Fairy Tales and Reggaeton Narratives: Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes Inherent in Puerto Rican Popular Culture

by

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Abstract

This thesis is informed on a feminist pedagogy and understanding which examines gender inequality and develops from the idea that everything in literature, music, and any other manifestation of popular culture is related in one way or another within the patriarchal system in which we live. The way children, and especially girls, perceive themselves is reinforced by what they read and listen to, and by situations they experience where they live. In the first part of this thesis, Disney's versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* along with the Grimm Brothers' versions of the same stories (the latter changing its title to *The Winter Rose*) were used as examples of fairy tale narratives which reinforce gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rico's popular culture. In the second part, Wisin and Yandel's song *Irresistible* and Alexis and Fido's song *Energía* were used as examples of highly successful reggaeton narratives which then reinforce gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rico's popular culture. This thesis evidences how both forms of popular culture portray and justify in an appealing way ideological structures which promote, among other things, gender constructs and acceptance of violence in society.

Resumen

Esta tesis se basa en una interpretación feminista que examina la desigualdad de género y se desprende de la idea de que todo en la literatura y la música, así como en cualquier otra manifestación de cultura popular, se relaciona en una forma u otra al sistema patriarcal en el que vivimos. La manera en la que los niños y especialmente las niñas, se perciben es reforzada por lo que leen y por la música que escuchan así como por las situaciones que experimentan en el lugar en el que viven. Las versiones de Disney de *Cinderella* y de *Beauty and the Beast* así como las versiones de los Grimm Brothers de los mismos cuentos (el último cambiando su nombre a *The Winter Rose*) serán usados como ejemplos de cuentos de hadas que refuerzan los estereotipos de género inherentes a la cultura popular de Puerto Rico. De la misma manera, las canciones *Irresistible* de Wisin y Yandel y *Energía* de Alexis y Fido serán usadas como ejemplos de narrativas que refuerzan también los estereotipos de género inherentes a la cultura popular de Puerto Rico. Esta tesis evidencia cómo ambas formas de cultura popular exponen y justifican de forma atractiva estructuras ideológicas que promueven, entre otras cosas, construcciones de género y la aceptación de la violencia en la sociedad.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my beloved children Vale and Kiki. You are my main source of inspiration and because of you I want to be a better person. Thanks for your love, support and understanding. Please, forgive me for not being there sometimes because I was writing. I love you more than words can tell.

In the words of author Ann Bradstreet:

To My Dear Children

This Book by any yet unread,

I leave for you when I am dead,

That being gone, here you may find

What was your living mother's mind.

Make use of what I leave in Love

And God shall bless you from above.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Due to the complex nature of popular culture and the pervasiveness of mass media in Puerto Rican popular culture, all children particularly young girls, are exposed to gender stereotypes and values as those which are presented in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives. Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are considered manifestations of popular culture.

Popular culture is complex because as Storey, in *Inventing Popular Culture,* explains: "… the idea of popular culture is always entangled with questions of social power, especially in terms of claims and counter-claims about, for example, class, gender, ethnicity, 'race', generation, and sexuality" (xii). Gender is what distinguishes a male from a female. According to gender, certain roles are prescribed to men and women. Whether on TV, in school, and/or at home, fairy tales play an important role in the way children understand the world they live in. Gender stereotypes are presented and reinforced in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives. Fairy tales use of magic and the messages promoted help children understand the rules of the society in which they interact. Reggaeton, on the other hand, is an extremely popular musical genre in Puerto Rico. The catchy and highly popular rhythms, narratives and the messages promoted play an important role in how children and adolescents understand the society in which they interact. It is interesting to point out that both these genres sustain similar if not the same ideological messages.

Ideology is defined as a body of ideas, beliefs or myths which guide the worldviews of a large group, class, institution or individual. Storey, in *Inventing Popular Culture*, points out that: "Ideologies are discourses which attempt to impose closure on meaning in the interests of power; to make what is cultural [i.e. made] appear as nature" (x). It is important to expose issues about

ideology because the discourses used in both fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are presenting gender stereotypes as something natural to young children.

The ideologies present in these narratives are the ones which produce the "hegemonic truth" of popular culture. The concept of hegemony is explained by Storey, quoting Gramsci, as "… a situation in which the interests of one powerful section of society are 'universalized' as the interests of the society as a whole" (Storey 48). Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives create uniformity through the reinforcement of gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rican popular culture. Gender stereotypes make reference to roles society imposes on people according to the sex they were born with. These roles might vary from culture to culture including the Puerto Rican culture itself. As an elementary school teacher in Puerto Rico, I have observed that fairy tales like Disney's versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast;* and reggaeton narratives like *Irresistible* and *Energía,* are part of popular culture and because of that, they play an important role in the socialization process of children. These two genres, although they appear to be different on the surface, are very similar at their core. As mentioned earlier, they both portray and justify in an appealing way ideological structures which promote, among other things, gender constructs and acceptance of violence in society. As Storey explains in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*:

> Popular culture changes constantly and occurs uniquely in place and time**.** It forms currents and eddies, and represents a complex of mutually interdependent perspectives and values that influence society and its institutions in various ways. For example, certain currents of pop culture may originate from, [or diverge into] a subculture, representing perspectives with which the mainstream popular culture has only limited familiarity. Items of popular culture most typically appeal to a broad spectrum of the public. (150)

Fairy tales as folk tales and reggaeton as underground narratives were both part of a subculture. Disney through movies and paraphernalia, and Daddy Yankee through Billboard gave both genres a boarding pass to mainstream popular culture. For example, Disney's most famous movies on fairy tales were the ones which made fairy tales part of mainstream popular culture. Reggaeton, on the other hand, converted into mainstream popular culture with the recognition Billboard awards gave to Daddy Yankee.

Fairy tales are an expression of popular culture because they are an extension of folk tale. As is noted in *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*:

> The fairy tale distinguished itself as a genre a few centuries ago when storytellers began appropriating different kinds of magical folktales and transforming them and conventionalizing them, for it became necessary in the modern world to adapt the oral tales to the moral, literary, and aesthetic standards of a particular society and to make them acceptable for diffusion in the public sphere. (175)

So it goes to follow that as we teach fairy tales, we are passing on a tradition of values and social codes contained within these texts. Therefore, they are mainly responsible for educating people. In his book, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion,* Zipes states that: "To be civil in any society, to be counted as a civilian, one must understand and follow social codes that are not of one's making and that determine to a large degree one's sexual identity and social status" (21). Hence, it could be understood that fairy tales civilize or rather socialize people mainly through gender stereotypes and social class stratification. Zipes further explains, "The classical fairy tale for children and adults reinforces the patriarchal symbolic order" (194). Reggaeton, on the other hand, represents a "subculture" of the "mainstream" popular culture. If we apply Storey's argument and accept that reggaeton, because it is a very popular musical genre although born in

"*los caseríos*" or "the projects", "*las barreadas*" or " the hoods" where the poor live, is accepted in the mainstream through popular culture. In a sense, reggaeton narratives are folk tales too of an urban nature. Raquel Z. Rivera explains in *Reggaeton* that the same secrecy needed to sell drugs was the same one used when reggaeton first started. Before it was considered a musical genre which could be commercialized, it was clandestinely sold by their producers. The government, police authorities, school authorities, and ecclesiastic authorities were some of the enemies reggaeton had to face and challenge in order to be accepted by society. These institutions were concerned that Puerto Rican "hegemony" was in danger. Therefore, Puerto Rican society used the "repressive state apparatus" to replace moral and intellectual leadership to secure authority. These hegemonic institutions (government: senate and police, church, upper class families) considered reggaeton to be the "voice" of the criminals, drug sellers, and deviants; therefore accepting reggaeton was like accepting actions of the people behind it as part of what should be considered normal or legitimate in society.

This thesis is based on a feminist pedagogy and understanding, which examines gender inequality, and develops from the idea that everything in literature and music is related in one way or another within the patriarchal system in which we live. Jack Zipes, in *Fairy Tale as Myth/ Myth as Fairy Tale,* suggests that: "... the classical fairy tale for children and adults reinforced the patriarchal symbolical order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender" (194). It is important to learn about the patriarchal symbolical order because this conversation can lead to necessary changes in education, school and home. As Levin and Kilbourne, in *So Sexy So Soon*, suggest: "The seeds of this sexual violence are sown in childhood" (159). Then teachers and parents can understand how a child's understanding of the world might be affected by literature and music which are part of the popular culture we are all exposed to.

From a feminist perspective, teachers and parents should be aware of the implications these two genres bring to the lives and socialization of children. As Zipes, in *Don't Bet on the Prince*, shares in his preface: "... it has been demonstrated by psychologists and educators time and again that stories and fairy tales do influence the manner in which children conceive the world and their places in it before they begin to read" (xii). Fairy tales being read by parents at bedtime and by teachers in the reading circle, inform children, especially in terms of their gender, on how to behave in society. Likewise, reggaeton narratives represent the belief system prevalent in Puerto Rico's popular culture or the "culture actually made by the people for themselves" as Storey, quoting Williams, suggests in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture.*

The language and situations of violence used in fairy tales are not rejected by parents. Moreover, parents encourage the use of fairy tales in schools to teach young children. A closer look at the "Disneyfied" and most popular versions of fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* show how certain patterns of behavior are promoted especially for girls. Cinderella is a very beautiful girl. She is the "lovely" daughter who is always kind to everyone. According to Jungian "archetypes", she represents the "maiden" because she is "pure" and "desirable". On the other hand, the "Disneyfied" version of *Beauty and the Beast* is also the story of a girl, Belle, who is so beautiful that she is considered the most beautiful girl in her town. Belle, just like Cinderella, is a very good girl. She is so submissive that she places everyone before herself. She also represents the "maiden" as well as the "child". Belle is "pure" and "desirable" and she also represents the "salvation" of her father and her family through self-sacrifice. Cinderella and Belle are presented as subservient, a gender role which may possibly result in violence towards them as women because it deprives them of the possibility of becoming self-sufficient. While Disney's fairy tales provide the delight of folk culture, the same is not true for reggaeton. Parents

argue reggaeton narratives are obscene, violent and too sexist. Nevertheless, fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are manifestations of the violence people experience through power structures. This violence serves as a basis in both of the genres' narratives.

Cinderella[1] was very ill treated by everyone at home and she didn't defend herself, as the story illustrates: "Cinderella was kind to everyone … even to Lucifer. But Lucifer took advantage of her kindness" (5). Lucifer is the name of her stepsisters' cat. The cat's name suggests she was ill treated even by the worst being that exists and despite that, she still treated it well. Likewise, Belle is a victim of her dad, of Gaston (a man who liked her), and even the victim of a beast. For example, Gaston, the man who wanted to marry Belle, locked "Belle and her father in the cellar of the cottage…" He did this to hunt down the Beast so he could be able to marry Belle. This passage represents the violence exercised towards women. Moreover, both Cinderella and Belle subject themselves to mistreatment which leads to low self-esteem, one of the most prevalent manifestations of the violence women suffer in fairy tales.

On the other hand, representations of women in reggaeton narratives such as *Irresistible* by Juan Luis Morena Luna, Llandel Veguilla Malavé, and Marcos Masis; and *Energía* by Raúl "Alexis" Ortiz and Joel "Fido" Martínez are similar to those presented in the fairy tales previously mentioned. In *Irresistible* there is a similar representation of women as seen in the two fairy tales since the girl who is the inspiration of this song is described as *"dama"* or *"*lady*"* as he calls her. She makes him feel so good; he can't literally keep his hands off her. In this song,

[1] It is important to point out that the books used in this thesis (Disney's *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* from the series *a Little Golden Book)* do not have page numbers. However, I enumerated the pages beginning with one after the cover page.

the girl is also described as sexually desirable. In *Irresistible* women are described as (followed by my translation):

Y mi cuerpo te llama

A mí me encanta la trama

Que yo sea el mago y tú siempre la dama

Ya quisiera tenerte en la cama

Tu pasión y tu amor

Encima de mí se derrama

And my body calls you

I love the plot

That I be the wizard and you always the lady

I want to have you in my bed

Your passion and love

Spill over me

On the other hand, in *Energía* the man courts a girl who is so pretty he feels she gives him an energy boost when he gets close to her. She is a *"reina"* or a "queen" as he calls her. Her good heart and behavior makes him think there is no one else with the "size" of her heart. However, he describes her as a "sex symbol". In *Energía* the woman is described in the following four lines:

Yo soy loco con las curvas que rompen con tu body

Me encanta cuando en la cama dice que soy su daddy

Tú eres mi media mitad, mi dama, mi sex symbol

Tú eres la mami rica que me tiene en el limbo

I am crazy about the curves that break with your body

I love when she says in bed I am her daddy

You are my other half, my lady, my sex symbol

You are the delicious mama that has driven me to limbo

The differences between fairy tales and reggaeton narratives rely on the vocabulary and rhetoric of the authors. Fairy tales use a kind of violence concealed within fantasy, humor, sarcasm, and even within the subliminal. In *Cinderella*, she was confined to live in an attic, to sleep on the floor, and she didn't even have friends. Her friends were animals, especially rats that are considered one of the most dangerous animals to human health. But she was happy with that as the story suggests because she even spoke and sang to them. These rats are depicted as funny animals that love her and try to comfort her whenever she is sad. In the case of Belle, she trades her life for her father's life and she feels more than satisfied; she feels blessed. Belle is also confined to solitude. She is treated with less importance than an animal because in the story her friends are household objects which are her company and her advisors.

Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives interest parents, teachers, and children for different reasons. On the surface, fairy tales are didactic in nature; they promote ideological values with regards to love and a perfect kind of life. Therefore, teachers and parents are the ones who like fairy tales the most because they help teach their children the social values they consider important. In his book, *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*, Zipes argues:

> The classical fairy tale makes it appear that we are all part of a universal community with shared values and norms, which we are all striving for the same happiness, that there are certain dreams and wishes which are irrefutable, that a particular type of behavior will produce guaranteed results ... (5)

Moreover, just like Storey explains, this happens because “The collectors of folk culture idealized the past in order to condemn the present” (10). Parents are just focusing on the positive side of these stories; however, too little analysis or interpretation is given to the message they send. Just as fairy tales teach these values and norms reggaeton narratives also teach them but from a different perspective and using a different ideology. Reggaeton narratives sometimes are a gimmick of fairy tales. For example, the relationship between the protagonists looks like that of the protagonists in fairy tales, as illustrated in *Energía:*

Siento que, algo cambió

¡Cuando me le acerqué!

¡Siento que, algo pasó!

¡Me enloqueció, me enamoró oh oh oh!

I feel something changed

When I got close

I feel like something happened

She made me go crazy; she enamored me oh oh oh!

This is similar to what happened to the Prince when he danced for the first time with Cinderella. The story illustrates what happened to him: "Then he caught sight of her. Ignoring everyone else, the Prince walked over to Cinderella” (14). The Prince didn't leave Cinderella's side all night. He fell in love and from that moment on, he couldn't think of any other woman. This shows that reggaeton narratives also make adolescents believe that a particular behavior will produce guaranteed results, just like in fairy tales. In reggaeton narratives a woman’s behavior is responsible for producing those “guaranteed results”, which is what *Irresistible* describes below:

Resistirme imposible será

De la manera como lo haces, ninguna lo hará

Recostándose en la pared

Sigue provocándome

Bien suelta, envueltaaa

It will be impossible for me to resist

The way you do it, nobody else will do it

Leaning on the wall

Keep provoking me

Uninhibitedly involved

It is important to point out that while fairy tales endorse love, devotion, and a happily ever after ending; reggaeton narratives evoke ideas of sex/love, pleasure, violence, excitement, and social disorder; all at the same time. Reggaeton narratives present a different kind of violence, which is the violence of the urban street subculture. They use the language of the "streets" with all its humor, sarcasm, and subliminal values. Subliminal meaning that sometimes its language is insufficiently direct but still creates the "stimuli" to conjure a certain thought. One example of this “stimuli” is illustrated below:

Me encantaría verte sudar

Los dos envueltos hay que llegar

En la disco nunca parar

Sentirte es lo que anhelo

Resistirme imposible será

I would love to see you sweat

Both embraced we have to come

In the disco never stop

Feeling you is what I long for

It will be impossible to resist

The "stimuli" intend to sexually arouse young women or girls. The message is if a woman achieves to provoke sexual desire in a man, he will never leave her side…i.e. devotion.

