

Of Beauties, Beasts, and Rousseau:

*Tracing the Birth of the Domestic Mother
in Enlightenment France*

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Abstract

In the opening decades of the eighteenth century, French women exercised considerable autonomy through the salon culture of the Enlightenment. By the end of the Enlightenment, however, their prescribed role was restricted to wives and mothers who tended to the cares of their households. This thesis explores the nature of this transition from one notion of femininity to another and identifies the causes through analyses of literary and philosophical texts written by men and women.

During the Enlightenment, two female authors published versions of the same tale, *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*). The 1740 original by Gabrielle-Susanne de Villeneuve is long, complicated, and imaginative; the sixteen-page 1756 revision by Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont simplified the earlier tale. In particular, Leprince de Beaumont's text made significant changes to Villeneuve's portrayals of femininity and offered a clear didactic message to readers. In this thesis, I compare the two versions of *La Belle et la Bête* in order to trace and explain the Enlightenment shift from autonomous to domestic and maternal models of femininity.

I situate the fairytales in a broader literary and philosophical context concerning debates about gender roles and women's education. The thesis analyzes the impact of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1758 *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* and his 1762 *Emile ou de l'éducation* in combination with late eighteenth-century educational treatises and articles from Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. Historians have traditionally cited Rousseau's two texts as proof that Rousseau instigated the trend towards domesticity as a result of his anti-feminist anxieties. In my thesis, I place Rousseau's works in their historical context in order to extricate them from the debates of postmodernist and feminist critics. When viewed through the lens of his contemporaries, Rousseau's arguments appear more ambiguous than is often thought. I argue that Rousseau advocated domestic femininity not only because he was anxious about gender hierarchies but also because he thought that doing so would foster virtue in society.

Exploring the changes that Leprince de Beaumont made to the original version of *La Belle et la Bête* and using Rousseau to think about why her tale overshadowed the more daring one by Villeneuve sheds light on a key shift in the history of attitudes toward men, women, and family. This shift continues to influence our own assumptions as demonstrated by Disney's choice of Beaumont's didactic version as the basis of the script for its popular film, *Beauty and the Beast*.

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INTRODUCTION

FROM SALONNIÈRE TO MÈRE: FEMININITY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
FRANCE

Comment, répondit [Belle] à son père, me déterminer à choisir un mari avec lequel je ne pourrai m'entretenir, et dont la figure ne sera pas réparée par une conversation amusante ? Nul objet pour me distraire et me dissiper de ce fâcheux commerce ! N'avoir pas la douceur d'en être quelquefois éloignée, borner tout mon plaisir à cinq ou six questions qui regarderont mon appétit et ma santé, voir finir cet entretien bizarre par un bonsoir, la Belle, refrain que mes perroquets pouvoit de faire un pareil établissement, et j'aime mieux mourir tout d'un coup, que de mourir tous les jours de peur, de chagrin, de dégoût et d'ennui. Rien ne parle en sa faveur, sinon l'attention que cette Bête a de me faire une courte visite, et de ne se présenter devant moi que toutes les vingt-quatre heures. Est-ce assez pour inspirer de l'amour? ¹

This quotation, from Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve's 1740 tale *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*), reflects Belle's qualms about marrying the Beast—qualms which stem from her desire to place her own happiness first. Villeneuve's *La Belle et la Bête* comprised 344 pages of her published volume of adult-oriented *contes de fées* (fairy tales), *La Jeune Américaine et les Contes marins*.² In this tale, Villeneuve depicts a notion of femininity that celebrates strong and independent women. Twenty years later, *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated a different type of femininity, one where women were to sacrifice their independence and personal happiness in order to fulfill their prescribed role as mothers and wives. Rousseau's view on women rapidly gained

¹ Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, *La Belle et La Bête*, in *La jeune américaine et les contes marins: (la belle et la bête). Les belles solitaires. [Suivi de], Magasin des enfants: (la belle et la bête)*, ed. Elisa Biancardi (Paris: Champion, 2008), 143. Translation: "How responds [Belle] to her father can I decide to choose a husband with whom I can't hold a conversation, and whose ugliness isn't even made up for by lively discussion? Nothing to distract me and save me from the awful exchanges [I've had with him]! Not to have the pleasure of getting away from the limited five or six questions [he asks me] about my appetite and my health, finishing the bizarre interview with a "Goodnight, Belle," a conversation that parrots could hold equally well? And I would rather die suddenly than die little by little every day from...disgust and ennui. Nothing can speak in his favor, unless you count the courtesy that the Beast paid me by allowing me this short visit [home], and by not staying by my side every hour of the day. Is this enough to inspire love?"

² Vicki Mistacco, *Les Femmes et la tradition littéraire: Les Femmes et la tradition littéraire : Anthologie du Moyen Age à nos jours, Première Partie : XIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2006), 386.

French society's approval; within half a century the autonomous, strong, and self-promoting woman depicted in Villeneuve's tale had vanished. In her place was the docile, virtuous and nurturing mother whose proper function rested in her own home. One is struck by the abrupt shift in views over the space of only two decades. Why did Rousseau garner such a devoted following? Equally important, can we attribute the Enlightenment's shift in notions of femininity to something more than Rousseau's persuasive rhetoric?

In 1756, sixteen years after the original publication of Villeneuve's *La Belle et la Bête*, a revision of the tale came out, this time written by Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont as part of a series of pedagogical tales called *Le Magasin des Enfants*. This newer version of *La Belle et la Bête*, reduced to sixteen pages, simplified the plot and language of the original, transforming the tale from a story for adults who attended the eighteenth-century *salons* to a moralizing *conte* catered toward teaching propriety to young girls. Most intriguingly, it also departed from Villeneuve's vision for independent and strong women and inserted elements of a different view. This different view lines up with that which Rousseau expressed two years later in his 1758 *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* and again in his 1762 *Emile, ou de l'éducation*. Leprince de Beaumont's tale also surpassed Villeneuve's in popularity—so much so, in fact, that today Villeneuve's version has fallen into obscurity, while Leprince de Beaumont receives credit as the original author of this oft-retranslated and reproduced story.³ These two

³ Leprince de Beaumont's tale, as part of *Le Magasin des Enfants*, went through at least 130 French editions between 1756 and 1887 (Vicki Mistacco, *Les Femmes et la tradition littéraire: Anthologie du Moyen Âge à nos jours, Première partie: XI^e à XII^e siècles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 369), in addition to numerous translations into different languages. During the twentieth century, two films entitled *La Belle et la Bête/Beauty and the Beast* saw great success—one by Jean Cocteau in 1946, the other by Disney in 1991. Both accredit Leprince de Beaumont as the original author of the tale, and both movies' plots are adapted from her 1756 tale.

versions of *La Belle et la Bête*, written within two decades of one another, allow us to trace the shift toward specific, gendered notions of identity that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century and which Rousseau's works epitomize. In this thesis, I use *La Belle et la Bête* alongside Rousseau's texts and eighteenth-century educational manuals to explore why the shift toward a domestic femininity occurred.

My question fits into a broader study of the Enlightenment's "woman question": where do women fit into the order of society? This query emerged as a result of Jürgen Habermas' influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated into English in 1989.⁴ Habermas articulated for the first time the notion that gendered public and private spheres emerged in the early modern period. His model presents the public sphere as a precursor to democratic politics. Since the translation of Habermas' theory, the concept of public and private spheres has dominated early modern European studies, and historians have applied his ideas to their research to try to understand how modern political discourse emerged out of the Enlightenment.

Habermas' theory is relevant to the study of gender and women's history and therefore to my interests here because it presents a scenario in which the seventeenth-century *salon* and its female hosts, the *salonnières*, played a vital role in the construction of individual subjectivities. He, however, envisioned only men taking part in the political discourse that occurred with the public convergence of these individual subjectivities.⁵

For Habermas, therefore, if women were involved at all in the creation of subjectivity, it

⁴ Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burgher. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.

⁵ For more extensive analysis and critique of Habermas' male-only public sphere, see Chapter 1 of Dena Goodman's *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), and Joan Landes' *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

took place in the privacy of their homes—men were the ones to bring these subjectivities together to create the politically-charged public sphere. Only men, therefore, acquired political sovereignty. The gendered dynamic of feminized private and masculine public spaces is something that historians, following Habermas' lead, have since explored extensively. As a result of this tremendous body of research, women's and gender historians often view the birth of democracy as a paradox because, while democracy is based upon freedom and equality, from its conception it excluded women from politics.

Historians agree that the *salon* played a key role in establishing women's autonomy in early Enlightenment France. As Steven Kale summarizes in "Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons," the *salon* grew out of the aristocratic, Court-centric life of the seventeenth century, where it originally served a more frivolous, social purpose rather than an intellectual one.⁶ These coed gatherings, however frivolous at the surface, generated conversations about art and literature, thus spawning a culture where individuals became aware of their subjective identities. Women in the seventeenth-century salons, therefore, reigned over the dominion of cultural taste. As participants in *salon* culture, women formed autonomous identities as critics who governed the tastes and inclinations of those around them.⁷

I mentioned previously that Habermas noted the importance of *salons* in constructing subjectivity, but that he saw their importance diminishing during the Enlightenment as political discussion moved outside of the home to coffee houses and

⁶ Steven Kale. "Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter, 2002), pp. 115-148.

⁷ See Faith E. Beasley, *Salons, History, and the Creation of Seventeenth-Century France: Mastering Memory* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006) for a study of women's role as literary critics in the seventeenth century.

other public spaces. Other scholars have since argued, however, that the *salon*'s function as a haven of literary discourse contributed much to the political thought developed in the eighteenth-century's public sphere. Most notably, Dena Goodman asserts in *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* that in Enlightenment *salons*, serious political discourse emerged from the literary conversations that took place between the men and women who frequented them. These *salonnières* and *salon-goers* were vital contributors to the way *philosophes* thought about society, making the feminine *salon* space something much more public than Habermas acknowledged in his vision of Enlightenment culture. Goodman identifies a tension in the eighteenth century, one characterized by "the *recognition* of a need for women in Enlightenment cultural practice and discomfort with that recognition." This tension, she claims, was resolved in the 1780s by "the decentering and displacement of women by men in new institutions of intellectual sociability" that replaced salons.⁸ Goodman portrays the relegation of women to the domestic sphere, therefore, as a revolt against the contributions that women made to Enlightenment thought through their roles as *salonnières* and producers and readers of literature. Like Goodman, several other scholars have emphasized that men's anxieties about early eighteenth-century women's autonomy and power narrowed the definition of femininity and placed women into the domestic sphere by the French Revolution of 1789.

Lieselotte Steinbrügge explores the Enlightenment debate about the natural state of women and the role they should play in society through the viewpoints of various *philosophes* including Rousseau. Her book, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment* asserts that by the end of the eighteenth century, French women

⁸ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 9.

had been pushed out of the public sphere as a direct result of Rousseau's works.

According to Rousseau, women should not participate in the public realm of politics because "it is not woman's role to think in abstract principles; her place, instead, is in the realm of the tangible [i.e., the domestic sphere of motherhood]."⁹ Several other historians researching Rousseau's impact on French thought have, by showing how he promoted and justified a mothering, domestic view of femininity, accused him of being the first modern misogynist. Madelyn Gutwirth's *The Twilight of the Goddesses* in particular portrays Rousseau as someone who "denounces female self-assurance as if it were a plague of the entire female sex's invention to diminish men."¹⁰

Recent research has questioned these claims about Rousseau. In *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France*, Jennifer Popiel offers an alternative account of Rousseau's attitudes on women.¹¹ Instead of denouncing Rousseau as a misogynist, we should consider his works in the context of a broader movement that distinguished the eighteenth century, where the goal was fostering a virtuous society. Popiel's perspective sheds light on our understanding of the transition to domestic femininity and complicates the more traditional approach to studying the formation of gendered public and private spaces. The shift toward a new femininity that we see evidence of in Leprince de Beaumont's 1756 version can be traced to something more than simply anxieties about the ambiguities inherent in earlier eighteenth-century notions of gender. While these anxieties caused men to push for a new, rigid formation of

⁹ Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Pamela E. Selwnn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 56-57.

¹⁰ Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 126.

