism concerns the correlation between beauty and passivity of the fairy-tale heroine. It is the main source of Lieberman's complaint about fairy tales – that the heroine does not have to *do* anything to be chosen by the prince – and it is emblematic in Brownmiller's account of Sleeping Beauty, the 'beauteous princess' who is 'unresponsive until Mr Right comes along'; and of Cinderella as the embodiment of 'beautiful passivity' (344).

From the 1970s onwards, an abundance of research and retelling of fairy tales grew in response to these (and other similar) critiques. While Haase argues that the feminist critique of fairy tales 'centred on depictions of the fairy-tale heroine' (x), various trends and tendencies emerged in feminist criticism of the sexual politics of fairy tales. These responses arise in a range of creative and critical practices in various media, and with diverse reference to consumption by adult women and/or girls, and to a much lesser extent by men and boys.<sup>5</sup> The vigour with which the second wave drew attention to the gendered structures of myth and fairy tale undoubtedly unleashed enthusiasm for the changing of these stories. The legacy of these works is, arguably, not only the insights on gender and culture, but fairy tale as a key medium for spreading knowledge of, and responses to, feminism. The relationship between feminism and fairy tale, therefore, has perhaps attained an appearance of symbiosis.

This history, combined with the identity of fairy tale as an eminently changeable or 'shape shifter' story form (Greenhill and Matrix 3) has no doubt contributed to their use in contemporary wonder cinema. The critique of female passivity, in particular, is addressed constantly through the active or action status of the revised heroines. The sense or illusion of symbiosis

---

5 Numerous approaches contest the stereotyping of women, or the power of romance to engender patriarchal subjectivities (Ebert 1988; Kolbenschlag 1988; Lieberman 1993); or reveal the pro-feminist potential of fairy tale (Auerbach 1992; Gordon 1993; Stone 1986; Makinen 2008); experiment with gender constructions; challenge male points-of-view (Claffey et al., 1985); play with fairy tale intertexts in literary fiction (see Cranny Francis 1992; Sharon Rose Wilson 1994/2012; 2008); analyse revisionism and counter-revisionism (Bacchilega 1997; 2013); retrieve female sources of fairy tales to contest the hegemony of the male-authored anthologies (Warner 1994; 1996; 2002; 2014; Haase 2004; Makinen 2008). These citations are but a sample of a sliver of the literature. Warner highlights the complexities of these practices for feminists: 'the misogyny of fairy tales engages women as participants, not just targets; the antagonisms and sufferings the stories recount connect to the world of female authority as well as experience' (1994, 208).

between feminism and fairy tale is, I argue, exploited in these practices in posing the illusion of contiguity and competition between feminism and fairy tale in which the active heroine is seen as empowered. Yet Elsa does not proclaim allegiance to the women's movement in *Frozen*. Nor does she profess a specific interest in either liberal, radical or Marxist or socialist feminism, as one might expect of a committed second-wave feminist. It seems unlikely, too, that the remake of *Beauty and the Beast*, which will include new scenes, will show Beast and Belle forging their affectionate bond at a 'Take Back the Night March', or in volunteering for a women's shelter because, like the animated film, it will most likely be set in a fantasy past. But anything is possible in Disneyland.

Neither was the animated *Beauty and the Beast* a feminist text in any purist's sense. Susan Jeffords wryly says that Belle is a 'Disney feminist' (1995, 170). More subtly, Marina Warner observes that Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* was more 'vividly aware of contemporary sexual politics' than any previous Disney film, and it worked its appeal through the 'cunning domestication of feminism itself' (1994, 313). Nor does the excitement for Belle's return heed the commentary on Belle as a queer character, or the widely-held view that Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is a story about masculinity (discussed in Chapter 3). Short observes that Belle is 'one of the first female characters to affirm an overhaul of the Disney ideal' (28), which is not the same as saying she is a feminist, and Short detects the stronger influence of feminism in reworking of the male roles in *Beauty and the Beast*.

