

## **The Refreshing and Turbulent Waters of a Provincial Life: Belle's Washing Machine and Disney's Message to Young Princesses**

When Disney first released *Beauty the and Beast* in 1991, their animated version of Jeanne Marie Le Prince de Beaumont's retold tale, the movie's heroine was hailed as a new kind of Disney princess. Quickly, however, it became apparent that Disney's Belle did not possess choices or futures too radically different than those of her princess predecessors. Belle's choices were to commit her life to the well being of one of three men, her father, the egotistical Gaston, or a literal Beast.

Disney's 2017 live-action remake of *Beauty and the Beast* was a highly anticipated event among those who grew up watching the animated version. With their new live-action version of *Beauty and the Beast* just released this year, Disney attempts to present the Belle character with more independence and agency, going so far as to make her an inventor, a female engineer of sorts. Disney characterizes Belle as intelligent, thoughtful, and clever. One of her main inventions, however, is a washing machine. Belle's washing machine invention, in addition to being a traditional sign of domesticity, symbolizes her role in Disney's tale, representing at once the refreshing benefit she provides for the males in the tale and the turbulence of her own limited life choices.

Examining Disney's live-action Belle through the lens of her washing machine, this paper seeks to examine the ways in which Disney's choice of a washing machine as one of Belle's inventions exemplifies the way in which the girl is characterized throughout the movie and the message that this representation sends to young viewers. Compared to the purposes and actions of a washing machine, Belle's role is to purify, cleanse, and civilize the men in her life while in doing so, her own life is a source of turbulence and agitation to her as she sets about to fulfill the role that Disney assigns her.