Originally, fairy tales were presented in a coarse and violent manner; however, through time adaptations by Disney transformed them to fit the hegemony. Just as Disney has shaped the original fairy tales, likewise some artists of reggaeton have done the same with the narratives of their songs. They have mellowed their lyrics in order to make them more "appropriate" for all types of audiences. In an interview, Wisin from the duo Wisin and Yandel statest that: "*Hay veces que las personas tienen que hacer la cosa negativa para luego entender que hay que crecer*" ("Sometimes people have to do the wrong thing in order for them to understand they have to grow"; my translation; Cano 1). Wisin, a very popular reggaeton performer and part of the duo *Wisin y Yandel*, recently commented this at an interview while explaining why their lyrics have changed from something "negative" to something "positive" and also explained why they have succeeded internationally. According to Wisin, "*El público del movimiento del regueton y del hip hop es gente de barrio, es toda una realidad, surgió en la calle, no podemos tapar el sol con un dedo*" ("Reggaeton and hip hop fans are people from the hood, really, it emerged from the streets, we can't hide the sun with a finger"; my translation; Cano 1). Initially, *Wisin y Yandel* won the attention of those who are "like them", but now they have caught everyone's attention, even those who disagree with who and what they are. Wisin declares:

> Nosotros nos convertimos en los ídolos de los chamaquitos que nacen en los barrios, cuyos padres quizás murieron de Sida, que se meten droga, a esa gente

llegamos, pero también a otro sector del público que escucha a Ricky Martin, a Enrique Iglesias o a David Bisbal, con quienes hemos trabajado, así que hay un compromiso fuerte cuando se tiene un micrófono enfrente.

We became the idols of the kiddos who are born in the hoods, of those whose parents may have died of Aids, of those who are drug users, we reach those people, but also another sector of the audience who listen to Ricky Martin, Enrique Iglesias or David Bisbal, with whom we have worked, so there is a strong compromise when you have a microphone in front of you. (Cano 1)

Those who are exposed to and internalize fairy tales and reggaeton in Puerto Rico receive a violent message from both genres. As I write this thesis, Puerto Rico is going through one of its most violent times, as Figueroa Sifre explains: "*Puerto Rico es una sociedad violenta, cuyas tasas de criminalidad son similares a las de un país donde hay una situación de guerra civil*" ("Puerto Rico is a violent society, its criminality rates are similar to those of a country with a civil war situation"; my translation; 1). It is especially important to note that the way children and especially girls perceive themselves is reinforced by what they read and listen to, and by situations they experience where they live. Girls are told physical appearance is really important if they want to be accepted and loved by others. They are also told the type of activities they should do and which are the ones they should like or dislike in order to be accepted. Moreover, they are told what kind of punishments they will receive if they don't fulfill all these pressures society has for them. These pressures create constraints, tensions, and frustrations in girls and they will live with them for the rest of their lives.

The gender stereotypes and archetypes reinforced by both genres lead boys to portray girls as sexual objects and girls to see themselves in the same way. However, Zipes, in *Don't Bet*

on the Prince, explains: "It is also too ethereal and idealistic to argue that the fairy tales contain archetypal patterns which point the way to happiness as many Jungians have done without questioning the historical validity of the archetypes" (2). There is, of course, a historic context which has to be taken into account when interpreting fairy tales. However, if nowadays fairy tales still reach the hands of children, the meaning and messages of the tales are still relevant and worthy of study. The gender stereotypes these archetypes promote only served the interests of those in power at the moment the tales were written. Men, rich men, were the ones who promoted those gender stereotypes to their delight, happiness, and pleasure. In other words, their happiness is achieved through the manipulation of the other; the other is their female counterpart.

Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives were and are mainly written by males; however, folk tales were mainly written or told by women. Zipes, in *Don't Bet on the Prince*, indicates in his preface that: "For years the classical literary tales were mainly articulations and representations of a male viewpoint" (xii). They are the voice of those in power even when in the case of reggaeton they are also the voice of people from los "*barrios*" (hoods) or "*caseríos*" (projects). The happiness of men in fairy tales as well as the happiness of men in reggaeton narratives depend on men being in control of the world. This control is achieved through the reinforcement of the common gender stereotypes. This is why it is time to begin questioning how and why these two genres are affecting the way young people see themselves and how these two genres reinforce the way children should behave according to the common stereotypes the patriarchal system has established for them.

For teachers, fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are worth studying because they represent two of the most influential genres in Puerto Rican popular culture. Therefore, teachers should be prepared to help children and specially girls to become critical about them. Gender

stereotypes cannot be completely eradicated but teachers and parents can make a difference in helping to recognize them and not accept them all as if they are a natural part of life. Gender stereotypes are reinforced more easily when they are taught at very early ages. Therefore, creating awareness to teachers and parents might help neutralize their effect. As Peggy Orenstein, in *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, articulates, "Then the whole concept of labeling kicks in – sometime between the ages of two and three they realize that there is this thing called 'boy' and this thing called 'girl' and something important differentiates them" (61). This differentiation of boy and girl is most of the time related more to behavior than to anything else.

Children and adolescents in Puerto Rico are exposed to fairy tales and reggaeton narratives. The gender stereotypes presented in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives are explicitly displayed for children and adolescents. When children reach the age to go to school, these stereotypes are already internalized and reinforced by parents, particularly by the stories read to them and the music played to them. Finally when they are in school, gender stereotypes will be reinforced by their teachers and classmates. In her book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, Orenstein explains: "... until around age five kids don't fully realize that their own identities [not to mention their anatomies] are fixed" (60). To fix stereotypes or gender roles for them is not only easy, it is also violent. When girls are told they are supposed to be subservient, docile, and attractive to men because they have to be the object of their desire, they are in danger of losing their dignity and the right they have to be free. Also, as Levin and Kilbourne, in *So Sexy So Soon*, inform: "Both boys and girls are routinely exposed to images of sexual behavior devoid of emotions, attachment, or consequences" (5). Gender stereotypes are presented very attractively through fairy tales and the use of fantasy. In reggaeton narratives gender stereotypes are presented more explicitly because its vocabulary is very graphic, sexually speaking. Therefore,

teachers should become more attentive to those gender stereotypes which are presented in a more appealing way because they are not only appealing to children; they are appealing to parents as well.

Children, particularly girls, need more positive modeling from women. Female teachers and mothers should change sexist vocabulary because the idea is, as Lisa Bloom expresses in her article *How to Talk to Little Girls* "to change the world, one little girl at a time". Gender stereotypes are noxious to children but especially to girls and women because they obstruct the path to liberation. To liberate a woman, one must liberate a girl. Therefore, it is not recommended to continue ignoring the message fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are sending, as Anzaldúa suggests, "… in reconstructing the traumas behind the images, I make 'sense' of them, and once they have 'meaning' they are changed, transformed" (70). There is hope if children become critical of what they read and listen to. The focus of this thesis is to look at how fairy tales and reggaeton narratives, which are most popular in Puerto Rico, are responsible of reinforcing gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rico's popular culture. The analysis and interpretation of the fairy tales *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* and the analysis and interpretation of the reggaeton narratives *Irresistible* and *Energía* will be compared in order to answer:

- What are the ideological values and gender roles promoted with particular focus on female gender roles accepted in popular culture?
- Identify and classify violence used in reggaeton narratives and that promoted in the Disney's versions of fairy tales.
- Identify the message(s) fairy tales and reggaeton narratives portray to young girls through the presentation of archetypes and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

- Discuss the representation of love presented in fairy tales and reggaeton narratives.

This thesis is structured in the following manner: the current chapter is the introduction to the problem, and chapter two focuses on the review of the literature. Among the several topics discussed are how fairy tales are manifestations of folklore. However, in Puerto Rico the new adaptations of fairy tales by Disney, as suggested by Storey, are a manifestation of popular culture. Popular culture theory, commonly known as pop culture, is also explained. Storey argues that popular culture has a "political dimension". Fairy tale books, movies, songs, personal objects, and school supplies among other things are part of what little girls in Puerto Rico normally consume. This is why fairy tales are considered as part of Puerto Rico's popular culture. Puerto Rico's popular culture is clearly represented in reggaeton narratives as well, especially among youngsters, because reggaeton is, as the reggaeton author and singer Eddie D says, "... *es la música con la que los jóvenes se identifican*" ("... the kind of music young people identify themselves with"; my translation). Reggaeton is very important in Puerto Rico because it represents the urban street ideologies. It is the ideology of those who are not acknowledged by the power structures. Dwellers of the hood and projects find a way to communicate their reality and life experiences through this musical genre. Therefore, for purposes of this thesis, two of the most popular princess stories, *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast;* and two of the most popular reggaeton songs *Irresistible* and *Energía* will be scrutinized.

From a feminist perspective, gender stereotypes are mentioned and defined. Theories of feminism are studied to describe and explain the consequences of inserting and reinforcing the most common stereotypes to young girls. The patriarchal system is defined and explained as well. Alternatives and options for teachers and parents to prevent the negative consequences of the insertion and reinforcement of gender stereotypes are explored.

Fairy tales theory is discussed; seminal books and articles on the topic are studied and analyzed in order to decode the message fairy tales impose about gender stereotypes in Puerto Rico. Then the reggaeton narratives previously mentioned are compared with *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* tales in terms of the similarities they may have when reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Chapter three discusses the importance of Disneyfied or contemporary popular versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*. This chapter examines in depth the classic Grimm Brothers' versions and modern Disney's versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast;* they are parsed and dissected in order to come across the similarities they share with reggaeton narratives in terms of gender stereotypes.

Chapter four attempts to identify and shed light on reggaeton narratives meaning and message. Books and articles related to this topic are analyzed in order to understand the message *Irresistible* of Wisin and Yandel and *Energía* of Alexis and Fido provide regarding gender stereotypes.

In chapter five, the conclusion and pedagogical implications are explained. I believe this thesis will benefit school teachers, college professors, parents, as well as those who are interested in taking care of children so they become critical on what they choose for them to read and listen. This does not mean that the liking of these genres or the influence they have in children's lives can be eliminated. It only intends to recognize how two apparently different genres are in fact very similar in the messages they send. Moreover, this thesis offers school teachers, college professors, parents, as well as those interested in taking care of children alternatives to identify and prevent the violence gender stereotypes conceal in the manifestations of popular culture children enjoy.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Issues regarding gender roles and power as understood in popular culture are important. Prevalent genres such as fairy tales and reggaeton present these issues in very similar ways. They set the confines of gender stereotypes which shape in part the thinking and behavior of children in Puerto Rico. John Storey, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, explores different critical approaches in order to define popular culture. The first approach states that: "… popular culture is simply culture that is widely favoured or well liked by many people" (5). Fairy tales and reggaeton represent what the majority of people and especially young children in Puerto Rico enjoy. Proof of the popularity of Disney and their versions of fairy tales is evident in the most circulated newspaper in Puerto Rico *El Nuevo Día.* In the article *Apertura de Disney Store en Plaza Atrae Decenas* on the opening of the Disney store on October 7, 2011; Andrea Martínez states*:* "Con una gran concurrencia, y con la participación del campeón de boxeo Tito Trinidad, y su familia, quedó inaugurada hoy la tienda de Disney Store en Plaza las Américas" (The Disney Store located in Plaza Las Americas was inaugurated today with a large crowd of people and the participation of boxing champion Tito Trinidad, and his family; my translation; 1). The participation of Tito Trinidad in this event is very important and symbolic because he is one of Puerto Rico's most famous boxer if not currently the most famous. People in Puerto Rico call him "el del pueblo" (he is one of us). The reporter of this article describes how the store was full of people: "A las 10:00 a.m., la fila de personas se extendía hasta el exterior del centro commercial" (At 10:00 a.m. the line of people stretched outside of the mall; my translation; 1).

Reggaeton also has a popular impact even in schools and in community groups. In an article in *El Nuevo Día* it is described how a group of students from public schools used reggaeton to send a very important message to their communities (followed by my translation):

> Con el mismo espíritu urbano y de naturaleza con que el Caño Martín Peña bordea ocho comunidades de Hato Rey y Santurce, unos 350 niños y jóvenes de escuelas elementales de esos sectores pusieron en práctica ayer lo aprendido durante el semestre escolar a través del "flow" del reguetón.
>
> Yesterday approximately 350 children and youngsters from elementary schools from eight communities in Hato Rey and Santurce, and with the same urban spirit and nature the Caño Martín Peña has, they put into practice what they learned during the semester through the "flow" (popular slang for rhythm) of reggaeton.

Auudi, one of Puerto Rico's many popular reggaeton performers, collaborated in this project. He and Orlando Falcón, the president of Sierra Club, journalist María Falcón, Dr. María Nazario from the Escuela Graduada de Salud Pública, and the president of Junta de Calidad Ambiental, Pedro J. Nieves had the task of evaluating the talent and execution of the participants. Therefore, reggaeton, just like fairy tales, is considered part of what is well liked by many people.

Although popular, not everyone in Puerto Rico considers fairy tales and reggaeton, and very specifically reggaeton, favorably or representative of the Puerto Rican culture. Storey's second approach to define popular culture addresses this fact: "… it is the culture that is left over after we have decided what high culture is" (6). This is due because popular culture is generally considered as mass culture. Storey notes in his third approach to define popular culture that mass culture is seen by some within the culture as: "…a hopelessly commercial culture". This definition gives a negative connotation to popular culture and a long time honored elitist argument which follows Mathew Arnold's declaration, in Storey's *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* that:

> The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them. On these inadequate ideas reposes, and must repose, the general practice of the world. (22)

Fairy tale narratives as well as reggaeton narratives only represent the values of those who are part of the mass of mankind. But as Storey notes, fairy tales and reggaeton narratives as part of mass media and popular music intend to entertain people and at the same time maintain the prevalent and more powerful ideologies of society.

Fairy tale narratives use an elegant and fancy vocabulary. Their discourse is politically correct. These tales represent the voice of people with social status. Therefore, they help maintain the ideologies of patriarchy and capitalism. On the other hand, reggaeton with its politically incorrect vocabulary and their obscene depictions of society is considered part of an inferior culture by those with higher social status. Storey's argument in his second approach follows the lines of thought of Theodor W. Adorno; Storey argues that popular music operates as "social cement" because mass media and popular music are "standardized" and promote "passive listening". Popular songs, specifically, are exploited to commercial exhaustion and demand inattention and distraction. The narratives of reggaeton may use the vocabulary of those who are not educated and are considered a mass. These narratives represent the voice of people with no social status. Again, these narratives help maintain intact the ideologies of patriarchy and capitalism, which are two of the most powerful ideologies in Puerto Rican society. They do not intend to change the social order prevalent in Puerto Rican culture.

Storey's fourth approach to define popular culture sheds light on the concern intellectuals have on music and literature as manifestations of popular culture. They believe these manifestations might disrupt social order. Storey's approach contends, "…that popular culture is

the culture that originates from 'the people' (9). As he explains it: "This is popular culture as folk culture: a culture of the people for the people" (9). Therefore, the culture of the people promotes or enhances the customs and values of those who are not in charge of establishing social order. However, he also explains that: "… folk culture was very much a category of the learned, constructed by intellectuals, especially collectors, editors, and publishers, and not a concept generated by the people defined as the folk" (1). Fairy tales are manifestations of the oral folk tale. They were collected and were re- created to educate people, especially women on how to behave in society even though they were all about common life situations. Valerie Paradiz, in *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales,* makes note that Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm ("were two of Europe's most preeminent philological scholars of the nineteenth century") defined fairy tales as being all about common life. Reggaeton, on the other hand is also considered folk culture according to this definition because it started the same way fairy tales did. The first name this musical genre received was *Underground*. Since it was born in "las barreadas" (hoods) and "los caseríos" (government sponsored low income residential projects) of Puerto Rico. Alfredo Nieves Moreno, in Notes from his essay *A Man Lives Here,* indicates that reggaeton or underground narratives were "limited to criticizing the conditions of poverty and the dynamics of oppressed sectors of the country" (278). These stories were and are mostly about the struggle of very young men who are trying to achieve social status and while doing that they have to encounter all kinds of difficulties related to the world of discrimination, drug trafficking and criminality. Therefore, what fairy tales and reggaeton narratives have in common as manifestations of folk culture is that both of them tell the stories of common people's daily lives foregrounding prevalent and more powerful ideologies of this segment of society .

Fairy tales just like reggaeton are part of the folk culture which is adapted to fit modern realities through popular culture. Folk tales and *Underground* represent part of the past. As explained by Storey, quoting Cecil Sharp, in *Inventing Popular Culture,* "… study of folk song … stimulates the growth of the feeling of patriotism" (13). Patriotism always means something positive for any country. Fairy tales are not considered patriotic in Puerto Rico simply because they are not about Puerto Rico's national history. Likewise, reggaeton does not represent part of the past which instills a sense of patriotism. In the case of reggaeton it is not considered patriotic because it doesn't narrate the story of Puerto Rico's past and traditions. In Puerto Rico, reggaeton is considered a manifestation of popular culture by the privileged class, as it is described by Storey's second approach to define popular culture,"… that is consumed with brain – numbed and brain – numbing passivity" (Storey 8). Nonetheless, this contrasts with the recognition reggaeton is achieving worldwide. Don Omar, one of the singers of this musical genre is an example of how popular and well known this genre is. In *El Nuevo Día,* one of Puerto Rico's newspapers, an article is dedicated to Don Omar:

> Don Omar encabeza este año la lista de finalistas a los Premios Billboard de la Música Latina con 16 candidaturas….Los premios que se entregaran el próximo 26 de abril en el Bank United Center de la Universidad de Miami, honran a los discos, canciones y cantantes más populares en su género, de acuerdo con las ventas e informes radiales basados en la lista semanal de Billboard.
>
> Don Omar heads this year's list of finalists for the Latin Music Billboard with 16 nominations…. The awards which will be presented on April 26 at the Bank United Center at the University of Miami, honor the album songs and most popular singers of its kind, according to sales and radio reports based on the weekly Billboard.

Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives pervade young children and adolescents daily lives. Both genres provide a common set of ideas that provide unity as well as understanding among children and adolescents.

Resistance is therefore, one word always present in the middle of any discussion about popular culture. The fifth approach Storey uses to define popular culture is related to this and the political analysis of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci on the concept of "hegemony". Storey explains that: "Those using this approach see popular culture as a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of the subordinate groups and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups" (10). Popular culture is seen as a battle among those who accept and are advocates of fairy tales and reggaeton, and those who condemn and consider them as inferior. Paradiz in *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales* explains what fairy tales do: "… dole out pedantic lessons in feminine virtue and appropriateness. The means of enforcement are often astonishingly violent" (54). Fairy tale narratives use of violence represents the voice of the main privileged groups. Girls losing limbs and fingers, or girls allowing their hands to be chopped in fairy tales are what the authors use to illustrate how violent society could be against women. The authors' intentions are to evoke feelings of disgust against behaviors of bad girls. Nonetheless, what they were doing with the final message that was being sent was incorporating the interests of dominant groups and their ideology. Reggaeton performers and the people who are the protagonists of its stories, just like the characters in fairy tales, are breaking away from some of the rules and manners of "proper" mainstream society; they are creating what Gramsci refers to as "compromise equilibrium". This simply means they are using "what is made from above" and from "below", both "commercial" and "authentic", "a shifting balance of forces between resistance and incorporation" as explained in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*

(82). This happens because people from a "dominant class" try to lead society through the exercise of "moral and intellectual leadership" in a capitalist democracy and the lower class which is considered a "class fraction" is trying to exercise resistance.

Nowadays, popular culture is not too much about establishing what is considered high culture or low culture manifestations of art. Moreover, this thesis intends to analyze fairy tales and reggaeton narratives as part of postmodernism. Storey's sixth approach to define popular culture is informed around the debate on postmodernism. Storey explains: "… postmodern culture is a culture which no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture" (12). Disney's fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are manifestations of this postmodern culture. The acceptance of these genres is no longer an issue of class power for parents, teachers, children, and for society in general. Disney's adaptations of fairy tales are what the majority of parents buy as "appropriate" literature for their young girls and are what little girls like the most. The magic Disney uses to present these stories is what makes them so appealing. An article in *El Nuevo Día* shows how important and valued Disney is in the lives of Puerto Rican families:

> No tendré que comprar regalos, ni cocinar ni preparar la casa ni afanarme – como todos los años – en recibir a hijos y nietos en Reyes. Encontré el regalo perfecto para ellos y para mí: ¡un Día de Reyes en Disney World (y unos cuantos días más después)!
>
> I won't have to buy gifts, cook, decorate the house or put in so much effort – like I do every year – to receive my children and grandchildren on *Reyes*. I found the perfect gift for them and for me: a "Día de Reyes"[2] in Disney World (and a few days more after)!

[2] Dia de Reyes (Three Wise Men's Day) is a religious tradition celebrated throughout Puerto Rico on January 6th. This celebration overpowers the celebration of Santa Claus.

Disney's movies and story books are also considered great gifts for children since they recreate all the magic that surrounds the recreational parks.

In the same manner, reggaeton is valued almost as much as fairy tales are. Juan Flores, in Foreword from *Reggaeton* explains that reggaeton: "is to this extent no different than other new styles or modes of popular music as they take hold among the young generation and conquer the soundscape of its place and time" (ix). Reggaeton as part of this postmodern culture is represented mostly by reggaeton performers like Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, Wisin y Yandel, Alexis y Fido, and Tito El Bambino. They are well known artists in Puerto Rico and internationally. According to Puerto Rico's media, they are a national pride. Therefore, one can argue that if artists of popular music are widely recognized as famous, then issues of power and control among dominant groups and subordinate groups of society are no longer at stake. Don Omar and his nominations for the Latin Billboard and Daddy Yankees nominations for the Latin Grammy this year are the justifications people needed to accept reggaeton as part of mainstream.

Popular culture defined as postmodern culture is one that is responsible of shaping the ideologies of people in Puerto Rico. Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera* argues that "culture forms our beliefs". Therefore, it is culture which presents and reinforces gender stereotypes. Moreover, manifestations of postmodern culture such as fairy tale and reggaeton narratives are responsible in part for the oppression suffered by young women. Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives both contain gender stereotypes which are and should be what concern women, men, teachers, parents, and psychologists among others. Jungian archetypes present in fairy tales are the ones responsible of presenting and reinforcing gender stereotypes. These are also presented in reggaeton narratives. Jungian archetypes represent different types of personalities. The most common archetypes are: the child, the mother, the witch, and the

"maiden". These personality types set the patterns of action one should follow. The actions represent the most common gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes can be defined as representation of the characteristics one should exhibit according to gender. These patterns of thought and action are not original to women or men's nature; they are prescribed roles in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives. The consequences of these representations are seen in a form of violence towards women. Zipes states: "The stereotypes, not archetypes, depicted in printed and staged versions of fairy tales tend to follow schematic notions of how young women and men should behave" (194). Representations of women in literature and in music narratives play an important role in the formation of a young girl's self-esteem. These narratives reinforce what is already known and understood in culture regarding gender.

Society and specially the patriarchy want their system of beliefs to be taught and reinforced. Manifestations of popular culture like fairy tales and reggaeton are used for this purpose. However, Disney's fairy tales discourse has changed with time in order to make people believe that discrimination and oppression towards women are not accepted by them anymore. Most recent versions of fairy tales have changed the representation of the princesses in order for them to look more empowered and less submissive. Zipes, in *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*, states that: "Although the plots varied and the themes and characters were altered, the classical fairy tale for children and adults reinforced the patriarchal symbolical order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender" (194). The patriarchal symbolical order notions of gender establish that women must be subservient to men, passive, docile, good wives, mothers, and housekeepers. Likewise, reggaeton has changed its discourse in order to be accepted by the more elitist and conservative part of society. However, their narratives still have the same sexist ideology fairy tales exhibit. Moreno Nieves in *Reggaeton* explains:

> …in many reggaeton songs, the participation of women is circumscribed to dancing and fulfilling male sexual desire. Women's objectification within reggaeton eliminates almost all possibility of action and translates their presence into a prize or trophy that men exhibit, dominate, and manipulate. (256)

Reggaeton narratives as well as the image they present of women in music videos play an important role in teaching the beliefs of the patriarchy and in reinserting the most common gender stereotypes.

Children, especially girls are living in a very sexist environment in Puerto Rico. Issues regarding gender are always present in their daily lives. Therefore, young girls see princess behaviors as normal. *El Nuevo Día* published in *Por Dentro* an interview to Dolly Mallet by Juan Ramón Peña. Mallet states that all women have something they want to imitate from these princesses because they are part of what they know since the day they were born, she describes them as follows:

> Blancanieves, Cenicienta, y la Bella Durmiente son las "princesas de la posguerra", las más empeñadas precisamente en casarse y ser amas de casa, en el marco de un estereotipo que buscaba llevar de vuelta al hogar a la mujer, tras haber tenido que asumir ésta un rol diferente por las dos guerras mundiales.
>
> Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty are the "princesses of the post war", the ones who were more determined to get married and be house wives, in the framework of a stereotype which tried to take women back to the household environment, because they had to assume different roles because of the world wars. (3)

Nonetheless, even when the situations created by these two wars are over, these princesses continue to be role models for little girls. Princess set the path to follow to adulthood because

they show the transition from a young girl to a grown woman. One of the reasons why they are still role models is because they reinforce and reinsert the most common gender stereotypes which help the patriarchal system perpetrate its power, the same gender stereotypes that are so important in Puerto Rico's popular culture.

It is explained, in the book *Reggaeton,* that reggaeton has a great power in reinforcing gender stereotypes to young people just like fairy tales do. In the fifth chapter of *Reggaeton* it expands on how reggaeton is gendered. This chapter interprets and explains reggaeton narratives and it also contrasts and compares the figures of the two most prominent and well known female performers of this music genre in Puerto Rico: Glory and Ivy Queen. Félix Jiménez, in his essay *(W)rapped in Foil* in *Reggaeton,* says: "Glory's lines in chorus performances woven into the songs are the essential, yet parenthetical, aside to the male's singers 'adjectivication/objectification of women" (230). Not only is she subjectified and objectified as a woman, she is also subjectified and objectified as a singer. She is the singer who began as a chorus girl and later transformed herself into an interpreter but her evolution did not turn out the way she wanted. Jiménez further explains: "So her lyrical career went - answering, and yielding, to men, within the narrow parameters of patriarchal condescension" (230). She is accepted because she plays by the rules. On the other hand, Ivy Queen who is also a singer is the most popular "voice" of women in Reggaeton because her narratives are written from a female perspective. She intends to represent the way of thinking of women in general. Jimenez proclaims: "Martha Ivelisse Pesante is the strongest of all female singers, a commercial success, and in the face of reggaeton's male performers' cultivated ambiguities, perhaps the only performer to structure her career with a gender difference in mind" (239). She wants to be respected and accepted as a woman, not only as a performer.

Since fairy tales and reggaeton narratives play an important role in the socialization process of children in Puerto Rico, the differences these genres establish among genders have an impact. This process is one in which violence is present now more than ever. Criminality rates have increased vertiginously these past years in Puerto Rico; society has permitted and fomented gender violence. Violence as defined and classified by Slavoj Žižek are presented and exercised in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives as well. Žižek in *The Tyrant's Bloody Robe* illustrates:

> At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible "subjective" violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. (1)

Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives represent this subjective violence Žižek mentions in this explanation. They exercise this violence through the insertion and reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Subjective violence is divided in three parts. The first part is the subjective violence itself. The second part is the symbolic violence which is embodied by the language and its forms (our House of Being) and an imposition of its universe of meaning. The third and last part is systemic violence which ensures the smooth running of our political and economic systems. The definition of violence by Žižek provides the explanation necessary to understand the violence in fairy tales and reggaeton narratives towards young girls and women. These narratives represent what Žižek calls "objective violence". Žižek explains that:

> The catch is that subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived from the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non – violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the 'normal', peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this "normal" state of

> things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the zero – level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. (2)

The narratives of fairy tales and reggaeton use their discourse to exercise their violence.

In the case of fairy tales, magic is used to describe how things should be in order to achieve happiness. On the other hand, reggaeton uses bold and audacious vocabulary to present their message of a fun life. Both genres conceal "subjective violence". People would argue that fairy tales are not violent and that reggaeton narratives are. However, the difference relies heavily on the vocabulary and the imagery both fairy tales and reggaeton narratives use. The violence fairy tales and reggaeton narratives represent is more "symbolic" because it is embodied by the language. It is also considered as "objective" according to Žižek definitions of violence because is one of the "more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence" (9). The violence reggaeton narratives represent could be considered as "subjective" because reggaeton narratives and imagery are very explicit because of how they describe the violence of the streets and because of how sexual relationships are described.

In Puerto Rico, gender violence occupies an important place in the list of criminal acts that occur every day in the country. This kind of violence is "subjective" and it is depicted very explicitly in fairy tales and especially in reggaeton narratives. Millán in *Violencia Machista, ¿Hasta Cuándo?* sugests that:

> Nuestra sociedad ha fomentado y permitido la desigualdad entre el hombre y la mujer, y por mucho tiempo se ha visto el maltrato y la opresión del hombre hacia la mujer como algo normal, porque se ha considerado como una cuestión cultural

> Our society has fomented and permitted inequality between men and women and for a long time the abuse and oppression towards women by men had been seen as normal because it had been considered as a cultural trait. (my translation;1)

The presentation of this type of violence in literature and in music children read can lead to the acceptance of it as they grow older. Teachers, parents, and caregivers of children should be aware of every kind of violence that could be exercised towards them. Žižek explains that:

> Opposing all forms of violence, from direct, physical violence (mass murder, terror) to ideological violence (racism, incitement, sexual discrimination), seems to be the main preoccupation of the tolerant liberal attitude that predominates today. (10)

Teachers and parents should also worry about direct physical violence but must always keep in mind that the more subtle forms of violence can lead to the first one.

Fairy tales' non physical violence has a great impact on young girls' lives. Zipes in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* declares that: "The fairy tale may be one of the most important cultural and social influences on children's lives" (Zipes back page cover). Therefore, the messages promoted in them should not be ignored. These messages socialize girls in terms of how they should act and accept violence according to their gender and that has a negative and dangerous impact. Zipes further informs: "Fairy tales – and one could add the oral folk tales as well – always have been concerned with sex roles, social class, and power" (21). They not only intend to socialize or educate people in terms of how to behave according to their gender but according to how much they are valued because of their social status. Zipes states that, "To be civil in any society, to be counted as a civilian, one must understand and follow social codes that are not of one's making and that determine to a large degree one's sexual identity and social status" (21). This process of "civilizing" is particularly problematic to young girls because this

is where violence starts to take place in girls' lives because as Zipes indicates, "… whatever conflicts and struggles for power are played out in the civilizing process involve the manner in which men reinforce their authority and force and the manner in which women confront and expose the arbitrary rule of men" (21). Most of the time, the arbitrary rule of men is not questioned in the tales and in real life.

Moreover, Žižek and other scholars such as Anzaldúa, sustain that one form of violence leads the way to the other. Gloria Anzaldúa, in her essay *Borderlands,* explains that culture is not always benevolent to people; it also influences people in negative ways. Culture could be violent. Culture, as it is defined by Storey in *Inventing Popular Culture:* "… are arenas in which different ways of articulating the world come into conflict and alliance" (x). For example, "machismo" is a negative ideology which concerns teachers and parents because it is objective violence that could transform into subjective violence. In Puerto Rico, "*machismo*" is the attitude a man displays towards a woman believing he is superior to her because she was not born with a penis. However, "machismo" is present in the stories girls read and in the music they listen and teachers and parents do not classify them as inappropriate for girls. This is troubling because this manifestation of men's way of thinking is the frontrunner to domestic violence and child abuse. In Puerto Rico, as Olga (Coquí) López Baez in her article *Consideraciones Generales de la Violencia Contra las Mujeres* states:

> Hemos pasado de la tolerancia y el "no te metas en asuntos de matrimonio" a reconocer mundialmente que la violencia en las relaciones de pareja es una de las manifestaciones más graves de la violencia contra las mujeres...

> We have gone from tolerance and don't interfere with marital issues' to recognizing worldwide that violence in a relationship is one of the worst manifestations of violence towards women… (my translation;1)

However, the recognition of this violence has not helped Puerto Ricans eliminate it or neutralize it. Moreover, statistics evidence that in Puerto Rico the leading cause of violent deaths for women are caused by "machista" violence. Coquí further explains, "... la primera causa de muerte de mujeres de forma violenta ocurre por la violencia machista" (... "the first cause of violent death among women occurs because of the 'machista' violence"; my translation; 1). Figueroa Sifre, in *La Violencia del País*, argues that education plays an important role in preventing and eliminating this violence. Francisco A. Cátala Oliveras, in his article *Crisis y Violencia*, points out that right now government efforts have been ineffective because there is no public policy to deal with the violence which has vanished from our hands. The violence the government is exercising towards those who act violent seems to perpetuate the worst.

To conclude, this thesis is concerned with one of the most subtle forms of objective violence present in fairy tales and reggaeton narratives which is related to gender stereotypes. This form of violence is the sexualization of girls at a very young age and this is done inadvertently. Parents and teachers are responsible for perpetuating and fomenting it. Sexualization is one of the greatest dangers of following common gender stereotypes at very young ages. It represents one of the many forms of violence society exercises towards women through the use of popular culture. In Notes of *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, sexualization is described as follows:

> According to the American Psychological Association: *Report of the **APA** Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*, www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html. The report defines

> sexualization as occurring under *any* of the following conditions: a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified – that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/ or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person. (2)

In fairy tales as well as in reggaeton narratives, girls are always the object of desire of a man. In the case of fairy tales, the prince considers the princess as worthy of his love only if she is very pretty and submissive. Likewise, in reggaeton narratives the male protagonist of the story considers the girl as worthy of his love only if she is pretty and sexually desirable. The descriptions of the girls in both narratives most of the time are related only to the physical appearance of the girls and not to their personality.

Lisa Bloom, in her article *How to Talk to Little Girls*, argues that women are the ones responsible to teach young girls with their example. Teachers, mothers, grandmothers, and big sisters are some of the women who are supposed to teach young girls with their example. Bloom suggests: "Model for her what a thinking woman says and does" (3). Eventually, if the model is positive, girls will copy the behavior of that person, in this case, important women in their lives. Sexist comments and questions should be avoided on behalf of women when talking to young girls. Lisa further to explain: "What's missing? A life full of meaning, a life of ideas and reading books and being valued for our thoughts and accomplishments" (Bloom 2). Teachers and parents should be aware of what is missing and be ready to step in to fill this void for girls. Alternatives to mass media and popular music should be provided in order to stimulate critical thinking.

Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne, in their book *So Sexy So Soon*, are also concerned with sexualization of young girls. They explain girls are specially being taught that their value as person relies heavily on looks. Levin and Kilbourne declare that: "The 'sexualization' of childhood is having a profoundly disturbing impact on children's understanding of gender, sexuality, and relationships" (7). This is particularly damaging because young girls are developing their sense of themselves as sexual beings when they are not ready to understand it because they are not psychologically developed yet. The message they receive about how they should establish a relationship with their male counterpart is only related to sex. These authors go further to explain: "In fact, the first experiences that lay the foundation for positive ideas and values and emotions about sex aren't related to sex at all" (8). Girls should learn first that emotional intimacy comes first if one wants to establish a healthy relationship. Fairy tales and reggaeton narratives do not teach about emotional intimacy. Because as Levin and Kilbourne suggest: "In part, children learn what they do from the sexualized popular culture, and sexual development occurs as it does, because of how young children think" (57). They argue children have an eye for strange things; sex is something that looks strange to them. Although teachers and parents can't separate them from the real world, they can help children become critical about what they are most commonly exposed to. However, this is becoming a great challenge because as Levin and Kilbourne explain: "But now, in an effort to expand its reach, the music industry has turned its attention to creating edgy music for younger children" (45). Edgy music, as they describe it, is the music which calls attention because its content is strange to what is normally seen in children's environment. One strange thing for children is sexually explicit lyrics and the visual representation of those lyrics in music videos. The same thing happens when reading fairy or princess tales. Levin and Kilbourne stress that: "The overwhelming message the Princesses

convey is to look pretty, aka sexy, so they can hook the prince" (48). Princess stories are supposed to be read by girls. However, the princesses in fairy tales and the princesses mentioned in reggaeton are not girls, they are women. Therefore, these narratives are explicitly telling girls how to act like women. Nevertheless, these stories do not tell girls they have to wait to reach adulthood to exhibit their behavior.

In *Cinderella Ate My Daughter,* Peggy Orenstein focuses on the same issues as Levin and Kilbourne do on their book. She is interested in analyzing the sexualization of girls at very young ages. She states that: "There is, however, ample evidence that the more mainstream media girls consume, the more importance they place on being pretty and sexy" (16). By looking pink and pretty, a girl becomes a good feminine girl and this is what will help her achieve social status. Orenstein illustrates:

> And a ream of studies shows that teenage girls and college students who hold conventional beliefs about femininity – especially those that emphasize beauty and pleasing behavior – are less ambitious and more likely to be depressed than their peers. They are also less likely to report that they enjoy sex or insist that their partners use condoms. (16)

Beauty and pleasing behavior are two of the most important characteristics described in fairy tales and in reggaeton narratives. Girls who have both characteristics are successful with men. Therefore, they secure their happily ever after ending.

Commercialization is also important when discussing sexualization of young girls. It teaches young girls that achieving physical perfection is the way to attain empowerment. Therefore, Orenstein analyzes its impact. In order to prove her point, Orenstein visited Disneyland, the International Toy Fair, American Girl Place, Pottery Barn Kids, and even a

beauty contest for toddler girls. At the beauty contest she spoke with the contestants' parents to investigate their reasons for having their girls there. She also "dissected the science, created an online avatar, and parsed the original fairy tales" (Orenstein, front flip) in order to understand the influence commercialization has in the sexualization of young girls. In her book, she explains and studies the implications of feeding fairy tale fantasies to young girls. She points out that when girls are intoxicated with these fantasies the following happens:

> We can excel in school, play sports, go to college, aspire to – and get – jobs previously reserved for men, be working mothers, and so forth. But in exchange we must obsess about our faces, weight, breast size, clothing brands, decorating, perfectly calibrated child – rearing, about pleasing men and being envied by other women. (18)

These unrealistic expectations of a woman are present in fairy tales and reggaeton narratives. Therefore, Orenstein is interested in showing the alternatives moms and teachers have to avoid this "fairy tale mania". One of these alternatives is to encourage girls to participate in sports. She recommends also that parents from the opposite sex spend more time with their children. But what she most strongly recommends is to teach girls to become critical thinkers, also parents and teachers should choose literature and music for them that are not part of this "girly girl culture". The "girly girl culture", as explained by Orenstein, is created around the hegemonized image fairy tales give to young girls. A "girly" girl is one who wears pink all the time, one who is delicate and most importantly is a girl that looks pretty all the time. Orenstein explains that even when media wants teachers and parents to believe that all girls like the same thing and that is not true. She declares that: "But when you're talking about 26,000 items (and that's just Disney), it's a little easy to say where 'want' ends and 'coercion' begins" (16). Therefore, parents and teachers should avoid saying: "but that is what they like".

Reggaeton narratives are part of this “girly girl culture” even though the way it is presented is more sexually explicit. However, phrases like: “tu eres mi princesa” (you are my princess) and “tu eres mi dama” (you are my lady) appear every time in most of the genre’s most famous songs. These princesses or ladies are supposed to look like fine ladies but act like crazy “whores”. Therefore, one can say thatparts of the symbolism in reggaeton narratives plots and vocabulary are borrowed from fairy tales and adapted to fit modern reality.

Feminists’ fairy tales were created to offset the traditional message fairy tales are communicating to young girls. In his preface, Zipes indicates that: in speaking out for women the feminist fairy tales also speak out for other oppressed groups and for another world…” (xi). Two oppressed groups which could have a voice in feminist fairy tales are black people and poor people. This is important because sexism is always entangled with issues of power and social class. Moreover, they provide a good standpoint to teach girls to become critical about the music they will choose. Popular music genres, like reggaeton, have feminist narratives too. They are considered feminist narratives because they are written from a female perspective. However, these narratives do not remove the image of a pretty and good girl. Fixed notions of gender roles are always present in reggaeton narratives. It is not enough to change the most common archetypes in the narratives of fairy tales and reggaeton in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and the violence that comes with the acceptance of them.

Chapter Three: Fairy Tale Narratives: Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes Inherent in Puerto Rican Popular Culture

Disney's versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* along with the Grimm Brothers' versions of the same stories (the latter changing its title to *The Winter Rose*) will be used as examples of fairy tale narratives which reinforce gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rican popular culture. *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* fairy tale narratives, as discussed in the introduction, are important because they have great influence on children and especially on girls' education in Puerto Rico and also because they are manifestations of popular culture. Disney's monopoly, as a company, not only includes fairy tale stories, it also includes films, cartoons, and theatrical plays to represent fairy tale narratives which are readily available in the country's theaters, video stores or in department stores as paraphernalia such as pencils, pens, book bags, notebooks, and book covers which are iconic images to be readily identified with. In *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, Zipes states: "Moreover, Walt Disney and Lotte Reiniger began their great cinematic careers in the 1920's by adapting fairy tales and nothing much has been made of their great debt to folklore and the fairy tale genre" (ix). The Disney Corporation still uses the same narratives Walt Disney and Lotte Reiniger used back in time. However, even though Disney has not done much to change the message they send through fairy tales, they still are the most important company in this field. Their impact is reinforced through the commercialization of their stories.

What Disney, as a company, has done is adapt the tales to fit modern reality but without questioning or challenging the patriarchal symbolical order. In *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, Jack Zipes informs:

> The fairy tale cartoons that began with Walt Disney, Lotte Reiniger, Paul Terry, and the Fleischer brothers in the 1920s and early 1930s paved the way for great experimentation that turned traditional fairy tale plots on their heads and exposed the ridiculous aspects of romantic love, fixed gender roles, the greatness of royalty, and so on. (xi)

It is important to analyze and interpret the unrealistic and harmful representation of love they provide, especially to young girls. These false or unrealistic representations of love are dangerous because it is in childhood when children learn through games how they will deal with adulthood. Pauline Greenhill and Sydney Eve Matrix, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, state: "… 'fairy tales [provide] a means of collective daydreaming' " (4). Daydreaming is used as part of childhood games to construct reality. The construction of reality based on unrealistic or false representations of love is what teaches fixed gender roles which could result in violence towards women.

Disney's ideology about love establishes that: "Romance and love exist exclusively within a heterosexual framework" (Pershing and Gablehouse 147). Heterosexuality is reinforced because it helps maintain hegemony. Linda Pershing and Lisa Gablehouse, in their essay *Disney's Enchanted: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in a Fairy Tale Film* in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, state that the plot of every Disney's fairy tale story is always the same when it comes to describing love. They note: "… a beautiful (motherless) maiden seeks her true love; she encounters trials and tribulations; a handsome young man appears; and they marry and live happily ever after" (143). Women not only have to find a very handsome and rich young man if they want to live happily ever after, they also have to be a beautiful, helpless, and submissive woman in order to live happily ever after.

Disney's fairy tale narratives lead girls to believe that if they fit the stereotype of a beautiful maiden then their prince will come one day. As a consequence, questions like the following will arise and disturb young girls: How will I know who is he? Where will I find him? What am I going to do if I find him? What if he cannot give me what I need him to provide for me? These are questions Disney's fairy tale narratives never answer. Pershing and Gablehouse, quoting Stone in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, explain: "… women's problems are solved when they fall in love with rich men" (147). Girls' lives should be devoted to find the handsome and rich man they need in order to fall in love. If they do not find that man the obvious abstraction will be that they will have problems which will never be solved.

Cinderella and *Beauty and the Beast* are two examples of fairy tales in which love is also presented as unreal, problematic, and violent. Disney's version of *Cinderella* tells the story of a young motherless maiden who finds the love of her life at her first ball. Disney's version illustrates: "Ignoring everyone else, the Prince walked over to Cinderella. He kissed her hand and asked her to dance" (11). It was love at first sight. The prince only had to see how beautiful she was to know she was the one he wanted to marry. Therefore, it can be inferred that physical appearance is all that matters when looking for someone to love and marry. Moreover, after dancing with her all night, the prince immediately took possession of her; he objectified Cinderella. He didn't even ask her name even though, according to him, he immediately fell in love with her. When Cinderella had to leave the only evidence the prince had as proof he was with Cinderella was her glass slipper.

A glass slipper is a very rare object, if not impossible to find, because glass is a delicate material that can break very easily. The slipper that Cinderella lost only fits Cinderella's foot. Therefore, it can be inferred that her glass slipper represents her innocence or virginity. The loss

of Cinderella's slipper suggests that Cinderella and the Prince were intimate on the first night they met. The story illustrates: "He's been hunting all night for that girl – the one who lost her slipper (18). This explicitly shows that the shoe is something that only belongs to her personally. This could be quit problematic because the message being sent is that if a girl likes a guy and feels a strong attraction towards him, then it is acceptable to surrender her most prized possession.

Cinderella proved she was the owner of the glass slipper but it was not easy for her to finally marry the prince. She encountered many problems because she was envied by her stepsisters and her stepmother. However, when the prince discovered Cinderella was the owner of the glass slipper, he took her to his castle and married her. Their happiness was instantaneous as the tale concluded happily forever after. The story illustrates: "From that moment on, everything was a dream come true" (21). It is clear dreams represent the wishes of people's unconscious desires. They represent perfection. Disney's happy endings promote a formula to achieve perfection through love.

On the other hand, the Grimm Brother's version of *Cinderella* is somewhat different to Disney's version. The representation of love is the same but there are certain parts of the story that are more explicitly sexist and violent. One example of explicitly sexist behavior is when the prince dances with Cinderella and some other suitors try to dance with her. The prince tells them on separate occasions: "This lady is dancing with me" (53). "This lady is my partner" (54). Moreover, in this story Cinderella's slipper is not made out of glass, it is made out of gold. Therefore, Cinderella's slipper represents her most valuable possession. Her valuable possession, in this version just as in Disney's version, could also represent her innocence or her virginity. Since the prince was the one who took it, he is the one she should marry. The message then is

that a young woman can give away her most valuable possession the first night she meets a suitor as long as he conforms to the archetype of a rich handsome prince.

Disney's version and the Grimm Brothers' version of Cinderella communicate that love can be found where money and beauty are. Moreover, these versions communicate that strong and stable relationships can be built by just following intuition. If money and beauty are present, it is acceptable for women to give away their most valuable possession. A handsome and rich guy will also be an honorable man who will appreciate any gift a girl gives him.

Beauty and the Beast's representation of love is not any different from *Cinderella's* story. In *Beauty and the Beast*, a beautiful educated young girl marries a handsome and rich young nobleman and they live happily ever after. Belle, the protagonist, gives her most important gift away; she gives her liberty to the Beast. Belle also marries a man she does not know well. However, this story presents a much more perturbing situation. Domestic violence is what distinguishes this story from *Cinderella's* story.

In Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast*, the Beast takes Belle hostage to pardon Belle's father who had trespassed onto the Beast's property and plucked a flower from his garden. Belle's father wanted the rose as a gift for his favorite daughter--Belle. The Beast considered the theft of the rose to be such a violation that the only retribution was the life of the man's daughter. When Belle saw the Beast: "Belle let out a terrified gasp at the sight of the hideous creature" (10). Even though she was horrified, she docilely accepted to stay with him. She accepted her fate because she loved her father so much that she considered her sacrifice was worth it in exchange for her father's life.

The Beast treated Belle very roughly from day one. The narrator points out: "Before Belle could bid her father goodbye, the Beast led her to her room. 'The castle is now your home,'

he said gruffly" (11). She did what he asked her to do at that time and every time he gave her an order. The Beast feels entitled to order her to do things just because he is the one in a position of power. The story illustrates: "You will join me for dinner, the Beast ordered" (11). If she refuses to do what he wants the Beast will grunt in reply. Belle was not even allowed to walk freely inside the castle. She was a prisoner in her own "home". The narrator illustrates: "That night Belle slipped out of her room and found her way to the forbidden West Wing" (12). However, the story shows she does not feel threatened or upset by being treated roughly; but that Belle is always trying to please the Beast.

Moreover, this story presents another disturbing situation related to love. Belle has an incestuous relationship with her father. Incest occurs not only when two members of the same family have sexual relationships, it also occurs when there is an intense emotional dependence between a father and a daughter, like the one Belle has with her father. She always wants to be with him. Her father considered Belle his favorite daughter. Dr. Hugo Schwyzer, in *Princesses, princes, daughters and dads: against emotional incest*, enlightens:

> While the dangers of physical incest and abuse are real, there's a kind of emotionally incestuous dynamic I've witnessed between fathers and daughters, one in which dads seek from their daughters the validation and affirmation that they feel they are entitled to, but are not receiving from their wives.

Belle's perception of her father as being a "genius" explains or implies that they are experiencing an emotional incestuous dynamic. Belle's father does not have a wife and the story does not say if that is because his wife is dead or because she abandoned him. However, his description as being a "crackpot" implies the possibility of his wife's desertion. Therefore, this also explains why Belle is codependent with her father.

Belle's codependency is what makes her so vulnerable to the danger of becoming a victim of others. According to the *Mental Health America Organization*, a person who is codependent shares these characteristics:

- An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others
- A tendency to confuse love and pity, with the tendency to 'love' people they can pity and rescue
- An unhealthy dependence on relationships. The co-dependent will do anything to hold on to a relationship; to avoid the feeling of abandonment
- A sense of guilt when asserting themselves

These characteristics among others help us understand Belle's devotion and behavior towards her father and also towards the Beast. Moreover, Belle's father emotionally incestuous relationship with his daughter is also set within the parameters of a codependent relationship.

Belle's father, Maurice, was willing to risk his life to find her a red rose. The red rose is sexual in its own symbolism. In the story, references to the red rose are always presented in terms of a relationship between a man and a woman. The handsome prince was converted into a Beast by an enchantress and this happens because of a red rose. The story illustrates:

> The red rose she had offered him was an enchanted rose. It would bloom until the prince was twenty one. If he could learn to love and be loved in return before the last petal fell, then the spell would be broken. If not he would remain a beast forever. (2)

Therefore, it can be inferred the red rose Belle needed was the only thing she can't recuperate when lost. The fact that her father is the one who is so extremely diligent to find the red rose for her alludes once again to the incestuous relationship which is implied between Belle and her father.

Belle is also willing to sacrifice her own life for her father's life. The only thing that makes each one of them sad is to know they cannot be with each other. Belle's experiences with love are disturbing and problematic because they represent violence against women. She was confined to solitude and was treated like a possession but she feels no pain or discomfort—she conforms for the well being of her father. She didn't even see the Beast as a bad person. In *Beauty and the Beast,* the following is illustrated: "Before long, Belle thought of the Beast as her dearest friend" (16). It took her just a few encounters with the Beast to consider him a good "person". When the Beast is almost dying because she left his side to go with her father, she begged him to stay with her. Disney's version of this story shows Belle's suffering for the Beast: "'Please don't die … I love you'" (22). Therefore, it can be inferred that Belle suffered something similar to what has been described as the Stockholm syndrome. According to the MedicineNet.com, the Stockholm syndrome is:

> An extraordinary phenomenon in which a hostage begins to identify with and grow sympathetic to their captor. Named for an episode that occurred in Stockholm in August, 1973 when an armed Swedish robber took some bank workers captive, held them for six days and stole their hearts.