In other words, detection of evidence of feminism in wonder cinema is largely inferred, and is at least debatable. The outcomes rarely lead to a sense that the productions are wholly feminist in perspective, and, more, the feminism detected is typically *not* detected in a number of examples. Such an example is Disney's heteronormative *Enchanted* in which the desires of the romantic heroine, Giselle (Amy Adams) are counterpointed with those of her 'feminist' friend, Nancy (Idina Menzel), who gives up feminism for romance by the end of the show (Pershing and Gablehouse 138). Indeed, the cinema of wonder is seen, on the whole, as reinforcing heteropatriarchal values; or feminism is implicated in the parodic discourses of these retellings whereby the film merely 'pays lip service to feminism' (Bacchilega and Rieder 2010, 29); or, in some views, constitutes either forms of anti-feminism or 'faux feminism' (Pershing and Gablehouse 2010, 151); or a kind of sympathetic 'post-feminism' (Williams 2010). In another context (children's story books), Angela Smith argues that the

crisis in masculinity, presumed as an effect of feminism in the late twentieth century, resulted in 'reinscribing the traditional gender divisions that second-wave feminism had so successfully tackled' (2015, 428). In these instances, signs of feminism lead, effectively, to no finding of feminism in the productions.

While independent feminist productions are more likely to satisfy audiences in search of feminism in popular culture, corporate media, like Disney's and that of its peers, consume feminist influences in diffuse and selective ways, and in alignment with wider industrial trends and conditions that affect their approaches to their markets. In this book, the hyper-reality-inducing trends in corporate wonder are discussed with regard to the cultural discourse of post-feminism (defined at length hereafter). Some fairy-tale films, I argue, are exemplary and utopian post-feminist narratives of the empowerment of the heroine, in productions more galvanised by the cinematic technologies of the digital era than by gender politics.

Post-feminism is regarded in this book not as a political form of feminism, or movement for social change, but as a cultural discourse that adapts some feminist ideas to hegemonic conceptions of femininity. A critical and consistent aspect of the discourse is the way second wave feminism is positioned as past. There are diverse views on what this 'pastness' means. Angela McRobbie (2009) sees post-feminism as a masquerade, a faux feminism that references second wave feminism as dead and buried. In other views, the pastness holds a range of potential meanings, and that 'it is the very success of feminism that produces its irrelevance' (Tasker and Negra 2007, 8), or, 'even necessitates, that it be superseded in the present' (Levine 2008, 376).

While debates about post-feminism are steeped in media analysis, especially of film and television (discussed at length in Chapter 5), few, if any, of the commentators take fairy tale or wonder cinema into their sights. In post-feminist wonder, I argue that the past-ness of feminism is indicated by the adaptation of (old) fairy tales as contemporary narratives of transformed femininity. The (conventional) fantastical antiquity of fairy tale settings, remediated as pastiche, quasi-historical settings, speaks to the pastness or legacy of second wave feminism, with all its critical attention to fairy tale and myth, while the 'empowered' heroine stands for contemporary femininity, with ambivalent and ambiguous implications for the inferred influences of feminism. In the illusion of its competition with fairy tale, feminism is drawn into ambiguous connection to fact and

truth, or, more pointedly, is as prone as the base fairy tale to adaptation and paratextuality. If abiding questions of the second wave of feminism were those such as posed by Beauvoir in asking, abstractly, ‘what is a woman?’, or by, say, Monique Wittig in questioning ‘what is a lesbian?’, post-feminist wonder seems to ask ‘what is a heroine?’, or, more precisely, ‘what is a fairy-tale heroine?’. Emma Watson’s self-described feminist life passage from childhood to womanhood playing fantasy characters seems such a tale. In contesting this kind of corporate conflation of feminism and fairy tale, this book also looks for wider perspectives on the histories of feminist interests in fairy tale in the second wave.

## Once Upon a Time in Feminism

A key figure who captures the complexity of feminist responses to fairy tale is Angela Carter. It is evidenced by the ubiquity of reference to her work in the scholarly and creative literatures, and in the resonance of her approaches implied in the (again, oft-cited) observation of the ‘Angela Carter generation’ of writers for whom she is a ‘generational figurehead’ (Benson 2008, 14). Stephen Benson’s characterisation refers, in particular, to the writers Carter inspired to adapt fairy tales in literary fictions, and to this end, he argues, she holds a particular influence in that her work ‘establishes in such vibrant and *polemic* fashion what might be called the *contemporaneity* of the fairy tale’ (9, my emphases). Benson’s observation is posed in forestalling the uncanny or other-worldly attraction of fairy tales for (literary) writers of fairy tale paratexts. He argues that the attraction of fairy tale ‘as narrative has the aura of the genuinely popular’, and that fairy tale uniquely connects modern popularity with ‘premodern cultures of storytelling’ (11).

Among the many fairy tales that Carter reinvented, subverted or devised, the stories that comprise *The Bloody Chamber* (Carter 1981) are arguably paradigmatic of the learned complexity of Carter’s oeuvre and feminist subjectivity. The titular tale, ‘The Bloody Chamber’, with its libertine Beast, references the high period of the European literary fairy tale, in the pre-Revolutionary court and salon cultures of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where the storytelling represented forms of feminism (see Chapter 1). More tendentiously, Carter was attracted to

this period by the writings of the Marquis de Sade, and all the stories in *The Bloody Chamber* extend Carter's theoretical construct, 'the Sadeian Woman' (Carter 1978).

