

LET IT GO

A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT GENDER DISCOURSE
BY BREAKING THE DISNEY FORMULA



Sabine Krouwels

S1014447

MA Thesis Literary Studies

English Literature & Culture

Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. M.S. Newton

Second reader: Dr. S.A. Polak

15 November 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Methodology	7
Chapter 1: History of the Disney Princess	11
First-generation princesses	13
Second-generation princesses	17
Chapter 2: <i>Tangled</i>	21
Chapter 3: <i>Brave</i>	28
Chapter 4: <i>Frozen</i>	34
Chapter 5: The Contemporary Princess	40
Conclusion	46
Appendices	48
Appendix A: Merida's transformation	48
Appendix B: <i>Moana</i>	49
Bibliography	50

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will centre on the ways in which gender discourses operate in the Disney Princess films, doing so through an examination of the figures of the princesses themselves. Between 1937 and 2013, Disney has released twelve of these films and number thirteen will be added to the list by the end of November. The story lines of the Princess films have changed in tandem with societal changes (Bell 121), however, despite developments, they seem to conform to the same narrative structure in which a woman must negotiate a path for herself within a patriarchal world where ideals of heterosexual romantic love dominate (Tanner et al. 369). This structure will be referred to as the ‘traditional Disney formula’. This formula takes a form in which Disney portrays “women as superficial images of helpless princesses, subserviently trusting males to carry them off and live happily ever after in a retro world of post-marital bliss” (Brode 171). In other words, the essential plot for Disney Princess films is that a damsel-in-distress waits around for a man, preferably a prince, to save her and they then live happily ever after. The typical princess is passive, submissive and enjoys domestic chores. In these ways, the Princess films correspond to mid-twentieth-century societal conventions concerning girls and their place in society (Whelan 23). Though these social expectations have altered, in Disney’s films they remained in place well into the late twentieth century and, perhaps, beyond. All twentieth century princesses are “packaged” to embody ideals of what it means to be a princess, thus a lady in a Westernised culture (Wilde 133). In these films, “princesshood” is linked to contemporary post-war ideas on ideal girlhood (Whelan 24). These ideals appeared in major nineteenth-century texts and were described by Barbara Welter (1966) as follows: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. This image establishes negative gendered portrayals for contemporary viewers (Wilde 133). While this might have been the idea of the perfect woman in 1937, however, such a narrative no longer appealing to or feels relevant for a twenty-first century audience. This is not the kind of life mothers want their daughters to adopt nowadays. During the whole of the twentieth century, Disney continues to compose narratives entrenched in dominant discourses that preserve inequalities and exclusion (King et al. 20). A “repackaging” of the Disney Princess, as Wilde (2014) calls it, is therefore necessary. Fortunately, the twenty-first century has given rise to a change.

The three most recent Princess films, *Tangled* (2010), *Brave* (2012) and *Frozen* (2013), increasingly diverge from the traditional Disney formula and are therefore the focus of this thesis. In a world where we are continuously fighting for gender equality and better opportunities for women, the narratives following the traditional Disney formula are no longer relevant for and desired by the twenty-first century audience. Moreover, since it is Disney’s aim to appeal to a large audience and young boys and an adult audience are not interested in these girl-centric story lines, they were obliged

to change their strategy for economic considerations (Chmielewski and Eller, 2010). Disney has consequently found itself forced to let go of the traditional formula and seek out ways to present new princesses who can prove there is more to a woman's life than cooking, cleaning and waiting for a male saviour. Slowly but surely, the last three Disney Princess films are making these changes. What the last princesses show us, is that there is more to a woman than what has been – stereotypically – expected of her. She can save herself and determine her own life, without (full) dependence on a man. This does not mean that Disney will distance itself from the twentieth century films, since they continue to circulate and to be enjoyed by children. The company explores ways to 'repack' these princesses as well, by uniting all princesses in a single merchandise, the 'Disney Princess line' (Orenstein, 2011; Whelan 25; Wilde, 2014; Suddath, 2015) and setting up campaigns which celebrate qualities in these princesses that might neutralise the negative backlash against these earlier movies that has grown over the years (Wilde 133; Loveday, 2016).

Women have been fighting for equality for centuries. They have gained, amongst others, the right to education, the right to vote, the right to work; however, there is still a long way to go since equality is not as self-evident as it ought to be (HeForShe, 2015). For example, even though the male-female division of the world's population is approximately 50-50, men take up most positions of power and prestige (Rose 3; Tomasevski, 1993). Put simply, the higher one goes, the fewer women there are. Moreover, women are pressured and disadvantaged by the two sets of expectations with which they are measured: they are expected to do well both at home and at work (Saladino 92). These expectations stem from the fact that feminism complicated gender roles: if women want to succeed outside the home, they must incorporate traditionally 'male' traits as well as maintain original 'feminine' characteristics (Coltrane 218). A woman who does well at work is also expected to maintain a spotless household and raise the perfect family (A. Davis 47–48). Therefore, as a recent study amongst Dutch workers has shown, working part-time is not a luxury for women, but a necessity for someone expected to excel both at work and in the domestic sphere (*De Wereld Draait Door*, 2016). Men do not experience this kind of pressure, which automatically disadvantages women when it comes to pursuing their dreams of both having a professional career and a family (Saladino 92). A man who wants both is never questioned; a woman, however, is (Saladino 93). As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013) puts it very justly: "We have evolved, but it seems to me that our ideas of gender have not evolved".

One of the reasons why this obsolete image and expectation of women is upheld is because of the way media portray gender discourse. It is a complex matter to unravel how a society's dominant ideology finds expression in works of 'popular culture'. As a guide in these matters, Stuart Hall has been very influential on the subject of encoding and decoding messages on television and in film. In his essay "Encoding, Decoding" (1999), he offers a theoretical approach for the reading of how media

messages are produced, distributed and understood. He argues that audiences of television and other media decode messages which are encoded in the programmes in different ways depending on an individual's cultural environment, economic position and personal experiences (510). Put simply, the same message can be interpreted differently from person to person. Hall criticises other theories, which fail to empower audiences and mainly focus on a simplistic version of 'message exchange' (508). In his opinion, audience members can play an active role in decoding messages as they trust their own social background and they might even be able to alter messages themselves through joint action (512–513). Thus, the encoded messages in television and film are decoded in a way which is influenced by the socio-cultural background of the audience. Taking Disney as our example, this means that the audience of a Disney film respond to it in diverse ways, including seizing on or discovering meanings that run counter to the studio's intentions. Moreover, it might be thought that conservative discourses of gender at work in Disney films might operate in complicated and perhaps self-questioning ways. Hall, therefore, allows us to see that the ideological premises of a work of popular culture are not static or stable, but are open to all kinds of interpretation. While the primary intention of the movies might be reactionary, patriarchal and limiting, in the exchange between text and the individual audience member, other possibilities for understanding emerge.

Hall's work is part of an attempt to argue for the seriousness and interest to be found in works of popular culture and in the audience's relation to those works. His work is necessary because it allows a more nuanced understanding of the enormous impact that popular culture makes in the lives of everyone. Mass media play a major part in the way people form ideas about societal norms (Wynns and Rosenfeld 91; Morawitz and Mastro 131; Giroux and Pollock 2–3; Baker 13) and especially so to young people (Wynns and Rosenfeld 91; Drotner 301). Because of its large-scale reach, media can govern people's attitudes towards and comprehension of many different subjects (Hazell and Clarke 5). One of these subjects is people's perception and acceptance of gender stereotypes, since media foster accepted gender roles and traits (Gunter 9; Morawitz and Mastro 132; Baker 13). These stereotypes are depicted as the ideal and consequently become the norm of life (Matyas 4). Thus, the media may affect the positive and negative life lessons taught to its audience and especially to young children (Hoerrner 213; Booker 3). Since the depiction of women in film largely does not develop at the same pace as societal change (Hoerrner 213; King et al. 20), the images of females are always much more narrow, suggesting that "women are much less powerful and important than men" (Gow 153). Women are typically portrayed as homely, family and personal relationships-focused, meek, submissive, highly emotional and less competent than men. Men, on the other hand, are autonomous, smart and vigorous towards the accomplishment of their goals (Gunter 15–16; Hoerrner 213).

