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**Gendered discourses in a contemporary animated film:  
subversion and confirmation of gender stereotypes in *Shrek***

by

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**Abstract**

This paper uses multi-modal analysis to identify some dominant gendered discourses in *Shrek*, an animated, feature-length film. It gives an overview of these discourses with reference to the main plot elements, and goes on to discuss some of the issues specific to the animated film and to modern fairytale genres. The latter half of the paper consists of a detailed analysis of six extracts from the film, chosen because they exemplify ways in which gendered discourses are encoded in the film. We suggest that while the film does not (cannot) reject traditional gendered stereotypes entirely, it does subvert them for humorous effect.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper we attempt to identify some dominant gendered discourses in the animated, feature-length film *Shrek*, and to evaluate it in terms of its reproduction or contestation of gender stereotypes. A film such as *Shrek* can be seen as a highly relevant epistemological site for gender and language study, given its 'fairy tale' focus and sheer number of viewers ([www.bcdb.com](http://www.bcdb.com)) and we see gendered discourses as central to the humour and plot of the film. As *Shrek* contains many fairy-tale elements and is ostensibly aimed at children, we will refer to prior analysis of gender in fairy tales (e.g. Cosslett, 1996) and children's literature (e.g. Sunderland, 2004). However, there are certain challenges in analysing a full-length film as opposed to a storybook. First, a film contains a huge amount of potential data. There is the characters' dialogue to consider, the narrative elements and of course the visual elements of the 'text'. This is related to the second reason: any profitable analysis of film (animated or otherwise) must be multi-modal, or must at least consider non-verbal elements in order to capture the 'totality' of the text (Sunderland, 2004). This multiplies the number of possible readings: a film will be 'read' by different viewers differently in that they will all respond to it by co-constructing a particular set of discourses, just as with a written text.

The exact definition of the term *discourse* has been subject to much debate (Titscher et al., 2000) but in this paper we follow Sunderland (2004) in using 'discourse' to mean a recognisable 'way of seeing the world', which can be 'co-constructed by the language user' through 'certain linguistic features'. In addition to highlighting linguistic features, we hope to also highlight some of the salient visual aspects of the text. An animation could give rise to even more complex readings than a picture due to the added element of motion, which arguably allows for far more complex visual representation. Of course,

it may also be the case that the visual text and the verbal text differ, either in the details provided or the (inferred) discourses therein. Alternatively, in dramatic genres such as narrative cinema, visual text often takes the place of narration, further narrowing the amount of linguistic evidence of discourses available. Linguistic analysis of a work of fiction is further complicated by the very nature of fiction: there is always the possibility of irony, satire or humour (Sunderland, 2004: 143). Perhaps because of *Shrek's* fictional nature, the notion of interdiscursivity is particularly salient. We found several instances where the incongruity of a 'snatch' of another text (Kristeva, 1986) in the context of the film was the driving force behind the humour.

The fairy tale genre has been analysed extensively by feminist scholars. While much of this work is relevant to the identification of gendered discourses in *Shrek*, the film does not fit neatly into the fairy-tale genre. It contains many characteristic fairy-tale elements (manifested as characters, plots and visual features) but also contains discourses characteristic of several cinematic genres, for example the love-story ('discourse of romance'), and of the TV cartoon genre ('discourses of acceptable violence'). There is also a growing body of work on gender issues in animated film (e.g. Giroux, 1995; Dundes, 2001; Craven, 2002) and, unsurprisingly, the focus of this work has generally been Disney films, since there are very few popular feature-length animated films which are not produced by Disney. Despite being produced by PDI/DreamWorks rather than Disney, *Shrek* nevertheless exists against the backdrop of a 'Disnified culture' (Giroux, 1995), and we therefore believe it is appropriate to compare – and, importantly, contrast (since subversion of the Disney world may be going on) – the characters and gendered discourses of *Shrek* with those in Disney films, and hence to refer to some of the studies of Disney films in our analysis. Unfortunately, there seems to have been very

little *linguistic* analysis of Disney films; as with children's books (cf. Sunderland, 2004), studies have tended to concentrate on content, in terms of quantitative analyses of gender representations and of films' themes or plots.. In our analysis of *Shrek* we attempt to identify discourses through both content and linguistic analysis. Due to some of the problems detailed above we cannot make this a wholly linguistic analysis, nor would this be very productive for an animation, and where possible we will attempt to support our claims through reference to multi-modal elements of the text. Although discourse identification is never straightforward (Sunderland, 2004), we attempt to find 'recognisable' discourses by drawing on our own experience of animated films, fairy tales and popular culture because *Shrek* exists as a product of the culture(s) we have experienced. We also refer to the commentary on the film given by the two directors and one of the producers (see Appendix). This is helpful in identifying authorial intention, which may in turn be helpful in suggesting possible readings of the text. Of course, our readings of discourses, and those of other analysts or viewers, may differ from the discourses the creators intentionally or unintentionally drew on. Our first step in analysing *Shrek* was to watch the whole film looking for linguistic and other 'traces' of gendered discourses (Talbot, 1998). Although the whole film is full of these, we found that certain passages were either representative of ways in which gender is manifested in the film as a whole, or contained particularly 'recognisable' gendered discourses. We selected six salient extracts. In addition to the film itself (*Shrek*, 2001), the data is based on an online film script ([www.shreksript.com/script/index.htm](http://www.shreksript.com/script/index.htm)). In this paper, the data is presented in two columns, with the spoken dialogue on the left and a description of the action and our comments on the right. The columns are

synchronised vertically, so that speech and co-occurring action are presented side by side wherever possible. The data is accompanied by stills from certain scenes. We have not included any detailed prosodic or phonetic information, though where this seemed highly relevant we have made a comment in the right-hand column. The extracts from the commentary soundtrack are presented in the Appendix only where they are relevant to gendered discourses in the film. Overlapping speech is marked with ‘//’.

Section 2 of this paper gives an overview of the analysis of the gendered discourses we have identified (or ‘co-constructed’) in *Shrek*. This is followed by a detailed textual analysis of the six extracts in section 3. Finally, in section 4 we attempt to evaluate the discourses we have identified in the preceding sections, in terms of their role in confirming or challenging stereotypes of gender.