Carter's friend, Lorna Sage, discusses Carter's adaptation of fairy tales with respect to *The Sadeian Woman*, alluding to the intense context of feminist activism against pornography. During the 1970s, she says, Carter was 're-reading fairy tales and Sade in tandem, and bleakly contemplating the fate of good, powerless girls, the Red Riding Hoods and Sleeping Beauties of the world' (Sage 2001, 225). She notes the many references to "bankrupt enchantments" and "fraudulent magic" and Carter's observation that "to be the *object* of desire is to be defined in the passive case [...] that is, to be killed", and that "[t]his is the moral of the fairy tale about the perfect woman" (Carter qtd in Sage 225). The prototype is Sade's Justine, who represented "two centuries of women who find the world was not, as they had been promised, made for them"; they are the "self-consciously blameless ones" who "suffer and suffer until it becomes second nature" (Carter qtd in Sage 225–26). Sage adds that such characters are to be found elsewhere – in 'conduct books, novels, psychoanalysis and suburbia as well as in pornography' – and the fairy tale is therefore part of this 'post-romantic-agony culture' (226).

In comparison, Sally Keenan sees Carter's work as intentionally dissonant with the dominant feminism of its time. The treatment of both pornography and fairy tale, especially in *The Sadeian Woman* is paradigmatic, Keenan argues, of Carter's view that women 'too readily identify with images of themselves as victims of patriarchal oppression' and thus become complicit with it (Keenan 2000, 39). As the authors of both fairy tale and pornography are typically anonymous, Carter adapted this "anonymous" voice from our communal oral culture' with the result that her position was ambiguous and potentially seen as 'running with the enemy', and she also risked association with reactionary attributions of fairy tale to a collective unconscious a la Bruno Bettelheim's view (Keenan 43–46).

This risk, in fairness, might apply to many of the feminist engagements with fairy tale, irrespective of the views for or against Carter's praxis. But her use of fairy tale, Sage argues, is based on the 'colloquial sense' in which fairy tale is "a sugar-coated lie"; or more grandly, a "myth", a cultural construct "naturalised as a timeless truth" (225). In fact, folklorists distinguish between fairy tale and myth where myths are seen as "core narratives" in "ideological systems" that are related

to truth or “concerned with ultimate realities” (Oring qtd in Greenhill and Rudy 11–12). Sage’s use of the term (in adapting Carter’s) suggests Roland Barthes’s (1993) notion of myths as ideological narratives that produce only truth effects.

Whether adapted or historical, fairy tales are speculations, wild imaginings.<sup>6</sup> The persistence and power owes to their radical availability; ‘they are volatile, anybody’s’ (Sage 244); or, according to Italian proverb ‘the fairy tale has no landlord’ (Jones 2002, 29). This quality, which Sage terms ‘promiscuity’ (226), makes the fairy tale something free in so many senses. Still, as she cautions, the fairy tale must be understood ‘historically, as drawn into the sensibility of the times, more often than not as a supporting strand in a realist or sentimental bourgeois narrative’ (226). There is no exception in the post-feminist wonder cinema where the adaptation of the heroine supports a realist strand in the contemporary narrative of female empowerment. How this situation has been reached is the story of this book, as outlined in the chapter summary that follows.

## Retelling *Beauty and the Beast* in the 1990s

The scenario is temporally framed as emerging since the early 1990s, and traced to the Disney production of *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991. An animated children’s film originally, it was developed as a touring stage production for adult audiences a few years later. At the time, and as elaborated in the first part of the book, the Disney corporation was preparing to undergo a transformative corporate expansion that greatly magnified its position as one of the largest and most monopolistic of the corporate tellers of fairy tale. Its production of *Beauty and the Beast* marked a noticeable departure from its earlier fairy tales, and it emerged within a number of converging developments in the histories of gender politics and theory in the early 1990s. Second wave feminism was approaching, if not an end,

---

6 A note on the text: whereas some writers (such as Joosen, for instance) distinguish ‘traditional’ or ‘canonical’ versions from contemporary retellings of fairy tales, I have elected to refer to ‘historical’ versions. This is partly suggested by Sage’s comments, and also to avoid ascribing tradition or canonicity to the specific versions of fairy tales discussed hereafter.