¹¹ Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008).

domestic femininity, other justifications provided even more impetus for men *and* women to adhere to the new model. Most importantly, the *philosophes*' insistence on producing virtuous societies encouraged this new femininity and provided justifications for it that convinced even women to adhere to their newly assigned roles as private mothers and wives as opposed to autonomous, public individuals.

WHY LOOK AT LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE?

Interestingly, at the same time as the *salon* developed into an important site of female subjectivity during the seventeenth century, the fairy tale emerged as a cultural phenomenon, exploding in popularity among the literate populations who attended the *salons*. Originally aimed at adult audiences, the fairy tale reflected the social circumstances of its time, as Raymonde Robert shows us in his *Le conte de fées littéraire en France*.¹² In *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, Jack Zipes explains that fairy tales provide insight into concurrent social norms and beliefs.¹³ *Contes de fées* made up a significant part of the literature discussed in *salons* during the seventeenth century and into the Enlightenment, which suggests that they contributed to the generation of individual subjectivity and collective opinions that occurred in *salon* culture. Fairy tales therefore acted not only as mirrors of the society around them but as modes for the production of social norms.¹⁴ Later in the century, when the audience

¹² Raymonde Robert, ed. *Le conte des fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVII^e siècle à la fin du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris : Honoré Champion, 2002).

¹³ Jack Zipes. *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁴ For more in-depth accounts of the *conte de fée* and its origins, see Jacques Barchilon, *Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790* (Paris : Honoré Champion, 1975) ; Élisabeth Biancardi, ed. *La jeune américaine et les contes marins (la belle et la bête). Les belles solitaires [Suivi de], Magasin des enfants: (la belle et la bête)*(Paris: Champion, 2008) ; and Robert Raymonde, ed. *Le conte des fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVII^e siècle à la fin du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris : Honoré Champion, 2002).

switched from adults to children, fairy tales' didactic tendency intensified and they became part of a trend toward pedagogical literature that coincided with the emergence of the domestic model of femininity. Thus, even though Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's versions catered to different audiences—adults and children, respectively—, both contribute to our understanding of how French society viewed women during the eighteenth century. In particular, these two versions of the same tale will help us to see how views on women's role in society started to change in the period of time between 1740 and 1756.

Born in 1685 to noble parents in Paris, Gabrielle-Susanne Barbot married Jean-Baptiste Gaalon de Villeneuve, a young, aristocratic lieutenant general, in 1706. Within the year, however, Gabrielle-Susanne filed for the equivalent of a modern-day divorce, saying that her husband's penchant for gambling and his poor financial management had led them to ruin. She never remarried, but instead went on to live with Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, a dramatist who became Voltaire's rival after Crébillon's success at the Court of Louis XV. It is unclear what her exact role at Crébillon's estate was, but it appears that she worked for him as his assistant while at the same time working on her own writing. Under Crébillon's tutelage, Villeneuve published two series of fairy tales, the first of which, published in 1740 under the title *La Jeune Américaine et les contes marins*, included the lengthy *La Belle et la Bête*. Villeneuve went on to write a total of several published works, and became well-known enough to be referenced several times by Voltaire himself, as well as by the prominent female author Françoise de Graffigny. The fact that such high-profile Enlightenment individuals read and critiqued Villeneuve's stories tells us that her works had a presence in some of France's most prestigious literary circles.

Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont, in need of financial stability after a failed marriage where she had been physically abused, became involved in education first as a governess and French tutor for the daughters and granddaughters of several English earls; during this time, she started to write and publish educational treatises. Soon, by means of her work as governess and author of pedagogical literature, she won connections with some of the most prestigious aristocrats in London. Through friendships with the likes of Sophia Carteret, wife of William Earl of Sherburne, and Lady Montagu, Leprince de Beaumont gained considerable fame and prestige in both England and France. When she published *Les Magasins des Enfants* in 1756, she already had a considerably large following worldwide.¹⁵

Leprince de Beaumont's reputation as an "expert" in child-rearing is most intriguing when one compares the popularity of her version of *La Belle et la Bête* with Villeneuve's. By all accounts, Leprince de Beaumont's simplified version of Villeneuve's *conte* virtually eliminated Villeneuve's tale from public awareness. Jack Zipes credits the supplanting of Villeneuve's version by Leprince de Beaumont's to the fact that the 1756 version was simpler, shorter, and therefore easier to replicate and translate; according to Zipes, this second *La Belle et la Bête* is "perhaps the most famous [fairy tale] in the world."¹⁶ By looking more in depth at the changes that Leprince de Beaumont makes to the femininity in Villeneuve's tale, however, it becomes apparent that her revision consists of something more than a simplification.

Her tale departs from Villeneuve's to promote a model for marriage where the woman is domestic and maternal, which is interesting considering how Leprince de Beaumont worked independently as a governess and writer and therefore was something

¹⁵ Biancardi, ed. *La jeune américaine*, 901.

¹⁶ Jack Zipes, trans. *Beauty and the Beast and Other Classic French Fairy Tales* (New York: Penguin Group, 1989), 231-232.

of an autonomous woman in her own right. In order to explore this seeming paradox, and to explain why the second version of *La Belle et la Bête* garnered unequivocal success over the original, this thesis seeks to explore both tales' depictions of gender and to place them within a broader historical context. I start with masculinity in order to see its relationship to femininity. After subsequently analyzing the tales' portrayals of femininity, I turn my analysis to Rousseau and his contemporaries, who advocated rigid gender prescriptions as part of an overarching goal of fostering virtue. Together, these varied analyses will help to form a picture of the late Enlightenment's movement toward a model of femininity where a woman's role was purely a domestic and mothering one.

SECTION I: MEN

L'HOMME SENSIBLE/COMPANION-HUSBAND: MASCULINITY IN LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE

In order to understand the transition to a domestic model of femininity, we should first explore notions of masculinity that the authors portrayed in their *contes*. As we shall see, by the time Villeneuve wrote the first version of *La Belle et la Bête* in 1740, her depictions of masculinity had shifted away from the stern patriarchy of previous eras to a sensitive, caring, and concerned head-of-household, epitomized by the *homme sensible*. This *homme sensible* or “man of feeling,” as described by Dror Wahrman in *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, “eschew[ed] manly power, manly pursuits (such as commerce and money-making), and manly sexuality (he never approach[ed] the women he love[d]), and assum[ed] instead

the womanly qualities of exquisite emotions and intense susceptibility.”¹⁷ Leprince de Beaumont wrote her version of Villeneuve’s tale sixteen years later, maintaining Villeneuve’s depictions of the *homme sensible*, but making significant changes to the tale’s representations of femininity. Thinking about why Leprince de Beaumont chose to rewrite *La Belle et la Bête* in this way sheds light on the transition from the autonomous woman of the early Enlightenment to the late eighteenth century’s domestic mother. As we examine the elements of masculinity portrayed in the two tales, we see that the new domestic and maternal femininity that emerged might have been a reaction to anxieties over the new masculinity characteristic to the eighteenth century.

During the Enlightenment, an increased interest in the welfare of the state augmented awareness among the more educated classes about the effects of individual relationships within society. Publications dealing with issues of human “vice” and “virtue” that emerged and became popular often stressed the impact of individuals on the civilizations in which they lived, and vice versa.¹⁸ The links made between individuals and the society around them fostered discussions of how to ensure virtue on a personal and private level as well as a collective and public level. The redefining of morality and honor that transpired from these discussions of virtue created new ideas about masculinity as illustrated in the eighteenth century’s representations of fathers and husbands.

One prominent *salonnière* and author, Anne Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, contributed to early eighteenth-century skepticism of traditional patriarchy and encouraged the creation of a more sensitive, relationship-oriented

¹⁷ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 38.

¹⁸ See Bernard Mandeville’s 1723 *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vice, Public Virtue* for one example.

masculinity. In a 1728 book written for her son that was hugely popular throughout France, Lambert advises him:

*Les bons cœurs sentent l'obligation de faire du bien, plus qu'on ne sent les autres besoins de la vie...L'honnêteté consiste à se dépouiller de ses droits & à respecter ceux des autres. Si vous voulez être heureux tout seul, vous ne le ferez jamais.*¹⁹

Here, she wants to make sure that her son realizes that his honor is contingent upon finding happiness through relationships with others—especially *respectful* relationships. This ideal was central to the new masculinity that appeared in the Enlightenment and one sees evidence of it in both versions of *La Belle et la Bête*.

Along with this increased interest in interpersonal relationships, one of the most significant changes in family life during the Enlightenment occurred with the reformulation of pleasure to give it positive connotations. Marrying for the purpose of mutual satisfaction and enjoyment became more commonplace, and relationships based on friendship and love started to override those made for economic or political purposes. Materializing as part of a series of social pressures to produce a virtuous society, the new ideal father of the eighteenth century incorporated love, emotion, and sensitivity into his relationships with family members.²⁰ The new understanding of the individual and ideas about how individuals fit into the broader society around them led to increased concern in Enlightenment France about social interactions and how they might affect individuals' formations. This awareness engendered the notion that male heads-of-households should

¹⁹ Anne Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, 1647-1733. *Avis d'une Mère à son fils et à sa fille* (Paris : Chez Etienne Ganeau, ...M.DCC.XXVIII [1728]), 36 ; 52. Translation: "Good hearts feel the obligation to do good [for others], more than any of the other desires in life...Honor consists of scrutinizing one's own rights and respecting those of others. If you want to be happy all alone, you never will be."

²⁰ Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 528.

be kind and loving, not dominating or repressive.²¹ They needed to work in partnership with their wives to help foster individuals' emotional development within the walls of their homes, as one entry in D'Alembert and Diderot's famous *Encyclopédie* describes:

*L'Être suprême ayant jugé qu'il n'était pas bon que l'homme fût seul, lui a inspiré le désir de se joindre en société très-étroite avec une compagne, et cette société se forme par un accord volontaire entre les parties. Comme cette société a pour but principal la procréation et la conservation des enfants qui naîtront, elle exige que le père et la mère consacrent tous leurs soins à nourrir et à bien élever ces gages de leur amour, jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient en état de s'entretenir et de se conduire eux-mêmes.*²²

Here, Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt depicts a model of marriage where both husband and wife choose to marry one another, indicating a shift from earlier paternalistic views of marriage where women played little or no part in the decision to marry. Equally important, the partnership depicted in this encyclopedia entry is based on a mutual understanding that parents should participate in their children's formations as individuals, "taking every care to nourish and raise [their children] well." In another entry in the *Encyclopédie*, also written by Jaucourt, good and happy marriage forms the basis of a healthy family. In this description, the fathers act as « amis » and « tuteurs pour ceux qui ne sont pas encore au monde » and help foster the creation of « bonnes mœurs » in society.²³ In both Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's versions of *La Belle et la Bête*, Belle's father represents the new, loving father of the Enlightenment who invests

²¹ For a more in-depth analysis of the eighteenth-century's caring, considerate father figure and its connection to formation of individuals, see Chapter 2, "The Rise and Fall of the Good Father," in Lynn Hunt's book: *Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

²² Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, « Femme [Droit nat.], » dans : Denis Diderot et Jean le Rond d'Alembert, eds. *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société des Gens de lettres* (Paris : 1751-1772) [database online] ; available from ARTFL. Translation: "The Supreme Being having judged that it was not good for man to be alone, inspired in him the desire to join himself in perfect union with a female companion, and this union would be formed by a voluntary agreement between the parties. As this union has, at its principal goals, procreation and the protection of the children born to it, it is vital for the father and the mother to consecrate themselves completely, taking every care to nourish and raise well these gauges of their love, until the point when they [the children] are able to instruct themselves and conduct themselves on their own."

²³ Jaucourt, "Mariage," dans Diderot et D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*. Translation: "friends"; "tutors for those who are not yet out in the world"; "good morals."

himself in raising his children to be beneficial members not only of his family but of society as a whole. The Beast reinforces the *homme sensible* by embodying the man who, through his relationship with his female companion, shows that he respects her and allows her some degree of autonomy.