## **2. Overview of gendered discourses**

*Shrek*, billed as ‘the Greatest Fairy Tale Never Told’, is the story of an ogre (Shrek) who wants to be left alone, a donkey who doesn’t, a princess who wants to be rescued by her true love, and a lord who wants to become King by marrying a princess. These are the characters’ positions at the beginning of the film as established both by their speech and actions. The ‘wants’ of all these characters drive the plot. In the case of the characterisation of Princess Fiona and of Prince Farquaad, traditional gendered fairy-tale discourses are drawn on from the outset. Viewers are introduced to a common fairy-tale theme even before the opening credits:

Once upon a time there was a lovely princess. But she had an enchantment upon her of a fearful sort, which could only be broken by love's first kiss. She was locked away in a castle guarded by a terrible fire-breathing dragon. Many brave knights had attempted to free her from this dreadful prison, but none prevailed.

She waited in the dragon's keep in the highest room of the tallest tower for her true love and true love's first kiss. (*Shrek* 2001)

This takes the form of a narrative voice-over (although the voice is Shrek's) while simultaneously the pages of an illustrated story-book are displayed (see fig 2.1). In the commentary soundtrack on the DVD, director Andrew Adamson describes this scene as follows:

We actually were looking for a very classic kind of fairy tale opening...we came to this conclusion of wanting to open like a traditional fairy tale and having a storybook (*Shrek* 2001)

There are thus a number of linguistic hallmarks of a traditional fairy tale (cf. Cosslett 1996), and the traditional discourses of 'Some day my prince will come' and 'Active man/passive woman' (Sunderland, 2004) are clearly present. The end of the scene, however, is of particular interest: Shrek tears a page out of the book and says 'What a load of <sound of toilet flushing>' and, viewers are then led to believe, uses the page from the book as toilet paper. For the purposes of this study we will restrict ourselves to how this symbolic subversion of the traditional fairy tale genre prepares the way for the range of gendered discourses in the film. *Shrek* as a whole can be seen as a 'general subversive discourse in relation to fairy tales' (Sunderland, 2004: 163), emphasis in original). However, it is also possible to identify specific gendered discourses. We have used 'analyst's names' for these which are not necessarily 'self-explanatory or ... recognisable' (Sunderland, 2004: 48), but to someone who has seen *Shrek* they should pose no problems. We have named the discourses in the manner of a Lonely Hearts column, because we believe that sexual desire and 'love' between characters are the key plot elements in the fairy tale genre. They are also of key importance, as we will demonstrate below, though with a rather different representation of gender relations.

### **2.1 'Lord seeks a perfect princess'**

In order to become King, Prince Farquaad must find and marry a princess. To this effect, he seeks the advice of a magic mirror, a traditional fairy-tale element taken intertextually from the story of *Snow White*. Unlike the Queen in *Snow White*, Prince Farquaad begins by seeking confirmation not of his own physical attributes, but those of his realm, DuLoc. The mirror responds by pointing out that in order for DuLoc to become a Kingdom, Farquaad must marry a princess. This is followed, highly intertextually, by a Blind Date-style display of the eligible princesses, which is analysed in some detail in section 3.1.

### **2.2 'Imprisoned princess seeks true love for brave rescue attempt. Must have valiant steed'**

Once again, the film draws on traditional fairy-tale elements as a plot device. Princess Fiona is imprisoned in her tower, and as Shrek puts it, has 'had a lot of time to plan' the rescue. However, later in the film Fiona turns out not to be 'exactly what [he] expected'. While Shrek is referring to Fiona's propensity for belching, it rapidly also becomes apparent that she is indeed not a prototypical fairy-tale princess (see point 2.4, below). Neither is Shrek an average knight-in-shining-armor, as viewers well know and as Fiona finds out. Not only is Fiona at first apparently unaware of Shrek's identity, but Shrek does not become aware of Fiona's 'secret' – that she turns into an ogre at sunset – until the end of the film. This is an unusual 'trace' of what can be seen as the 'women as beautiful or ugly' discourse (Sunderland, 2004). This aspect of Fiona's physiology seems central to the character's motivation in the film – she gives this nocturnal transformation as her reason for wanting to find her true love. Until she finds 'true love and true love's first kiss' she will

continue to change shape at night. Although she evidently has feelings for Shrek, she believes her 'only chance to live happily ever after is to marry [her] true love' (ibid.), i.e. not Shrek. Once again, there is a case of dramatic irony here which directly relates to Fiona and Shrek's behaviour towards each other: in some ways *Shrek* has more generic hallmarks of a romantic Hollywood film than a fairy tale, in that it is the gendered discourses typical of this genre which pervade this scene. What we are calling a discourse of 'tolerance of grossly unattractive masculinity' is also apparent. According to Craven (2002), this tolerance 'is inherent in the quality of "feistiness" that defines Disney heroines' such as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, and the 'heroine' of *Shrek*. Fiona could indeed be described as 'feisty', and some of the data presented in section 3.2 will show how this 'feistiness' is constructed linguistically and visually.

### 2.3 'Lonely dragon seeks talking donkey mate'

Farquaad, Fiona and Shrek are not the only characters engaged in 'romance'. As becomes apparent from anthropomorphic visual clues (eyelashes, red lips) and through Donkey's dialogue, the dragon in *Shrek* is intended to be both female and 'feminine'. She takes a fancy to Donkey. This is a major departure from traditional gender roles in fairy tales. While there may be a few stories featuring overtly feminine dragons or monsters (see below), most dragons are either masculine or gender-neutral. One notable example of a female monster is in *Beowulf* (Jack, 1994), where Grendel's mother takes revenge for her son's death. However, in this and many other 'parental revenge' narratives, the gender of the monster is not central to the plot or interaction with other characters. Whether this case of role-reversal in *Shrek* is really groundbreaking and/or feminist is examined further in section 4.

#### 2.4 'Plucky bandit and Merry Men seek damsel-in-distress to rescue'

On their trip back to DuLoc, Donkey, Fiona, and Shrek are set upon by a rather strange incarnation of Robin Hood. This francophone rogue attempts to 'liberate' Fiona from 'this green ... beast'. Fiona, however, does not want to be rescued from Shrek, especially not by someone as 'annoying', in her words, as Monsieur Hood. She despatches her would-be rescuer and the entire group of Merry Men using impressive martial-arts skills. We discuss whether this episode representationally frees Fiona from the shackles of traditional 'princess-like' behaviour in section 3.2, below.