an abatement, and mutating into third-wave feminism, and debate about post-feminism was gathering strength; queer theory was on the rise as a source of gender and cultural criticism; masculinity studies and men's movement politics also underwent resurgence, especially in the so-called mythopoetic reaches. These events are referenced in the first and middle sections of the book. While events in gender, media and folklore history cannot simply or specifically be connected, I argue that the some implications have converged in today's wonder cinema, which is discussed in the final section of the book.<sup>7</sup>

While many scholars of fairy tale urge swerving away from Disney to disrupt its power (see, for instance, Zipes 1995; 2011; Greenhill and Rudy 2014; Zipes et al., 2015), feminist analysis of Disney media has proven in the long run to have been judicious given the capital investment in these entertainments in the information age. As Belle and Elsa show, too, no matter how committed or trenchant the feminist critique of Disney, it is not a beanstalk that will bring down the giant; in fact, not only has feminism not diminished Disney, the giant grows richer on the work of feminism. It has responded and empowered its aura by shoring up its 'princess-industrial complex' (Hay and Baxter 2014, 329), and its corporate peers have also ventured into comparable immortal franchises. This scenario is reminiscent again of the prophetic Baudrillard, who, in one of his more anxious polemics, declared: 'It is Dracula against Snow White [...] We have a good idea who is going to suck the other's blood once their glass coffins are broken open' (1994, 47). To date, Disney has not done Dracula, although some of its villains resemble vampires. But any number of its competitors have capitalised various supernatural and enchanted characters, vampires, werewolves, zombies and fairies in films and allied media.

A playful response to this scenario is offered in the book in the linking of the sections through an extended ficto-critical retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*, in which the heroine, Belle, plays a part (that is, Belle herself, not the character played by Emma Watson). The manner in which this narrative is staged in the book is influenced by Bacchilega's model of the fairy-tale web, in which tales are 'experienced as intertextual, multivocal and transmedial cultural practices' (27). The fairy tale web is a

---

7 In the realm of fairy tale scholarship, too, the early 1990s, as Bacchilega (2013) points out, saw publication of some key works of feminist fairy tale studies, including Angela Carter's edited collections of *The Virago Book of Fairy Tale* (1990 and 1993), and Marina Warner's now classic work, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (Warner 1994).

methodological field, of practices of reading and writing, and a platform in her project to decolonise and provincialise global wonder narratives in all forms of media. Its conceptual influences are derived from Manuel Castells idea of the 'network society', Pierre Bourdieu's notion of field, and Haase's theory of fairy-tale hypertextuality, and Cathy-Lynn Preston's characterisation of how 'in postmodernity, the "stuff" of fairy tales exist as fragments' in 'nebulous' forms of 'cultural knowledge' (2004, 210). The fairy tale web represents the 'explosion of fairy tale information *and* (critical) creativity' that 'operates within the logic and interests of capitalism and globalisation but is not "reducible"' to these interests (Bacchilega 14).

While my overall aim is not identical with Bacchilega's project, the fairy tale web models the hyperreal space in which wonder, feminist theory, sexual politics and corporate media converge. This is fairy tale in its optative mode, where the potential for subversion and adaptation is applied to theory and fiction. In the first part of the book, therefore, *Beauty and the Beast* is treated as a threshold text in the history of gender and wonder cinema in the 1990s, and one that heralded the onset of post-feminist mass culture. 'Beauty and the Beast' is the 'fairy tale interrupted' in the first chapter, which concerns the history of the tale and its adaptation from the salon tales of pre-Revolutionary France, namely Mme de Beaumont's '*La Belle et la Bête*' (first published in 1756), which, in turn, was an adaptation of an earlier version by Mme de Villeneuve (1740). Both were modernisations of the classical tale of 'Cupid and Psyche' (Hearne 1991; Korneeva 2014). The chapter concerns the remodelling, by Disney, of the story whereby it becomes Beast's story, in which the heroine, Belle, is positioned as a kind of spectator on his transformation.

A flagship during the period of Disney's corporate expansion in the 1990s, in Chapter 2 the production is seen to shadow the corporate transition and aspirations of Disney at the time. The implications are drawn towards the rewriting of Belle and Beast's story, the relative invisibility of Beast's 'true' identity as the prince; and the adaptation of the mythic rose in the fairy tale as a symbol of Beast's masculinity in contrast to its historical association with female sexuality in literary history. In Chapter 3, Beast's story is placed within the debates of the 1990s regarding the so-called crisis of masculinity, a phenomenon already drawn into the fairy tale web through the activities of the mythopoetic men's movement, and the beast tale at its centre, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (Bly 1992). This movement, and its fractious relationship to feminism, is considered as

surrounding context to Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Michael Kimmel suggests that the mythopoetic men's movement harboured contradictory fears that feminism was either all about men, or not about men at all (2010). I suggest how this notion also emerges in *Beauty and the Beast*.