Leprince de Beaumont alternates between the terms *bonhomme* and *marchand* when referring to Belle's father, a single parent with six children.²⁴ These two terms place him in the bourgeoisie, the social strata most often associated with the changes occurring in French society at the end of the *Ancien Régime*. This characteristic provides an image of the emerging middle class man as differentiated from the aristocratic noble. Belle's father thus represents an important sector of society as the bourgeoisie, not the aristocracy, played such a vital role in shaping French culture and thought throughout the Enlightenment and into the Revolution. Therefore we can use illustrations of Belle's father to shed light on one significant type of masculinity present in French society during the eighteenth century.

Belle's father represents the eighteenth century's *homme sensible* by providing for his family—not just to keep them alive, so that his name will continue, but because he wants to enrich them as individuals. In the first line of the story we learn that, « *comme ce marchand était un homme d'esprit, il n'épargna rien pour l'éducation de ses enfants, et leur donna toutes sortes de maîtres.* »²⁵ Spending money to educate his children and encouraging them to pursue intellectual hobbies sets Belle's father apart from fathers in

²⁴ Little of significance is lost in Leprince de Beaumont's revision in terms of Belle's father—her version adds nothing new to his character and subtracts only details insignificant to our purposes. The reader should keep in mind therefore, that while my analysis of Belle's father comes directly from Leprince de Beaumont's version, it represents his depiction in Villeneuve's tale, as well.

²⁵ Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, in *La jeune américaine et les contes marins: (la belle et la bête). Les belles solitaires. [Suivi de], Magasin des enfants: (la belle et la bête)*, ed. Elisa Biancardi (Paris: Champion, 2008), 1017. Translation: "because this merchant was a man of wit [intelligence], he spared nothing in order to educate his children and gave them tutors of all sorts."

previous eras, who believed that children should act as subordinates to their absolute rule and provide labor to bolster family's economics.²⁶ Here, Belle's father's interest in the education of his children aligns instead with the Enlightenment's new view of children as blank slates whose environments molded them into the type of adults they would become. Belle's father illustrates the Enlightenment's vision of creating the best type of civilization through raising children to be productive and virtuous members of society. Instead of worrying about his children in terms of lineage and inheritance, Belle's father concerns himself with developing them, through education, into socially constructive citizens.²⁷

He repeatedly demonstrates his love for his children and shows how much he cares for them. Early in the story, Belle's father loses all of his money and as the result his family moves to the countryside, away from the urban life that they know and enjoy, which reduces him to tears.²⁸ Later, when he leaves on a business venture, he makes sure to ask Belle what she would like him to purchase for her (the other two sisters having already pleaded for their own presents): « *Tu ne me pries pas de t'acheter quelque chose,* » he says.²⁹ While on the return journey, he can think of nothing but his children—still leagues from home, he « *se réjouit[] déjà du plaisir de voir ses enfants* ».³⁰

Nothing, however, demonstrates Belle's father's status as a family man more than the

²⁶ The notion of the father-as-tyrant in the pre-Enlightenment Western world is well documented and is particularly well summarized in Daniel Roche's *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 525.

²⁷ The difficulty of achieving this potential, however, is evident in Belle's two older sisters, who, despite their father's intentions, manage to represent the opposite of virtue. The difficulty of cultivating virtue becomes a significant problem by the end of the eighteenth century, hence the explosion of educational manuals intended for parents.

²⁸ Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, 1018.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1019. Translation: "You haven't asked me to buy you anything."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1020. Translation: "already rejoice[s] in the pleasure of seeing his children."

emotions he displays after encountering the Beast and being told that he must either die or sacrifice one of his daughters in his place.

The first thought that comes to the merchant's mind when the Beast gives him the opportunity to go home to consider his options is: « *Au moins, j'aurai le plaisir de les embrasser encore une fois.* »³¹ Upon returning to his family, Belle's father explains his situation, but cannot hold back his emotions: « *le marchand se mit à pleurer en les regardant.* »³² This deluge of sentiment convinces Belle to forfeit herself to save her father; she tells him: « *Je vous assure...que vous n'irez pas à ce palais sans moi.* »³³ This episode marks a reversal from an earlier, chivalric model of masculinity where the male figure protected the vulnerable woman; in this case, the female Belle takes charge of the situation. Her father, powerless to stop her, can only weep. After accompanying Belle to the Beast's castle, he cannot even eat because he is so upset.³⁴

While Belle's father represents the sentimental, passionate side of the *homme sensible*, both Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's depictions of the Beast add an additional facet to our picture of the eighteenth-century man. By showing respect for Belle, the Beast represents the new, sensitive husband and offers a portrait of marriage as an institution that promotes happiness, not only economic and genealogical security. Through his paternal affections, the Beast embodies the eighteenth-century husband who promoted a female agency through his courtship of his future wife. Close analysis of the Beast and his relationship with Belle suggests that the emergence of the *homme sensible*

³¹ Ibid., 1021. Translation: "At least I will be able to embrace them all one last time."

³² Ibid., 1022. Translation: "looking at [his children], he start[s] to cry."

³³ Ibid., 1023. Translation: "I assure you...that you will not go to that castle without me."

³⁴ Ibid.

in the early Enlightenment correlates to the late eighteenth century's shift from one version of femininity to another.

Both Montesquieu and Rousseau agreed that men should share power with other members of their families including their wives and daughters. The father should only express his authority in order to promote good morals and virtue within his family.³⁵ Their arguments align with the eighteenth century's replacement of the traditional arranged marriage with the companionate marriage model.³⁶ This type of marriage identified happiness, friendship, and choice, instead of economic pragmatism, as its core values.³⁷ Friendship implies mutual respect; therefore, the husband who treats his wife as a friend necessarily sees her as a separate individual with worthy opinions and abilities. Thus, this masculinity enabled varying degrees of female agency. This respect for women underlay and propelled the eighteenth century's redefinition of masculinity. Through both versions of the tale, the Beast's interactions with Belle embody the affectionate, considerate masculinity that sustained the Enlightenment's companionate marriage model.

Villeneuve's Belle initially fears the Beast, thinking that because of his appearance he would not only look monstrous but act monstrous, too. When she sees him for the first time, however, she relaxes: « *la Bête... dans son abord ne montra rien de furieux, [et] ses frayeurs [donc] se dissipèrent.* »³⁸ In the Beast's first conversation with

³⁵ Lynn Hunt, *Family Romance of the French Revolution*, 18.

³⁶ Christine Adams, "Devoted Companions of Surrogate Spouses? Sibling Relations in Eighteenth-Century France," in Adams, Christine, Jack R. Censer, and Lisa Jane Graham, eds. *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 61.

³⁷ James F. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 16.

³⁸ Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, *La Belle et La Bête*, in *La jeune américaine et les contes marins: (la belle et la bête). Les belles solitaires. [Suivi de], Magasin des enfants: (la belle et la bête)*, ed. Elisa

Belle, he asks: « *Croyez-vous pouvoir vous accoutumer ici ?* »³⁹ From the start of their relationship, then, the Beast makes Belle's comfort imperative, suggesting that even though Belle is technically his prisoner, she will have a fair amount of agency. The extent of Belle's power over her own situation becomes even more evident in their next interaction:

*[La Bête] lui demanda sans détour si elle voulait la laisser coucher avec elle. A cette demande imprévue, ses craintes se renouvelèrent, et poussant un cri terrible, elle ne put s'empêcher de dire : 'Ah Ciel ! je suis perdue.' –Nullement, reprit tranquillement la Bête. Mais sans vous effrayer répondez comme il faut. Dites précisément oui ou non.' La Belle lui répondit en tremblant : 'Non, la Bête.' –Eh bien, puisque vous ne voulez pas, repartit le monstre docile, je m'en vais. Bonsoir, la Belle.*⁴⁰

Here, three points are significant, each of which illustrates, through the Beast's noble and respectful behavior, the idea that men should defer to women. First, the Beast does not ask: "Will you sleep with me," but rather: "Will you allow me to sleep with you?" The emphasis here lies not on "sleep" but on "allow;" the Beast, in stressing this, gives Belle a choice in the situation. Second, in telling Belle that she must give a definitive answer, the Beast cedes full control to Belle over the situation, and in fact forces her to take an authoritative stance. This request puts Belle in charge of her own destiny. Third, the Beast's response to Belle's rejection shows his acceptance of Belle's decision, demonstrating his respect for her autonomy. While the Beast could have easily forced Belle to sleep with him, he did not; in fact, that option did not occur to him. He continues to ask her this question every evening, and each time when Belle refuses, the Beast sighs

Biancardi (Paris: Champion, 2008), 124. Translation : "There was nothing suggesting fury in his demeanor, [and] Belle's fears were [therefore] dispelled."

³⁹ Ibid., Translation: "Do you believe that you will be able to get used to living here?"

⁴⁰ Ibid., Translation : "The Beast asked her directly if she would allow him to sleep with her. With this unforeseen request, Belle's fears were reawakened, and, letting forth a terrible shriek, she couldn't help but say: 'Oh God! I'm lost!' 'Not at all,' replied the Beast, calmly. 'Do not frighten yourself in doing so, but respond honestly. Say precisely 'yes' or 'no.'" Belle, trembling, responded: 'No, Beast.' 'Oh well, since you do not want to,' said the docile monster, 'I'll be off. Goodnight, Belle.'"

and retires to his chambers, remaining as “docile” as he seemed in their first encounter. In fact, later in the story, Belle learns that the Beast does not actually want to have sex with her; he only wants her company beside him as he sleeps.⁴¹ The meekness of the Beast’s sexual desires (in fact, here he seems almost asexual) further demonstrates how he represents this eighteenth-century conception of masculinity, with its focus on companionship and love in lieu of sexual conquest and patriarchal hierarchy.

It soon becomes apparent that the Beast genuinely wants Belle to be happy. Each evening, he asks her a series of questions about her day, taking particular care to ask whether she has enjoyed herself. Once, when Belle tells him that she had discovered an enchanted window through which she had watched a play at the *Comédie française*, the Beast replies: « *Est-ce que vous l’aimez ? Souhaitez tout ce qu’il vous plaira, vous l’aurez.* »⁴² Later, Belle takes this response into consideration and asks him whether she might return to her family to visit for a few weeks. In response, the Beast says: « *Je ne puis rien vous refuser ; mais il m’en coûtera peut-être la vie : n’importe. Dans le cabinet le plus près de votre chambre, vous trouverez quatre caisses : emplissez-les de tout ce qu’il vous plaira, soit pour vous, soit pour vos parents [votre père, vos sœurs, et vos frères].* »⁴³ The Beast’s generosity both in sacrificing his own happiness to provide Belle’s (he might die of despair without her, but “no matter”) and in allowing Belle to take whatever she wants from his castle back to her family again demonstrates his compassion. Belle returns to her family and shows them the treasures that the Beast has provided for them. Her father, overwhelmed by the Beast’s kindness, has a complete

⁴¹ Ibid., 158.

⁴² Ibid., 130. Translation: “Did you like it? Wish for whatever you would like, and you will have it.”

⁴³ Ibid., 138-139. Translation: “I could never refuse you anything, though it might cost me my life: no matter. In the nearest closet of your room, you will find four chests: fill them with whatever you please, either for yourself or for your family.”

change of heart and urges Belle to consider marrying that same creature whom he had earlier feared would kill her.⁴⁴ His rationale hinges on his belief that the Beast will make her happy: « *Tu m'avoues en être tendrement aimée. Prends les mesures convenables pour que ton union soit éternelle. Il est [...] avantageux d'avoir un mari d'un caractère aimable.* »⁴⁵ Through the words of Belle's father, Villeneuve asserts that loving husbands are vital for the successful maintenance of a marriage. As we have already seen, marriage formed the basis for family, and in the eighteenth century, individuals started to see family as the foundation for society. Villeneuve, by depicting the Beast as a desirable husband because of his affectionate and respectful disposition, presents through him a picture of the suitable *homme sensible* as someone who contributes to society's virtue through a successful marriage.