#### 2.5 'Cartoon characters seek genders'

Thus far we have focussed on gendered discourses through the lens of attraction or desire. Tanner (2003) points out that in animated films 'couple relationships are created by love at first sight'. However, gender is encoded in the characters in many other ways. As animated cartoon characters, they do not have a biological sex. However, as Smith (1995) notes, 'literacy practices require an interpretation of reality concerning the genders of [fictional] characters'. The sex of the actor providing the character's voice may indicate the supposed biological sex of the animated character; visual representation is another indicator. Here, Shrek appears male because of his physiognomy and body shape. His non-human characteristics (conical ears, green skin) do not detract sufficiently from his human-like appearance to lead viewers to believe otherwise. Similarly, Fiona, despite being computer-generated, appears almost 'photorealistic' in her human form (although commentators on fashion magazines might question just how realistic photos of women are in today's digitally powerful visual media (e.g. Wolf, 1991)). In this, she is comparable to Pocahontas, the female protagonist in an animated film who 'continues

Disney's tradition of presenting a body type which is unattainable' (Dundes, 2001). In *The Tech of Shrek*, a short documentary feature on the *Shrek* DVD, producer Jeffrey Katzenberg comments that Fiona had to be 'dialled back' or she looked 'too photorealistic', and hence 'looked out of place in the fairy-tale world' (*Shrek*, 2001). The directors make remarks about her appearance at several points in their commentary; here they are describing her first appearance in the 'flesh', as it were:

Andrew: The design, even, of Fiona was very scary....She was much more stylized at one stage, with big and more animé eyes and so on, and she just looked like this freaked-out ant-mannequin creature – very scary!

Vicky: [commenting on Fiona in the final version of the film] Very tiny waist.  
(*Shrek* 2001)

It seems that the creators of the film then found a solution which, to them, gave an acceptable balance of 'not too out of place' and 'photo-realistic' for Fiona. The end result, most viewers would probably agree, is very feminine-looking in terms of physiognomy and body shape. However, as suggested, it is through her actions rather than her appearance that Fiona overtly challenges both the 'princess' and the 'female' stereotypes established at the beginning of the film - though things become more complex when we find out that she turns into an ogre at night. There is thus a complex interplay between the voices in this multi-modal, fictional text, and the variously gendered discourses may be challenging stereotypes in one reading while simultaneously confirming them in another. One such case is examined in section 3.2, below.

Donkey, we suggest, is represented as a male first, and an animal second. Unlike many of the animated animal characters in older films he displays very little of the behaviour stereotypically associated with his species. Thus, despite being a donkey, he does not bray, eat grass, or carry heavy loads. He

might be called stubborn, and occasionally makes jokes about being a donkey, but these usually rely on incongruity for their humorous effect. Yet there is a difference in the way masculinity is encoded in Donkey and in Shrek. While Shrek displays many stereotypically masculine 'qualities', such as grossness, aggression, physical prowess and bravery, Donkey is shown by contrast to lack these qualities. Despite his suggestion to Shrek, shortly after their first meeting, that they should swap 'manly stories', Donkey is not portrayed as very 'manly' in our reading of *Shrek*. He proclaims that he is afraid of the dark, is frequently shown cowering behind Shrek, treats 'unfamiliar, dangerous situations' (*Shrek*, 2001) with some degree of timidity, and faints at the sight of blood. However, running counter to these dichotomised masculinities is Donkey's apparent attractiveness to the opposite sex – he 'gets the girl (dragon)', or rather is got by her – which is contrasted with Shrek's failure to win Fiona until right at the end of the film. Shrek and Donkey can be read as embodying (at least) two different masculinities, partly through their interaction with each other, and partly through their contrasting behaviours in broadly parallel situations. A third embodiment of masculinity is encoded in Farquaad, in his power relationships with his servants as much as his interactions with the main characters, and is analysed below.

A detailed textual analysis of two extracts from *Shrek* will now provide evidence for some of the readings of gendered discourse we have proposed thus far.

### **3. Detailed textual analysis**

This section comprises transcriptions of six extracts from *Shrek* chosen, as discussed, because they display traces of gendered discourses. Each is followed by an analysis of content and language. This will consist of the entire

spoken dialogue of the extract in the left hand column, and a partial identification of salient visual or other non-verbal features in the right. Where appropriate, this is followed by one or more stills from the film.

### 3.1 Lord Farquaad picks a princess

Farquaad has just been shown torturing the Gingerbread Man to find out the location of the fairytale creatures he has evicted from his realm. A guard interrupts him with news that the Magic Mirror has been found.

<p>1. LORD FARQUAAD: Evening. Mirror, mirror on the wall is this not the most perfect kingdom of them all?</p> <p>2. MAGIC MIRROR: Well, technically you're not a king.</p> <p>3. LORD FARQUAAD: Uh, Thelonius. [To mirror] You were saying?</p> <p>4. MAGIC MIRROR: What I mean is, you're not a king yet. But you can become one. All you have to do is marry a princess.</p> <p>5. LORD FARQUAAD: Go on.</p> <p>6. MAGIC MIRROR: So, just sit back and relax My Lord, because it's time for you to meet today's eligible bachelorettes. And here they are! Bachelorette number one is a mentally abused shut-in from a kingdom far, faraway. She likes sushi and hot tubbing any time. Her hobbies include cooking and cleaning for her two evil sisters. Please welcome Cinderella. Bachelorette number two is a cape-wearing girl from the land of fancy. Although she lives with seven other men, she's not easy. Just kiss her dead, frozen lips and find out what a live wire she is. Come on. Give it up for Snow White! And last, but certainly not least, bachelorette number three is a fiery red head... from a dragon-guarded castle surrounded by hot boiling lava! But don't let that cool you off. She's a loaded pistol who likes pina colodas and getting caught in the rain. Yours for the rescuing, Princess Fiona! So will it be bachelorette number one, bachelorette number two or bachelorette number three?</p> <p>7. THELONIUS: Pick number three, my lord!</p> <p>8. LORD FARQUAAD: Okay, okay, uh, number three!</p> <p>9. MAGIC MIRROR: Lord Farquaad, you've chosen Princess Fiona.</p>	<p>The Magic Mirror is not on the wall, it is hung from a hook by the guards. Lord Farquaad looks proud</p> <p>Thelonius (a torturer) smashes small hand-mirror (see fig 3.1.1)</p> <p>The MM hastily corrects himself and looks rather worried</p> <p>This takes the form of a mock sequence from <i>Blind Date</i> (or rather <i>The Dating Game</i>, as this is an American film). The three 'bachelorettes' are introduced with pictures shown inside the mirror. Cinderella is shown cleaning, Snow White in her glass coffin, and Princess Fiona staring upwards from the window of a castle. The pictures of the first two 'bachelorettes' have a significantly higher modality (they look less 'realistic' – Smith, 1995) than the main animated world, while the last looks more three-dimensional than the other two. The last sequence interacts with the 'real' world inhabited by the characters - LF withdraws from the heat of the dragon's fire when this is displayed by the MM.</p> <p>LF looks uncertain.</p>
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<p>10. LORD FARQUAAD: Princess Fiona.  11. LORD FARQUAAD: She's perfect. All I have to do is just //find someone who can go-  12. MAGIC MIRROR: //But I probably should mention the little thing that happens at night.  13. LORD FARQUAAD: I'll do it.  14. MAGIC MIRROR: Yes, but after sunset--  15. LORD FARQUAAD: Silence! I will make this Princess Fiona my queen, and DuLoc will finally have the perfect king! Captain, assemble your finest men. We're going to have a tournament.</p>	<p>LF is speaking to himself. He looks pensive.   The face in the mirror shrinks from LF's hand, and slowly grows again after he turns away.  The guards snap to attention.</p>
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**Extract 3.1**