The implications for Belle, the heroine, are discussed in Chapter 4 (a redux of an earlier publication, Craven 2002) in which the ficto-critical tale of her escape from Disney gains momentum. Belle escapes to feminism and the women's movement in the company of her counterparts in myth and fairy tale: Beauty of the salon tale; Psyche, the classical goddess. She also meets up with Snow White, her relative (through their common ancestor, Psyche) and fellow Disney heroine, and who also figures in a key work of second wave feminism, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (Gilbert and Gubar 1979). This opens the way for discussion of feminism, masculinity and post-feminism in the next section, 'Arcade', which, in turn, sets the scene for Belle's re-entry into contemporary post-feminist wonder in the final section of the book.

## Arcade/Arcadia

It is in the middle chapters of the book that the questions about second wave feminism and fairy tale are most directly canvassed. These chapters veer away from wonder cinema but the connections are sustained through Belle's filtering of 'feminism' in corporate wonder. In progressing Belle's story of escape from Disney, in Chapter 5, she visits the feminist debates about the post-feminism she is seen to have heralded; and, in Chapter 6, about feminism and masculinity. In Chapters 7 and 8, she gains more perspective on feminist uses of myth and fairy tale. In order to situate Belle's moves, first, some framing of the discussion of post-feminism and feminism is warranted.

In Chapter 5 I pick out a strand in feminist debates and commentary about post-feminism since the early 1990s, which pit, at least notionally, a sense of a receding second wave, and an emerging third wave, of feminism. This third wave has for some time been seen as giving way to another (Dux and Simic 2008) (although it is only passingly mentioned in this book). The discussion is also referenced to the trends in wonder cinema, such

that the strand of debate is roughly pegged to the appearance of *Beauty and the Beast* (in 1991) and the appearance of *Enchanted* (in 2007), which marked a revival of Disney's princess heroines (see Chapter 4). Constructing feminism in 'waves', or determining its influences through the trends in popular culture, is, nevertheless, a questionable practice (see Conclusion). The notion of a paradigm shift between second and third waves poses a deceptively linear generational model, and disguises complexity and diversity in feminist thought. It is sometimes equated with a 'tension' between a "'modern"' second wave and a "'postmodern"' third wave that is 'irreconcilable' and 'linked to feminism's "'anachronism"' or "'death"' (Lam 2015, 486). The discussion of second and third waves of feminism is therefore premised on the retelling of Belle's story, and in synchronicity with the evidence of post-feminism in the deluge of wonder cinema.

Post-feminist cultural discourse, apart from the pastness of feminism, is said to celebrate women's agency and consumption, and entails a privatised and individualised frame of reference (Tasker and Negra 2005; 2007; Butler 2013). It is associated with neo-liberalism and the related ideologies of 'consumer citizenship, personal responsibility and individual empowerment' (Butler 2013, 41). Its rhetorics are somewhat interchangeable with those of girlpower, and third-wave feminism; and with the latter is shared interest in the 'feminism/femininity dialectic' (42). The 'girling of [adult] femininity' is 'characteristic' of post-feminist representations (Tasker and Negra 2005, 109). Slippage with third-wave feminism has led some to contend for post-feminism as a form of political subjectivity (Genz 2009; 2015; Genz and Brabon 2009). More recently, this theory of post-feminism as politics has been applied to celebrity performance of 'successful femininity' (Genz 2015; Favara 2015). In Chapter 5, with a trace of wonder from 'The Frog and the Princess', some implications from the debate about post-feminism are rendered towards perspectives on feminism and masculinity.

However, within these debates, post- and third-wave feminist subjectivities, male and female, are often organised around notions of the 'old' and the 'new'. Third-wave-feminism is seen, for instance, as a 'space' to 'cultivate individual feminist identities without all the strident negativity of "old school" feminist activism' (Butler 2013, 42). The post-feminist man, a narcissist, wounded by feminism, is also afflicted by the stigma of 'old', 'traditional' masculinity (Genz and Brabon 2009). While not wishing to reify this old/new divide, and as the relationship between feminism

and masculinity is in question for Belle, the following two chapters visit a rather pastiche space, the Arcade of Feminism, to bring a gaze to this old 'strident' practice, and to contest its 'wounding' reputation.