Belle fell in love with the Beast and she never talks about her captivity as something bad in any part of the story, she also never shows any discomfort. She does not even show strong negative emotions against the Beast.

When she found the Beast was dying of grief for not having her by his side is when Belle finally shows strong emotions of pain and discomfort. In her desperation upon seeing the Beast so sick Belle kisses his cheek and the spell was immediately broken. Then the story shows the typical perfect ending in the following two lines:

In one magical instant, the Beast turned back into a prince, and the enchanted servants returned to their human forms.

There was no doubt that the loving couple would live happily ever after (23).

Beauty and the Beast's ending, also shows that the only ones who can be ugly and at the same time have happy endings in life are men. However, men's happiness depends on their money and their possessions, which includes a very beautiful young and submissive woman. They should be rich and handsome if they want to live happily ever after with a young obedient and unselfish beautiful maiden.

In the Grimm Brother's version of Beauty and the Beast, the representation of love is also problematic and since it is not as sanitized as Disney's version it is more explicitly violent. Belle, the protagonist also has an incestuous relationship with her father. In this version Belle's father has two other daughters. Nonetheless, Belles is his favorite. His relationship with Belle is so important that the two daughters are not even mentioned in the story. When the Beast caught Belle's father picking a rose from his garden, the Beast wanted to take back the rose. In *The Winter Rose* this is illustrated:

"Return my rose to me or else you must die!"

"Let me keep the rose", the man answered. "I want to bring it to my daughter, the most beautiful maiden in the world."

"Fair enough," the beast said. "But let me have her as my wife."

"All right," said the man… (1)

These two men are fighting or defending the same prize, the red rose which makes allusion to the sexual nature of the red rose and which confirms the father's admiration for his daughter goes beyond what a father should feel for his daughter.

In this version of the story, Belle also falls in love with the Beast before he turned into a prince. She considered him a good person because he used to eat dinner with her every night and because he treated her kindly. However, he had her confined to solitude; she was a prisoner. Moreover, Belle fell in love with the Beast because even though he considered Belle a prisoner, he agreed to let her see her father when her father became sick. She interpreted his gesture of allowing her to leave his side as a sign of love towards her.

When Belle asked him to go back and see her father the Beast showed her the magic mirror. She saw her father dying because of her. The story illustrates: "… she saw that her father was sick from grief for her sake and was lying in bed…" (1). Even though he had two daughters, Belle was indispensable. The story continues: "… but the grief had eaten away at his heart to such a great extent…" (1). When she finally reached her father's side, he was in such a bad situation that he died right after but "he had the pleasure of seeing her once again", as the story suggests. Belle also shows a disturbing manifestation of love towards her father, since he was the only person that mattered to her. She was willing to give her own life away in order to save her father's life.

Belle's incestuous and unhealthy dependent relationship with her father prepared her for her unhealthy relationship with the Beast. Right after her father died, she went back to the Beast's castle. The Beast was also very sick from the grief of not having her by his side. The story shows:

> Full of regret, she went into the garden and saw a pile of cabbage heads that were already old and rotten. She began taking them down and stacking them to one side, and after she had turned over several of them, she saw her dear beast lying beneath them as if he were dead. (1)

Belle felt really bad because the Beast was dying since she promised him she would be back right after seeing her father; but it took her one week to get back to the castle. One week was enough time for the Beast to become sick with grief over her absence. Again, this shows that their relationship was one of codependency.

The end of the Grimm's version, just like the Disney's version is one in which happiness is presented as the beginning of a life of happiness forever after. The same steps or procedure are followed by Belle and the Beast in order to achieve their final goal. The ultimate goal is to marry a young handsome prince or in the case of a man, to marry a beautiful young maiden. Both characters, male and female fit the archetype and follow the gender stereotypes required by the patriarchal system. Men are the princes who are looking for their helpless princesses in need to be rescued. They are rich, young, and handsome men who are hyper masculine. On the other hand, women are the princesses waiting for their princes to come and rescue them. They are poor, motherless, young, very beautiful and submissive women who are always the damsels in distress.

Love as presented in *Cinderella* and in *Beauty and the Beast*, is similar to the representations depicted in other fairy tales. Their narratives use love as an artifact which helps maintain the patriarchal symbolical order. Pauline Greenhill and Sydney Eve Matrix declare that, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity,* Disney's versions have done a great job in reinforcing the patriarchal symbolical order:

> … Disney 'bowdlerized and sanitized' the work of collectors/anthologists of traditional tales like Charles Perrault in France and the Grimm brothers in Germany, as well as the literary fairy tales of Carlo Collodi and others, to achieve his goal to create visually

spectacular cinema that reinforced and reflected patriarchal, capitalist American family values (1994, 141). (6)

The presentation of heterosexual love, the glorification of the male figure, and the reinforcement of a diminished female figure are some of the values of the capitalist American values presented in fairy tales. Men are the head of the family who are supposed to provide and women are the care takers who are supposed to maintain the family united. Money receives glorification because it is a crucial factor to assure happiness. Films are one of the genres Disney has used to present fairy tales very successfully. As demonstrated earlier in this thesis, Disney's values are entrenched in Puerto Rican popular culture.

The United States film industry of is one of the largest industries in the world in terms of revenue and influence. Disney's fairy tale films are part of that mass culture industry and therefore it influences many other global popular cultures. Hence, the ideological impact it has on young girls in our culture is persistent and glamorous and it deserves attention just like stories and comics do. Fairy tale narratives in films and in short stories, are part of the "social apparatuses" that are in charge of preserving male hegemony. Zipes, in *Don't Bet on the Prince* states: "There are certain fairy-tale patterns, motifs, and models which constantly arise in our life and in literature which appear to have been preserved because they reinforce male hegemony in the civilization process" (9). Some of the patterns which constantly surface in fairy tales are the ones related to gender stereotypes. Women are presented as young, beautiful, and submissive. Men are presented as young, handsome, and rich. Women who do not fit these stereotypes are considered wicked, evil, or in the best case scenario are considered good fairy godmothers or happy helpers. In the case of men, if they do not fit the stereotypes, they are

presented as beloved father or husbands, or they are servants. In fairy tale narratives, men will never appear as wicked or evil. If they behave badly, most likely it is a woman's fault.

The works of Disney and fairy tales in general which promote and reinforce male hegemony permeate our lives constantly. Zipes informs:

> Folk and fairy tales pervade our lives constantly through television soap operas and commercials, in comic books and cartoons, in school plays and storytelling performances, in our superstitions and prayers for miracles, and in our dreams and daydreams. (xii)

Folk and fairy tales could be considered our point of departure when creating meaning about life because with them we day dream about love and about life in general. If they are part of what pervades our daily lives then their messages should be considered as part of our own belief system. Therefore, our system of beliefs is one in which male dominance is always present.

It is important to understand that male hegemony establishes that gender roles are part of what give value to a person. Male hegemony establishes that men are superior and they are also the ones who establish how women should behave. This is particularly problematic because it results in abuse of power. Parents, as guardians of male hegemony are the first ones to teach children how to act according to gender stereotypes. These stereotypes provide an unwritten set of rules which help children interpret the world. Maria Tatar, quoting Adam Gopnik, in *Enchanted Hunters/ the power of stories in childhood*, explains that when children read stories or when parents read stories to them, children are trying to find ways to interpret the world.

Children interpret the world but in a different way than parents do. Children's perspective about life are different because they have very little amount of significant experiences in life. Gopnik explains that: "Children want to light out for new territory and make those symbolic stories work for them, using them as road maps for navigating the real world"

(4). These stories they read or observe in movies or listen to in songs are the experiences they use to interpret the world and to give meaning to life. They believe that one day they will live and experience life the way the characters in the stories they enjoy do. Tatar, in *Enchanted Hunters/ the power of stories in childhood,* believes that: "Absorbed early in life, words and stories powerfully affect the formation of identity" (22). Identity is formed by the time children reach the age of five. Therefore, it is important to remember that the personality they will display as adults was formed by the experiences they had before the age of five.

Identity is what defines a person and one of the first traits which are used by parents to raise children and teach them how to deal with life is their gender. Zipes, in *Don't Bet on the Prince,* points out that*:* "it has been demonstrated by psychologists and educators time and again that stories and fairy tales do influence the manner in which children conceive the world and their places in it before they begin to read" (xii). Children have ideas of how the world is according to how their parents and family members behave. Their identity as a male or a female will tell if they are valuable as a person. Children should form an identity which helps them understand that both boys and girls are equal in terms of what they deserve in life.

Fairy tale narratives work to: "… maintain the present arrangements…" (Zipes 4). The present arrangements in Puerto Rican society are those in which men have more privileges than women. Puerto Rican government and its institutions, the families, and the popular culture children enjoy present the ideology of male hegemony. Disney is part of the popular culture children enjoy which reinforces male hegemony. Kay Stone in, *Things Walt Disney Never Told Us*, informs: "A popular psychiatrist, the late Eric Berne, felt that fairy tales offer not only dreams and hopes but actual programs for behavior. Your favorite fairy tale may parallel and

inform your attitudes and acts" (48). Disney's fairy tales narratives, inform children on how to act according to their gender and this they do by presenting magical solutions to life.

Disney's authors of fairy tale stories and filmmakers have done much to inform children on how they should act according to their gender. Again, Zipes, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, informs and explains:

> … a model of conformity that hundreds of other filmmakers have followed up until today: 1) girl falls in love with young man, often a prince, or wants to pursue her dreams; 2) wicked witch, stepmother, or a force of evil wants to demean or kill girl; 3) persecuted girl is abducted or knocked out of commission; 4) persecuted girl is rescued miraculously either by a prince or masculine helpers; 5) happy ending in the form of wedding, wealth, and rise in social status or reaffirmation of royalty. (xi)

Boys and girls should infer or abstract, from the presentation the narratives of these tales do of men and women, that women should be helpless and weak in order to fulfill the archetype of a real princess. Boys, on the other hand, should know they must be heroes in order to achieve or gain the love of a perfect woman. Nonetheless, this is not enough for girls because first they should fit the archetype of the very beautiful, white, and skinny young girl. If they have all these characteristics, the only thing they need is a wealthy young man willing to help them overcome their life obstacles.

The negative aspects or the features which place women behind men are always glorified in fairy tale narratives. This glorification occurs because it helps in the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Zipes, quoting Moore in *Don't Bet on the Prince*, emphasizes:

> … the negative features of the tales: (1) Females are poor girls or beautiful princesses who will only be rewarded if they demonstrate passivity, obedience, and submissiveness.

(2) Stepmothers are always evil. (3) The best woman is the housewife. (4) Beauty is the highest value for women. (5) Males should be aggressive and shrewd. (6) Money and property are the most desirable goals in life. (7) Magic and miracles are the means by which social problems are resolved. (8) Fairy tales are implicitly racist because they often equate beauty and virtue with the colour white and ugliness with the colour black. (6)

As one can see the worst part of the stories in terms of conduct and outcomes are towards women. Their actions could result in harm to themselves. However, fairy tales do encourage girls to believe these ideals as something inevitable in life. Men have more privileges and also men's self-esteem is heightened by the plots in fairy tale narratives.

Disney's presentation of these universal truths regarding gender can be seen in their versions of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Disney's female protagonist of *Cinderella* fits the archetype of the young maiden. Her name is Ella and she is a beautiful lovely daughter. Her mother is dead but she lives with her father and her stepmother. She represents white privilege because of the way she is described in terms of her physical appearance. The story illustrates: "She had golden hair, and her eyes were as blue as forget – me – nots" (1). Her appearance is what makes Ella someone special.

Ella is submissive to all around her and because of that she accepts ill treatment without any resistance. She waits patiently for her true love to come and rescue her. However, she is not the only character that pertains to one specific archetype. Her father was a kind and devoted father because he was a rich gentleman. He used to give Ella "everything her heart desired" (2). The only thing he gave her that she didn't want was her stepmother and her stepsisters. Nonetheless, she accepted them and she treated them with love and kindness. In this adaptation of Cinderella's story the stepmother revealed her "true nature" when Cinderella's father died.

She became the "wicked stepmother" who confined Cinderella to solitude and mistreated her as if she were an animal. Her stepsisters were described as the stepmother's: "…mean selfish daughters" (3). They were mean and selfish because they were not as pretty as Ella. The fairy god mother also represents an archetype. She is a small woman who has a gentle voice. In the illustration of the godmother she appears as a smiling, white, old lady. This story presents the world through the representation of the most common archetypes as Kim Snowden, quoting Zipes, explains in *Fairy Tale Film in the Classroom: Feminist Cultural Pedagogy, Angela Carter, and Neil Jordan's The Company of Wolves:*

> … "well-ordered, clean world in which evil is always recognizable and good takes the form of a male hero who is as dependable as the phallic principles that originally stamped the medium of animation at the beginning of the twentieth century". (162)

Evil is always represented by an ugly female figure; whereas good is represented by a benevolent and patriarchal male figure.

Grimm Brothers' version of this story is even more violent in terms of what happens to women who do not follow the most valued common gender stereotypes. Nonetheless, Disney's version is more sexist than the Grimm Brother's version. In the Grimm Brother's version one important figure is the dead mother. At least she is presented in this story and represents something positive for the protagonist. She is the one who helps *Cinderella* solve her problems. However, she does that after her death. Zipes in *Don't Bet on the Prince* illustrates: "Even in such a 'sexist' tale as *Cinderella*, there are matriarchal remnants of a folk tale which still play an important role in the outcome of the tale, for it is the dead mother who enables her daughter to attain her goal" (6). If women are a presented as a positive and empowered figure, then they will not do it actively or as a living person. Pershing and Gablehouse, quoting Laura Sells in *Fairy*

Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity, observe: "'Within Disney's patriarchal ideology, any woman with power has to be represented as a castrating bitch' (1995, 181)" (149). One example of a "castrating bitch", in *Cinderella*'s story is the stepmother.

In the Grimm Brothers' version the helpful mother is presented through the way she talks to Cinderella when she was alive: "… 'Always be a good girl, and I will look down from heaven and watch over you'" (52). Being a good girl always means to be subservient, obedient, and submissive. These characteristics always help the other and not the person who observes those characteristics. Cinderella's mother is presented as a powerful being because she is the one who helps Cinderella achieve her goals in this story. However, she is still reinforcing the most common gender stereotypes of society through the description she gives of a good girl. The mother represents the voice of the patriarchal symbolical order.

Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast* is different from *Cinderella's* version in terms of the most common archetypes both present. However, they are the same in terms of the most common gender stereotypes both reinforce. Perfshing and Gablehouse, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, explain:

> In her study of *Beauty and the Beast,* Allison Craven traces the way that Disney's version twists the older tale from a focus on Beauty's learning and understanding to falling in love. Citing the "domesticating effects of Disney's feminism on its heroines," she demonstrates the way that Disney films sometimes inject elements of self-determination or empowerment into the portrayal of female protagonists, only to undermine them with narrative conclusions that inevitably equate the heroine's fulfillment with heterosexual romance and marriage (2002, 126). (153)

Belle is intelligent and educated because she loved to read books. However, it seems that the books she read prepared her to become the perfect wife. The books she liked the most were about love.

Belle is described as follows: "… a beautiful young woman…" (5). Belle, like Cinderella, is the lovely daughter, and none have a mother. She is a beautiful young maiden who is suffering because she is different from the girls in her town; she is only interested in reading. The story illustrates: "Her nose is always in a book…" (6). Moreover, her father is considered a "crackpot" according to the people of her town. However, she considers him a genius. Therefore, Belle is always dealing with rejection. She deals with this situation by being a good, sweet and subservient daughter and woman.

Unlike Cinderella, Belle is not the stepdaughter of a wicked stepmother. She is not forced to clean like a maid. She also doesn't have two evil stepsisters who want to make her life miserable. Belle is the strange girl of the story. She loves to read about adventure and romance. Maybe that is why she is described with her head "always in the clouds". Therefore, it could be interpreted that even though Disney tried or intended to make Belle look like she is different in terms of her intellectual attributes, she is not because she has hopes and dreams just like any other princess. Therefore, being a well-read person is not depicted in a positive way. Disney does with Belle, what Sonowden, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, explains: "… Zipes and Warner, who identify Belle as constructed within limited feminist frameworks that may reinforce sexist constructions of gender" (164). Even though Belle seems to be the head or the leader of her family, she still acts according to what men and society expect from her. She does the housework and looks after her father who seems to be a total disaster.

However, she is not able to deal with her own personal struggles because she needs a man by her side to help her deal with them. Belle went to the Beast's palace to rescue her father. She was brave enough to go all by herself with her father's horse. Nonetheless, she was not brave enough to confront the Beast and ask him to free her father. What Belle did was beg the Beast to free him. When the Beast refused and asked her to trade her father's life for her own life, she immediately accepted. Her life is worth nothing compared to her father's life. This does not make any sense because her father is an adult much older than his daughter; he is the one who is supposed to protect her. It is evident that a man's life is worth more than a woman's life. Therefore, it can be inferred that women are treated as objects in Disney's fairy tales.