However, that is not the only image of women presented in the media. Appearance is another factor which is massively stereotyped. Nowadays, one cannot open a magazine without reading an

article about a new diet or tips on how to get the best body (Markula 237). Magazines, movies, TV, and the internet mostly portray young slim women, however, that is not what the average woman looks like (Silverstein et al. 531; Markula 237). Women's bodies – and men's, for that matter – come in all shapes and sizes. However, since media portray only the thin and toned ones, they establish a notion that that is attractive and most women with normal bodies are unattractive (Silverstein et al. 531; Markula 237). Moreover, when media, for example in films and television shows, use women with different body shapes, they do so to convey different messages (Bazzini et al. 541). The perfect woman is young, slim, pretty, attractive and therefore pleasing to boys and men. Older women tend to be seen as overweight, less friendly and unattractive (Bazzini et al. 541; Towbin et al. 30–31). This image of the pretty woman has a negative influence on the self-image of women and girls (Ahern et al. 303). They consequently feel pressured by society to be skinny and to conform to an imposed standard of beauty. Thus, media are a major cause of body dissatisfaction. They are one force behind a surge in body dysmorphia, discontent with ones' own appearance, and eating disorders (Ahern et al. 303). Undoubtedly, the large-eyed, tiny-waisted typical Disney princess is one element in establishing these unrealistic images of the desirable body.

Children get lost in the dreamlike world of safety, consistency and childhood innocence created by mass media, especially Hollywood films and in particular Disney films (Giroux and Pollock 92). These G-rated films, "a high-tech visual space in which adventure and pleasure meet in a fantasy world of possibilities and a commercial sphere of consumerism and commodification", are a sharp contrast with the often difficult, dreary reality of school (Giroux and Pollock 92). Therefore, Disney films should be taken seriously regarding educational relevance. It is especially vital to question the varied and often paradoxical messages that comprise Disney's worldview, since these films dazzle the fantasies of very young children (Giroux and Pollock 92; Ward 2; A. Davis 42; Booker 3; Tanner et al. 366; Whelan 26). The 'Disney worldview' can be defined as what Disney considers to be important in culture and individual life (Hoerrner 224; Ward 7; Saladino 42). As Jon Stewart put it in *The Daily Show* (2013), it is Disney's job to raise children and teach them the appropriate lessons. This is, of course, a bit exaggerated and he said it in a joking fashion; however, there is truth in it. Disney films aid children to comprehend ways who they are and what the world is about, wrapping this knowledge in a combination of enchantment and naiveté (Giroux and Pollock 91–92). Because of the wrapping, parents will not second-guess a Disney film before they show it to their children. It is a 'genre' of film in which people have confidence and of which they approve, strengthened by the G-rating these films have (Stone 43; Hoerrner 214; Matyas 11). One would simply never doubt the appropriateness of a Disney film (Matyas 11). It is therefore extra disturbing to discover the many stereotypical representations of gender discourse, not to mention race, in the films (Hoerrner 214; Matyas 10). Moreover, these norms get imprinted into children's heads, since they watch the films repetitively

(Henke et al. 230), something Bell, Haas and Sells (1995) acknowledge in the dedication of their book *From Mouse to Mermaid*: “For the children in our lives who showed us Disney again (and again and again)” (v). Therefore, Disney – perhaps unknowingly – implants its worldview onto children.

Methodology

In my approach, I am going to use ideas which derive from Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler. De Lauretis (1999) argues that sex does not refer to a particular kind of body (309). However, women have developed or been historically bound to specific properties or necessary attributes (310). Our male dominant world appropriates women and restrains the feminine (Weedon, 1947, 6 qtd. in de Lauretis 311). Therefore, “women are made, not born” since gender is a socio-cultural construction and not an inherent feature (309). Butler (1999) is of the same opinion when it comes to the cultural construction of gender as she argues that “gender is the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes” (345). Butler bases this idea on Simone de Beauvoir who suggested that “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (qtd. in Butler 347). In other words, women have merely been socialized into taking on a certain position in a particular society. Moreover, that position comes with certain expectations. The way I will use the term ‘gender’ conforms to this theory. When I refer ‘gender’, I use it in the way as Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) have defined it in *Gender Studies: Terms & Debates*. They argue that:

gender [is not] simply the gender one is [...] but a set of meanings that sexes assume in particular societies. The operation of gender in our society takes up these sets of meanings, organises them as masculinity or femininity, and matches or lines them up with male and female bodies. (Cranny-Francis et al. 3)

This belongs with the idea that gender is socio-culturally constructed, as argued by both de Lauretis and Butler.

Another term I employ in this thesis is ‘stereotype’. Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) define ‘stereotypes’ as fixed ideas that cannot (easily) be changed since they are numerous reproductions of the same thing (140; Baker 16). It stems from the simplification and reduction of classes of people to a few components by which they are generally said to be identifiable (140). It allows people instantly to recognise and categorise others by processing a few simple visual, unambiguous signs (140). More often than not, stereotypes are misleading and incorrect, since they are formed from outside of the group itself (141). What arises is a “strategy of splitting”: people distinguish between the self and the other, normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable (141). Stereotypes are difficult to overcome, since “laws, traditions and institutions structurally support [them]” (142; Baker 16). When

a group tries to alter its fundamental place within society, they logically concentrate on tackling the stereotypes first (148). They will try to overturn them or adopt the opposite groups' positive stereotype (148).

To explore the changes in gender discourse and the characters of the princesses I conducted a textual analysis of the films. I chose textual analysis since it helps us to understand the meanings and representations within a specific text in relation to our society and culture (Click and Kramer 246; McKee 1). This allows me to acquire a detailed analysis of the role of gender in the Disney Princess films. To do so, I have examined each of the eleven films and have observed similarities and – perhaps more importantly and interestingly – differences between them. I chose this kind of technique since it allowed me to assemble clear and specific outcomes for my study. It enables me to thoroughly to analyse, compare and contrast each of the selected films, keeping in mind Hall's theory on encoding and decoding. Any other methodology might have failed to bring out the subtle ways in which gender is presented in the films. Many scholars have considered the gendered characters of the princesses and I will use their work as the foundation for my own. Using previous work as guidance, my own observations functioned as the basis of my analysis. The chapters shall be chronologically structured so that each of them deals with the films in historical and cultural context. In doing so, a change in the agency of the heroines will become evident. Since the focus of my thesis lies on the last three Princess films, they will all be dealt with in a separate chapter and the first chapter shall provide an overview of the first eight films¹.

Something I will not be looking at, but which is a very fascinating aspect in terms of the formation of social norms, is the way Disney treats race. Researchers have argued that Disney sexualises women of colour and racial minorities, such as *Aladdin's* Jasmine (1992) and *Pocahontas's* Pocahontas (1995) (LaCroix 222). They are generally more athletic and mature than the white female characters (LaCroix 219–220). Jasmine is the first princess of colour and she introduces a shift in her generation. From *Aladdin* onwards, men do not have complete power over the princesses anymore as they do in the earlier films (Matyas 26). Disturbingly, the exotic, sexualised princesses of colour accompany this shift (Matyas 27). Moreover, animating non-white characters seems problematic for Disney (Matyas 38). It relies on racial stereotypes to depict villains, for example by using ethnic physical features and heavy accents, while the protagonists are Americanised (Matyas 38). Thus, stereotypes are used to design the antagonists, while the protagonists are Westernised (Matyas 30), which makes it an Us versus Them-division, good versus bad. Even the forthcoming *Moana* has already been subject to commentary regarding the depiction of race. Polynesian demi-god Maui is under fire for his physical

¹ One film, namely *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) shall not be included in my analysis of the Disney Princess films. The explanation for this choice shall be provided in the first chapter.

appearance (Yiin, 2016; Appendix B). The fact that he is somewhat overweight is considered a negative stereotype of Polynesian men and women, though others read his girth as a way to symbolise strength (Yinn, 2016). Whatever your standpoint is, race is a difficult issue when it comes to animation, however, therefore not a less interesting subject to explore further.