Yet framing old 'feminism' holds nigh as many challenges as framing 'wonder' or 'fairy tale', or 'post-feminism'. Whether second wave feminism is seen as 'resurgence' of the first wave (Siegel 2007; Messner, Greenberg and Peretz 2015), or as a discreet movement that took shape in ephemeral and disparate forms in a variety of national settings from the 1960s until the 1980s, it is uniquely defined by its mass international character. Wherever it flourished, the second wave of feminism was situated historically in the era of global mass media and mass education, so it was always going to be big. It is part of its changing character today, and the transformation of the political frameworks and the technologies that conduct its global reach, that its interests are arguably as niche as they are transnational.

Notwithstanding this, feminist theory of gender in the second wave, as Rosi Braidotti says, has been criticised for its 'theoretical inadequacy and for its politically amorphous and unfocused nature' (141).<sup>8</sup> Insofar as the relationship of feminism to fairy tale is in question in this book, rather than amorphous, it is fairly concentrated, thanks largely to the influence of recent fairy tale scholarship. The approach to 'old feminism' is therefore guided by recent work on the intertextuality of the postmodern fairy tale. Joosen has convincingly shown how fairy-tale criticism and fairy-tale retellings form an intertextual network and are therefore an 'intertextual dialogue in the truest sense' (2–3), and how this occurs across cultures and industries (Joosen's work is exemplary as she compares versions in English, German and Dutch). Intertextual analysis also supports the discussion of feminism and masculinity.

Indeed, it is partly my aim to suggest that second and third wave feminisms, such as they might be differentiated, exhibit differing views of masculinity. If the aim of third wave feminisms is to 'eradicate sexism' (Dux and Simic 7), or to uphold the 'belief' that 'differences between men and women' should not lead to differences in 'social, economic or political power' (Maguire 2008, 7), then these compare starkly to some second

---

8 Braidotti states this in alluding to a 'crisis' in the notion of gender in feminism in the 1990s, and she makes a case for the continuing relevance of sexual difference theory, and against the assumption, either literally or politically, of equivalence or symmetry between the sexes (see 141–150).

wave formulations that explicitly pose the notion of woman as subject to oppressions induced by men and masculinity. For instance, Annette Kuhn defines feminism as the ‘political’ action of analysis of ‘the social/historical position of women as subordinated [...] within dominant modes of production’ or ‘patriarchy’ or ‘male domination’ (1994, 4). In some of the fiercer feminisms of the second wave, feminism is a ‘politics of confrontation – rebellion against the power of men in public and private’ (Dworkin 1989, 325). Feminists’ explicit contesting of masculinity is sometimes seen as hostile to or disinterested in masculinity, or as having created essentialist myths of masculinity. In extreme characterisations, feminism is slated as ‘man hate’ (Friedan 1984); or is stereotyped by unaffiliated interests as ‘hat[ing] men’ (cited in Dux and Simic 35). Kimmel, as noted earlier, (although not referring to these specific instances) argues that this tendency is an effect of media reception of feminism combined with social fears of feminism, and has the effect of creating the illusion that feminism is in some way about ‘hating men’ (2010, 217) (see Chapter 3).

In Chapter 6, ‘Patriarchy Dreaming’, some second-wave theory of patriarchy is discussed with an eye to the implied or explicit ideas about masculinity, which are shown to be varied. The dominant feminisms – the liberal, radical, socialist and Marxist – are highlighted as projecting different ideas about masculinity. The unifying constructions of ‘patriarchy’, and its correlative, the ‘sex/gender system’, became unstable paradigms, as the second wave of feminism approached its putative end. In Belle’s fictional sojourn in the Arcade, this inspires some retelling from threads of theory of patriarchy, in ‘The Traffic in Women’ (Rubin 1997/1975), *The Sexual Contract* (Pateman 1989), and *Men in Feminism* (Jardine and Smith 1987). A connection to the fairy tale web emerges in Snow White’s appearance among the radical feminists in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, a work that also brings in the Sphinx and her part in the myth of Oedipus. How this myth matters to Belle in thinking about feminism, masculinity and wonder cinema, unfolds through the next chapters.