In the Grimm Brother's version of this story, Belle is described the same way she is described in Disney's version of the same story. She is a very beautiful young maiden; she is the lovely daughter. However, the representation of women and men is somewhat different to the one portrayed in Disney's version. In the Grimm Brother's adaptation of this fairy tale, Belle has two sisters. They are not like Belle. They are presented as materialistic and more subservient and helpless than Belle. Her father is a merchant. He considers Belle his favorite daughter. The Beast is a man who has power and money but needs a beautiful and docile woman in order to recover his good looks. The Beast represents the archetype of a man that with money can buy the love of a perfect girl and therefore his own salvation.

Gender as a social construction is very important in fairy tales because it also holds up other ideologies to maintain their power. Christy Williams, in *The Shoe Still Fits: Ever After and The Pursuit of a Feminist Cinderella*, informs: "Judith Butler argues that gender is performative. Rather than expressing an essential quality, it is constructed by the repetition of bodily 'acts and gestures' 'within established political contexts'…" (105). It is not Belle's beauty or good

manners what make her who she is as a person; it is her actions guided by society and its patriarchal institutions which make Belle an example to be followed by other young girls.

Gender roles and particularly, female gender roles presented in folk tales and in fairy tales such as the ones presented in *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* are accepted and promoted just as they are accepted and promoted in popular culture. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, John Storey quotes Lana Rakow observations about women and popular culture:

> Though contemporary feminists have taken a diversity of approaches to popular culture, they have shared two major assumptions. The first is that women have a particular relationship to popular culture that is different from men's… The second assumption is that understanding how popular culture functions both for women and for patriarchal culture is important if women are to gain control over their own identities and change both social mythologies and social relations… (136)

Women and girls, as target audience of fairy tales, are being instructed on how to act and think according to their gender. Popular culture is a powerful instrument used by the patriarchal system because it reaches a very large population. If girls are educated and empowered to think critically about fairy tales then they will be more apt to understand that in real life they don't necessarily have to follow all the rules these tales give them. Storey, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, quotes Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment to explain the impact of popular culture in relation to the information popular culture provides about gender:

> It is from popular culture that most people in our society get their entertainment and their information. It is here that women (and men) are offered the culture's dominant definitions of themselves. It would therefore seem crucial to explore the possibilities and

> pitfalls of intervention in popular forms in order to find ways of making feminist meanings a part of our pleasures. (137)

Cinderella and *Beauty and the Beast*, as manifestations of popular culture, greatly impact the formation of identity. Their impact is not only because they offer the culture's dominant definition of the gendered self but also because this information is received very early in life through books and stories by parents, teachers, and through media. Childhood is one of the most important stages of life because it is a time when future adults form their identity. Moreover, Disney's commercialization of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* has made their characters so popular through all kind of items for very young girls. Disney teaches gender roles by using common and well known archetypes. However, their messages change with time in order to look more modern and as a consequence more appealing not only to young girls but to parents as well. Girls fall in love with the way the stories are presented. Books with very colorful images help them use their imagination and are used to present the old and obsolete patriarchal system of beliefs in a very appealing way. Films, on the other hand provide a multisensory experience to girls which help them believe princesses are real – life characters who help them relate to the princesses' life stories. Zipes, in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, states:

> … Disney began changing his original, more provocative approach and gradually became more conventional in adapting the classical fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Perrault and adhering closer to the traditional plots and patriarchal ideology of nineteenth-century folk and fairy tales. (xi)

What Disney is doing is trying to make parents and girls become more conservative since the prevalent ideology of the patriarchy is presented and reinforced more vehemently.

Marriage is the reason and the justification Disney uses to promote and reinforce gender stereotypes and gender roles. Heterosexuality is part of Disney's ideology; however, hegemony is their ultimate goal. Pauline Greenhill and Anne Brydon, in *Mourning Mothers and Seeing Siblings: Feminism and Place in The Juniper Tree*, indicate that: "Gender stereotypes are reaffirmed, as are their association with heterosexuality" (115). Gender stereotypes work to maintain heterosexuality especially among women. Disney makes marriage look more appealing to girls by showing them they gain upward mobility with it. Therefore, marriage is more a social commodity than a compromise made by people who want to unite their lives in order to share their love.

Marriages in Disney's fairy tales and in Disney's films are always more about girls than it is about boys. The way girls are represented suggest what kind of stereotype they should fit and what are the roles they have to follow in order to be the perfect bride. Pershing and Gablehouse, in *Disney's Enchanted: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in a Fairy Tale Film*, illustrate that: "… the prevailing standard represents the bride as a princess – white, thin, rich, privileged, and heterosexual – who uses cultural consumption to demonstrate her marital status" (142). With the description of the stereotypes of a wife come other issues such as those of race and class. These issues are intertwined with violence towards women. In fairy tales, women who don't have the characteristics of a perfect bride often end very badly.

Scholars and teachers are becoming more concerned about the messages these tales send to children and especially to girls. Therefore, as was previously mentioned, Disney is changing some of the characteristics princesses have. Their descriptions are more modern because it helps conceal the true intentions of the patriarchal system of beliefs with women. Snowden, in *Fairy*

Tale in the Classroom: Cultural Pedagogy, Angela Carter, and Neil Jordan's The Company of Wolves, explains:

> Despite the inclusion of strong women, female warriors, liberal feminists, and powerful, magical girls, Disney and most mainstream contemporary fairy tale films ultimately send the same post feminist message: women can be all of these things as long as they ultimately conform to social norms of heterosexual marriage. (162)

Ella, from Disney's version of *Cinderella*, is not as powerful as Belle from Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast*. Belle is a strong and powerful magical girl who sends the post feminist message. She is empowered because she takes care of herself and saves her father's life but ends up doing what men want her to do. Zipes, in the Foreword in *Fairy Tale Films/Visions of Ambiguity*, points out that: "Optimistic fairy tale films such as *Ever After* and Disney's *Enchanted* demand that we critically reflect about false and artificial gender definitions and the backlash against feminism" (xiii). A story like *Beauty and the Beast* creates the illusion of empowerment when in reality what it does is trick women into thinking that they are powerful because they can be active in solving their problems. Nevertheless, they are deemed powerful when they are active if they live their personal life according to what society expects from them.

Expectations society instills on people are many and sometimes difficult to accomplish. However, women are the ones who have this burden to carry because in order to fulfill them women have to act in ways which could result in violence against themselves. One worrying aspect of being too fond of fairy tales is that they present people as objects. Naarah Sawers, in *Building the Perfect Product: The Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Fairy Tale Film*, explains that: "To civilize contemporary children into hegemonic society through stories, they must understand their bodies as consumers in and of themselves" (59). Hegemony helps the

"social apparatuses" to have control over the masses. People's identities and especially women's identities are defined by capitalism. Sawers explains that: "Contemporary children's identities are thus defined by a relationship of desire with consumerism" (45). In fairy tales children and people in general are only valued by how much they have in terms of money. In Disney's version of *Cinderella,* the story illustrates:

> "But my dress…," said Cinderella.
>
> The Fairy Godmother looked at it. "Good heavens!" With a wave of her wand, she turned the rags into an exquisite gown (12).

Cinderella worried more about her appearance and the things she would need to go to the ball than anything else. Her dress is just an example of the materialistic aspect which predominates in Disney's description about love. On the other hand, in *Beauty and the Beast* the narrator does not describe Belle as interested in material things to gain the love of a man. However, she rejects a handsome man who is interested in her, and is not rich but she accepts one who has the physical appearance of a beast and is rich like a prince. Therefore, the differences between these men should not be taken lightly or as a coincidence because Belle was no ordinary girl in terms of her looks. She could have chosen the one who was more handsome because she was very pretty and instead she chose the ugly one but rich.

Popular culture in general and in this case Disney wants to make children understand that their bodies are and should be considered a commodity. Sawers explains that: "These new scientific economies are based on neoliberal ideas, where the body as commodity and exchangeable is accepted as an individual choice of right" (56). Ella, in Disney's version of *Cinderella,* knows that the only thing she has to offer to the prince is her body and that is why she prepares herself so meticulously before meeting him. Beauty, on the other hand, knows that

her father is poor and has no way to better his life and that is why she accepts to trade her life for the life of her father. Disney makes girls believe it was their choice to exchange their bodies by selling the concepts of the happily ever after endings. The girls in the tales and in real life are considered objects.

Disney's policy about children and their education has always been very clear. Pershing and Gablehouse quote Disney's chief executive officer:

> "We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" Michael Eisner, CEO of Walt Disney Corporation, 1981 staff memo (quoted in Wasko 2001, 29). (140)

Disney wants to raise good consumers and while they do that, they make children's parents consume. Disney makes parents believe their commodities are what children need to be happy and emotionally stable. Nevertheless, girls are Disney's principal target.

The company captures girls' attention with princess stories and all kinds of princess items. Pershing and Gablehouse inform: "Princesses have been the fastest-growing product brand for Disney in recent years, with marketing strategies to attract female – infants to adults – as consumers of its merchandise" (140). Princesses not only promote the most common gender stereotypes that are needed to reinforce the patriarchal symbolical order, but they also promote and help maintain capitalism. Pershing and Gablehouse inform:

> Ingraham focuses specifically on Disney in her analysis of 'the wedding-industrial complex,' the social economic systems through which the massive wedding industry reasserts heterosexual dominance and promotes women's oppression in capitalist societies. (142)

Marriage is perceived as something negative because it is used as an artifact to subjugate women. Therefore, it is then used as another form of violence against women.

Disney's versions of fairy tales and Grimm Brothers' versions of folk tales have offered children, and specially girls, a group of women who are happy to live as part of the patriarchal symbolical order. Disney's versions, specifically, have selected the most unusually docile and patient heroines. Stone, in *Things Walt Disney Never Told Us*, declares: "In fact, a dozen docile heroines are the overwhelming favorites, reappearing in book after book from the mid – nineteenth century to the present" (43). These princesses are the favorites because they are presented in the most appealing way. Moreover, Disney only devotes time and money presenting and promoting the most passive heroines. Stone, in *Things Walt Disney Never Told Us,* points out:

> But if the Grimm heroines are, for the most part, uninspiring, those of Walt Disney seem barely alive. In fact, two of them hardly manage to stay awake. Disney produced three films based on Mairchen ("Sleeping Beauty" and "Snow White" from the Grimms and "Cinderella" from Perrault). All three had passive, pretty heroines, and all three had female villains, thus strongly rein-forcing the already popular stereotype of the innocent beauty victimized by the wicked villainess. (44)

Disney glorifies women who are easy to manage by society and men in general. They want girls to prefer being submissive than to have any power at all. Therefore, in their tales they punish those girls or women who try to do something for themselves instead of waiting patiently for something good to happen. Stone, in *Things Walt Disney Never Told Us*, informs:

> In brief, the popularized heroines of the Grimms and Disney are not only passive and pretty, but also unusually patient, obedient, industrious, and quiet. A woman who failed

> to be any of these could not become a heroine. Even Cinderella has to do no more than put on dirty rags to conceal herself completely. She is a heroine only when properly cleaned and dressed. (44)

Patience, obedience, industriousness, and submissiveness are traits or characteristics which are considered very valuable in women by Disney because they help men maintain the patriarchal system of beliefs.

Feminist scholars and writers of retold fairy tales are trying to change the way women and men are seen and are asked to act. They are doing this mostly because the consequences of acting like maiden, witches, stepmothers, wicked sisters, or helpless maidens all bring negative consequences to women's lives. Pershing and Gablehouse explain:

> Feminism seeks to disrupt conventional masculine/feminine polarities, see other positions and identifications, and raise significant questions about issues of power and privilege, not only with regard to gender and sexuality but also race, ethnicity, class, culture, dis/ability, religion, and nationality. (151)

Teachers and parents in Puerto Rico are trying to help children and adolescents cope with violence related to gender due to the unprecedented numbers of fatal domestic violence acts during the past years. This violence is causing the death and discrimination of women. Therefore, literature which presents an alternative to fairy tale narratives, such as feminist literature, should be of great use. Teachers, for example, are tired of reading and listening to the same universal truths presented in fairy tales. People, in general, are also tired of this because they know that acting like characters in a fairy tale does not guarantee a happy ending even less a positive result in real life situations.

Chapter Four: Reggaeton Narratives: Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes Inherent in Puerto Rican Popular Culture

Wisin and Yandel's song *Irresistible* and Alexis and Fido's song *Energía* will be used as examples of highly successful reggaeton narratives which reinforce gender stereotypes inherent in Puerto Rican popular culture. Both of these reggaeton narratives are important because they have great influence on children and especially on adolescents' and young adults' education in Puerto Rico because they are manifestations of popular culture. The *Billboard Music Award* confirms Wisin and Yandel's and Alexis and Fido's international fame and as a consequence both are admired by most Puerto Ricans. According to *MTV.com*: "it wasn't until Pa'l Mundo hit the number one Latin album spot on the *Billboard* charts that they (Wisin y Yandel) began to be recognized outside the Spanish-speaking community". Likewise, Alexis and Fido with their album *The Pitbulls,* became internationally famous as confirmed by *Billboard*: "The record was a success, hitting number four on the Top Latin Albums chart and even making it into the *Billboard* 200". Their accomplishment represents one of the highest values of Puerto Ricans who consider United States the country of opportunity. To be accepted and known outside of Puerto Rico is the ultimate goal of any artist in the country. Therefore, whatever they sing or do as artists will have a great impact especially on the lives of those who admire them or this popular musical genre.

It is important to identify the audience of reggaeton and most importantly, the fans of artists like Wisin and Yandel, and Alexis and Fido because as Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* explain:

> Pop music exhibits "emotional realism"; young men and women "identify with these collective representations and… use them as guiding fictions. Such symbolic fictions are

> the folklore by means of which the teenager, in part, shapes and composes his mental pictures of the world". (55)

The fiction depicted in reggaeton songs, especially those related to gender stereotypes are those that will shape the social interaction and for example, the dynamics of a couple involved in a relationship. Reggaeton narratives can do this because they use the vocabulary and customs adolescents and young adults know and like.

Adolescents like reggaeton, for instance, because they need to distance themselves from the world of adults. Their main struggle is to achieve power over their parents. Adolescents and young adults relate to the fictional narratives popular music provides because as Storey, quoting Hall and Whannel, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, declare: "… teenagers use particular ways of talking, particular places to go, particular ways of dancing, and particular ways of dressing, to establish distance from the world of adults" (55). Therefore, Reggaeton's famous and influential artists have the tools to provide teenagers and young adults with that particular way of talking and dressing to distance themselves from the world of adults. Parents represent the main source of repression they have to confront.

Adolescents and young adults are always absorbing what culture has to teach them. Moreover, music as a powerful tool or powerful manifestation of any culture which opens a space to present among many other contemporary issues, those issues related to gender identity. Storey, quoting Hall and Whannel, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, point out:

> The culture provided by the commercial entertainment market… plays a crucial role. It mirrors attitudes and sentiments which are already there, and at the same time provides an expressive field and a set of symbols through which these attitudes can be projected. (54)

Popular music helps establish a sense of identity among youth not only through their narratives but also by using the personal stories of the artists that are famous in popular culture. Stories of artists of reggaeton like Wisin and Yandel, and Alexis and Fido are also as important as the narratives of their songs. Wisin and Yandel and Alexis and Fido, as well as other reggaeton performers create a persona of themselves in each one of the narratives. Nonetheless, their fans think about them not as the persona created in the narratives. Their fans believe they are in real life the persona they have created in the narratives.

It is important to establish that reggaeton fulfills the fantasies of those who want to become the persona "reggaetoneros" represent in their narratives. With these particular celebrities, the persona projected as well as the real life persons, praise the American dream. The American dream in terms of capitalism is achieved when one achieves economic power. When reggaeton first started to be known as a musical genre it was called as *Underground*. This musical genre was responsible for helping those who pertain to the unprivileged classes to pursue the American dream. Nieves Moreno, in *A Man Lives Here*, declares:

> *Underground* songs narrated the realities of the inhabitants of many neighborhoods and housing projects of Puerto Rico, drugs and their trade, the rivalries between street gangs, and the sexual parameters that energized young bodies, particularly in the place that would become the quintessential stage for reggaeton's narrative: the disco. (252)

The inhabitants are those who belong to the unprivileged classes of Puerto Rico who finally managed to escape their harsh reality through their success as singers of this musical genre. Wisin and Yandel, and Alexis and Fido are two examples of how much poor young people can achieve if they manage to get accepted and catapulted to fame. For Puerto Ricans fame represents achieving the American dream.

However, even though reggaeton still uses most of the main topics underground used to create their narratives, the ones that were most controversial were almost completely eliminated. Drugs and rivalries between street gangs were mostly erased in order to sanitize the narratives and become accepted by the mainstream. The first artists to do this crossover towards "sanitized" success were Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, and Wisin and Yandel among many others. Nieves Moreno adverts:

> Even though Puerto Rico and Panama both claim to have originated reggaeton, Puerto Rican singers have garnered greater commercial recognition. Through their work, Daddy Yankee, Wisín and Yandel, and Don Omar, among many others, lay the foundation for a multifaceted market that today generates millions of dollars throughout the world. (254)

The market that today generates millions of dollars throughout the world is the one which gives artists the power to include in their narratives whatever message they want to send to their audience. Moreover, it gives them the power to be recognized as reliable sources of information. In a capitalist society like Puerto Rico, most of the time, money is related to knowledge and personal success.