Another thing which will not be included in my thesis, are female characters in 'other' Disney films. The Princess films are only a sub-genre of the whole range of Disney movies. There are many other films in which a female character has the lead or is a deuteragonist, such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame's* Esmeralda (1996), *Hercules's* Megara (1997), *Anastasia's* Anastasia (1997), *Tarzan's* Jane (1999) and *Atlantis: The Lost Empire's* Kida (2001). These films have all been released toward the end of the second princess generation, a period during which the agency of the princesses was changing towards the assumption of independence. A comparison between the representation of the princesses and that of these female characters might bring to light what it is that Disney means to do with their female characters. Do the other female characters take more agency in their stories or are they as dependent on their male counterparts as the princesses are? What are the lessons the female characters ought to teach the audience? Are these women also used to portray ideal girls or does Disney merely use to princesses to do that? Do Pixar and DreamWork films, such as *Shrek* (2001), portray gender differently or are they similarly male-dominated? If the characters of the Disney Princesses are severely different from that of the other women, this might prove that Disney has a specific goal in mind when animating a princess film. Moreover, there are very few female protagonists in the first run of classic Disney films, such as *Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942). Thus, there are many more angles to be considered when it comes to gender portrayal in Disney films, but for now, for reasons of clarity and coherence, I shall focus on the princesses.

Considering the first three Princess films will provide evidence for the foundation of the traditional Disney formula. I shall subsequently show how the next five princesses handled the formula since they increasingly began to take more agency in their own stories. The second, third and fourth chapters shall each focus on one of the last three Princess films, namely *Tangled* (2010), *Brave* (2012) and *Frozen* (2013). I chose to focus on these films, since they have not yet received much sustained critical attention. When I started looking for secondary sources for this study, I was overwhelmed by the amount of information and research I could find which focussed on the first eight princesses. However, I found that there was quite an absence of studies which have focussed on the most recent films, especially a combination of the three in one work (most researches include only one or two of the three films). I chose to include all three films in my thesis since that allows me to prove my point that Disney is finally able slowly but surely to let go of the traditional formula and create narratives which are relevant for the twenty-first century audience. The textual analysis of the films allows me to show that the newest films all focus on a different theme than the heterosexual love theme on which

the traditional formula is based. The latest princesses shall all be compared to the earlier princesses to show that they still contain elements of their narratives, however, they deal with and use these elements in a different way so that at the end of the day, the narratives of the three most recent films truly comprise a different message.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF THE DISNEY PRINCESS

“Someday my prince will come”

– Snow White (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*)

In 2000, Disney created the Disney Princess line, an advertising and marketing campaign aimed at young girls. Its initial princesses were Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan and Tinker Bell (Orenstein, 2011; Whelan 25; Wilde, 2014; Suddath, 2015). The latter was soon removed from the overall line-up and over the past few years, it has been expanded with Tiana, Rapunzel and Merida. It is a \$5.5 billion enterprise, making it Disney’s second-most-profitable franchise, after Micky Mouse. It consists of dolls, sing-along videos, clothing, home décor, toys and a wide variety of other products featuring the Disney Princesses (Suddath, 2015). *Frozen’s* Elsa and Anna are not included since Disney measures their merchandise separately (“List of Disney Princesses”). On its own, the film has sold \$531 million worth of dolls and dresses (Suddath, 2015). Both franchises allow young girls (and boys, for that matter) to completely immerse themselves in Disney Princess items (Orenstein, 2006). They can watch *Tangled* while eating from plates with Cinderella’s head on it and drinking out of a Mulan cup, all while wearing Belle’s dress. Before they go to bed, they brush their teeth with an Ariel brush, change into Pocahontas pyjamas and sleep in a princess pink room with Elsa and Anna smiling on the sheets.

It all started in 1937 when Walt Disney presented the world with his very first princess in an animated feature-length film: *Snow White*. From that moment onwards, the world cannot imagine a life without the pretty Disney princesses with their tiny waists, beautiful flowing hair and helpful animal sidekicks. In fact, Disney has become almost synonymous with the princess fairy tale narratives, its corporate logo being a castle (Do Rozario 35) and the company owning actual kingdoms worth \$4 billion full of these perfect princesses (Wilde 133). When one thinks of Disney, one immediately thinks of the fairy tale princesses (and vice versa).

To be an official Disney Princess, the heroine must meet certain requirements: she must have a primary role in a Disney animated feature film; she must be human or more or less human (such as Ariel); and she does not primarily appear in a sequel (“List of Disney Princesses”). They are able to communicate with animals (regardless of them actually talking back or not), are known for their inner and outer beauty and their beautiful singing voices, and almost every princess has a romance that is resolved by the end of the film (Merida and Elsa being the only two exceptions so far) (“List of Disney Princesses”). This thesis will consider twelve of the thirteen Disney Princesses and focusses on the four

most recent ones. Elsa and Anna, even though they are ‘Unofficial Princesses’, will be included, because of their immense popularity and therefore influence on the lives of young children. *The Princess and the Frog’s* (2009) Tiana is excluded from my analysis, since there are many racial issues regarding this film (Saladino, 2014) and as I have previously argued, the discussion of race is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Before I go any further, I will introduce the ‘collective terms’ which will be used to refer to specific groups of princesses. Following Saladino (2014), I will distinguish between the three time periods into which the Disney Princess films can be divided using the terms *first-generation*, *second-generation* and *third-generation*. I chose these labels since they avoid what might be evaluative inferences or become otherwise confusing. Other researchers have used alternative labels, such as First, Second and Third Wave Princesses (Whelan, 2012); Classic, Renaissance and New Age Princesses (Fought and Eisenhower in Guo, 2016); and Walt Disney and Team Disney Princesses (Do Rozario, 2004). However, many of these labels carry confusing connotations – for example, to waves of feminism. The corresponding films to these time periods are as follows:

- First-generation: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)², *Cinderella* (1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959);
- Second-generation: *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)³, *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Mulan* (1998);
- Third-generation: (*The Princess and the Frog* (2009)), *Tangled* (2010), *Brave* (2012) and *Frozen* (2013).

The films can be grouped this way, since each successive generation shows a distinct change in the character traits of the princess and the plot development of the films they feature in (England et al. 561–562), not to mention that these generations are separated by princess-less decades and staff changes within the Disney Studios (Do Rozario 35). In the thirty years between *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Little Mermaid*, Disney chose not to produce any Princess films. During these years, the women’s liberation movement arose and while Disney obviously continued to make films, they might not have been ready yet to animate a strong, independent, feminist protagonist (Stover 3; Saladino 46). Another reason might involve the change in leadership at the Disney Studios. Walt Disney had a rather traditional idea of the role of women and implanted that view on the characters of the princesses he created, something which will become evident when studying the first-generation films (Stone 45;

² *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* will be referred to as *Snow White*

³ *Beauty and the Beast* will be referred to as *BB*

O'Brien 160; Do Rozario 36). Disney died in 1966 and after a series of take-over attempts, Michael Eisner was named CEO in 1984 (Bryman 40–42). Under his lead, the animators 'reinvented' the Disney Princesses and were able to include societal changes in their characters and gave them a voice, a desire for adventure and more diverse story lines (Bryman 43–46; Stover 3; Do Rozario 51).