Belle’s interests in myth and fairy tale, in Chapter 7, are addressed to the criticisms made of radical-feminist uses of fairy tale early in the second wave, namely their ‘lack of knowledge about [...] fairy tales’ (Joosen 92), or ‘oblivious[ness] to the complexities’ or the ‘historical development of the genre, and the challenges of fairy-tale textuality’ (Haase ix–x). These views are questioned by considering the polemical context and style of the feminist works in question, and the qualitatively different views of masculinity

expressed in the works. Further context for the uses of fairy tale paratexts in radical polemics, is suggested with reference to uses of fairy tale, and the architecture of myth in some foregoing touchstone works of feminism, namely, *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir 1988/1953), *The Dialectic of Sex* (Firesstone 1979/1971), and *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan 1984/1963) (which refers not to fairy tale but to other fictions of femininity). Into the web, in Chapter 8, and as a coda to the previous chapters in 'Arcade', theoretical encounters with Sigmund Freud in the work of Luce Irigaray (1985a/b), and adaptations of Oedipus and the Sphinx by Teresa de Lauretis (1984) and Barbara Creed (1993) reveal further perspectives on masculinity, myth and feminism. For Belle, there are new leads for the following chapters, pertaining to princesses and wonder cinema.

While in these sections, I allude to 'feminism' and the 'women's movement' somewhat interchangeably, the analyses are of theoretical texts and in the conviction that, aside from its ephemeral movement politics, feminism is above all else, a literature in which its many wisdoms are visible for discussion and analysis. Even so, the selection of texts is deliberately limited and with the – potentially contentious aim – of highlighting intertextuality with fairy tales, especially where this has precedence in second wave feminist writing. I pose these stories of feminism as pre-texts of (post-feminist appropriations) of feminism today, and the retellings as parodies in some sense of the feminist fictions of capitalist heteropatriarchy. Into the mix, are the thoughts of Belle, whose asides and reflections are parodic, yes, and purposeful, as she stands for that invisible subject of feminism and fairy tale, the reading woman, who – with feminist precedent – has been reinvented in post-feminist cultural discourse as a fairy tale heroine.

The blurring of literature and criticism is productive of "paraliterary space", Joosen notes, following Linda Hutcheon, or overlaps with "fictocriticism", which "blur[s] the distinction between theory and fiction" (Flavell qtd in Joosen 43). Perhaps it is too easy to appropriate these terms to suggest that what is offered in these chapters is 'para-feminism'<sup>9</sup> or 'ficto-feminism'. Theory is not beyond parody (Joosen cites instances that are at least questionable for their irony). But the aim is more to suggest how knowledge of (second wave) feminism, including its imagining of masculinity, is comparable to the relationship between fairy tale paratexts and his-

---

9 Not to be confused with Amelia Jones's theory of para-feminism in *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (Routledge, 2006).

torical tales; that is, as intertexts that circulate for consumption by audiences either knowing or ignorant of the foregoing sources. This is not to suggest that the second wave is the definitive 'version' of feminism, any more than the Brothers Grimms' stories are definitive versions of fairy tales (or that the Disney Beast is typical of all beasts in fairy tale). The implications are more for what is elided or adapted in post-feminist wonder, as it is discussed in the final section of the book.

## Aftermath and After-party: Post-feminist Wonder

In Part 3, I turn to the contemporary corporate wonder cinema of the early twenty-first century, looking at fairy-tale films that can be described as post-feminist. 'Aftermath' refers ironically to the presumed pastness of feminism in this discourse, and, less ironically, to the aftermath of Disney's transformation, and the accompanying period of transition in cinema technologies since the 1990s, and the implications for how audiences experience the medium of cinema. This is not simply a McLuhanesque claim about medium as message, but rather to suggest how 'medium' is a set of complex processes through which gender is transmitted. 'After-party' suggests certain revelry in the productions that have emerged, and which signify the putative legacies of all three events, which must be seen contiguously in influence, I argue, in interpreting the wonder cinema of today. Remix occurs at several levels in these productions, in the pastiche narratives and aesthetics, and in the technological and industrial discourses of the productions. Remix is therefore regarded as a process (following Markham 2013), as explained in Chapter 9.

In Belle's story, in this chapter, she is in catch up with the changes in her medium and in Disney entertainments since 1991. The pastiche aesthetics and sexual politics of post-feminist wonder are regarded in the context of renewal of the medium in *Shrek*, and with regard to its place in the Disney-DreamWorks rivalry, which has attracted persistent commentary (Zipes 2012; Bacchilega 2013; Roberts 2014). Gender and medium, I argue, are conflated in the remixed revelry of *Shrek* in its play with form and content that surrounds the anchoring hypermasculinity of its hero, Shrek, and the transformation of its princess, Fiona. In Chapter 10, the convergent

(animated and live-action) productions of *Maleficent* (Stromberg 2014) and *Cinderella* (Branagh 2015) are discussed as retellings by Disney of their earlier animated films from the 1950s, *Cinderella* (Geronimi and Jackson 1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi 1959). In each remake, the spectacle of the heroine's empowerment is conflated with the change in the medium, and this is discussed in the context of the longer history of Disney's movement between animated and live-action wonder.