Reggaeton performers achieved success for their musical genre and for themselves not only because of the musicality of this genre but because of how innovative and creative it was in terms of the wordplay they used to present their narratives. Frances Negrón Muntaner, in her essay in *Poetry Filth*, declares:

> Not only has reggaeton produced a new sound by fusing black Atlantic genres such as dancehall reggae and hip-hop; it also constitutes the most important verbal event that has taken place in (and from) Puerto Rico in the last two decades. (327)

It took reggaeton young artists, authors, and musicians great skill to create this musical fusion especially because the majority of them did not have the academic skills and economic resources to do otherwise. The game of words which is also a vital part of the attractiveness of this genre is what should interest educators and teachers who know their youngsters enjoy this musical genre. Through the uses of catchy narratives and rhythm a powerful message related to gender stereotypes is being promoted and reinforced.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that adolescent and young adults are not passive listeners who do not participate in what is happening with reggaeton as a popular musical genre. They also have something to do with the creation of the narratives of these songs. There is always an exchange that goes on between artists and their audience. Storey in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* indicates that Hall and Whannel declare in their discussion of pop music culture that: "the claim that 'the picture of young people as innocents exploited' by the pop music industry 'is over simplified'" (55). Authors of reggaeton narratives also take into account the realities and interests of those who are part of their audience and they use that to make the narratives more appealing and pertinent. Young people identify with the protagonists of those stories. Storey, quoting Richard Hoggart, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, explains: "Songs only succeed, he argues, 'no matter how much Tin Pan Alley plugs them' [159], if they can be *made* to meet the emotional requirements of their popular audience" (40). The requirements of the popular audience have much to do with the feelings and emotions and not necessarily with an innovation in the discourse of the songs.

Discourses are the verbal representation of people's realities. They are about the action or the experiences put into words. Storey quoting Michel Focault, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, explains:

> Discourses, therefore, are social practices in which we *engage*, they are like social "scripts" we perform (consciously and unconsciously). What we think of as "experience" is always experience in or of a particular discourse. Moreover, what we think of as our "selves" is the internalization of a multiplicity of discourses. In other words, all the things we are, are enabled, constrained and constituted in discourses. (129)

The "wordplay" and the rhythm of reggaeton conceal the powerful discourses related to issues of power in terms of gender which is the focus of this thesis. The ultimate goal of the narratives is to use their discourse to maintain the hegemony in terms of power relations among men and women. Negrón Muntaner, in her essay, states that: "… reggaeton is constituted by an extravagant poeticness; a faith in the spoken word as a means to create imaginative and affective worlds through rhyme, repetition, and alliteration" (327). The repetition and alliteration help the audience catch the narratives and makes them learn the narratives faster but at the same time it helps the audience own the message sent.

The message related to relations of power, specifically in terms of gender, is presented through the discussion of the main topics of these narratives.Wayne Marshall, quoted by Nieves Moreno, declares:

> … "reggaeton tends toward partying and sex as primary subjects. Descriptions of sexual acts and female bodies alternate between explicit language and innuendo, and women rarely appear as anything other than objects of the male gaze". The narratives of these videos reproduce the lyrics of the songs, as well as the singers' codes of masculinity. (267)

Partying and sex establish the rules and codes men and women have to follow in order to fit the stereotypes related to their gender. Men are presented as hyper masculine and women are

presented as mere objects of male desire. Men are the protagonists and the antagonists in the narratives. Women are the secondary characters who rarely appear as active subjects in the narratives. If they appear actively, most of the time, is to act like antagonists.

The descriptions of sexual acts in the more sanitized versions of reggaeton are concealed with words alluding to the description of love. Love is used as an artifact which helps maintain the audience, and especially the female audience, attracted to the idea of being submissive in the name of love. Women are sexualized but they are not in control of their sexuality. *Billboard* magazine online states that: "Although many hip-hop artists are known for their sexist lyrics, Alexis and Fido pride themselves on embracing their female fans. 'That's why 90% of our fans are women,' says Alexis". Alexis and Fido argue that they embrace their female fans but they never explain how that embrace distances them from those artists who use sexist lyrics. Alexis, in *Billboard*, expresses:

> "What happens in the streets we put in the songs very, very carefully," he notes. "We don't want to offend nobody [sic]. You're never gonna hear Alexis and Fido talking about "Yo, move that fat ass, bitch' or whatever".

It seems Alexis and Fido, as well as Wisin and Yandel, believe that by changing the words of their discourse, they change the prevalent sexist ideology.

Insults and discourtesy are not necessary if one wants to subordinate and diminish others. Therefore, the description of love/sex in reggaeton narratives should not be interpreted in terms of morality or good manners. What is at stake is more an issue of gender relations. Negrón Muntaner, in her essay, delimits that: "… the emphasis on sexuality has less to do with a lax morality or lack of 'education' as reggaeton critics contend than with a rejection of social hierarchy and the established order…" (331). Reggaeton performers challenge the hierarchical

order prevalent in Puerto Rico. The part of the population that pertains to the unprivileged class is the one which is obtaining recognition and attention of media. However, while reggaeton performers try to break away with the rules imposed on them by the "good" side of society what they do is reinforce and help maintain the patriarchal system of beliefs. Love/sex relationships should not be based on power or control over the other.

One could argue that there is no representation of love in reggaeton narratives because sex seems to be the primary subject of the narratives. In his essay, Alfredo Nieves Moreno declares: "… in the style that is common in reggaeton – the singer's attempt to conquer a woman and have sex with her" (273). A man in the narratives tries to conquer a woman to have sex but they do it by praising that woman's attributes as a way to demonstrate his love for her. It is taken for granted that a woman who loves a man will give him the sexual pleasure he needs. The authors of these narratives, as well as the performers, promote the use of sex as an artifact to present love in an appealing and fun way.

Irresistible and *Energía* are considered romantic songs in which sex is a manifestation of love at first sight. In *Irresistible*, love is presented in the following line (followed by my translation):

Me le pego, la beso, le digo te amo

I stand close to her, I kiss her, and I tell her I love her

The male protagonist is dancing with a woman in a disco and since he likes her because of her looks and because of the way she dances, he decides to get more intimate with her. What happens here is the same thing that happened between Cinderella and her prince. The prince falls in love with Cinderella as soon as he saw her. They were also intimate on the night they met and this fairy tale is not criticized in terms of morality the same way reggaeton narratives are

criticized. In another two lines Wisin makes reference of the love he feels for this woman in the following two lines:

Tu pasión y tu amor

Encima de mí se derrama

Your passion and love

Spill over me

In these two lines he is obviously making reference to the female normal biological response of the body to foreplay which leads to intercourse. Nonetheless, the words passion and love are carefully placed before the description of this sexual response.

Likewise, in *Energía*, Alexis and Fido present love in a similar way. In *Energía*, Fido in the following lines expresses:

Siento que, algo pasó

Me enloqueció, me enamoró

I feel like something happened

She made me go crazy; she enamored me

The male protagonist, in these narratives, feels love at first sight. Moreover, this love is also described in terms of sexual attraction. He loses his sanity because of a woman. What happens to a man, who falls in love, is out of this world. Love/sexual attraction are sentiments that people, and specially men, cannot control. The kind of women, men like, are the ones who are really special and specifically speaking, extraordinary in terms of her physical appearance.

A woman who is out of this world is the best one to fall in love with. The singer of *Energía*, describes this extraordinary woman in the following line:

Tu eres la única en mi universo mi meteorito

You are the only one in my universe my meteor

This woman is the only one important for him but also she is someone temporary in his life. She is compared to a meteor or a shooting star which do not last forever and they disappear almost as soon as they appear. The woman who makes him feels so crazy and out of control should know that this love will last the time their sexual energy lasts.

Love as well as sex, in reggaeton songs, is not supposed to last forever. Happily ever after endings do not exist in reggaeton narratives because love is based on sexual energy. This is quite problematic because the message is that sex is what matters the most in a relationship. Moreover, it also implies that women are objects of men's desire. Therefore, women rarely exist as active participants in the narratives; they are objectified.

If women achieve a voice in reggaeton songs, it is only to enhance and reinforce the "hyper masculine" image of men. Felix Jiménez, in *(W)rapped in Foil*, states that: "… the female intervention would not run counter to the songs' implicit goal of male sexual pleasure" (232). Women, who have a voice in the narratives, express sexual pleasure only to reiterate how unique and special the man in terms of his sexual response is. Men and their sexual response depend only on how desirable a woman is in terms of her physical appearance. Her looks and subservience will help her find the man who will take care of her and provide for whatever she needs.

In *Irresistible*, the male protagonist of the narratives does not offer the woman affection or protection if she accepts to be intimate with him. However, in *Energía* the male protagonist promises protection and economical stability to the woman if she accepts to be intimate with him. The protagonist, in *Energía*, promises:

Conmigo estás querida, protegida

Confía en mí que na' te va a faltar mientras yo viva

With me you are good, protected

Trust me, for as long as I live you will have no needs

He wants her to feel secure and confident. However, his offer implies that she is weak and helpless and at the same time implies he is superior and self sufficient. Therefore, the ultimate message in terms of gender is that men are always in control.

To achieve control over the other is always important to men in reggaeton narratives. Men are in control of their sexual desires but they cannot control their sexual impulses. Therefore, they offer money and sweet words in order to also have control of the women they crave. Likewise, they also want to achieve control of other men. They are also vigilant of other men who are possible threats and could possibly take away their women or their fame.

The male protagonists have absolute control over everything immediate in their relationships and they achieve that control using their sexual drive or their money, and fame. This description of men helps us understand the most common male archetype in these narratives. The archetype is the "barriocentric/ lover macho". Nieves Moreno explains:

> The phrase "barriocentric macho" synthesizes the codes of masculine domination and representation that construct the male reggaeton subject in terms of image, gender, and discourse. In general terms, this synthesis results from a subject's identity organized through a constant reference to gangster logic, the objectification of women, and the almost total omission of messages that acknowledge the value of education. In addition, it includes the aesthetics, influenced by U.S. rappers. (276)

The image and gender of men in reggaeton narratives are very important but their discourse is even more important. Discourse is "performative" because it describes and it shapes behaviors. In the discourse of reggaeton narratives the most powerful social constructs, especially those which deal with gender stereotypes, are presented and reinforced.

The visual representation of men and women in the music videos through their dance and interaction also produces a fixed type of personalities for men and women. Men are in a power position and women are merely ornaments or followers of men's actions. Nieves Moreno indicates that:

> The representation of masculinity established by the songs, dances, and pretenses of reggaeton contribute to the genre's naturalization of a particular kind of man. Images of men in reggaeton are dominated by the use of sportswear, major-league baseball caps, designer jackets, and shiny jewelry, also called "bling bling" – an aesthetic drawn in part from contemporary, commercial U.S. rap/hip-hop. As such, the reggaeton man or barriocentric macho emerges from an exaggerated heterosexual masculinity that, in an immediate way, suggests fissures. (256)

The power of consumerism is what gives men superiority. The more they have in terms of capital goods, the more masculine power they gain. However, this power is not only achieved through money and fame. Violence, in some cases is suggested as a valid tool to maintain power and control over others.

The ultimate goal of every man, according to the system of beliefs of the patriarchy and in reggaeton narratives, is to always have authority or the upper hand. "Reggaetoneros" in their discourse and with their images are always reinforcing male authority. Nieves Moreno states that: "In terms of discourse, reggaeton also reproduces a male domination, one that enhances the

figure of the man and situates him in a position of constant symbolic authority" (255). Symbolic authority, in songs like *Irresistible* and *Energía*, is exercised towards women because they are treated as objects of male desire. Women are never a threat to symbolic authority in reggaeton narratives. However, what they provoke in terms of sexual desire is what causes men conflict with themselves and among them.

Women fit the stereotype of the young maiden who is also a submissive sex object. They are present in reggaeton narratives and music videos to attract and please men. Their sex appeal is vital to the fantasy of happiness created by the narratives. Nieves Moreno describes them as follows: "Generally speaking, women on the covers of recordings, in videos, or on stage reggaeton concerts are voluptuous, provocative, and scantily clad" (263). The visual image of women presented on the cover of the recordings and in music videos is the same one presented in the discourse of reggaeton narratives. In *Irresistible*, the sexually desirable woman is described in the following lines:

Ella es extrema, controla el sistema
Suprema, envuélveme en tu esquema
Entra a la disco, ella es un problema
La cartera combina con la diadema
She is extreme, she controls the system
Supreme, involve me in your scheme
She enters the disco, she is a problem
The purse matches her diadem

The woman of this narrative is extremely sexually attractive. She is described as a woman on top of her game in terms of her physical appearance. She dresses according to the norms of the male

gaze of femininity. However, she is considered a problem. Her looks as well as her assertiveness are what make this woman a source of distress.

In *Energía*, the sexually desirable woman is described as follows:

Yo soy loco con las curvas que rompen con tu body
Me encanta cuando en la cama dice que soy su daddy
Tú eres mi media mitad, mi dama, mi sex symbol
Tú eres la mami rica que me tiene en el limbo
I am crazy about the curves that break with your body
I love when she says in bed I am her daddy
You are my other half, my lady, my sex symbol
You are the delicious mama who has driven me to limbo

Her body and her ability to drive him sexually crazy are the most important assets of this woman. The archetype of the young beautiful maiden who is a submissive whore is the woman who makes the life of a man complete and happy. This type of woman, even though she does not express herself in reggaeton narratives, is the one who is deified by the patriarchal system of beliefs accepted by popular culture in Puerto Rico. The submissive whore is deified because she represents a woman who is powerless. Storey in explaining Michel Focault, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, points out: "Power produces reality; through discourses it produces the 'truths' we live by…" (130). The discourse that deifies women as sexually submissive reinforce once more the "reality" of men in control of women.

Women who manage to have a voice in reggaeton narrative performances, as well as those who don't have a voice, only reinforce the image of the "barriocentric macho". Félix Jiménez declares that: "The generic reggaeton woman was paid to simulate her sensual bliss

through her chorus singing, even if enjoying that simulation" (232). Her interventions in the songs only last seconds and are part of the chorus or background sounds. Their purpose, once again, is to reinforce the image of subservience women have in a culture with strong patriarchal beliefs.

According to our culture, subservience in women and superiority in men are inherent to their gender. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* Sarah E. Chin, as quoted by Storey, describes gender as:

> Our identities depend upon successful performance of our genders, and there is an entire cultural arsenal of books, films, television, advertisements, parental injunctions and peer surveillance to make sure those performances are (ideally) unconscious and successful. (162)

Children have a script to follow from the day they are born. That is why performing the script as adults is so natural for people. However, it is not too important to understand or know why gender seems to be natural to us. What is important to understand is, that gender is constructed and that certain constructions were created to subordinate women by imposing on them certain roles. These irrational constructions pervade in our lives constantly in the books we read or in the music we listen.

In the case of reggaeton songs, it is not in the streets where reggaeton sexist discourse is created and reinforced. The recording studio is where the sexist discourse comes to life. Jiménez proposes that:

> The recording studio is where gender relations are established and regulated. For reggaeton performers, the structural dynamics of their act is predicated upon a visible

> subject, object, or both, in video and concert performances – in this case, a woman on the side. (232)

The way women are used or presented in the narratives, in music videos and or in concerts is what creates the ideology of male superiority. Women see and understand themselves as objects. Men see and understand themselves as owners of women as much as they are owners of fame and money. Therefore, young girls understand that what they have to do is let their male counterpart act over them. Young boys understand that women are to be treated in terms of how they feel about them.

Young people decide to act or not to act according to the prescription given to them according to their gender in reggaeton narratives. Jiménez indicates that:

> Gender and sexuality ruled not only the content, but also the production of the genre. Aural promiscuity stands out as the benchmark of reggaeton, in which collaboration is the name of the game. (236)

Gender relations take place in the narratives in terms of sexual acts and promiscuity establishes the rules for gender relations. Therefore, humans are merely prisoners of their sexual instincts. Sentiments or ideas are not valued as part of the valid traits of a man or a woman.

Reggaeton narratives do not present anything new in terms of the ideological values and gender roles accepted in popular culture. These narratives only present a genre with a change in the aesthetics. Jiménez states that:

> As a technomusical hybrid construct, reggaeton proposes no frontal assault to gender conventions. “Reggaetoneros”, experts in repetition, created a generic woman that, in essence, could always be invisible and that in most reggaeton lyrics appear as a woman satisfied – as a verbal robot. (232)

The woman created in reggaeton narratives is one very similar to the one created by fairy tales. She is a very beautiful and sexually attractive woman who is ready to fulfill and satisfy men's fantasies. Women who are considered intelligent or empowered are never present in reggaeton narratives; they exist in binary opposition with men. They only exist in terms of the other.