Belle also is concerned with making sure that happiness would be the grounds for her marriage; unlike her father, however, she understands that only reciprocal love—where not only the Beast loves her, but she loves the Beast—would provide her with happiness.⁴⁶ It takes the Beast's impending death to make Belle realize the love she feels for him. She explains: « *j'ignorais à quel point je vous aimais: la peur de vous perdre m'a fait connaître que j'étais attachée à vous par des liens plus forts que ceux de la reconnaissance.* »⁴⁷ When the Beast thanks her for deciding to marry him, he focuses again on Belle's happiness: « *Puisque vous m'aimez, je veux vivre. Allez vous reposer, et*

⁴⁴ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 143. Translated from the French: “You have testified to me that you are tenderly loved [by the Beast]. Take the appropriate measures so that your union can be eternal. It is [...] advantageous to have a loving husband...”

⁴⁶ See section of thesis: “The Autonomous, Strong Woman: Depictions of Femininity in Villeneuve's 1740 Tale” for more on this.

⁴⁷ Villeneuve, *La Belle et la Bête*, 154. Translation: “I had been ignoring [until now] just how much I love you: the fear of losing you made me recognize that I am attached to you by ties much stronger than simply friendship.”

soyez certaine que vous serez aussi heureuse que votre bon cœur le mérite. »⁴⁸ Not only does Belle save the Beast from death (caused by a broken heart) after having calculated how doing so would benefit her own happiness, but the Beast rewards her for her actions by assuring her that she will be content. In his relationship with Belle, the Beast consistently enacts the role of the companion-husband, tailoring his needs to match hers—even before he has married her.

At the end of Villeneuve's version, the Beast's mother, a queen, comes to visit her son, who has been restored to his former human state as a handsome prince. In an exchange with Belle, the Queen expresses her disdain that Belle is the daughter of a merchant, saying that she worries about her son's noble blood mixing with that which is "obscure."⁴⁹ The Prince (formerly the Beast) reacts to this conversation by literally « *se jet[ant] aux pieds...de sa mère,*” and *[la] pria[nt] avec la plus vive instance de ne le pas rendre plus malheureux ... en le privant du bonheur d'être son époux.* »⁵⁰ We should take notice of this for two reasons. First, the fact that the Prince begs his mother to approve of his marriage with Belle places agency in a woman's hands—reversing the traditional structure of the patriarchal family where husbands and fathers make the decisions. Second, *Belle* produces the happiness that the Beast feels—he expresses joy in *being her husband*, not in having her as his wife. The agency given to Belle here in the subtle choice of words is yet another example of how the Beast represents the compassionate, loving man who went with the new marriage contract of the Enlightenment.

⁴⁸ Ibid., translation: “Since you love me, I want to live. Go [now] and rest, and be certain that you will be as happy as your good heart merits.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 160-161.

⁵⁰ Ibid., translation: “throw[ing] himself to his mother's feet” and “beg[ging] her not to deprive him of the happiness he would feel in being Belle's husband.”

In Leprince de Beaumont's version, she maintains Villeneuve's portrayals of masculinity, meaning that she both depicts the male figures as *hommes sensibles* and, as a result, gives Belle some of the agency that this type of masculinity effects.

« *Souhaitez, commandez ; vous êtes ici la reine et la maîtresse,* » the 1756 Belle reads on a book cover that she finds in the Beast's library.⁵¹ She proceeds to wish to see her family members again, and a magic mirror allows her to check on their status; she sees her father in a state of utter misery without her (again we recognize in Belle's father traits of the *homme sensible*). This scene gives Belle incentive to return to her family, but as she is imprisoned in the Beast's castle, she thinks that visiting home would be impossible. In her first interaction with the Beast, however, it becomes clear that she is something more than a prisoner:

*La Belle, lui dit ce monstre, voulez-vous bien que je vous voie souper ? –Vous êtes le maître, répon[d] la Belle, en tremblant.—Non, répon[d] la bête ; il n'y a ici de maîtresse que vous. Vous n'avez qu'à me dire de m'en aller, si je vous ennuie ; je sortirai tout de suite.*⁵²

In this simple exchange, Leprince de Beaumont sets up, for the first time, the Beast's innate kindness. He repeatedly demonstrates concern for her well-being, including one instance where he reminds her: « *tâchez de ne vous point ennuyer dans **votre** [emphasis ajouté] maison ; car tout ceci est à vous ; et j'aurais du chagrin, si vous n'étiez pas contente.* »⁵³ The Beast stresses that the castle is *her* home—implying that she is in control and that she should not subject herself to his will. Not only does the Beast say that Belle should do what she pleases while staying with him, he also suggests that she is in

⁵¹ Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, 1024. Translation: "Wish, command: here, you are both mistress and queen."

⁵² Ibid. Translation: "Belle," says the Beast, would you mind if I sit with you while you eat?" "You are the master," replies Belle, trembling. "No," says the Beast. "Here, there is no master but you. You have but to tell me to go, if I bother you; I will leave immediately."

⁵³ Ibid. Translation: "Try not to bore yourself in *your* [emphasis added] house because everything here is yours, and I would be much chagrined if you weren't happy."

charge of her own contentment and that he will only be happy if she is happy. What was once a crucial part of chivalry—seduction—appears to have been replaced here by a masculinity that emphasizes the woman’s emotional state. The Beast readily admits a sentimental dependence on Belle, which lines up with the Enlightenment’s vision of masculinity where men, in the public sphere, charged themselves with protecting the moral, virtuous order of society.⁵⁴ If, during the Enlightenment, happiness went hand in hand with virtue and individuals strived to create virtuous societies, then a patriarch who made his family happy contributed something useful to civilization.⁵⁵

Even though the Beast assures Belle that she has free reign over his castle, the fact remains that she is still his prisoner. Over time, however, as Belle grows more comfortable with the Beast, she decides to ask him whether she might return home to her family for a time. She explains: « *Je pourrais bien vous promettre de ne vous jamais quitter tout-à-fait, mais j’ai tant d’envie de revoir mon père, que je mourrai de douleur, si vous me refusez ce plaisir.* »⁵⁶ In response, the Beast says : « *J’aime mieux mourir moi-même que de vous donner du chagrin. Je vous enverrai chez votre père, vous y resterez, et votre pauvre bête en mourra de douleur.* »⁵⁷ The fact that the Beast allows her to go (not even requiring her to return) is critical to our understanding of the masculinity depicted in the story. In releasing her, the Beast places Belle’s happiness above his own, even though he knows that her absence will destroy him—he weighs her *douleur* against

⁵⁴ We will return to this notion of a virtuous society in Section III of this paper.

⁵⁵ Conveying masculinity as a way to protect the moral order during the eighteenth century is a concept discussed in Rachel G. Fuchs’ *Contested Paternity: Constructing Families in Modern France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 8.

⁵⁶ Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, 1027. Translation: “I promise never to leave you for good, but I have such a desire to see my father again, that I would die of sadness if you were to refuse me this pleasure.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Translation: “I would rather die myself than give you cause to chagrin. I will send you home to your father, you can stay there, and your poor beast will die from sadness as a result.”

his own and decides to sacrifice himself. Belle's happiness is, for him, more important than his own life.

After spending eight days with her family, Belle returns to the castle to find the Beast, true to his word, literally dying of despair. Belle, however, revives him by telling him that she will marry him, for she has determined that she would be happy being his wife. In her decision to marry him, Belle saves the Beast from death, and he transforms into a handsome prince. Without her decision, the Beast would have died; he owes his life to Belle having made a voluntary gift of her heart. This emphasis on Belle's choice denotes her authority in the situation. Even though it is marriage that ensures Belle's happiness, the fact that she *chooses* a husband, based on his internal virtue, shows how the companionate-husband model of masculinity effected the promotion of female agency.

The Beasts in both Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's tales represent the eighteenth-century man who compromises to share power with and give agency to his wife (or, in Belle's case, his potential wife). Together, Belle's father and the Beast represent elements of the eighteenth-century's increasingly present *homme sensible*. Through his relationship with his wife and daughters, this *homme sensible* shows us that, by Villeneuve's original publication date of 1740, masculinity has shifted to allow more agency to women in the eighteenth century. In the following section, we will explore the extent to which Leprince de Beaumont revised the model for femininity that Villeneuve's tale promoted, thereby confining Belle's agency into a more private, domestic space.

SECTION II: WOMEN

THE AUTONOMOUS WOMAN: DEPICTIONS OF FEMININITY IN VILLENEUVE'S 1740 TALE

Villeneuve's original version of *La Belle et la Bête* contains elements of a type of femininity that appears only partially in Leprince de Beaumont's revision of the story, published sixteen years later. In Villeneuve's story, Belle represents the very type of woman that Rousseau reacted against in the latter part of the eighteenth century—in this tale, Belle's individual desires drive her actions; she pursues what Rousseau would later denounce as frivolous activities. Villeneuve's Belle lives largely in a world of imagination, where she finds happiness through a mixture of erotic dreamscapes, worldly pleasures, and intellectual stimulation. In Villeneuve's tale, Belle represents an autonomous woman emerging from the 17th-century *salon* culture who is not yet relegated to the domestic sphere.

When Belle's father, a merchant, falls into financial ruin, forcing the family to move away from their house in the city to live in the country, sadness overwhelms Belle. She, like her sisters and brothers, misses the company and charms of city life. She resolves, however, to find happiness and does so by casting her mind elsewhere and often using her imagination to escape from reality.⁵⁸ Occasionally, Belle passes the time by playing instruments and singing; sometimes, though, "*Pour adoucir ses ennuis*

⁵⁸ In Leprince de Beaumont's version of the tale, Belle no longer "lives in her imagination" in the same way that she had in Villeneuve's, indicating that imagination does not have a place in the late eighteenth century's model of domestic femininity. For an account of the increasing prevalence of condemnations of imagination as dangerous, which occurred in the decades leading up to the French Revolution, see Jan Goldstein's *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), especially Chapters 1 and 2.

[tristesses], dans ses heures de relâche elle ornait sa tête de fleurs,” pretending to be one of the « *bergères des premiers temps* » whose leisurely and rustic lives provided them so much pleasure.⁵⁹ Here, Belle searches for alternative ways to find happiness. In this passage, it becomes clear that Belle places significance on satisfying her own desires, and that she values an interior life, a life very much her own. The fact that she takes matters into her own hands to acquire contentment shows her capacity as an autonomous, capable, and self-reliant individual.

When Belle’s father accidentally offends the Beast and must decide whether to live as the Beast’s prisoner or to send one of his daughters in his place, he cannot find it in his heart to force one of his daughters to sacrifice herself. Belle, thinking that her father’s predicament is her own doing (she had asked him for a rose; her father takes one of the roses from the Beast’s garden, provoking the Beast’s rage), feels both guilty and incredibly saddened by the turn of events. She tells her family:

Je suis coupable de ce malheur : c’est à moi seule de le réparer. J’avoue qu’il serait injuste que vous souffrissiez de ma faute... Cette faute est faite : que je sois innocente ou coupable, il est juste que je l’expie. On ne peut l’imputer à d’autres. Je m’exposerai, poursuivait-elle d’un ton ferme, pour tirer mon père de son fatal engagement. J’irai trouver la Bête, trop heureuse en mourant de conserver la vie à celui de qui je l’ai reçue.⁶⁰

Here, in offering to replace her father as the Beast’s prisoner, possibly sacrificing her life in the process, Belle proves her aptitude at finding solutions to problems. While her father and brothers try to change her mind, nothing they can do prevents her from following through on her resolution. Her act of courage and her tenacity in overriding her

⁵⁹ Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, *La Belle et La Bête*, 99. Translation: “to soften her sadness, in her free hours she decorate[s] her head with flowers;” “shepherdesses of old.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 112. Translation : “I am guilty of causing this misfortune; it’s up to me to repair it. I believe that it would be unjust if you were to suffer for my error... [Even if I am not truly at fault], the error has been made, it is just that I pay for it. One shouldn’t impose it upon others... I will expose myself... to save my father from his fatal promise. I will go and find the Beast, only to happy to die in order to save the life of he who gave life to me.”

father and brothers' arguments emphasize her status as an independent individual and endow her with power. Villeneuve's tale shows how these male figures symbolize the eighteenth century's model of masculinity when she describes Belle's brothers' final acceptance of Belle's decision: « *ses frères qui l'aimaient tendrement furent touchés de sa résolution...ils se contentèrent de répandre des larmes, et de donner à leur sœur les louanges que méritait sa noble résolution.* »⁶¹ Belle makes her own decisions, based on her own rationale. Not only can nobody stop her, but the male characters accept and respect her decisions.