In Chapter 11, I look beyond Disney to consider live-action adaptations of two heroines of second wave feminism, 'Snow White' and 'Little Red Riding Hood', in productions by Disney's competitors, in: *Mirror, Mirror* (Dhandwar 2011), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (Sanders 2012), and *Red Riding Hood* (Hardwicke 2011). All three films adopt the pastiche conventions popularised in the DreamWorks-Disney dialogue, and exhibit genre hybridity, with action drama in the 'Snow White' films, and a horror-styled thriller in *Red Riding Hood*. These films have attracted comment as (unsuccessfully) channelling feminism (Bacchilega 2013; Short 2015). All model the utopian post-feminist narrative of empowerment of the heroine, within, as I argue, an expanded spectacle of fairy-tale masculinity. A period, the medieval, is the setting for each production, which implies a deeply pre-feminist surround for the supposedly pro-feminist revision of the base tales. Meanwhile, the expanded male roles in the story pose the *raison d'être* for the heroines' empowering challenges, which arise in plots concerning the heroine's inheritance from her father. Whereas empowerment might suggest some legacy of feminism, each film seems to resist or deny attribution of the inheritance to a source that might symbolise or be equated with women or feminism, and more suggest the reinstatement of the heroine's patrilineal entitlement.

Considering these films is not in any way to diminish the significance, and likely wider consumption, of other variants of, 'Snow White' or 'Little Red Riding Hood'; I make no claim that these films are more important than other retellings of the base tales. They are discussed and compared for the relative closeness in time of their production, which also followed on the enormously successful *The Twilight Saga* (Various, 2008–2012) and have connections with its production interests and personnel (see Craven 2017). In spite of regressive sexual politics, these films, and the heroine Bella, have attracted an amount of attention as sources of post-feminist agency, although not shared by all critics. Christine Jarvis puzzles over the appeal of *The Twilight Saga* to young women when '[t]hey have the legacy

of feminism and understand that they should not be defined by their looks' (2014, 105). She acknowledges but implicitly rejects post-feminist interpretations of these films, in resolving that they offer to young women the twin 'satisfaction of resisting normative femininity, combined with all the rewards of submission to it' (113). Post-feminist wonder, by comparison, might seem relatively wholesome, offering a utopian discourse of empowerment and success as attributes of femininity.

This study, however, is not about the uptake by young women, nor does it present a view of the actual legacy of second wave feminism. Neither would I claim that this legacy is measurable or likely to be observed in the profit-driven productions of Disney or any other mass-story tellers; nor is it the project of this book to define the legacy of second wave feminism. Its more limited aim is to reflect and comment on the ways in which feminist ideology is incorporated into these productions within the larger spectacle of the production technologies of corporate wonder.

## Riders in the Web

American feminism has greatly influenced the perceptions of histories of other national women's and men's movements, although it is not uncontested. Wherever its influences originate, feminist knowledge is prone to be commodified and abstracted when referenced in popular media. When the fiction media is sourced in the United States, and has a history of uniquely American cultural politics, as is the case with Disney media, the feminism – if it is implied – is liable to be associated with that national context. Yet regional histories of feminism influence the uptake of ideas in local and national contexts. As an Australian, my perspective is, like many of my kind, derived through a lifetime of exposure to international and domestic media transmitting fairy tale, *and* feminism. Feminism has been implicitly presented as formed in international contexts in which the domestic uptake is experienced as a variation on a global narrative. Nor is international feminism any less imported in some senses than Disney fairy tale or the works of the Brothers Grimm or Charles Perrault or Hans Andersen. The choices of the texts are guided by the international recognisability of the works, and the sense in which these works represent pre-texts of feminism in the global

fairy tale web. This explanation may not adequately justify the choices I have made but may suggest the reasoning, and why, sometimes, a light is shone on an Australian text that suggests a perspective on the international example.

The framing of this story as 'Fairy Tale Interrupted' poses the optative state, or the anticipation, of 'what might be', or 'what comes next' or 'instead of' what is interrupted. It is an allusion to the condition in which fairy-tale retellings proceed upon one another in time, without linearity, and interrupt those before, after and co-temporary. Whatever the tale, it can always be retold. While Disney might prosper on the illusion that it is a feminist, in the narrative in this book, a touch of the marvellous, the 'beloved' Belle – one of the 1990s most influential fictional characters – might manage to escape Disney, and remain a heroine of fairy tale and feminism.