This extract is interesting for three reasons. First, it shows Lord Farquaad interacting with his servants; second, it sets up the major plot element of the film – the quest to ‘rescue’ Fiona; third, it uses elements from two very popular fairy tales (*Snow White, Cinderella*) but combines them with contemporary cultural elements (*Blind Date / The Dating Game*). This is a good example of the type of intertextuality found in many parts of the film which underlines its subversive, ‘disturbing’ nature. Farquaad’s short stature is repeatedly referred to by the other two male protagonists, and even by Fiona at times. However, in this scene Farquaad is on his home territory – he has a great deal of power over the other characters here – and this is shown through both his actions and his speech. Farquaad uses direct orders when he addresses others, including the magic mirror, except in (1) where he uses a formulaic phrase from *Snow White*. Interestingly he varies the phrase to ask about the realm of DuLoc rather than his own physical appearance. This contrasts sharply with the Queen’s interaction with the mirror – one reading of which is ‘the King’ – in *Snow White*:

In the Grimm version, the king in the story is absent except, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, for his presence as ‘the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen’s – and every woman’s – self evaluation’ (Craven, 2002)

Farquaad evidently has no need for patriarchal judgement from a looking glass, preferring to dispense judgement himself; the mirror is in fact portrayed as frightened by Farquaad's intimidation (see fig. 3.1.2). Although the mirror tries to fulfil its role as an authoritative voice, it is silenced.

There are two further groups of relatively powerless individuals in this scene. Thelonius and the guards are clearly subservient to Farquaad (he uses an imperative towards the guard and he only has to say Thelonius's name for him to act immediately). The mirror, however, is in the least powerful position here. He (the voice is male) is carried in by the guards, is threatened by Thelonius's smashing of a hand mirror (see fig. 3.1.1), and above all is subservient to Farquaad. His challenge to Farquaad's question is preceded by hedging ('well') and modification ('technically'). After the hand-mirror is smashed, the magic mirror quickly 'corrects' his previous statement.

The Mirror's description of the princesses (6) is also very interesting. This constitutes a complete genre shift, where the mirror brings in elements of a TV game-show, but still retains certain elements of fairy-tale discourse. This is signalled by a visual and auditory change (the colours and music), but the mirror's language and demeanour also change (see fig. 3.1.3). He uses imperatives and simple present forms, indicating low modality. According to Vicky Jenson, a director, 'this is one of those sequences that really sets the type of humour that we did' (*Shrek*, 2001). The directors claim that 'everyone' contributed to this sequence by sitting around and giving ideas (ibid.), which may have contributed to the large number of partially conflicting discourses present in such a short extract. First, the 'dating' discourse involves the description of the bachelorettes' desirable qualities to an interested party. However, each also has a number of undesirable qualities such as 'dead,

frozen lips', having been 'mentally abused' or being in a 'dragon-guarded castle'. The descriptions of Cinderella and Snow White (see fig. 3.1.5) contain clear subversions of the discourses of physical appearance and behaviour prevalent in the fairy tales from which these characters are drawn:

es sah noch so frisch aus wie ein lebender Mensch und hatte noch seine schönen, roten Backen. (Grimm and Grimm, 1857)

*She [Snow White] still looked as fresh as a living person, and still had her pretty red cheeks.*

Similarly, Cinderella is not traditionally known for her predilection for sushi and hot-tubbing. These descriptions could be read as a critique of the 'silliness' of conventional fairytale representations. The discourses are all gendered in this case, in addition to any inherent 'fairytale genderedness', because of their presence within the overarching 'dating' discourse. Additionally, gender stereotyping occurs through lexicalisation of the princesses by terms such as 'fiery red-head' and 'live-wire'. Once again it is possible to read these as traces of sexuality (also 'she's not easy', 'cool you off'), which are probably aimed at adult viewers and designed to go over the heads of child viewers.

### 3.2 Monsieur Hood attempts to 'rescue' Fiona

<p>1. MONSIEUR HOOD: La liberté!  2. PRINCESS FIONA: Hey!  3. SHREK: Princess!  4. PRINCESS FIONA: What are you doing?  5. MONSIEUR HOOD: Be still, mon chérie, for I am your saviour! And I am rescuing you from this green-- [smooching F] beast.  6. SHREK: Hey! That's my princess! Go find your own!  7. MONSIEUR HOOD: Please, monster! Can't you see I'm a little busy here?  8. PRINCESS FIONA: Look, pal, I don't know who you think you are!  9. MONSIEUR HOOD: Oh! Of course! Oh,</p>	<p>Hood swings across road on a rope and picks up Fiona, alighting on a large branch.   F pushes him away.  H does a theatrical flourish, has a marked French accent. H grabs F's arm and starts kissing it. F withdraws, looking disgusted (see fig. 3.2.1)  Shrek looks up at H and F   H gestures at F  F grunts, then pushes H around to face her. She looks angry (see fig. 3.2.2)</p>
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stereotype. Not unlike Pocahontas, 'A new heroine has been created' (Dundes, 2001). Fiona does not require male assistance to be rescued, and when this is offered she rejects it. After some posturing ('That's *my* princess' – emphasis in original), Shrek and Donkey are backgrounded – they observe this scene passively (see fig. 3.2.3), allowing Fiona to fulfil the traditionally male aggressor role vis-à-vis Monsieur Hood.