The remainder of this chapter deals with the first- and second-generation princesses, something many other researchers have already explored. For example, Stone (1975) compared Disney's interpretation of fairy tales to the original ones to conclude that more diversity would be welcome among the passive female characters of princesses (49). Zipes (1995) comes to a similar conclusion when he argues that Disney has put his mark on the classical fairy tale by means of an "eternal return of the same" since no film brings anything new regarding narration, animation and signification (40). Henke et al. (1996) claim that Disney Princess films put forward the image of "the perfect girl" (231), an image which they find troubling since women face the daily struggle of having to fight for their social and intellectual opportunities (247). O'Brien (1996) criticises Disney for their patriarchal depiction of females, regardless of their initially independent and self-empowered characters. Do Rozario (2004) considers the position of the Disney princess in her kingdom and her relationships to other characters and concludes that, though the kingdoms are still "man's [worlds]", the princesses progressively take more agency in their tales (57). England et al. (2011) analyse gender portrayal in the Disney Princess films and predict that since the princesses increasingly obtain more "masculine characteristics" and let go of "feminine" ones (561–562), future princesses would be depicted less gender stereotypically (565). Using, amongst others, these works as guidance, my own observations for the textual analyses of the films functions as the basis of my analysis. The first-generation films will be providing the original basis for the Disney formula and the second generation will show how the formula slightly changes, although essentially remaining the same. Contrary to the films in the first two princess generations, the third-generation Disney princesses have not yet received much attention. They will therefore be dealt with in separate chapters to do them sufficient justice.

First-generation princesses

Snow White's Snow White, *Cinderella's* Cinderella and *Sleeping Beauty's* Aurora can be fittingly described as 'damsels in distress'. They are quiet, classy, graceful and romantic daydreamers who suffer from oppression by others ("List of Disney Princesses"). They are secluded from the world and wish to be saved from their miserable situation by a prince (Matyas 22). They are largely passive characters who have no intention of taking matters into their own hands or rebelling against whoever is oppressing them. They rather wait for the prince to come along and save them. In fact, two of these princesses are so passive they hardly manage to stay awake (Stone 44). The first-generation princesses

merely function as “helpless ornaments in need of protection” and are omitted when it comes to the action of the film (Zipes 37).

Snow White believes that her wishes will “soon come true” if the wishing well echoes them. Cinderella is convinced that as long as you keep faith and believe in your dreams (which “is a wish your heart makes”), they will eventually come true. Aurora holds on to the idea that “if you dream a thing more than once [it is] sure to come true”. All three princesses dream to be saved and swept of their feet by a prince and in all three films, the love between the princess and the prince is instant (Matyas 22). This encourages the idea that the princesses will give themselves to *any* man instead of the *right* man (Stover 4). It also allows the princes to become the focal point of the film, since they are the only ones who are able to save the princess (Zipes 39). In fact, the miserable situations the princesses are in “can only be improved through the heroic actions of the male protagonist” (Matyas 25), consequently allowing the princes to frame the narrative (Zipes 38).

Snow White's Prince Florian declares his love to Snow White at the beginning of the film, only to disappear for almost one and a half hour “until the proper moment to make himself known” (Zipes 38). When he finally arrives, he saves the day and takes all the credit, leaving the caring dwarfs behind, princess-less. Like Prince Florian, *Cinderella's* Prince Charming also becomes the focus of the story, since he is the desired prize and the only one able to save Cinderella (O'Brien 164). Then there is *Sleeping Beauty's* Prince Philip. Instead of only appearing at crucial moments, Prince Philip fulfils an actual role in the film. However, it is the fairies who continually smooth his way, changing falling rocks into bubbles and arrows into flowers. He “is simply the vessel of their magic” (Do Rozario 40). Still, he fulfils a far more active role in the narrative than the extremely passive heroine herself and, though with some help, he does save the day.

Another, very important similarity between the narratives of the first-generation princesses is that they all face the wrath of a female villain (Stone 44; “List of Disney Princesses”). These “evil women are driven by the desire to have what [is not] theirs – purity, beauty, acceptance, love” (Henke et al. 244), traits which the princesses naturally possess. The villain punishes the princess for her beauty and sexuality, of which she is obviously jealous (Henke et al. 244; Wilde 136; Towbin et al. 30). Because these women have a certain power over the princess, either because they are their stepmother or because they have set a spell on them, they are in charge of their fate and cause them to be locked away and secluded from the world. By playing out good and bad in the form of the princess and the villainess, respectively, Disney aims to teach its audience the appropriate lessons (O'Brien 161). Disney opposes the young, bright, pure and innocent princesses with the dark, old, evil and powerful villainess (Do Rozario 39). In each film, the moral is that good will always triumph over evil, since negative and evil elements are eventually punished (O'Brien 161). Disney also implies that independence is considered “unsuitable” for a woman since “the use of power by these strong, evil females results in

each's literal or social death" (Henke et al. 244). The princesses are "pale and pathetic" compared to the "active and demonic" female villains (Zipes 37), however, this is something Disney praises since action is punished and passivity is rewarded (O'Brien 161).

It is not only in terms of the conflict between the good and the wicked for which the 'relationship' between the princess and villain is used. It also functions to illustrate the bond between the heroine and a maternal figure. In all three films, the biological mother of the princess is absent (Haas 196). In fact, in two of the three films, namely *Snow White* and *Cinderella*, the mother is deceased. Therefore, the central female relationship in these films is based on that between a stepmother and stepdaughter. Since there is no true bond of blood between these two women, their relationship is socially constructed (Do Rozario 41) and consequently unnatural. The bond between Aurora and Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty* is non-existent – in fact, there is no real interaction between the two – and the female villain merely uses the princess as her prime tool for revenge (Do Rozario 43). The heroines find themselves in the midst of puberty and the female villains are middle-aged beauties at their peak of their sexuality and authority (Bell 108). The conflict between them is therefore one of authority and power (Do Rozario 41), as the villains have "power over" the princesses (Henke et al. 243). Though the relationship between the princess and the villain is 'unnatural' in terms of a familiar bond, it does depict a negative image of the mother and creates an environment where the princess must live in fear of the maternal figure (LeBeouf 28).

The Wicked Queen, or Queen Grimhilde, is Snow White's polar opposite. She is evil, active and vain. The moment she takes matters into her own hands, dresses herself as an old hag and tries to lure Snow White with a poisoned apple which will cause her to fall into a comatose sleep, her activeness is punished. It is the queen who eventually dies and Snow White who lives happily ever after. *Cinderella's* Lady Tremaine "forced [Cinderella] to become a servant in her own house" after her father's death. She is jealous of the protagonist's charm and beauty, traits which her own daughters do not naturally possess. The film is not hesitant to highlight the differences between the lovely Cinderella and her evil stepsisters, Anastasia and Drizella (O'Brien 161–162). This becomes especially vivid in the scene where Lady Tremaine and her daughters are practising their musical skills. Drizella 'sings' and Anastasia 'plays' the flute. It sounds horrible and even Lucifer, the evil cat, agrees. He tries to muffle his ears with a pillow, but eventually flees the room to find Cinderella scrubbing the floor whilst singing in her lovely voice, a distinct contrast with the musical attempts practised by her stepsisters. As becomes evident throughout multiple instances in the film, Cinderella possesses all the qualities of a perfect woman – kindness, endurance, courage – and her stepsisters do not (O'Brien 162). Since she is the one who eventually marries the prince and not her stepsisters, the film implies that women who do not possess these qualities will not find happiness (O'Brien 162). When *Sleeping Beauty's* Maleficent is not invited to Aurora's christening, she takes revenge by putting a spell on her and to avoid its consequences, the

princess is – unknowingly – forced to live hidden in the forest for the first sixteen years of her life. Aurora is the most passive princess ever to be found. She literally performs no actions except being the enchanting beauty that she is. Maleficent, on the other hand, is so active that she even shapeshifts into a dragon in the final, climactic scene. However, since she has an evil nature, she dies and passivity triumphs once again.