Upon her arrival at the Beast's castle, Belle finds out that her "imprisonment" actually provides her with more pleasures than she had enjoyed while living with her family. Her first night's sleep at the castle introduces her to a world of sexual fantasy as she meets a young man in her dreams who becomes her love interest for the remainder of the tale. Villeneuve writes: « *[Ce] jeune homme, beau comme on dépeint l'Amour, d'une voix qui lui portait au cœur lui dit : ...Souhaite ; tous tes désirs seront remplis. Je t'aime tendrement...tu peux faire mon bonheur en faisant le tien.* »⁶² From this point on, when Belle is awake, she thinks constantly of her "*Inconnu*"⁶³ (Villeneuve always refers to him as "*son Inconnu [emphasis ajouté]*,"⁶⁴ giving Belle possession over him), hoping that he exists somewhere in real life. Each night, Belle returns to her *Inconnu* in her dreams, and each day, as she remembers her dreams, she falls more and more in love with him. She constantly searches for him in the castle, but fruitlessly; she does, however, find a portrait

⁶¹ Ibid., 113. Translation: "her brothers who loved her tenderly were touched by her resolution...they contented themselves with drying their tears and giving their sister the praise she deserved by [having made] such a noble resolution."

⁶² Ibid., 120-121. Translation: "[This] young man, handsome as Love itself, with a voice that strikes right to her heart tells her: ..."Wish, and all of your desires will be fulfilled. I love you tenderly...you can make me happy by making your own happiness."

⁶³ "Unknown"

⁶⁴ "*Her Unknown [emphasis added]*"

that resembles him so much that it fuels her search. As Belle looks at the portrait, « *[il] semblait la regarder avec une si tendre affection, qu'elle en rougit, comme si cette peinture eût été ce qu'elle représentait, ou qu'elle eût eu des témoins de sa pensée.* »⁶⁵

Her obsession for this man, who appears to exist only in her imagination, symbolizes Belle's determination to satisfy her own desires.

Belle never gives up on her quest to find him. At one point, after the Beast permits Belle to visit her family for a time, the dreaming Belle asks her *Inconnu*: « *Mais pourquoi faut-il que ce voyage nous sépare ?...Acceptez ma proposition : nous ne nous quitterons point, nous reviendrons ensemble ; ma famille sera ravie de vous voir, et je compte qu'elle aura pour vous tous les égards que vous méritez.* »⁶⁶ She tells him, « *je vous aime plus que la vie, et je la perdrais plutôt que de cesser de vous aimer.* »⁶⁷ At times, Belle becomes so restless to see her *Inconnu* again that she cannot wait until she can go back to sleep, so that she can experience the pleasure of seeing him once more.⁶⁸

While at the Beast's castle, Belle does not spend all of her time looking for her *Inconnu*, however; she also enjoys other forms of entertainment that enhance her happiness. Most notable among these diversions are the magic windows that allow Belle access to the greatest cultural attractions of eighteenth-century Paris. In the passage below, one learns how Belle passed a typical day as a "prisoner" in the Beast's castle:

[En ouvrant une] fenêtre, elle s'était trouvée à l'Opéra...elle en ouvrit [encore] une [autre] qui lui procura les plaisirs de la foire Saint-Germain...Elle y vit les curiosités les plus rares, les productions extraordinaires de la nature, les ouvrages de l'art : les plus

⁶⁵ Ibid., 122. Translation: "It seem[s] to regard her with such tender affection, that she blushes, as if this painting had been what it represented [the man himself] or that it had intimate knowledge of what she was thinking."

⁶⁶ Ibid., 139. Translation: "But why should this voyage separate us? ...Accept my proposition: we won't leave one another's side, we will come back together; my family will be ecstatic to see you, and I know that they will look on you with the highest regards."

⁶⁷ Ibid., 136. Translation: "I love you more than life, and I would rather lose it than stop loving you."

⁶⁸ Ibid., 147.

*petites bagatelles...L'Opéra-comique était dans sa splendeur. La Belle en fut très contente. Au sortir de ce spectacle, elle vit toutes les personnes du bon air se promener dans les boutiques des marchands... Les jours suivants furent semblables. Elle avait en ses fenêtres des sources intarissables de nouveaux amusements...[des] autres lui donnaient l'une le plaisir de la Comédie-Italienne, l'autre celui de la vue des Tuileries, où se rendent tout ce que l'Europe a de personnes plus distinguées et des mieux faites dans les deux sexes. La dernière fenêtre n'était pas la moins agréable : elle lui fournissait un moyen sûr pour apprendre tout ce qui se faisait dans le monde. La scène était amusante et diversifiée de toutes sortes de façons. C'était quelquefois une fameuse ambassade qu'elle voyait, un mariage illustre, ou quelques révolutions intéressantes...*⁶⁹

Belle avoids *ennui* by partaking in the pleasures that the magic windows provide. Equally important to Belle's capacity to solve her problems in her pursuit of happiness is *what* makes her happy. A woman finding pleasure in decadence or luxury, as Belle does here, does not pose any of the problems in Villeneuve's version of *La Belle et la Bête* that she will sixteen years later in Leprince de Beaumont's tale; Belle's contentment—regardless of its source—seems to be what matters most.

That Belle finds happiness through the avoidance of *ennui* represents another critical aspect of the femininity reflected in Villeneuve's tale: it shows how Belle, in order to achieve happiness, needs intellectual stimulation. In her first days living with the Beast, before she has discovered the enchanted windows, Belle feels bored and tries to rectify the situation by exploring the castle. Soon, she finds rooms with musical instruments, paintings, and books. Villeneuve writes: « *Elle aimait à s'instruire, et depuis son séjour à la campagne, elle avait été privée de cette douceur...Son grand goût pour la lecture pouvait aisément se satisfaire dans ce lieu, et la garantir de l'ennui de la*

⁶⁹ Ibid., 131-132, 134. Translation: “[Opening one] window, she found herself at the Opera...she opened [another] that procured for her all of the pleasures that the Saint-Germain fair had to offer...She saw the rarest of curiosities, nature's most extraordinary products, works of art [, and] numerous trifling objects... The comic opera was in its greatest splendor. Belle was very happy with it. Leaving this spectacle, she saw everyone outside, shopping in the markets...She had in her windows inexhaustible sources of new amusements...Other [windows] gave her the pleasure of seeing the Italian Comedy, a view of the Tuileries gardens, where all of Europe's finest and most distinguished men and women turned out. The last window was no less agreeable: it gave Belle a way to learn everything that was happening in the world. The scene was fun and diverse in all sorts of ways. Sometimes she saw in this window a famous ambassador, an illustrious wedding, or some interesting revolutions...”

solitude. »⁷⁰ Belle, with her “great taste for reading,” finds respite from boredom in this solitary, intellectual activity; this again supports the claim that she often takes matters into her own hands to ensure her happiness.⁷¹

In a conversation that Belle has with her father, after he urges her to consider marrying the Beast, she expresses her desire for intellectual stimulation:

*Comment...me déterminer à choisir un mari avec lequel je ne pourrai m'entretenir, et dont la figure ne sera pas réparée par une conversation amusante ? Nul objet pour me distraire et me dissiper de ce fâcheux commerce ! N'avoir pas la douceur d'en être quelquefois éloignée, borner tout mon plaisir à cinq ou six questions qui regarderont mon appétit et ma santé, voir finir cet entretien bizarre par un bonsoir, la Belle, refrain que mes perroquets pouvoir de faire un pareil établissement, et j'aime mieux mourir tout d'un coup, que de mourir tous les jours ...de dégoût et d'ennui. Rien ne parle en sa faveur, sinon l'attention que cette Bête a de me faire une courte visite, et de ne se présenter devant moi que toutes les vingt-quatre heures. Est-ce assez pour inspirer de l'amour ?*⁷²

Belle has trouble resolving her gratitude toward the Beast with the love she feels for her *Inconnu*. She cannot imagine marrying the Beast without feeling love for him, but, as she says, his inability to hold an invigorating conversation with her keeps her from loving him. Belle cannot conceive of living a bored life because it would prevent her from attaining happiness. Here, Villeneuve suggests that love requires an intellectual connection as well as an emotional, sentimental one.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 123. Translation: “She loved learning, and since her move to the country, she had been deprived of this sweetness...Her appetite for reading could easily be satisfied in this place, and was sure to protect her from the boredom of solitude.”

⁷¹ Here we might compare Belle to Zilia, the Peruvian heroine of Françoise de Graffigny’s 1747 *Lettres d'une peruvienne* (Dans *Romans de Femmes du XVIIIe Siècle*, ed. Raymond Trousson. Paris : Robert Laffont, 1996). Zilia chooses an alternative, independent, and intellectual path toward happiness rather than marrying someone she does not truly love.

⁷² Ibid., 143. Translation: “How...can I decide to choose a husband with whom I can’t hold a conversation, and whose ugliness isn’t even made up for by lively conversation? Nothing to distract me and save me from the awful exchanges [I’ve had with him]! Not to have the pleasure of getting away from the limited five or six questions [he asks me] about my appetite and my health, finishing the bizarre interview with a “Goodnight, Belle,” a conversation that parrots could hold equally well? And I would rather die suddenly than die little by little every day from...disgust and ennui. Nothing can speak in his favor, unless you count the courtesy that the Beast paid me by allowing me this short visit [home], and by not staying by my side every hour of the day. Is this enough to inspire love?”

Luckily for Belle, as she deliberates about the possibility of marrying the Beast, someone comes to her aid. A fairy, whom Villeneuve refers to as “*La Dame*,” visits Belle in her sleep, and advises Belle not to worry about her feelings for *l’Inconnu*, that: « *les mouvements qu’elle se [sent] n’ [ont] rien d’incompatible avec l’intention qu’elle a de faire son devoir [de récompenser la Bête], que sans résistance, elle la pourrait faire suivre, et que son bonheur serait parfait en épousant la Bête.* »⁷³ The fairy’s wisdom reassures Belle and convinces her that not only would she be doing the right thing by marrying the Beast, but she would not be hindering her happiness in doing so. As we have already seen, when Belle returns to the Beast’s castle and tells him that she will marry him, she saves his life, for he had been dying of despair and loneliness for her. The Beast then surprises Belle by thanking her with the longest and most sincere response that she has ever heard him speak, and, after this exchange, he transforms into her beloved *Inconnu*. By choosing to marry the Beast, Belle actually chooses to marry her *Inconnu*—the very man she had coveted since her first night in the castle. Thus, Belle’s choice effectively realizes her desires and completes her happiness. Here, for a final time, Villeneuve presents Belle as a powerful agent who determines her own destiny.

Through Villeneuve’s Belle, we see one notion of femininity in the eighteenth century that preexisted the later Enlightenment thought about how women should tailor their identities to the private sphere. Belle represents a strong, independent woman who is unafraid to pursue her own goals through whatever means make the most sense for her. She is more concerned with intellectual pursuits than she is with the notion of family. Now that we have a firm understanding of Villeneuve’s portrayal of femininity, let us

⁷³ Ibid., 155. Translation: “the feelings that she feels are not incompatible with the intention that she has to do her duty [of repaying her debt to the Beast], that without problem, she would be able to follow through with [the marriage], and that, in marrying the Beast, she would achieve perfect happiness.”

move to an analysis of Leprince de Beaumont, in order to see where she makes changes and how those changes inform us about cultural transitions taking place in the second half of the Enlightenment.

THE DOMESTIC MOTHER: DEPICTIONS OF FEMININITY IN LEPRINCE DE
BEAUMONT'S 1756 TALE

Il emporte à la société que les femmes acquièrent ces qualités [la timidité, la pudeur, la modestie], il importe de les cultiver en elles ; et toute femme qui les dédaigne offense les bonnes mœurs. Y a-t-il au monde un spectacle aussi touchant, aussi respectable, que celui d'une mère de famille entourée de ses enfants, réglant les travaux de ses domestiques, procurant à son mari une vie heureuse, et gouvernant sagement la maison ? C'est là qu'elle se montre dans toute la dignité d'une honnête femme ; c'est là qu'elle avec honneur les hommages rendus à la vertu...une femme hors de sa maison perd son plus grand lustre...Quoi qu'elle puisse faire, on sent qu'elle n'est pas à sa place en public.⁷⁴
–**Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, 1758.**

As Sarah Maza writes, “the modern cult of family love first took shape in the second half of the eighteenth century.”⁷⁵ Within this framework, which highlighted familial bonds, the idea of the woman as nurturer and caretaker first emerged as a definite characteristic of Enlightenment thought. Rousseau brought this woman to the forefront of political theory when he published the *Lettre à M d'Alembert sur le spectacles* in 1758.