Prior to this, Hood's language and actions could be said to typify a traditional male 'cavalier'. He smooches Fiona's arm (see fig. 3.2.1) and tells Fiona to 'be still', claims to be her 'saviour', to be 'rescuing her from this green beast'. Fiona is the 'object' in all this linguistically, while Hood is the 'subject'. The Merry Men's song further enacts this stereotype. Once again, Hood is the 'subject' in virtually all the lines of the song (e.g. 'I steal from the rich', 'I'm not greedy', 'I rescue pretty damsels'). He uses sexist terms such as 'saucy little maid', 'lady', 'tush'. The Merry Men bring sexuality into the equation by suggesting the word 'laid' in their song, although Hood interrupts them with 'paid' – another example of discourse aimed at adult viewers. Thus Shrek and Fiona are lexicalised as their traditional fairy-tale persona – the beast and the needy princess – and Hood is lexicalised as the lover/rescuer. Through her physical act of complete domination, Fiona could be said to contest and indeed counteract this. As Cosslett points out, 'Feminists don't want women just to take over the violent and aggressive values of patriarchy' (1996), and Fiona attacks Hood ostensibly to protect Shrek.

However, there are two problems with this reading. First, although Hood embodies traditional, sexist discourse, he and the Merry Men are also represented as somewhat 'camp' through their sexual innuendo, dancing and theatrical movements (see fig. 3.2.4). This counteracts the traditional

masculine stereotype somewhat (compare Bugs Bunny's representation in Abel, 1995). Secondly, there are some traces of stereotypical femininity in Fiona's actions – she blushes when Shrek compliments her on her performance, and adjusts her hair in the middle of the fight (see fig. 3.2.5). This contrasts with the female warriors on which this action sequence intertextually draws: the characters of Trinity in *The Matrix* and Yu Shu Lien in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* do not adjust their hair in fight scenes. Thus while there are clear intertextual connections with these films, *Shrek's* interdiscursivity with respect to the 'female warrior discourse' remains somewhat problematic.

Of course, we may be reading against the grain here. The directors repeatedly refer to Fiona's character as different from a traditional fairytale princess (*Shrek*, 2001) and a discourse identifiable in this scene could be seen as 'subversion of traditional fairytale roles'. This discourse underlies the whole film: traditional fairy tale women may have sleeping sickness (*Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*) or be compelled to do things (*Rapunzel*, the miller's daughter in *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Cinderella*) but do not usually fight, win, and change shape. This is normally the prince's role, as in *The Frog Prince*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. A viewer's interpretation of this passage will arguably depend on their familiarity with the intertextual elements and with the growing body of texts (be they books, films or other media) which subvert traditional fairytales.

### 3.3 Donkey wants to stay in Shrek's house

1. DONKEY: Please! I don't wanna go back there! You don't know what it's like to be considered a freak. Well, maybe you do. But that's why we gotta stick together. You gotta let me stay! Please! Please!	D puts his hooves on S's chest. Uses high-pitched, desperate intonation.
--	--

2. SHREK: Okay! Okay! But one night only.	
3. DONKEY: Ah! Thank you!	D Pushes past S into house
4. SHREK: What are you-- No! No!	
5. DONKEY: Oh, this is gonna be fun! We can stay up late, swappin' manly stories, and in the mornin' I'm makin' waffles.	D makes himself comfortable on S's comfy chair
6. SHREK: Oh!	
7. DONKEY: Where do, uh, I sleep?	
8. SHREK: Outside!	S looks and sounds angry.
9. DONKEY: Oh, well, I guess that's cool. I mean, I don't know you, and you don't know me, so I guess outside is best, you know...	D looks & sounds dejected and annoyed

**Extract 3.3**

This extract is typical of the interactions between Donkey and Shrek until the end of the film. Shrek's utterances are short and to the point (here, 13 words). Donkey, on the other hand, speaks a great deal (here, 59 words). Through intonational features he expresses a high degree of modality, and although (1) contains grammatical imperatives, its pragmatic function is that of a request or plea. Donkey attempts to create a shared sense of masculine solidarity by using 'we' and suggesting a joint activity ('swappin' manly stories'). Shrek counteracts this by ordering Donkey to sleep outside. As suggested, Donkey's and Shrek's masculinities are continually presented to the viewer through exchanges such as this. Shrek is portrayed as uncommunicative, taciturn and unwilling to 'bond', which can be seen as part of a 'strong, silent masculinity' discourse. Donkey's actions and utterances, on the other hand, could be said to characterise a 'male bonding' discourse not unlike that in traditional 'road movies'.

**3.4 Shrek and Donkey find DuLoc; Shrek and Donkey return with Fiona**

1. DONKEY: But that's it. That's it right there. That's DuLoc. I told ya I'd find it.	
2. SHREK: So, that must be Lord Farquaad's castle.	
3. DONKEY: Uh-huh. That's the place.	The 'camera' pans up, DuLoc castle towers over them.
4. SHREK: Do you think maybe he's compensating for something? [Laughs]	Donkey looks puzzled

compensating for something? [Laughs]	
<p>5. SHREK: There it is princess. Your future awaits you.</p> <p>6. PRINCESS FIONA: That's DuLoc?</p> <p>7. DONKEY: Yeah, I know. You know, Shrek thinks Lord Farquaad's compensating for something, which I think means he has a really- Ow!</p> <p>8. SHREK: Um, I, uh-- - I guess we better move on.</p>	Shrek silences Donkey by kicking him.

**Extract 3.4**

The first part (1-4) of this extended joke could be read as a simple allusion to Farquaad's height. However, the phrase 'compensating for something' also carries phallic allusions (note Donkey's use of the indefinite article 'a' in (7)). This precludes the possibility that he is referring to an abstract, uncountable noun like 'height' and supports the idea that Donkey thinks Shrek is referring to Farquaad's presumed genital inadequacy. Significantly, it was Shrek who first suggested this near the beginning of the movie, yet when Donkey brings the topic up later Shrek silences him. There are two possible explanations for this, it seems: the first is that, chivalrously, Shrek does not wish Donkey to discuss this in the presence of Fiona. This would be gender stereotyping of the kind this film has arguably counteracted through other scenes. However, given the views of the directors:

Andrew: That line [7] used to go a little bit further but we decided to cut it off there.