Manipulation and domination are key words in terms of the relation that exists between a man and a woman in reggaeton narratives. She manipulates him with her looks while he uses her and that implies his domination over her. Nieves Moreno describes this woman: "Women's objectification within reggaeton eliminates almost all possibility of action and translates their presence into a prize or trophy that men exhibit, dominate, and manipulate" (256). Women as men's trophies or prizes have to be exhibited, dominated and manipulated. Men in exchange protect them to justify the possession of a woman. In order to present the image of men as hypermasculine, "reggaetoneros" created a plot in their songs in which they have to fight in order to keep the women they want for them. There are always other men interested in the same woman the protagonist of the narratives desires. Therefore, he should be ready to fight for her. Women, on the other hand, are not trustworthy because they will follow or accept the man who can give her all she wants in terms of material goods.

The domination of women represents a form of violence. This violence is considered gender violence and this one is quite problematic especially here in Puerto Rico. Gender violence includes physical, sexual, and psychological violence. In reggaeton narratives physical, sexual, and psychological violence are not overtly described. However, sexual and psychological violence are exercised towards women in the form of symbolic violence. This symbolic violence is used to exercise authority. In *Irresistible*, Yandel acting his persona sings:

Me encantaría verte sudar

Los dos envueltos hay que llegar

En la disco nunca parar

Sentirte es lo que anhelo

I would love to see you sweat

Both embraced we have to come

In the disco never stop

Feeling you is what I long for

He wants to have sex with her incessantly and in a public place. What he wants from her is sexual pleasure. Her feelings, emotions, or desires do not count even though he wants her for sensual enjoyment and the eventual sexual act. These narratives place men in a position of power because they are the ones who act and speak in the relationship.

Likewise, in *Energía*, sexual violence is also present. In this song, however, the woman receives a promise of an everlasting love and economic stability if she accepts to become a sexual object. Alexis, in *Energía*, acting as his persona expresses:

Quisiera encerrarme contigo en un cuarto

Y hacerlo all night

con el aire en high los dos bien high

Alcanzar la nota prometida

Durarte toda la vida

Darte lo que me pidas

I would like to lock myself in a room with you

And do it all night

With the air on high both of us very high

Reach the promised note

to last a lifetime

Give you all you ask for

He wants to lock her in a room and have sexual pleasure for a lifetime. He compares his sexual desire for her with a drug addiction. Once again, symbolic sexual violence is exercised towards women but this time in the name of love. Nonetheless, love is described in terms of a need to possess the other.

To possess a woman is quite natural in a patriarchal system. In Puerto Rico, just like in any other part of Latin America, "machismo" allows for men to be the owners of women. Nieves Moreno describes this type of masculine domination:

> masculine domination represents a crucial example for the understanding of symbolic violence. This domination is rooted in all cultural, social, and political practices. The French theorist [Pierre Bourdieu] establishes that this rooting naturalizes domination in such a way that it often goes unnoticed and gains hold of our subconscious. In order to fight it, Bourdieu proposes the denaturalization of domination in the symbolic circuit, through the exercise of representation. (276)

Reggaeton narratives do not denaturalize domination in the symbolic circuit as described above, instead these narratives present what Puerto Rican culture has to offer in terms of dominant popular culture practices. Therefore, performers and authors of reggaeton's way to reveal against the "good values" of Puerto Rican society is rejecting conservatism through the use of a different aesthetic in music. Jiménez explains that: "Reggaeton's repertoire of cultural excesses – the violence it reflected or referred to, the real (and feigned) rivalries among performers, its

homosociality and its hypersexuality – rearranged the collective Puerto Rican ear as well as the eye" (231). "Reggaetoneros" established a less hypocrite position about the subordination of women. They are up front with what really happens with women, especially to those who pertain to the unprivileged classes.

In Puerto Rico, women suffer day by day because of the violence exercised towards them not only at home but because of that violence exercised by the government. Diana Valle Ferrer, in her article *La Violencia Contra las Mujeres en Puerto Rico: ¿Emergencia Social?*, declares:

> … en el Puerto Rico de hoy existe una embestida contra las mujeres que se manifiesta de muchas maneras, tales como los ataques de la rama judicial contra la Ley 54, Ley para la Intervención y Prevención de la Violencia Doméstica del 1989. Los ataques de la Rama Ejecutiva, tales como la derogación de la Carta Circular sobre la Equidad de Género, en el Departamento de Educación, la inversión de 1.2 millones a la campaña Promesa de Hombre, una campaña religiosa que perpetúa los roles estereotipados de las mujeres como principalmente madres y esposas, y la violencia de la Policía Estatal contra las estudiantes en la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
>
> … nowadays, in Puerto Rico there exists an attack against women and the manifestations of these attacks are several, such as the attack of the judiciary power against the "Ley 54", this is the law for the Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence from 1989. The attack from the Executive power, such as the derogation of the "Carta Circular sobre la Equidad de Género," from the Department of Education, the investment of 1.2 million of dollars to the campaign "Promesa de Hombre" (A Man's Promise), a religious campaign which perpetuates the stereotypical roles of women

> mainly as mothers and wives, and the violence of the Police Department against the female students at the University of Puerto Rico.

This violence exercised by the government is being reinforced in songs, short stories, movies, and other manifestations of popular culture. Therefore, violence against women is being normalized and standardized.

Alternatives to a normalized and standardized violence should be provided in schools and at home. Adolescents and young adults who only like violent manifestations of popular culture are prone to accept and engage in violent behavior. Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne, in *So Sexy So Soon*, reveal that:

> A study by the Rand Corporation found that teenagers who listen to sexually degrading music lyrics are nearly twice as likely to have sex within two years as teens who listen to other types of music. This was true for boys and girls, regardless of race. Another study found that young black girls who frequently watched rap music videos were more likely to binge drink, have sex with multiple partners, and have a negative body image. (150)

Having sex is not something that should be considered violent. However, having sex and being promiscuous at very young ages is very dangerous and perpetrating such behavior can be considered a violent act against childhood. Both women and men, involved in this type of behavior are at risk of damaging their health. Boys and girls who engage in sexual practice without knowing the consequences of their acts are at risk, not only regarding the biological aspect but also regarding their emotional health.

The image of the "barriocentric macho" and the image of the "submissive whore" for females promote the idea of a person whose ultimate value relies only on his or her sexual response. The glorification of the human body as a commodity is denigrating and it reinforce

gender stereotypes which result in violence towards men, and especially towards women. Levin and Kilbourne, in *So Sexy So Soon*, declare that: "Boys who are taught to equate masculinity with violence cause a lot of problems for others but also do harm to themselves" (160). Boys harm themselves, for example, by being promiscuous or by getting into trouble for being aggressive with women. Their physical health as well as their emotional health is at risk. Levin and Kilbourne go further and explain that:

> Young men these days are quite actively discouraged from entering into mutually satisfactory intimate and committed relationships with women. Men who have been conditioned to judge women by the current standard of beauty and to compare real women with the idealized images in the popular media and pornography often find it difficult, if not impossible, to feel empathy for women. Needless to say, they are unlikely to be satisfying partners for women. Boys who lack empathy, who have compassion deficit disorder, often become men who find it impossible to have deep and fulfilling intimate relationships with their partners, with their children, with anyone. (161)

The common gender stereotype, which presents men as sexual beings whose only interest in life is to possess women and to fight against other men to protect their supremacy, is telling men that emotional intimacy is not important or necessary. Boys are being taught that their basic and most primitive instincts are the ones most valued by their culture. Likewise, women are left with no choice but to accept the needs and desires of those who are superior to them.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

Fairy tale and reggaeton narratives as manifestations of popular culture have a great impact on children's lives. They inform people, and in this case, children on how to act according to their gender. As enchanting or entertaining as their narratives appear to be both genres promote women as objects of abuse and misunderstanding on behalf of men because of the way they are represented in popular culture. They are presented in unequal terms to men. Storey, quoting Lana Rakow in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, informs:

> … women have a particular relationship to popular culture that is different from men's.… The second assumption is that understanding how popular culture functions both for women and for a patriarchal culture is important if women are to gain control over their own identities and change both social mythologies and social relations… (136)

Women, in today's society, as a social group are trying to gain power and recognition for who they are as human beings. Scholars, teachers, and parents are concerned with the way young girls see themselves in popular culture representations because the message fairy tale and reggaeton narratives present is one that could result in violence towards girls and women. Fairy tale and reggaeton narratives present women as sexual objects of men's desire. In both genres men are presented as hyper masculine and sometimes even as abusers.

A woman who is described, represented, and raised with an image of her as a sexual object will have problems creating a positive identity. John Storey, in *Inventing Popular Culture*, explains that:

> … identities are made in conditions and circumstances which are rarely of our own making. Therefore, although identities are a sign of agency, identities are always made

> within structures and discourses, which both enable and constrain the making of identities. (80)

Fairy tale narratives teach girls who they are and how they should behave. Likewise, reggaeton narratives reinforce the fairy tale description girls have received of themselves as they reach their teenage years. The discourses available to girls, in both fairy tale and in reggaeton narratives, teach and reinforce the prevalent patriarchal ideas of gender that will influence the construction of a sexist identity.

The construction of identity is not a simple process. Identity is formed through interaction with the self and with others. Social institutions as well as media will socialize children towards accepting gender stereotypes. John Storey, in *Inventing Popular Culture*, points out that:

> In this way, the performance of identity is the accumulation of what is outside [in culture] as if it were inside [in nature]. In other words, our identities are made from a contradictory series of identifications, subject positions, and forms of representation which we have made, occupied, and been located in as we constitute and are constituted by performances that produce the narrative of our lives. Popular culture is a fundamental part of this process. (80)

Children create their identity in their early years mostly through the interaction they have with the significant people in their lives. However, the manifestations of popular culture available to them as well as those available for the adults that take care of them have a great impact on the formation of their identity. Popular culture as a fundamental part of this process is creating problems which result in violence because the distorted images of children are presented as something natural. Fairy tale narratives and reggaeton narratives reinforcement of gender stereotypes are telling young children and specially girls that the behaviors they should observe

according to their gender are inherent to their nature. Gender is explained in terms of a biological feature and not as a social construct.

Disney's versions of fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*, and popular reggaeton narratives such as *Irresistible* and *Energía* present young women within the limited parameters of the patriarchal symbolical order. Through the usage of the image of a princess or damsels in both genres women are being taught they have to exhibit a pleasant behavior towards men. Women's inner positive qualities are related to the behavior learned from the patriarchy and are related to their physical attributes. This behavior assures women they will find the happy ending they want in terms of money and social mobility. The achievement of goals depends only on supplying men with what they want and not on women's intellectual capacity. The perfect body along with a subservient attitude will help women achieve their emotional, social, and financial goals.

Princesses in fairy tale narratives as well as young women in reggaeton narratives have become prisoners of the expectations society has for them. Therefore, their personalities are being stereotyped to negate their individuality and uniqueness as humans. Passivity and obedience are "positive" characteristics women have to observe however these characteristics are dangerous especially because they don't help women to become proactive and in control of their lives.

The contrast that exists between men and women in fairy tales and in reggaeton are abysmal. Men are in a power position and women are in a subordinate position. Men are considered superior to women. Heterosexual love, social mobility, and the presentation of men and women as opposites in terms of the power they have are present in both genres narratives.

However, reggaeton narratives are more explicit in terms of sexual language and in terms of the violence they portray.

Teachers, parents, figures of authority, and care takers should all provide alternatives which can help children understand the value of human life without taking into consideration their gender. Moreover, they should help children in school and at home become critical about what they read and what they listen to. Popular culture pervades our lives constantly. Children cannot be kept in a safe bubble free of degrading messages related to gender.

For teachers, fairy tales and reggaeton narratives are worth studying because they represent two of the most influential genres in Puerto Rican popular culture. The statistics of violent crimes and especially those related to gender violence rates have reached very high levels in Puerto Rico. Cynthia López Cabán, in her article *Combate el Centro para Puerto Rico la violencia domestica*,states:

> Este estudio concluyó que en el año 2011, además de haberse establecido una cifra histórica en asesinatos, se alcanzó un récord en los asesinatos de mujeres por violencia de género.
>
> Del análisis, se desprende que entre el 2007 y el 2011 las muertes por violencia doméstica aumentaron en un 84%, mientras que entre el 2010 y el 2011 se reportó un aumento de un 36%.
>
> This study found that in 2011, besides having established a historical figure in murders, a record in murders of women caused by gender violence was attained.
>
> The analysis shows that between 2007 and 2011 deaths due to domestic violence increased by 84%, while between 2010 and 2011 an increase of 36% was reported.

Therefore, teachers should be prepared to help children and specially girls to become critical about gender inequality. Gender stereotypes cannot be completely eradicated but teachers and parents can make a difference in helping to recognize them and not accept them all as if they are a natural part of life. Gender stereotypes are reinforced more easily when they are taught at very early ages. Therefore, creating awareness to teachers and parents might help neutralize their effect. As Peggy Orenstein, in *Cinderella Ate my Daughter*, articulates, "Then the whole concept of labeling kicks in sometime between the ages of two and three they realize that there is this thing called 'boy' and this thing called 'girl' and something important differentiates them" (61). The differences that are evident to children should be explained to them in terms of social expectations and not in terms of biological traits.

This thesis does not end here because there are many other aspects related to fairy tales and reggaeton which should be explored. First, teachers, college professors, and scholars should also explore how the expectations these narratives create for young boys affect the way they see themselves. Second, creating educational units to teach positive image of girls by comparing and contrasting traditional fairy tale narratives and feminist fairy tale narratives will help neutralize negative effects of traditional fairy tales. Third, issues related to capitalism should also be explored in both fairy tale and reggaeton narratives. How the American dream is presented and promoted are worth of study because of the implications it might bring. Last but not least, other popular genres recognized by *Billboard* such as “bachata”, for example, should also be explored and compared with fairy tale narratives. This musical genre also portrays traditional images of men and women in terms of the most common gender stereotypes they present.

These suggestions along with this thesis will slowly but surely help children deconstruct the hegemony and create awareness of the gender constructions of our own times.

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Appendix Reggaeton Narratives

Irresistible

Hoy

Me encantaría verte sudar

Los dos envueltos hay que llegar

En la disco nunca parar

Sentirte es lo que anhelo

Coro

Resistirme imposible será;

De la manera como lo hace ninguna lo hará;

Recostándose en la pared

Sigue provocándome

Bien suelta envuelta

(Te cuento)

Ella es extrema controla el sistema

Suprema envuélveme en tu esquema

Entra a la disco ella es un problema

La cartera combina con la diadema

Bien tu quieres y yo también

Besándote te quito el sostén

Tiéntame bésame tu sabes quién controla los de cien

resistirme imposible será;

De la manera que no lo hace ninguna lo hará;

Recostándose en la pared

Sigue provocándome

Bien suelta envueltaa

Coro 2x…

Bebemos cenamos

Como no hay ningún reclamo

Después yo le regalo un ramo

Me le pego la beso le digo te amo

De mi casa a su casa pequeño es el tramo

Y mi cuerpo te llama

A mi me encanta la trama

Que yo sea el mago y tu siempre la dama

Ya quisiera tenerte en la cama

Tu pasión y tu amor

Encima de mí se derrama

Oooooh Ooooooh Ooooooooh

Levanta la mano y grita fuerte

Oooooh Ooooooh Ooooooooh

Valió la pena esperarte

Energía

Siento que, algo cambió

Cuando me le acerqué!

Siento que, algo pasó!

Me enloqueció, me enamoró oh oh oh!

Coro:

Tú me das energía

La suerte, me saque la lotería contigo uoh

Tú me das energía

La suerte mia, me saque la lotería contigo uoh! (2x)

Solo pienso en tí se recargan mis electrolitos

Tu eres la única en mi universo mi meteorito

Por tí me derrito Fua!!

Cuando te conocí, todo cambió

Ahora todo es distinto

Quiero que sepas mi reina que como tu nadie hay

Otra que tenga el corazón de tu size

Quisiera encerrarme contigo en un cuarto

Y hacerlo all night con el aire en high los dos bien high

Alcanzar la nota prometida

Durarte toda la vida darte lo que me pidas

Conmigo estas querida, protegida

Confía en mí que na' te va a faltar mientras yo viva

Coro 2x…

Me saqué la loto,

tu sanaste mi corazón roto

Tu besos causan en mi un maremoto

Cuando te toco tiemblo más que un terremoto

Y el que intente hacer daño lo exploto

Tu nacistes pa' mi Yo nací pa' ti

soy loco con las curvas que rompen con tu body

Me encanta cuando en la cama dice que soy su daddy

Estando contigo me siento como un millonarie

Vamos a viajar el mundo, sin rumbo sin destino

Nunca olvido la manera que nos conocimos

Tu eres mi media mitad, mi dama mi sex

symbol

(Tu Eres La Mami Rica Que Me Tienen En El Limbo)

Siento que, algo cambió

Cuando me le acerqué!

Siento que, algo pasó!

Me enloqueció, me enamoró oh oh oh!

Coro 2x…

Yeah Yeah

tu tienes todo lo que necesito en la vida baby

esto va para perreologia

Mrs. A Señor F

Love Your For Girl

Fino ComO el Haze