Here, he states:

⁷⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, ed. L. Brunel (Paris: Hachette, 1928), 132; Translated in Allan Bloom's *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1960), 87-88 as: “It is in society's interest that women acquire these qualities [of timidity, chasteness, and modesty]; they must be cultivated in women, and any woman who disdains them offends good morals. Is there a sight in the world so touching, so respectable, as that of a mother surrounded by her children..., procuring a happy home for her husband and prudently governing the home? It is here that she shows herself in all the dignity of a decent woman; it is here that she really commands respect, and beauty shares with honor the homages rendered to virtue...a woman outside of her home loses her greatest luster...Whatever she may do, one feels that in public she is not in her place.”

⁷⁵ Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary 1750-1850*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 61.

[I]l n'y a point de bonnes mœurs pour les femmes hors d'une vie retirée et domestique ; si je dis que les paisibles soins de la famille et du ménage sont leur partage, que la dignité de leur sexe est dans sa modestie, que la honte et la pudeur sont en elles inséparables de l'honnêteté.⁷⁶

With both his *Lettre à d'Alembert* and his educational treatise *Emile*, which he published in 1762, Rousseau made a profound impact on French society. Publication of pedagogical treatises surged in his wake as discussions about the importance of producing virtuous citizens led to the popularity of manuals telling governesses, mothers, and educators exactly how to raise “good” females from childhood.⁷⁷ One such work, entitled “*De l'éducation physique et morale des enfans des deux sexes*”⁷⁸ and published anonymously in Paris in 1785, represents this trend. In the book, the author writes: « *Les femmes [quand elles manquent de bons éducations]...en contractent tous les vices...il y a un fol amour-propre qui porte en elles, jusqu'à l'excès, le désir de plaire, le goût des vaines parures...* »⁷⁹ And later:

C'est aux femmes que dans l'ordre de la nature, appartiennent les travaux des grossesses, de la nourriture, et du soin des enfans, ce qui occupe au moins le tiers le plus actif de leur vie. Elles sont d'ailleurs, par une convention générale, et dont l'origine remonte peut-être jusqu'au premier âge du monde, chargées de tout le détail de l'intérieur de leurs maisons.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert*. Bloom's translation, 82: “[T]here are no good morals for women outside of a withdrawn and domestic life; if I say that the peaceful care of the family and the home are their lot, that the dignity of their sex consists in modesty, that shame and chasteness are inseparable from decency for them.”

⁷⁷ See Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marcel Grandière, *L'Idéal pédagogique en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998); and Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters*, and Jennifer M. Jones, “Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Regime France,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 939-967.

⁷⁸ Translation: “On the Physical and Moral Education of Children of Both Sexes”

⁷⁹ “De l'éducation physique et morale des enfans des deux sexes.” A Paris : chez Nyon l'aîné, 1785. Bryn Mawr College Special Collections, Bryn Mawr, PA, 2. Translation: “Women, [when not raised/educated properly]...contract all vices...[There is] a foolish self-esteem in them [that inclines them] to excess, the desire to please, a taste for vain finery...”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8. Translation: “It is for women, by order of nature, to take on the work of pregnancy, food, and caring for the children, which takes up at least the most active third of their lives. They are also, by common consent, and by tradition established in the first days of the world, responsible for all details concerning the inner [workings] of their homes.”

This educational manual, like many others produced at the end of the eighteenth century, rehearses the ideas concerning the role of women that Rousseau preached. It shows us how powerful a notion the domestic mother became in just a brief period of time.

We should be careful, however, about citing Rousseau's work as the catalyst for new theories about femininity or saying that only his publications redefined the role of women in eighteenth-century France.⁸¹ While Rousseau certainly became a leading voice on the subject, and we can attribute the overwhelming success of the domestic femininity to his publications, looking at Leprince de Beaumont's fairy tale *La Belle et la Bête* indicates that his views on women did not develop in isolation and that they in fact correlate closely with broader French thought about femininity.

Leprince de Beaumont's Belle enjoys some of the same agency that we see depicted in Villeneuve's earlier tale—as we have already explored in the stories' representations of masculinity, the male figures cede to Belle some authority by acting out their roles as *hommes sensibles*—but Leprince de Beaumont's revision also introduces a contrasting theme indicating that women should be domestic, virtuous, and nurturing. The 1756 Belle, to whom Leprince de Beaumont attributes these traits, embodies the definition of “woman” that became so important to the arguments of several late eighteenth-century *philosophes*, especially Rousseau, and which became the prescribed notion of femininity by the end of the *Ancien Régime*. Contrasting Leprince de Beaumont's tale with de Villeneuve's 1740 story, where there is no emphasis on these qualities, highlights the transitional nature of Leprince de Beaumont's work as it promotes the shift to a new, domestic model of femininity. This new model emphasized

⁸¹ In her insightful article, “Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Regime France,” (*French Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 939-967), Jennifer M. Jones also takes issue with historiography that credits the redefinition of femininity in eighteenth-century France solely to Rousseau.

woman's morality and selfishness and made her dependent on marriage and family to find happiness.

In this *conte*, Belle represents the woman who always puts her family and domestic matters ahead of her own desires. She prefers to stay at home to « *tenir compagnie à son père pour quelques années* » and chooses to read books rather than joining her sisters as they attend theatrical productions and balls and go on promenades.⁸² In fact, whereas Villeneuve's Belle had unproblematically enjoyed these same activities, and while her happiness often hinged upon being able to attend social events such as the *Comédie-française* or the *Opéra*, Leprince de Beaumont condemns them. She even goes so far as to turn Belle's sisters into statues for their "faults," which include: « *de l'orgueil...de la gourmandise, et de la paresse.* »⁸³ By depicting Belle as the ideal woman and her sisters as models for what women should *not* be, Leprince de Beaumont presents the proper femininity as embodied by Belle's domestic, caring, and virtuous tendencies. Her sisters' frivolity and love for superficial pleasures, on the other hand, represent all that a woman should avoid. In her household where her father is a single parent, Belle, so different from her sisters, performs the role of the mother. Each of her traits matches the characteristics of the ideal, virtuous woman that Rousseau defines in his *Lettre* and which became an integral part of French culture in the wake of his writings.

While her sisters lament the loss of their luxurious urban lifestyle, occurring as a result of their move to the countryside, Belle says to herself: « *Quand je pleurerai beaucoup, mes larmes ne me rendront pas mon bien, il faut tâcher d'être heureuse sans*

⁸² Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la Bête*, 1018. Translation : "keep her father company for several years"

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1030. Translation: "pride...greed...and laziness."

fortune ». ⁸⁴ She then takes it upon herself to make the household run smoothly: « *La Belle se levait à quatre heures du matin, se dépêchait de nettoyer la maison, et d'apprêter à diner pour la famille.* » ⁸⁵ Here, Leprince de Beaumont depicts Belle as the nurturing mother who takes care of her family's needs, which coincides with how *philosophes* would define women by the end of the eighteenth century. After finishing each day's work, Belle reads, practices music, or spins thread—participating in solitary activities that take place within the home and which Rousseau later presented (in *Emile*) as optimal feminine pursuits. Her sisters, lazy and spiteful, do nothing to help her; in fact they spend most of their free time inventing new ways to insult her. Belle, however, is « *si bonne qu'elle les aim[e] [malgré tout], et leur pardon[n]e de tout son cœur le mal qu'elles lui avaient fait.* » ⁸⁶ Even when, later in the tale, Belle departs for the Beast's castle, choosing to place her father's life over her freedom, one of her last requests is for her father to fulfill her sisters' wishes of being married to their suitors. Perhaps because she will not be there to guide the household, Belle thinks that her sisters would be better off going to live elsewhere; perhaps she says this only out of the kindness of her heart. Either way, it is clear that Leprince de Beaumont presents Belle as the epitome of the domestic female figure who not only manages her family's resources but who places her family's well-being ahead of her own.

After she goes to the castle in place of her father, Belle dreams about an unknown woman who tells her: « *Je suis contente de votre bon cœur, la Belle ; la bonne action que*

⁸⁴ Ibid. Translation : “If I were to cry a lot, my tears would do nothing to help me; one must try to be happy without wealth.”

⁸⁵ Ibid. Translation: “Belle woke up at four in the morning, hurried to clean the house, and prepared food for the family.”

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1023. Translation: “so good that she love[s] them [despite this], and pardon[s] them with all her heart of their wicked ways.”

vous faites, en donnant votre vie, pour sauver celle de votre père, ne demeurera point sans récompense. »⁸⁷ True enough, after Belle has decided to marry the Beast, the woman from her dream (now revealed to be a fairy) comes to life and turns the Beast into a prince, then makes Belle a queen. From the fairy's previous rationale, we discern that Leprince de Beaumont wants to emphasize Belle's generous, sacrificial nature—depicting her as a model of the new femininity who is willing to sacrifice her own happiness for the good of her family.

We glimpse the magnitude of the difference between Villeneuve's Belle and Leprince de Beaumont's Belle in the passage that follows, where the 1756 Belle deliberates over the possibility of marrying the Beast:

*Ne suis-je pas bien méchante de donner du chagrin à une Bête qui a pour moi tant de complaisance ? Est-ce sa faute si elle est si laide, et si elle a peu d'esprit ? Elle est bonne, cela vaut mieux que tout le reste. Pourquoi n'ai-je pas voulu l'épouser ? Je serais plus heureuse avec elle, que mes sœurs avec leurs maris. Ce n'est, ni la beauté, ni l'esprit d'un mari qui rendent une femme contente, c'est la bonté du caractère, la vertu, la complaisance, et la Bête a toute ces bonnes qualités. Je n'ai point d'amour pour elle, mais j'ai de l'estime, de l'amitié, et de la reconnaissance.*⁸⁸

Here, Belle—as in Villeneuve's version—has doubts about marrying the Beast. She dispels her fears, however, by listing the Beast's virtuous qualities. Most importantly, she decides that the Beast's inherent goodness—his virtue and kindness—overrides the fact that he is ugly and lacks intelligence. She even decides that she should marry him not because she loves him, but because she thinks he deserves to have her as his wife. Not only does she place the Beast's happiness on par with her own, but she believes that she

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1025. Translation: "I am happy with your good heart, Belle; the righteous act that you make, in giving your life to save your father's, will not go unrewarded."

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1029. Translation: "Aren't I cruel to cause such chagrin to a Beast who has shown me such kindness? Is it his fault that he is so ugly, and that he has so little wit? He is good, that should count more than anything else. Why shouldn't I marry him? I would be happier with him than my sisters are with their husbands. It's not a husband's looks or intelligence that make a woman happy, it's the abundance of character, of virtue, of kindness, and the Beast has all of these good qualities. I might not love him, but I esteem him and count him as my friend and am grateful to him."

will be happiest if she were to marry him, in spite of his flaws. Comparing these sentiments to Villeneuve's Belle, who worried that by marrying the Beast she would forgo her chances at happiness by being thrust into a perpetual state of *ennui*, we see that Leprince de Beaumont's ideas about what makes a woman happy differ greatly from the ideas espoused in 1740. In Villeneuve's version, the autonomous Belle makes her own happiness and she carefully weighs marriage's potential impact on her happiness; here, Leprince de Beaumont clearly presents marriage to the Beast as the means to make Belle happy.