Andrew: The criteria we were using at this point was not so much what would our children accept, //because none of us have children.

Vicky: //Because we don't have any,

Andrew: [for this] bit it was what would our mothers accept? What could we actually put in the movie without getting into trouble? (*Shrek* 2001)

It seems likely that the reason for the curtailment of this line and the minimization of the sexual innuendo is the sensibilities of the target audience (or their parents).

## 3.5 Donkey meets the dragon; They get to know each other better

<p>1. DONKEY: Oh! Aah! Aah! No. Oh, no. No!</p> <p>2. [Screams] Oh, what large teeth you have. I mean, white, sparkling teeth. I know you probably hear this all the time from your food, but you must bleach or somethin', 'cause that is one dazzling smile you got there. And do I detect a hint of minty freshness?</p> <p>3. And you know what else? You're-You're a girl dragon! Oh, sure! I mean, of course you're a girl dragon. 'Cause you're just reeking of feminine beauty. What's the matter with you? You got something in your eye?</p> <p>4. Ooh. Oh. Oh. Man, I'd really love to stay, but, you know, I'm, uh-- [Coughs] I'm an asthmatic, and I don't know if it'd work out if you're gonna blow smoke rings and stuff.</p> <p>5. Shrek! [Gasps] [Whimpering] No! Shrek! Shrek! Shrek!</p>	<p>Dragon (Dr) towers over Donkey (D)</p> <p>Dr bares teeth and roars.</p> <p>Dr stops roaring and cocks head – looks interested.</p> <p>Eyelashes and red lips visible for the first time.</p> <p>Dr puckers lips and flutters eyelashes</p> <p>Dr grins coquettishly</p> <p>Dr blows heart-shaped smoke ring.</p> <p>Dr grabs D's tail between teeth and picks him up She walks off, swinging him by his tail</p>
<p>6. DONKEY: Slowdown. Slowdown, baby, please.</p> <p>7. I believe it's healthy to get to know someone over a long period of time.</p> <p>8. Just call me old-fashioned, you know. [Laughs] I don't want to rush into a physical relationship. I'm not emotionally ready for a commitment of, uh, this-- magnitude really is the word I'm looking for.</p> <p>9. Hey! That is unwanted physical contact! Hey, what are you doing?</p> <p>10. Okay, okay, look. Let's just back up a little and take this one step at a time.</p> <p>11. I mean, we really should get to know each other first as friends or pen pals. Cause I'm on the road a lot, but I just love receiving cards-- I'd really love to stay, but—</p> <p>12. Don't do that! That's my tail! That's my personal tail. You're gonna tear it off. I don't give permission-- Hey! What are you gonna do with that? Hey, now. No way. No! No!</p>	<p>D is sitting encircled by Dr's tail. POV switches from D looking up at Dr to Dr looking down at D.</p> <p>Dr tickles under D's chin</p> <p>Dr starts nuzzling D's tail</p> <p>Dr uses fire to light chandelier.</p> <p>Dr puckers lips and closes eyes, meanwhile Shrek pushes D out off the way, and lands just before Dr kisses Shrek on the buttocks.</p>

**Extract 3.5**

The dominant discourse here can be seen as a 'sexual harassment' discourse, as articulated by Donkey: 'That is unwanted physical contact' and 'I don't give permission'. Donkey is the only character using speech in this scene.

However, he responds to the dragon's physical various actions, and in a sense this forms a dialogue. Generally Donkey's speech is very hasty, he repeats

several phrases ('no', 'slow down') and often cuts off his sentences, creating a picture of someone who is stressed or nervous. He also uses a number of hedging features. In the end, Donkey is saved from further embarrassment by Shrek's timely arrival. However, even this rescue contains a gendered element: as the dragon prepares to kiss Donkey, Shrek falls and pushes Donkey out of the way, and thus receives a kiss on the bottom. The directors note the number of plays on the two meanings of the word 'ass' (*Shrek* 2001), and this is one of them. We tentatively suggest, however, that it is in part Shrek's 'coarse' maleness which makes this acceptable to viewers (or their parents). Nothing of this sort happens to Fiona, whether as an ogre or a human, and we cannot conceive of a U-rated film, animated or otherwise, that would allow a female character to be kissed on the bottom .

### 3.6 Shrek 'rescues' Fiona

<p>PRINCESS FIONA: Oh! Oh!          SHREK: Wake up!          PRINCESS FIONA: What?          SHREK: Are you Princess Fiona?          PRINCESS FIONA: I am, awaiting a knight so bold as to rescue me.          SHREK: Oh, that's nice. Now let's go!          PRINCESS FIONA: But wait, Sir Knight. This be-eth our first meeting. Should it not be a wonderful, romantic moment?          SHREK: Yeah, sorry, lady. There's no time.          PRINCESS FIONA: Hey, wait. What are you doing? You know you should sweep me off my feet, out yonder window and down a rope onto your valiant steed.          SHREK: You've had a lot of time to plan this, haven't you?          PRINCESS FIONA: Mm-hmmm. But we have to savour this moment! You could recite an epic poem for me. A ballad? A sonnet! A limerick? Or something!          SHREK: I don't think so.          PRINCESS FIONA: Can I at least know the name of my champion?</p>	<p>Shrek comes in crashing through roof of Fiona's lonely tower. F wakes up, then pretends to be asleep again. S wakens her roughly. She is holding a bunch of flowers.</p> <p>S breaks through the door.          They run across a bridge.</p> <p>F uses sarcastic tone of voice</p>
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SHREK: Uh, Shrek. PRINCESS FIONA: Sir Shrek. I pray that you take this favour as a token of my gratitude. SHREK: Thanks!	F gives him a handkerchief which he uses to wipe his grubby face and then gives back S responds sarcastically.
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**Extract 3.6**

The first marked linguistic feature of this extract is what can be seen as code-switching from formal, fairy-tale discourse to rather more banal language. Fiona constructs herself as a princess waiting to be rescued by pretending to be asleep, and through language: she uses the terms 'bold', 'be-eth' and 'yonder'. However, she does not maintain these lofty forms, additionally using more prosaic language ('Hey, wait', 'A limerick?'). Shrek, and his actions in this scene, are the principal challenge to Fiona's carefully constructed fairytale rescue schema. His utterances are much shorter than Fiona's, and consistently challenge her statements, for example through a dispreferred response in an adjacency pair: 'Yeah, sorry, lady. There's no time'. Shrek additionally uses the term 'lady' which could be considered pejorative and is most certainly not a typical form of address for a stereotypical princess. Compared with the Grimms' *Sleeping Beauty*, Fiona has rather a rough awakening:

Da lag es und war so schön, daß er die Augen nicht abwenden konnte, und er bückte sich und gab ihm einen Kuß. Wie er es mit dem Kuß berührt hatte, schlug Dornröschen die Augen auf, erwachte und blickte ihn ganz freundlich an. (Grimm and Grimm, 1857)

*There she lay and was so beautiful that he couldn't avert his eyes, and he bent over and gave her a kiss. The moment he touched her with the kiss Sleeping Beauty snapped open her eyes, woke up and looked at him amiably.*

There is an extremely high level of intertextuality with traditional fairy tales in this scene. The interaction here could perhaps be classed as a hybrid discourse (Fairclough, 1992, cited in Sunderland, 2004) due to the balanced nature of the dominant discourses: Fiona (mostly) articulates the 'traces'

(Talbot, 1998) of a fairy-tale discourse, while Shrek responds with 'traces' of a subversive one. We would conjecture that the principal aim of this incongruity is to make the audience laugh. This is achieved through the bluntness of Shrek's responses to Fiona's flowery prose, listing of types of poem from the romantic 'ballad' + 'sonnet' to the distinctly unromantic 'limerick', and of course through the visual text, e.g. Fiona pursing her lips for a kiss and then being violently shaken awake.

Although one possible reading would see this scene as a confirmation of a traditionally gendered fairytale discourse, there is an alternative: that Fiona is subverting the fairytale discourse by appropriating it and using it in a controlling way. Although she is physically passive (lying down, being carried by Shrek), she is not passive in her actions. She attempts to manipulate Shrek into behaving more like a traditional fairytale rescuer. By stepping outside her traditional fairytale role and commenting on it ('You know you should sweep me off my feet...') she shows an awareness of how these events are 'supposed to' take place, and hence subverts the traditional fairytale discourse.

## **Conclusions**

Identifying and analysing discourses in a full length animated film is difficult, but not impossible. Importantly, cartoon films interact with society in that they have a special capacity to draw on many genres. They can however also be treated as a genre in their own right. Animated cartoon drawing comprises 'a wholly created world which, of necessity, simplifies reality, both visually

and psychologically' (Abel, 1995). The technology behind *Shrek* ensures that its world is visually richer than that of its predecessors (cf. *Toy Story*, a 1995 computer-generated Disney film), and the humour of the scriptwriters and actors ensures a certain level of psychological as well as discursive complexity. *Shrek* nevertheless distils the fairy-tale and romance film discourses which are so prevalent in Western culture into the speech, action and appearance of a few protagonists, and proceeds to contest, subvert and complexify them. Fiona both is and is not a classic fairy tale princess. She is beautiful, but instead of being passive has periods of intense activity, demanding action from her rescuer. She considers herself 'ugly' when she is an ogre, and yet the film directors have purposefully designed her to have a 'sweet, cherub face', despite referring to her as a 'beast' (*Shrek*, 2001). Shrek calls her 'beautiful' in the final scene, yet the text of the storybook which closes the film reads 'And they lived ugly ever after'. Ironically, the 'cuteness' of Fiona's ogre persona is an intrinsic refutation of the possibility of true ugliness for a heroine and a princess. Although the film seems to be preaching 'don't judge on appearances', it continues to portray beauty as essentially binary.

Gender, however, is encoded in a multitude of ways, and due to the sheer complexity of the numerous characters comes across as much more than binary. This means that, at least in our reading, several gender stereotypes which *Shrek* overtly challenges are thus both simultaneously recycled *and* disturbed.

There is no question that the creators of *Shrek* have tried to steer viewers in a certain direction when it comes to interpreting discourses. This is clear from their commentary (see Appendix), as well as the film itself. As regards the

constraints and choices of this animated genre every pixel of every frame has been created, and there is thus very little room in animation for accidental visual stimuli. Nevertheless, visual and textual elements designed to have a certain effect can in practice be read in any way that suits the viewer.

*Shrek*, perhaps through its generic hybridity, frequently encourages the viewer to think outside the genres of fairytale, animated film, and romance film.\*

One reading of *Shrek* which will probably be shared by most viewers is however that diversity, as embodied by Shrek, Donkey, Fiona, the Dragon, and all the fairy-tale creatures, is societally beneficial. 'Order' and 'perfection', as epitomised by Farquaad and his 'fascist theme park' (*Shrek*, 2001), are not. We tentatively suggest that this reading can be extended to gender roles: Fiona is free to be (in some ways) a stereotypical princess and an unusual ogre. She can be read as 'believing' she has to play this role, but discovers it is not necessary. Donkey can be 'manly' and scared. Shrek is a little harder to find a variety of gender enactments for, as he is portrayed as stereotypically masculine in for large parts of the film. However, he is also shown in less stereotypical roles: as a passive bystander in a fight scene who gets injured, and as someone who has been spurned by a love interest. Farquaad, by contrast, represents the other side of stereotypical masculinity: he is domineering, sexually aggressive, he wants to 'own' the 'perfect princess', and in a satirical twist is eaten by the feminine dragon. This, we propose, is the dominant discourse of the film: 'masculinity and femininity with a strong

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\* A brief search of the internet brings up the following, extremely diverse readings: a Christian media watch site ([www.capalert.com](http://www.capalert.com)), asks how it is possible to reconcile 'a fine moral embedded in 83 minutes of fun' with 'crude and toilet humour'; an article from [www.onlineathens.com](http://www.onlineathens.com) alleges that *Shrek* is a fine feminist film; and a blog from [dmk.dyndns.org](http://dmk.dyndns.org), by contrast, sees the film as 'reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes'.

sense of the ludic, and with a difference' is good; an undisturbed and binary homogeneity is dull, predictable and not really any good to anyone.

To summarise, we have attempted to identify some of the most salient gendered discourses in *Shrek*. We have drawn attention to some of the intertextual and interdiscursive elements which viewers may draw on to co-construct these discourses. Through multi-modal analysis we have found traces of various discourses, and have tried to determine whether these serve to confirm or contest the gender stereotypes found in traditional fairytales, romance stories and animated films. A number of questions remain unanswered, not least whether the film's target audience would agree with our readings and simultaneously co-construct the same discourses as we have. The continued expansion of the animated film genre should provide an ample source of data for future investigations of such questions.