The fact that the female villain is jealous of the protagonist's beauty and the fact that the love between the princesses and the princes is instant, implies that physical appearance and sexuality is what is most important for a woman and valued over her abilities or intellect (Stone 44; Murphy 133; Towbin 30; Guo, 2016). The Wicked Queen feels threatened by Snow White's beauty and sexuality and therefore tries to kill her. It is that same beauty which saves the princess in the end, since "the dwarfs could not find it in their hearts to bury her" and therefore, Prince Florian was able to awaken her by "love's first kiss". Cinderella and Prince Charming also fall in love at first sight and when she is eventually saved by him from her terrible conditions, it is not because she is such a hard worker, but because she is beautiful. When the three fairies present their gifts to baby Aurora at her christening, the first gift she receives is "the gift of beauty" and in the end, she is saved by "true love's kiss" (Towbin et al. 30). Thus, sex is her only salvation.

At the time these films were released, Disney's animation team consisted only of men (Bean 55; Bell 107; O'Brien 161; Matyas 45). The women who did work at Disney, worked in the Painting and Inking Department and had no influence whatsoever on the animation and actual drawing of the characters or screenplay of the film (Bell 107; Saladino 43–45). It can therefore be assumed that the male animators created in the princesses their version of 'the perfect woman' (Stone 45; Bell 107; Matyas 45; Whelan 23) and apparently, the perfect woman takes a lot of joy in performing domestic duties (Towbin et al. 31). The first time the audience sees Snow White, she is scrubbing the steps of the castle. When she arrives at the dwarfs' cottage, she directs domestic chores to women: "Why, [they have] never swept this room. [You would] think their mother would—Maybe they have no mother. Then [they are] orphans". The song 'Whistle While You Work' implies how nice and rewarding domestic work actually is (Zipes 38). When she finally meets the dwarfs, Snow White promises that if they will let her stay, she will keep house for them. The princess has laid the foundations of what Murphy (1995) calls the 'Snow White syndrome', the notion that women have to clean up after men (135). Cinderella is "forced to become a servant in her own house", however, despite all the cruelty performed against her, she manages to stay gentle and kind. When we see Cinderella cleaning the floor, she is singing. Just like Snow White, this implies the joy women should supposedly get from performing domestic chores. It is not only the heroine herself who confirms this stereotype; her animal sidekicks do so as well (O'Brien 165). While the female animals help her doing her chores and sew her dress ("Leave the sewing to the women"), the male mice perform the heroic acts, such as liberating

Cinderella from her attic room after her stepmother has locked her in there to prevent her from trying on the glass slipper (O'Brien 165). Since she is such an extremely passive character, we do not see Aurora performing too many domestic chores in the film. The first time we see her, however, she is dusting the window and afterwards she is sent out by the fairies to get berries from the forest. Both duties are performed while singing and humming, thus sign of taking joy in these duties.

The three first-generation films laid the foundation for the traditional Disney formula: a damsel in distress/princess is fed up with her current situation, but instead of doing something about it, she finds herself a man to solve the problem. And they live happily ever after. One thing has to be given to Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora, though. Although they are super passive and submissive to their situations, their dreams *did* come true. They got exactly what they wanted, even if they did not play an active part in achieving those goals.

Second-generation princesses

Where the first-generation princesses were passive damsels in distress, the second-generation princesses become progressively proactive (Do Rozario 57; England et al., 2011). They too are dissatisfied with their situation and want more, including the possibility of adventure and escaping their surroundings (Stover 4; Do Rozario 56; Matyas 23–24). They are not afraid to take initiative when it comes to realizing their wishes for something grander. However, instead of going on a quest of self-discovery, these princesses fall in love to solve their problems, as did the first-generation princesses. This suggests that the source of their dissatisfaction is still actually the absence of love (Stover 4; Matyas 23–24; Whelan 26). However, this time it is not *any* man they want, but the *right* man (Stover 4).

The Little Mermaid's Ariel rebels against her father and wishes to be part of the human world. The focus of her wish, however, changes when she meets Prince Eric (Sells 176). She no longer wants to be “part of that world” because she wishes to walk, run and dance among people; she now wants to become human because, as sea-witch Ursula phrases it, she has “a thing for this human” (Sells 180). *BB's* Belle sings that “there must be more than this provincial life”. She dreams of “adventure in the great wide open”, however, this is not what she ends up with. Instead of going out into the world, she moves from one prison, narrow-minded town life, to the other, the Beast/Prince's castle. Even though this is an extraordinary and magical place, she will merely continue dreaming of “adventure in the great wide open” through the books in the library the Beast has given to her. *Aladdin's* Jasmine – the only princess who is not the protagonist, but rather the deuteragonist of her film – is done with palace life where everything she does is decided for her. When “street rat” Aladdin enters the picture her dissatisfaction is immediately solved (Matyas 35). At first, she is rebellious against the idea of arranged marriage: “I hate being forced into this! When I do marry, I want it to be for love.” However, she seems

to have no problem with marriage in general, as long as it is with the *right* man. In fact, Jasmine gives up her dream of life outside the palace so Aladdin can become a prince (Matyas 35). Then there is Pocahontas, from the film of the same name. She is the first princess who does not end up with a man and therefore chooses a destiny different from “heterosexual romantic fulfilment” (Henke et al. 241). Her wish is to find her path in life and in the end, she chooses loyalty to her people over her own desires and she finds happiness in discovering her selfhood (Henke et al. 241; Dundes 361). However, this is not a decision she has made herself entirely. In the beginning of the film, her father has told her that she must take her place amongst the people since she is the daughter of the chief. Thus, in fact, Pocahontas chooses *duty* over her own desires (Dundes 355; Henke et al. 241) which makes her akin to princess Mulan, whose duty it is to uphold her family’s honour by marrying a suitable man. At the start of the film, she names all the traits a (Chinese) girl should possess if she is to make a proper wife: “Quiet and demure... graceful, polite, delicate, refined, poised... punctual!” Unfortunately, these are not traits Mulan naturally possesses and she is therefore unable to bring honour to her family. She goes to war in the place of her father and saves China, however, when she returns, Granny Fa says: “If you ask me she should’ve brought home a man!” As soon as she sets eyes on Captain Li Shang, who has presumably come to the house to ask for Mulan’s hand in marriage, she says: “Woo! Sign me up for the next war! [...] Would you like to stay forever?” By having the beginning and end of the film focus on a woman’s duty to find a man and bring honour to her family, everything which has happened in the middle does not seem to matter. No one cares that Mulan has saved China when she is just another girl looking for a man (Giroux and Pollock 107–108).

Three of the five second-generation princesses represent a ‘mirror’ to the male protagonist. He is to become more like her in order to change his situation in life. In some cases, the prince therefore becomes the main focus of the film, similar to the princes in the first-generation films. In *BB*, Disney has chosen to inform the audience upfront of the dilemma the Beast is caught in. Belle, on the other hand, is unaware of it. As the film starts with a narration of the curse set upon the Beast and his staff, it becomes the story of the Beast, not Belle (Jeffords 166) – while the title of the film suggests their interconnection and interdependency. Consequently, she becomes the prop for solving the Beast’s dilemma (Jeffords 167; Giroux and Pollock 106). Lumière confirms this idea right after Belle has entered the castle: “Don’t see? She’s the one. The girl we have been waiting for. She has come to break the spell!” However, to break the spell, the Beast must “learn to love another” *and* “earn her love in return”. Belle’s beauty gravely contrasts the Beast’s ugliness (Craven 138). Therefore, he must change his soul to match her beauty (Jeffords 167). By presenting the Beast as the centre of the story, Belle’s dreams of freedom and “more than this provincial life” are made submissive to his dilemma. In the end, Belle is just like any other princess who finds her freedom through love (Giroux and Pollock 106; Matyas 25). Princess Jasmine is no different. The film is called *Aladdin*, so it is obvious he is the focus

of the narrative. Jasmine is, however, the mirror Aladdin has to adapt himself to in order to become a prince. In fact, Aladdin can only become a prince because of the presence of Jasmine, whose dreams of life outside the palace are undermined so he can become royal (Do Rozario 56; Matyas 35). At first, *Pocahontas*'s John Smith is unappreciative of nature. However, Pocahontas makes him see the spirituality and magic of her own land, beautifully expressed in the song 'Colours of the Wind' (Do Rozario 56). Moreover, by teaching him about the wonders of her land, Pocahontas is also able to make the other Englishmen see that there is more to her people than savages and more to her land than gold (even though there is no gold).