In a brief discourse that follows immediately after *La Belle et la Bête* in *Le Magasin des Enfants*, a fictional governess instructs her female tutees that they should all emulate Belle's morality and selflessness.⁸⁹ This governess states:

*Il faut faire en sorte d'être si bonne, qu'on puisse oublier notre visage pour l'amour de notre cœur. Remarquez aussi, mes enfants, qu'on est toujours récompensé quand on fait son devoir. Si la Belle avait refusé de mourir à la place de son père, si elle avait été ingrate envers la pauvre Bête, elle n'aurait pas été ensuite une grande reine.*⁹⁰

Once more, Leprince de Beaumont enforces the idea that a proper woman should be self-sacrificing and virtuous. Not only is it her *duty* to place her family first, but, above all, in her heart she should be *good*.

We have now seen that, while both versions of *La Belle et la Bête* depict the *homme sensible*/companion-husband model of masculinity, in her revision, Leprince de Beaumont makes significant changes to the presentation of female identity. Historian Carole Blum has argued:

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1031-1032.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1031-1032. Translation: "One should make sure to be so good, that the love in our hearts causes people to overlook our faces. Remark also, my children, that one is always compensated when one does one's duty. If Belle had refused to die in her father's place, if she had been ungrateful toward the Beast, she would not have later been transformed into a great queen."

Damned by the standard of fruitfulness and multiplication, threatened with invasion by the burgeoning Protestant states, and called unequal to his biological duties, the eighteenth-century Frenchman saw his masculinity treated with contempt by numerous authors in his own nation. It is difficult to imagine a narrative containing a more unnerving message than the repeated story of demographic disaster caused by the Frenchman's poor performance as a man.⁹¹

In her study of demography in the French Enlightenment, Blum identifies increasing anxiety arising out of the question: how can a man maintain his worth as a *man* with this new emphasis on the *homme sensible* who differs so greatly from previous eras' conceptions of masculinity? The sensitive family man, by loving his wife and children and thinking of them as individuals with rights and the capacity to contribute to the common good, opened up opportunities to women. Perhaps the threat of women-as-equals spurred by this sort of masculinity created anxiety in French society, an anxiety that fostered theories of femininity with efforts aimed at enclosing women in the private sphere. The theory that women's place became the home as a result of masculine anxieties has often promoted by feminist and gender scholars, who have traditionally pegged Rousseau's writings as the beginning of modern anti-feminism.

I would like to posit, however, that this anxiety cannot be the only motivation driving the movement for changing femininity, since not only late eighteenth-century men but also women—including Leprince de Beaumont, who typifies the independent, strong woman because she, a single woman, earns her living as a governess and author—started to promote the model of domestic mothers.

In the next section, we will see that one reason that Rousseau's writings have been targeted by historians as providing a "watershed moment" in the history of gender roles is that his writings were, in fact, vital to bolstering the justifications for the late

⁹¹ Carole Blum, *Strength in Numbers : Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 113.

Enlightenment's model of domestic, maternal femininity, thereby making it a universal standard. While we should see him as part of a broader cultural movement rather than the instigator of such a trend, his texts prove useful in informing us about the underlying causes of the shift. Using Rousseau to look carefully at the reasoning behind this model explains why not only anxious men, but also women such as Leprince de Beaumont, embraced the vision of domestic femininity.

SECTION III: MARRIAGE

A NEW VISION FOR SOCIETY: VIRTUE AND DOMESTICITY

In 1762, the publication of Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'éducation* solidified and expanded upon the views on women that he had promoted four years earlier in his *Lettre à M d'Alembert sur les spectacles*. *Emile* emerged as one of the most popular and important texts in the late Enlightenment's rising genre of pedagogical literature and Rousseau quickly became a leading thinker on the subject of education.⁹² His opinions on women described in *Emile* therefore made an impact on eighteenth-century society, and today many historians see Rousseau as the most influential figure in pre-Revolutionary thought about women. Many scholars have written that Rousseau articulated the domestic ideology that relegated women to the private sphere, where she should act the part of the perfect, good mother.⁹³ Nonetheless, as we saw in the previous section, Leprince de

⁹² Marcel Grandière, *L'Idéal pédagogique en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998), 129.

⁹³ Such scholars include, but are not limited to: Carole Blum, Madelyn Gutwirth, Joan Landes, and Lieselotte Steinbrügge. See Helena Rosenblatt's article "On the 'Misogyny' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The

Beaumont shows us that social movements toward a domestic notion of femininity predated Rousseau's work, indicating that we should not credit Rousseau entirely for this trend.

One cannot, however, deny his influence in solidifying the notion of the domestic woman and in completing the transition to this rigid femininity; after the publication of both the *Lettre à d'Alembert* and *Emile*, the majority of French men and women supported the domestic model of femininity. Later, in 1789, the French Revolution made this model central to the modern era's republican political culture. Looking at Rousseau's ideas allows us to identify their broad appeal in the latter half of the eighteenth century and to understand why Leprince de Beaumont's version of *La Belle et la Bête* supplanted Villeneuve's earlier text to become the version that would be remembered and remade for centuries.

The fifth chapter of *Emile* describes Emile's future wife, Sophie, in great detail. Here, Rousseau lays out his educational program for girls, designed to create the ideal mate for his virtuous, male citizen. He bases his thoughts on contemporary medical texts, which laid the groundwork for "natural" gender differences by noting the differences between female and male bodies.⁹⁴ Rousseau's rationale thus placed women firmly in a domestic space and made them responsible for raising their children and managing their households. He insists that women's nature suited them for these roles:

En ce qu'ils ont de commun ils sont égaux ; en ce qu'ils ont de différent ils ne sont pas comparables...Dans l'union des sexes chacun concourt également à l'objet commun, mais non pas de la même manière. De cette diversité naît la première différence assignable entre les rapports moraux de l'un et de l'autre.

Letter to d'Alembert in Historical Context, *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (winter 2002), 91-114 for more on this view.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 5: "Discovery of the Sexes," of Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), especially pp. 194-207.

*L'un doit être actif et fort, l'autre passif et faible : il faut nécessairement que l'un veuille et puisse, il suffit que l'autre résiste peu.*⁹⁵

Here, he shows that his later assertions that a woman's place lies in her home find their justifications in natural causes. In certain respects, Rousseau says, men and women are intrinsically different and these distinctions should guide their behaviors. He leaves no room for argument, asserting that these fundamental differences validate prescribed gender roles that are both unquestionable and immutable. In the following passage, Rousseau describes his view of the female nature:

*pour en bien remplir les fonctions [des femmes], il lui faut une constitution qui s'y rapporte. Il lui faut du ménagement durant sa grossesse ; il lui faut du repos dans ses couches ; il lui faut une vie molle et sédentaire pour allaiter ses enfants ; il lui faut, pour les élever, de la patience et de la douceur, un zèle, une affection que rien ne rebute.*⁹⁶

Rousseau argues that women should be patient, gentle, affectionate, and that they should not overexert themselves. These traits are characteristic of the domestic femininity that emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century and which we have already seen in Leprince de Beaumont's tale. As we can see in many texts produced after Rousseau, including educational manuals, not only men found the new model of femininity enticing; a majority of women, too, adopted Rousseau's position on the value of domestic motherhood.⁹⁷ If we are to believe, however, that earlier notions of femininity, such as

⁹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'éducation* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961), 446. Translated by Allan Bloom in *Emile, or On Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 358 as: "In what [the two sexes] have in common, they are equal. Where they differ, they are not comparable...In the union of the sexes each contributes equally to the common aim, but not in the same way. From this diversity arises the first assignable difference in the moral relations of the two sexes. One ought to be active and strong, the other passive and weak. One must necessarily will and be able; it suffices that the other put up little resistance."

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 450; Bloom's translation, 361: "to fulfill [her] functions well, she needs a constitution which corresponds to it. She needs care during her pregnancy; she needs rest at the time of her childbirth; she needs a soft and sedentary life to suckle her children; she needs patience and gentleness, a zeal and an affection that nothing can rebuff in order to raise her children."

⁹⁷ See Mary Seidman Trouille's *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), especially pp. 54-67, for a useful analysis of Rousseau's thoughts on women and their impact on female readers in France. On page 55, she writes: "Rousseau's valorization of *la vie intérieure*...was enthusiastically adopted by his women readers."

that depicted in Villeneuve's 1740 version of *La Belle et la Bête*, promoted women as agents, why would Rousseau's Sophie capture the hearts of so many?

Villeneuve's portrayal of Belle suggests that autonomous, strong women who exerted control over their male counterparts existed in France during Rousseau's lifetime. We have already, with the help of Dena Goodman, seen how *salonnières* and female authors contributed to the culture of the Enlightenment, making themselves critical to the century's production of political thought. What caused powerful, independent women like these to relinquish their authority and adhere to Rousseau's vision of a nurturing, domestic mother whose most valued attributes were the more submissive traits of modesty, chastity and delicacy? Rousseau himself recognized that his notion would meet resistance, and he responded by insisting that nature provided dissenters with the proof needed for them to change their minds:

*Quand la femme se plaint là-dessus de l'injuste inégalité qu'y met l'homme, elle a tort ; cette inégalité n'est point une institution humaine, ou du moins elle n'est point l'ouvrage du préjugé, mais de la raison : c'est à celui des deux que la nature a chargé du dépôt des enfants d'en répondre à l'autre.*⁹⁸

According to Rousseau, women cannot legitimately complain of injustice when he says that they should center their lives on their children and adapt their behaviors to promote a nurturing environment because nature dictates that they, as the child-bearers, should fill that role. The exclusion of women from Habermas's political public sphere that early modern historians have observed can therefore be linked to Rousseau's depiction of women and men as distinct, separate categories.

⁹⁸Ibid., 450; Bloom's translation, 362: "When woman complains on this score about unjust man-made inequality, she is wrong. This inequality is not a human institution—or, at least, it is the work not of prejudice but of reason. It is up to the sex that nature has charged with the bearing of children to be responsible for them to the other sex."

Looking only at one piece of Rousseau's argument, where he uses nature to justify his view on women, however, does not explain why women in the late eighteenth century would have embraced the idea that they should focus on motherhood and domesticity. The fact that women adhered to this definition of femininity has been well documented, and is exemplified in the opinions presented in the flourishing number of educational treatises written after the publication of *Emile*.⁹⁹ It seems unlikely that the argument that Nature dictates that women should act one way, and men another, would convince a core of Enlightenment individuals to suddenly shift their thinking about female identity. Also, keeping in mind that the transition to a domestic femininity predated both Rousseau's *Lettre à D'Alembert* and *Emile*, as Leprince de Beaumont's *La Belle et la Bête* helped us to see, we need to widen our thinking and notice how other arguments helped promote this deeper cultural shift. With additional exploration, one starts to understand that a new emphasis on virtuous society, and therefore on virtuous citizens and how they are formed within the family, figures prominently into the rationale for a new, domestic femininity.

If we continue to read beyond Rousseau's initial proposal that Nature provides all of the evidence we need, we see that he stressed the importance of the family unit in creating virtuous citizens. In *Emile*, Rousseau writes:

De la bonne constitution des mères dépend d'abord celle des enfants ; du soin des femmes dépend la première éducation des hommes ; des femmes dépendent encore leurs mœurs, leurs passions, leurs goûts, leurs plaisirs, leur bonheur même. Ainsi toute l'éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes. Leur plaire, leur être utiles, se faire aimer et honorer d'eux, les élever jeunes, les soigner grands, les conseiller, les consoler, leur rendre la vie agréable et douce : voilà les devoirs des femmes dans tous les temps, et ce qu'on doit leur apprendre dès leur enfance. Tant qu'on ne remontera pas à ce principe, on s'écartera du

⁹⁹ See Marcel Grandière, *L'Idéal pédagogique* for more details on the explosion of interest in educating children that occurred after 1762.

*but, et tous les préceptes qu'on leur donnera ne serviront de rien pour leur bonheur ni pour le nôtre.*¹⁰⁰

One of the most important reasons for women's placement in the domestic realm described here is that men relied on women for everything—including their happiness and morals. To our modern senses, it may seem misogynistic for Rousseau to claim that women's lives revolved around men. At the same time, however, he insists that men *depend on* women. While Rousseau may push for Emile to fulfill his masculine destiny as a proper and virtuous citizen who protects the moral order of society, at the same time excluding Sophie from performing this public role, he gives her the important task of helping her husband and sons to fulfill their duties. Without wives and mothers promoting love and virtue within their homes, there would be no virtuous men capable of performing their roles as citizens.