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## Appendix

### Commentary soundtrack to *Shrek*: Extracts relevant to gendered discourses

#### Speakers:

Andrew Adamson, Director

Vicky Jensen, Director

Aron Warner, Producer

Andrew: We actually were looking for a very classic kind of fairy tale opening...we came to this conclusion of wanting to open like a traditional fairy tale and having a storybook

Vicky: his bits and pieces are nicely hidden, à la Austin Powers

Andrew: okay, everyone come up with three funny ideas for fairy-tale creatures

Vicky: You always have to have a butt shot

Andrew: It [The scene with Donkey singing to Shrek] was actually the first really naturalistic sequence that we did, too, as far as the forest and the trees and all that kind of thing. We actually went backwards and forwards – at one point it looked too natural, and we wanted to kind of keep it stylised, keep it like a fairy tale, a storybook come to life.

Andrew: So when we developed these 2000 cute fairy-tale characters to be Shrek's motivation for leaving it just opened up a huge amount of comic fodder, we'd like to call it.

Andrew: People may be asking "Why are the pigs German?" and we'd have to answer, "We have no idea."

Aron: We have no idea.

Vicky: It was funnier.

Andrew: "Hüffed and püffed" just sounded funnier than "huffed and puffed."

Vicky: [About Farquaad's castle] We didn't want anything soft or round, 'cause that was sort of Shrek's thing, everything organic.

Vicky: [About Mirror sequence] This is one of those sequences that really sets the type of humour that we did.

[Everyone sat around contributing ideas and ]

Vicky: that's where *The Dating Game* parody came out of.

Andrew: It didn't have the whole *Dating Game* feel to it.

Andrew: we ended up coming up with this thing that was basically a Fascist theme park.

Vicky: [About dragon chasing Shrek & Donkey] ...when they see the dragon falls in love with Donkey, it's okay.

- Andrew: The design, even, of Fiona was very scary....She was much more stylised at one stage, with big and more animé eyes and so on, and she just looked like this freaked-out ant-mannequin creature – very scary!
- Vicky: Very tiny waist.
- Vicky: [about Dragon & Donkey scene] Speaking of lighting, this one was really funny because we always wanted it to feel like kind of a disco boudoir. This was the great dragon seduction scene. We even had music playing at one point.
- Andrew: At one stage we had “Love to Love You, Baby” in there, and for a while we had “Puppy Love” played on the harp.
- Vicky: Cos her eyes are big and her eyebrows are thin. Here’s the close-up – that’s the beast Fiona, not our regular Fiona... but we didn’t want to cheat her that much and make it the beautiful princess in there, it had to be the beast to work.
- Andrew: [About Fiona bird sequence] A chance to get to know her, and see her having a little moment by herself, being a typical fairy-tale princess. Vicky: But not quite – she’s an opportunist.
- Aron: But not.
- Andrew: And then we got to layer the joke, one thing on another and another. So she blew up the bird, and then we thought, Well, she’s doing something nice really, because she’s making breakfast for Shrek.
- Aron: Right.
- Vicky: It was funny layers because she’s upset about blowing up the bird, and you see the eggs, and you think she’s going to be concerned for the baby birds, but then she makes very productive use of them.
- Cameron [Diaz] belching.
- Andrew: Cameron is amazing. She’s such a wonderful, down-to-earth, just very real person, and she’s so perfect for the princess in that way, as, you know, she’s this person that lives this glamorous Hollywood lifestyle, she’s a supermodel, she’s an actress, and she’s just a really very real person.
- Aron: Totally normal and fun to be around.
- Andrew: Which is very like our Princess, you know, she’s this very down-to-earth person who believes she has to play this role.
- Andrew: [About compensating line] That line used to go a little bit further but we decided to cut it off there.
- Andrew: The criteria we were using at this point was not so much what would our children accept, //because none of us have children.
- Vicky: //Because we don’t have any,
- Andrew: [for this] bit it was what would our mother’s accept? What could we actually put in the movie without getting into trouble?
- Vicky: We did everything we could to make her look as scary as possible, with the ears and taking on sort of a monster pose.
- Andrew: The design of Fiona as an ogress – it was really important that there was some commonality. Even though she looks very different – she’s obviously wearing the same dress and the same hair and so on – but we really worked hard to make the eyes and eyebrows be very, very similar, so that when Donkey looked into her eyes we looked into her eyes, we could still see that it was Princess Fiona inside there.

- Vicky: In the book there's a very different design for her. We actually experimented quite a bit before we landed on this sweet, cherub face that's very closely related to Shrek in that she's an ogre. We took her hair, made it a little more wild than when she's in her Princess form – just trying to find that sweet earthiness about her, like this is the way she was meant to be. Even the choice of her dress being green was kind of a subconscious thing we wanted to do to make you feel that she belonged in Shrek's world.
- Aron: So subconscious that I don't remember us discussing that one.
- Vicky: Yeah, we did.
- Vicky: Her spell was an interesting problem, trying to find the right way to explain what was going on with her without saying that she was a beautiful princess that had an ugly curse on her. We actually wanted to play it the other way around, that maybe she was born an ogress who had a pretty curse on her, or a pretty spell on her.
- Andrew: ... there's this complex, multiple level of misunderstanding where Shrek thinks she's rejecting him, and he [sic] thinks she's [sic] rejecting her and it really is one of those classic things that happens in relationships, which is, it just comes down to one little moment.
- Vicky: It's funny when Farquaad comes riding over the hill like the classic knight in shining armour.
- Andrew: this sensitive, romantic fairy-tale moment.
- Vicky: This is fun - she magically flies up [onto the horse].
- Andrew: That was just a little moment of independence there.
- Vicky: Yeah.
- Andrew: One of the things we always tried to do was make Fiona a very independent woman, and even though she's offered assistance up onto the horse there, she just jumps up anyway.

### Special Feature: *The Tech of Shrek*

#### Speaker:

Jeffrey Katzenberg, Producer

- Jeffrey: Our artists were able to do something that was almost photo-realistic. It was too good, and so we really had to dial her back to make Fiona fit inside of the fairy-tale world, because when she got too photo-realistic, she really looked out of place in it, ... technology allowed us to achieve something that if we went to the full extent of its potential, actually became incongruous with the look of the film itself.