Mulan is the only one of these five princesses who has a living mother. All four others only have a father, making them "daddy's little girl" (Stover 5; Do Rozario 52). Moreover, all princesses are either an only child or have no brothers – Ariel, the only princess with siblings, has six older sisters. Consequently, the fate of the kingdom rests in the hands of each princess (Do Rozario 41). Only *her* love life can save the kingdom. If she does not marry, she disrupts patriarchy (Do Rozario 53). The 'marriage situation' is complicated by the conflicting ideas of father and daughter about a suitable husband. While the father represents "traditional, autocratic law and order", the princess strives for "autonomy and openness" (Do Rozario 53). To save his kingdom, the father chooses men which are of "approximately their own status" (Do Rozario 54). However, the princess does not wish to be married to such boring men. Strengthened by her wishes to see more of the world, she chooses an outsider, someone who, at first sight, seems to be a threat to the stable future of the kingdom (Do Rozario 54): a human, a beast, a street rat or an Englishman. Even though the chosen man might not be the one the father would have initially chosen for his little girl, each film eventually results in a happily-ever-after when the father is content with the arrangement (Stover 5). Although Mulan is the only princess with a living mother, the film is highly aware that she does not have a brother, highlighted by her dog called Little Brother (Do Rozario 52). Her situation is no different from that of the mother-less princesses, since her family's only wish is that she will bring "honour to us all" by marrying.

In terms of their capacity to find and express agency, the second-generation princesses have taken a big leap forward from the passive first-generation princesses. One of the reasons for this change might be that more women came to work in the Disney animation team (Bell 114). Men were no longer the absolute sovereigns over the princess' characters; women had their say in it as well. *BB* was the first film to have a female screenplay writer (Bell 114) – moreover, the film is based on a tale first written down by a woman (Craven 126). However, there does seem to be a lack of diversity when it comes to the princesses (Henke et al. 240). When you take a closer look at their story lines, are these princesses really that different from each other? Or are they just, as Henke et al. (1996) argue, "the same characters with only slight variations in hair colour" (240)? Stone (1975) already argued that more diversity would be welcome amongst the princesses (49). Yes, their characters have responded

to some social and cultural changes over the years, but their characterization remains in line with the traditional, conservative gender identities (O'Brien 157). Pocahontas is the first princess to directly shed light on the "absence of diversity" among her fellow princesses (Henke et al. 240).

Ariel, Belle and Jasmine's narratives fit the traditional Disney formula of a princess who is fed up with her current situation and to solve this problem, she finds herself a man (Jasmine being the only one, though, to argue that she wants to marry the *right* man). Pocahontas is the first princess to break with the traditional formula (Henke et al. 240). Although she is not exactly fed up with her situation, she does resent the prospect of marrying Kocoum. Her father tells her that it is her duty as daughter of the chief to take her place among the people, but Pocahontas believes there is a different path for her. When she meets John Smith, she believes he is the path the spinning arrow from her dream was directing her to. So, in a way, she does fall in love to solve her problems, or in her case find an answer to her questions. In the end, however, she does not choose to go away with the man she loves, as would fit the formula, but stays behind and fulfils her duty as the chief's daughter. Mulan's 'problem' is that she is not what her family expects her to be: "a perfect wife or a perfect daughter". When Li Shang comes to her house in the final scene, this problem seems to have solved itself and Mulan can bring honour to her family. Thus, even though the characters of the second-generation have changed compared to the first generation, for example in terms of agency, their stories do stick to the traditional Disney formula overall. Pocahontas is the only princess so far who breaks with tradition and does not end up with a man, regardless if he is the right one or not. However, while the dreams of the first-generation princesses did come true, the dreams of most of the second-generation princesses do not or they alter their dream halfway so it seems as if they came true in the end. Ariel changes her wish from dancing and singing among people on land into being with her man; Belle's dreams of more than provincial life are overshadowed by Beast's dilemma of the curse; Jasmine gives up her dream of life outside the palace so Aladdin can become a prince; and Mulan's dream to discover who she is inside is cast aside when a man knocks on her door to presumably ask her hand in marriage. Pocahontas's dream of finding her path is the only one which comes true and even though her path turns out to be John Smith, she makes the conscious decision of performing her duty and stays with her people.

The next three chapters will take an in-depth look at the third-generation princesses to show how they are completely different in character, actions and pursuance of their dreams than the princesses analysed in this chapter and how the traditional Disney formula is finally changing.

CHAPTER 2

TANGLED

“Stuck in the same place I’ve always been
And I’ll keep wonderin’ and wonderin’ and wonderin’ and wonderin’ and wonderin’,
when will my life begin?”

– Rapunzel (*Tangled*)

When *The Princess and the Frog* was not the box-office success Disney had hoped, they realised that they had to go in a different direction with their next Princess films (Whelan 31). One of their conclusions was that boys were not attracted to a film which has the word ‘princess’ or a direct reference to a princess in the title (Chmielewski and Eller, 2010; Whelan 31). Therefore, they changed the name of their first CGI-animated Princess Film to a less gender-specific one, altering *Rapunzel* to *Tangled*. At that time, Disney was already working on *The Bear and the Bow* and *The Snow Queen*, which consequently also became victim to this “boy problem” (Chmielewski and Eller, 2010). Since it is Disney’s goal to make films which appeal to everybody, these films were strategically renamed *Brave* and *Frozen*, respectively.

Tangled tells the story of Rapunzel, the princess with seventy feet long hair one has first seen in the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. The film starts when her mother, the queen of Corona, falls ill during her pregnancy. The only way to cure her is by brewing a potion using a magical flower. This flower derives from a small drop of sunlight and possesses healing powers as well as the power to keep one young and beautiful. The potion saves the queen and a healthy princess is born whose hair has taken on the powers of the flower. When the witch Mother Gothel, who used the flower to stay young and beautiful, learns of the magical hair of the princess, she decides to kidnap her. She locks Rapunzel up in a tower in the forest so she can keep her powers to herself. She makes the princess believe that she is, in fact, her mother and that the outside world is a scary place, so the girl will stay in the tower forever. However, Rapunzel dreams of life beyond the tower that she has not left in eighteen years. She is not at all satisfied with the stereotypical housewife-chores she is expected to perform (Garcia 88). Her dearest dream is to see the floating lights which appear on her birthday each year. She has a strange feeling they are somehow connected to her and she wants to find out what they represent (Garcia 83). With the help of thief Flynn Rider, she leaves the tower for the first time in her life and sets off for Corona; a journey which turns out to be a quest to discover her true identity.

Other scholars who have analysed *Tangled* do not agree on the amount of agency Rapunzel takes and to what extent she is either independent or dependent on Flynn Rider. This thesis believes that *Tangled* forms the transitional text between the old princesses who were merely passive and

helpless damsels in distress and the new princesses who are active, independent and progressive. Therefore, Rapunzel is caught in between, not completely dependent on a man, but not fully independent yet. Her character shows elements of both subject positions. M. Davis (2014) argues that Rapunzel does not *need* Flynn, but she *uses* him to fulfil her dream of seeing the floating lights (51). Garabedian (2014) says though Rapunzel's intentions are admirable, she relies heavily on Flynn to lead her in the right direction (24). Moreover, towards the end of the film Rapunzel performs a heroic deed to save Flynn. However, *he* is in control of the outcome by cutting her hair and sacrificing himself for her, taking away her agency (Garabedian 24). Comparing these arguments allows us to question the princess's agency and ability to act independently. Yes, Rapunzel bargains Flynn into a deal to take her to Corona, therefore *using* him. However, the story is only set into motion once he stumbles upon her tower, therefore she also *needs* him otherwise this would never have happened. When Flynn is attacked by the ruffians in *The Snuggly Duckling*, Rapunzel contributes to the double interpretation of her need for/use of him: "I *need* him to take me to see the lanterns". 'Need' can be interpreted as her dependence on Flynn, but also her desire to fulfil her dream for which she uses him as her guide. To a certain extent, Rapunzel takes agency over her own fate, but on the other hand, she is still dependent on a man to do so, or at least to set things into motion, just like the earlier princesses.