Rousseau's belief that women in their domestic roles influenced their male kin by providing them with happiness reoccurs in many of the educational treatises from the late eighteenth century, including one written in 1779 by Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert whose abbreviated title is *Le nouvel ami des femmes*.¹⁰¹ In this manual, he writes:

La délicatesse départie à la femme par la nature...[est un] trait divin, qui ajoute encore aux grâces, la circonscrivent dans une vie paisible & sédentaire, où le soin de la famille est un motif de plus pour la retenir. L'homme a reçu la force, pour lui faire une enceinte de son courage, et rassembler autour d'elle les secours qu'elle ne peut aller chercher au-dehors : mais elle ne doit voir dans son défenseur qu'un ami tendre, non un maître impérieux¹⁰² ; & l'espèce de dépendance où elle se trouve à cet égard, ne donne à

¹⁰⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*, 455; Bloom's translation, 365: "The good constitution of children initially depends on that of their mothers. The first education of men depends on the care of women. Men's morals, their passions, their tastes, their pleasures, their very happiness also depend on women. Thus the whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet—these are the duties of women at all times, and they ought to be taught from childhood."

¹⁰¹ "Women's New Friend"

¹⁰² Note the similarities between the husband described here and both Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont's portrayals of the Beast.

*l'homme d'autre supériorité que l'avantage inestimable de servir utilement l'objet de son affection, & de mériter un tendre retour.*¹⁰³

Here, the author, like Rousseau, acknowledges that women might not see their new role of domestic, nurturing mothers in a positive light. He argues, however, that while women fulfill different roles from their husbands, they should not view their new position as inferior. While Boudier de Villemert does not explicitly say that women aid men in producing virtuous societies, his emphasis on “tender” feelings between husband and wife shows that he thinks that the companionate marriage model, where the man respects and loves his wife, will ensure that she is no less significant than her husband. These attempts to disarm objections to the prescribed role of domestic wife and mother show the apprehension that women appear to have felt when confronted with the late-eighteenth century’s prescribed gender roles.

In combating this apprehension, or at least the perception of such an apprehension, Rousseau and Boudier de Villemert emphasized the importance of women to their husbands’ happiness—indicating that a certain female dominance remained intact even when women were confined to the private space of the domestic sphere. This concept is perhaps best articulated in an entry in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* where the author, Joseph-François-Édouard de Corsembleu Sieur de Desmahis, asserts

¹⁰³ Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert, *Le nouvel ami des femmes : ou, La philosophie du sexe/ouvrage nécessaire à toutes les jeunes personnes qui veulent plaire par des qualités solides ; avec une notice alphabétique des femmes célèbres en France*. (Amsterdam, & se trouve à Paris : Chez Monory, 1779), Bryn Mawr Special Collections, Bryn Mawr, PA, 4-5. Translation : “The delicacy dealt to woman by nature, her modesty even, this divine trait, which adds to [her] charm, contains her within a peaceful and sedentary lifestyle, where she remains because taking care of her family provides her with the incentive necessary to stay [within the home]. Man has received, by force, the job of creating a wall with his courage, and building around [his wife] everything that she would ever need, so that she need not search elsewhere: She should see her protector as a loving friend, not as an imposing master; and the type of dependence that she finds herself subject to in this relationship does not give the man any other superiority than the inestimable advantage of being of use to the object of his affection, and meriting a tender return [of these affections].”

that women are, in fact, *superior* to men precisely because of their naturally domestic tendencies:

Renfermée dans les devoirs de femme et de mère, elle consacre ses jours à la pratique des vertus obscures : occupée du gouvernement de sa famille... sa maison est la demeure de...l'amour conjugal, de la tendresse maternelle, de l'ordre, de la paix intérieure...[elle est]économe et sédentaire...Elle a un caractère de réserve et de dignité qui la fait respecter, d'indulgence et de sensibilité qui la fait aimer, de prudence et de fermeté qui la fait craindre; elle répand autour d'elle une douce chaleur, une lumière pure qui éclaire et vivifie tout ce qui l'environne. Est-ce la nature qui l'a placée, ou la raison qui l'a conduite au rang suprême où je la vois ?¹⁰⁴

In this entry, not only does the author depict the domestic femininity as a supreme—more virtuous—state, but his ending question stresses that both Nature and *reason* allow them this superiority. Thus he indicates that perhaps Rousseau and those who believed what he did had rational arguments for prescribing strict gender roles based not only upon Nature, but upon something else—here I suggest that this *something else* is woman's natural ability to foster virtue.

In Jennifer Popiel's recent study on Enlightenment and 19th-century child-rearing and maternity in France, she argues that those who see Rousseau as the epitome of the anti-feminist might be thinking too simplistically. She states that his insistence on the importance of the domestic sphere in fostering the type of individuals who would restore virtue in society empowered women by providing them with an agency that, while hidden within familial space, was critical to the formation of society. She writes:

[Rousseau's] insistence on the foundational importance of creating radically free individuals within the domestic rather than the political sphere...simultaneously

¹⁰⁴Joseph-François-Édouard de Corsembleu Sieur de Desmahis, "Femme [morale]," dans Diderot et d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*. Translation: "Relegated to motherly and womanly tasks, she spends her days practicing obscure virtues: occupied with governing her family...in her house reside conjugal love, maternal tenderness, order, internal peace...[she is] economic and sedentary...she has a reserved and dignified character that makes her respected, her indulgence and sensitivity make one love her, her prudence and firmness make one fear her; she exudes a soft warmth, a pure light that brightens and gives life to all that surrounds her. Is it nature that has placed her, or is it reason that has driven her to the supreme state where I envision her?"

reconceptualized the meaning and purpose of the politically active individual and reached a new understanding of women as a central part of this genesis.¹⁰⁵

Popiel provides a convincing rationale for why Rousseau's contemporaries and followers, including women, clung to his ideas of femininity. Even though Rousseau separated men's and women's duties respectively to the political public sphere and the intimate, domestic sphere, he did not present women as inferior to men. In fact, by giving them the essential role of "enabler" to man's autonomy and virtue in the public sphere, Rousseau arguably gave women an important new form of agency in the birth of social reform.

As Habermas notes, the private sphere of the eighteenth century was connected to the public sphere because the citizens interacting with one another in the public sphere formed their subjective identities within the intimate space of the family.¹⁰⁶ Thus even if only men could act the role of citizen, women, charged with protecting and promoting morality and virtue in their households, helped to form the autonomous male citizens they lived with and raised. Women may have had to sacrifice their independent desires for the good of their families, and therefore society—but in doing so, they gained influence over society as well. The home became a site for political education, where women guided the development of male subjectivities that, coming together in public, politically charged spaces, enabled the development of democracy.

The transition to the type of femininity that Rousseau promoted was not, therefore, a demotion of women to lesser, inferior roles in the private sphere, but instead the substitution of one kind of female agency, as presented in Villeneuve's tale, for another, as depicted in Leprince de Beaumont's. If we view Rousseau as a man trying to

¹⁰⁵ Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters*, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 43-51.

reform a corrupt society by having men and women realize their natural capacities for good, we can see why his views would have generated such a significant following among both men and women of the late Enlightenment. For men, putting women into the domestic sphere would not only ensure masculine prominence in politics, but it would also help to infuse their actions with virtue and humanity. For women, charged with cultivating masculine virtue in the home might provide them with a sense of importance that made up for the loss of independence that being relegated to the domestic sphere triggered.

CONCLUSION



**Frontispiece to *Emile*, 1782, by Charles-Nicholas Cochin II.
Image accessible through Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org)**

The above image comes from the frontispiece to the 1782 edition of Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* and depicts a young mother nursing one child while surrounded by several others. As she performs her motherly duties, she simultaneously reads from the open *Emile* before her. Her daughter looks on over her shoulder, watching her mother and learning from everything that she sees. Both Mary Seidman Trouille and Madelyn

Gutwirth point out that this 1782 engraving reflects Rousseau's significant impact on late eighteenth-century notions of femininity.¹⁰⁷

The twenty-year anniversary of the first publication of this work was marked by an illustration that depicts a woman carefully following Rousseau's guidance as she nurses and nurtures her children. Gutwirth claims that the woman "seated on the earth at the foot of Rousseau's pedestal...exudes natural simplicity."¹⁰⁸ While I agree that we should see this image as proof of Rousseau's importance, I think that its significance lies elsewhere. A complete understanding of the engraving includes the observation that it portrays the significance of the woman to her children's education. The caption under the engraving translates as "A man's education starts at birth." Combining this reminder of the Enlightenment notion of "blank slate" child-rearing with the mother who is the focal point of this image, the contemporary viewer in 1782 would have easily made the direct connection between "woman" and "man's education." In this scenario, women play a vital role in the formation of men.

We have seen that the transition to a model for domestic femininity was a lengthy process that started early in the second half of the eighteenth century and which Rousseau's writings solidified. The definitive, legal relegation of women to the private sphere did not occur until 1789, however, since after the French Revolution the freedoms assumed under democracy pertained only to men; after a brief interlude of political activity, women found themselves excluded from the category of citizenship and its rights and duties. For this reason, historians often associate the birth of democracy with

¹⁰⁷ Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 16; Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 179.

¹⁰⁸ Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses*, 179.

the birth of anti-feminist sentiments in a sexual contract where men forced women into inferior roles as wives and mothers in order to promote their own status.

In Gutwirth's analysis of Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary images, she notes that artists frequently used female allegorical figures to depict new political ideals such as "liberty" and "freedom." For example, Gutwirth states that in the following cartoon, done in 1789 and entitled "Nouvelle Place de la Bastille," the artist depicts the woman as an "alternative symbol of nation," "replac[ing] the monarch as effigy."¹⁰⁹



“Nouvelle Place de la Bastille,” 1789. Image accessible through ArtStor (www.artstor.org)

¹⁰⁹ Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses*, 253.

In this image, the woman—a nursing mother—represents France and the boys around her, dressed as soldiers, represent France’s future male citizens.¹¹⁰ Gutwirth suggests that the importance of the mother figure here in political representations surrounding the French Revolution shows the extent to which society has become oppressive for women by the end of the *Ancien Régime*: the female nation needs protection from the male soldiers. Once again, while I agree that images such as “Nouvelle Place de la Bastille” prove the omnipresence of the domestic, mothering model of femininity, misogyny is not a useful category for explaining the new form of femininity that emerged in the eighteenth century. If we broaden our focus as well to include the significant role given to the woman in this cartoon, we recognize the importance of women in the construction of French society. The boys playing at her feet represent what France will become. They crowd around their mother, looking at her to guide them in their actions. Here, the role of mother is neither insignificant nor subordinate. In the cartoon, the woman’s relatively large size compared to the king tells us that the mother has replaced the monarchy as the foundation for French society. She actually supersedes the king in importance.

Looking at these Revolutionary images with too narrow of a lens therefore leaves out a significant piece of the story. As we have explored through the comparative analyses of both Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont’s *La Belle et la Bête*, even if reactions to anxieties over masculinity and the agency that it gave to women contributed to the shift to a domestic femininity, these reactions cannot fully explain the movement’s popularity and ubiquity. We need to understand the transition toward the late Enlightenment’s new model of femininity in the context of efforts to reform society. As part of this new vision of society, men came together in public spaces and, through

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

political discourse, formed the foundations for a democratic republic. Even though women were relegated to the private spaces of their domestic homes in this vision, they played a vital role in guiding the formation of the male citizens.

Returning to *La Belle et la Bête*, we can now understand the changes that Leprince de Beaumont made to Villeneuve's story in the following way: Not only did she simplify the story to make it accessible for a younger audience, but Leprince de Beaumont also interjected elements of a new kind of femininity, one where women were supposed to be nurturing and domestic. While Leprince de Beaumont's Belle represents this new femininity, she is not made inferior because of it. If we look carefully at the rationales for prescribing women to the private sphere, as we have done through Rousseau's texts, late eighteenth-century educational treatises, and now Revolutionary imagery, we see that Leprince de Beaumont's text garnered such a popular following, overtaking Villeneuve's original tale, not only because it was shorter and simpler but because it was better suited to the Enlightenment fascination with creating a better, more virtuous society.

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