The conflict which lies at the heart of the action is the conflict between Mother Gothel's control over Rapunzel and the latter's ambition. This unfolds itself in three stages. During the first stage, Mother Gothel's control is imposed on the princess's ambition. Mother Gothel's control over the princess has succeeded for eighteen years since she manipulates and verbally abuses her. She has her believe that she only means to protect the precious gift Rapunzel possesses, since the outside world is dangerous and other people would take it for themselves. In fact, this is exactly what Mother Gothel does. The reasons for locking the princess up in the tower are selfish and vain (Saladino 68). She is using her; however, this is something Rapunzel does not realise. Since Mother Gothel's vanity causes Rapunzel to be unconscious of the world *and* since she believes Mother Gothel is her real mother, she accepts that her mother tries to keep her safe. Moreover, Mother Gothel ridicules Rapunzel, taking away the girl's self-esteem: "Rapunzel, look in that mirror. You know what I see? I see a strong, confident, beautiful young lady. Oh look, you're here too. (laughs) I'm just teasing. Stop taking everything so seriously."

Rapunzel's ambition, or dream, is to see the lights which float through the sky on her birthday each year. When she asks Mother Gothel for permission to go and see them, the latter burst into the song 'Mother Knows Best', in which she convinces Rapunzel the outside world is perilous, talks her into a negative self-image and makes her question her competence (Saladino 73):

Mother knows best
 Take it from your mumsey
 On your own, you won't survive
 Sloppy, underdressed, immature, clumsy –
 Please, they'll eat you up alive!
 Gullible, naive, positively grubby,
 Ditzzy and a bit, well, hmm vague
 Plus, I believe, gettin' kinda chubby
 I'm just saying 'cause I wuv you

What these lyrics also show is that Mother Gothel treats Rapunzel as if she is a little girl. "I'm just saying 'cause I wuv you" is something one would say to a child, not to an eighteen-year-old. After having heard her mother sing this song, Rapunzel realises that she is not free to make her own choices, leading to the second stage of the conflict. (Saladino 73).

The second stage emerges when Mother Gothel's control starts to conflict with the princess's ambition. Rapunzel realises that her wishes lie beyond the scope of the tower she is trapped in and that her mother stands in the way of that freedom. She recognizes that she is being oppressed, however, she has not gained the agency to speak up for herself (Saladino 75). Instead, she resorts to trickery and she uses Flynn Rider as a tool to get her way. In terms of the princess's incompetence, Mother Gothel turns out to have been quite wrong. When Flynn Rider intrudes into the tower, Rapunzel acts against him in what might be regarded a rather 'masculine' fashion. She even physically defends herself, proving that she is, in fact, competent enough to stick up for herself in the 'dangerous world' (Saladino 73).

When Rapunzel touches the grass for the first time, various conflicting feelings are called up. She is confronted with an "inner turmoil", a strongly conflicted state of mind. One moment she is filled with joy and the next she feels guilty towards her mother (Saladino 76):

I can't believe I did this! I can't believe I did this. I can't believe I did this! Mother would be so furious. But that's okay. I mean, what she doesn't know won't kill her. Right? O my gosh, this would kill her. This is so fun! I am a horrible daughter. I'm going back. I am never going back! I am a despicable human being. Woohoo! Best! Day! Ever!

Rapunzel is finally free to make her own choices, but she does not feel like freedom at all because she feels guilty.

During the third and final stage, Rapunzel's ambition reigns over Mother Gothel's control. When Mother Gothel finds her in the middle of her journey, Saladino (2014) argues that Rapunzel is still not able to take responsibility for her own choices (77). She does reject her mother, though, and by doing so, she gives up life as an obedient follower and she "enacts active [...] personality traits and takes responsibility for her actions" (Saladino 78). Mother Gothel regains control, however, when she saves Rapunzel from the ruffians, convincing the princess that she is indeed incapable of making her own choices and not ready to live in the outside world (Saladino 80). Rapunzel struggles with her newfound voice and agency and is once again locked away in the tower (Saladino 80). Finally, she has her epiphany and she recognizes who she really is:

RAPUNZEL. I'm the lost princess.

MOTHER GOTHEL. Please, speak up, Rapunzel. You know I hate the mumbling.

RAPUNZEL. I am the lost princess. Aren't I? Did I mumble, Mother? Or should I even call you that?

MOTHER GOTHEL. Rapunzel, do you even hear yourself? Why would you ask such a ridiculous question?

RAPUNZEL. It was *you*! It was all *you*!

MOTHER GOTHEL. Everything I did was to protect *you*. Rapunzel.

RAPUNZEL. I spent my entire life hiding from people who would use me for my power...

MOTHER GOTHEL. Rapunzel!

RAPUNZEL. ... when I should have been hiding from *you*.

In this instance, the princess gains control of her life by telling Mother Gothel that she may never use her hair again and her journey turns out to have been a journey of self-discovery.

During the final moments of the film, the audience sees that Rapunzel and Flynn are happily united as lovers. Finding love at the end of the film indicates that Rapunzel is just another Disney Princess as we have seen in so many films. However, the focus of Rapunzel's narrative is not finding a man, but finding her identity. She finds love along the way, a love which is not instant, but developmental. This makes the connection between Rapunzel and Flynn more real and endearing. During her journey of self-discovery, she also learns how to let someone into her heart; as does Flynn, as a matter of fact. Their union at the end of the film seems logical and the completion of the lessons they had to learn. Flynn becomes Rapunzel's prince. Therefore, just as Jasmine did for Aladdin, she elevates him socially. He does not do so, however, before she has achieved her goal (Saladino 51).

Disney Princesses would not be Disney Princesses, however, if they did not cohere to the template that defines such characters. Therefore, Rapunzel's narrative overlaps at some points with those of her ancestors. First, she is caught up in a miserable situation. Rapunzel is obviously unhappy with her existence (Garcia 78) and she expresses her feelings in the song 'When Will My Life Begin?'. During this song, we see her performing "the usual morning line-up": "Start on the chores and sweep 'til the floor's all clean / Polish and wax, do laundry and mop and shine up / Sweep again and by then it's like 7:15". Unlike the first-generation princesses who whistled while they worked, Rapunzel takes no joy in the domestic chores (Garcia 79). She merely performs them out of boredom, to kill the time (Garcia 81). Just like every other princess before her, she has a dream and she needs a man to help her (Garabedian 24). Though Rapunzel represents something of a damsel in distress, she takes agency to make her dream come true. She makes a deal with Flynn Rider so he will take her to see the floating lights and she performs many courageous actions during their journey towards Corona. Although her independence is questionable or mainly a transitional phase in the development of the princess-figure, she does take a big leap forward in terms of agency and self-discovery compared to previous princesses.

Every single princess before Rapunzel has found love and she is no different. However, the previous princesses fell in love *to* achieve their goals and falling in love was often their main goal in life. The first-generation princesses needed a prince to save them from their miserable situation; Ariel needed Prince Eric as a reason for her wish to live on earth; Jasmine needed Aladdin so her life in the palace would not be so boring anymore; Pocahontas needed John Smith to find her path; and Mulan needed Li Shang to bring honour to her family. Yes, Rapunzel needs Flynn to bring her to the floating lights and find out who she really is. Her love for him, however, emerges *after* she has established these goals. One can argue that she is a princess in need of a man to save her from her situation, however, it is not the love for this man that drives her. Rapunzel is driven by her dream to see the floating lights and it is because of this desire she discovers her true identity. Her goals guide her and she finds love along the way.

Another similarity between her and previous princesses is that she is oppressed by a female villain. The motives for locking her in the tower are quite like the foundation of the jealousy of the first-generation villainesses: Rapunzel's magic hair keeps Mother Gothel young and beautiful. Like *Snow White's* Wicked Queen, Mother Gothel's motives to lock Rapunzel up are vain. The major difference between Rapunzel and Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora is that Rapunzel eventually rebels against her oppressor. She tricks Mother Gothel into leaving the tower so she can get Flynn Rider to bring her to the floating lights. Her rebellion comes to a climax after her epiphany when she realises who she is and she tells Mother Gothel she cannot use her hair anymore. The first-generation princess would have never gotten into such an argument with their female villain. They were obedient and accepted

their fate. Contrariwise, Rapunzel acts as any girl in the twenty-first century would and rebels against the force that oppresses her. However, she is only able to do so using trickery, since she is not yet able to speak up for herself under the control of Mother Gothel (Saladino 77).

Rapunzel goes on a journey of self-discovery. Pocahontas and Mulan were also princesses who struggled with the sense of belonging and identity. Pocahontas wants to explore what her path in life is and discovers that the spinning arrow she has been dreaming about is in fact the arrow of a compass, a compass which belongs to John Smith. Is he her path? In the end, however, she does not chose to follow that path, but follows a different one and stays with her people. Mulan is desperate for her reflection to show who she is inside. However, instead of finding who she is, she joins the army to save her father. She saves China and finds a man, but has she discovered who she really is? The only thing she gained was the affection of her father and a handsome man on her arm. Their journeys of self-discovery are led and completed by falling in love. Rapunzel does discover her identity, fulfils her dream of seeing the floating lights, sets her story to her own hand and when all is achieved, finds herself a man.

The traditional Disney formula goes along the lines of ‘a damsel in distress is trapped in a miserable situation from which only a man can save her and with him she will live happily ever after’. As argued, *Tangled* forms the transition from the old princesses to the new princesses. Or, as Whelan (2012) puts it: “Rapunzel is a contemporary princess trapped in an all too traditional setting” (31). This might, amongst others, be caused by the fact that the original Rapunzel from the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm is no kind of princess, but an ‘ordinary’ girl. Disney therefore added the princess-element to her character while also remaining – partially – true to the original tale. The narrative of the Disney version fits the traditional formula or at least a part of it. Though this chapter has shown that it is arguable if Rapunzel *needs* or *uses* Flynn Rider to fulfil her dream, this is where she refrains from the traditional formula: she does not fall in love to solve her problem. She sets up a bargain with Flynn so he will be her guide and bring her to the floating lights. If he does so, he gets his satchel back. During their journey, Rapunzel proves to be a strong individual, takes agency and, most importantly, discovers her true identity and gains a voice with it. Her personality changes, something which has not happened in the characters of princesses in previous films, who adapted their dreams, but not their characters (Murphy 134). However, there is still love to be found in the end, which does suit the familiar pattern. The developing love between Rapunzel and Flynn does not invalidate her journey of self-discovery, though, since she did not fall in love *to* achieve her goals, but fell in love *after* she has achieved her goals. Thus, Rapunzel tries to break free from the restraints (or stereotypical plot developments) put on previous princesses and she can do so to a certain extent. The fact that her story does show many similarities to the previous films and that it largely fits into the traditional formula mould might imply that at the time Disney produced *Tangled*, they were not quite ready to let go of

the traditional formula. However, Rapunzel's big leap forward in terms of agency and progressiveness does predict a promising development in activeness and individuality for future princesses.

CHAPTER 3

BRAVE

“Some say our destiny is tied to the land, as much a part of us as we are of it. Others say fate is woven together like a cloth, so that one’s destiny intertwines with many others. It’s the one thing we search for, or fight to change. Some never find it. But there are some who are led.”

– Merida (*Brave*)

Brave, a collaboration between Disney and Pixar, presents the world with a princess as we have never seen before: the Scottish 16-year-old Merida. One does not even have to scrutinise the narrative to realise that she is different from her ancestors; her looks give it away. Her red hair is messy, she has freckles, she does not wear make-up and her neck looks quite small compared to her head. In fact, she looks like an actual, imperfect young girl instead of a perfect princess: “Merida is the strong, confident, self-rescuing princess that countless of girls and their parents were waiting for; a princess who looked like a real girl, complete with the ‘imperfections’ that made her such a unique and relatable character for children” (“Together We Can Keep”). Indeed, she was deliberately created that way by writer and co-director Brenda Chapman, who wanted to create a role model for her own daughter (“A Mighty Girl Interviews”). The opening scene of the film confirms that Merida is not a typical Disney Princess. It is young Merida’s birthday and her father, King Fergus, gives her a bow, with which she is absolutely thrilled. Her mother, Queen Elinor, on the other hand, is not pleased at all: “A bow, Fergus? She’s a lady!” The contrast between mother and daughter is already brought to our attention.

Merida’s prologue (see opening quote of this chapter) sets the mood: everyone should be allowed to control their own fate (Wilde 141). The heroine is looking for self-reliance, the opportunity to make her own choices, choose her own path, control her own destiny and not follow the path which is laid out for her because of her birth right (Saladino, 2014; Wilde 141). Her dream triggers the central conflict of the film, namely the relationship between Merida and her mother (Saladino 88; Wilde 142). It is evident from the start that Merida is not and does not want to be like her mother. Queen Elinor is in control of everything the princess does and it is obvious that she does her utmost best to make her daughter into a proper, eligible princess, but Merida is not interested in that at all. She would rather ride her horse Angus, shoot arrows and climb mountains. This sets her apart from all the other princesses we have seen so far, since she is not obedient and submissive, but in fact extremely rebellious and sometimes even rude to her mother. Most of the second-generation princesses attempt to be rebellious against their parents (well, father), however, they only slightly scratch the surface of

rebelliousness. Merida, on the other hand, takes rebellion to the next level and gets into multiple arguments with her mother.

The conflict between mother and daughter represents the tension between tradition and ambition. This creates a clash early in the film when Queen Elinor receives letters from the lords of three neighbouring clans. They have all accepted the offer to present their oldest son as a suitor for the hand of the princess. Not interested in such a betrothal at all, Merida raises her voice to her mother:

MERIDA. I suppose a princess just does what she's told?

.....

QUEEN ELINOR. A princess does not raise her voice. Merida, this is what you've been preparing for your whole life.

MERIDA. No! It's what you've been preparing me for my whole life! I won't go through with it! You can't make me!

Merida's rebellion and the conflict with her mother comes to a climax during the Highland Games scene. During these games, there is an archery contest in which the suitors can win the princess's hand. Only the firstborn of each clan is allowed to compete in the competition and this gives Merida an idea. The suitors are not the greatest archers, however, one manages to hit the target. When all three have shot their arrows, Merida steps into the shot: "I am Merida. Firstborn descendant of Clan Dun Broch. And I'll be shooting for my *own* hand." This scene becomes even more climactic when Merida rips herself out of the tight dress she is wearing, literally breaking through the restrictions she has been living with all these years and setting her first steps towards self-reliance (Saladino 100; Wilde 143). Her mother tries to stop her, but all three arrows hit the target flawlessly. After this, Merida and her mother stand face to face: tradition versus ambition. The queen drags her daughter inside, where for the first time Merida tells her mother how she really feels:

MERIDA. You're never there for me. This whole marriage is what you want. Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No! You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do, trying to make me be like you. Well, I'm not going to be like you.

QUEEN ELINOR. You're acting like a child.

MERIDA. And you're a beast. That is what you are! [...] I'll never be like you [...] I'd rather die than be like you! (cuts her mother's tapestry with a sword)

QUEEN ELINOR. Merida, you are a princess and I expect you to act like one.

(throws Merida's bow in the fire)

Not only is Merida uninterested in an arranged marriage, throughout the film she does not have a love interest *at all*. She is the very first princess to do so and this clearly sets her apart from all the previous princesses. (The next chapter will show that Elsa makes a similar decision.) However, she does not reject the whole idea of marriage. To her it is merely one option in life, but not a necessary end (Saladino 121). Merida's "ultimate measure of happiness" (Matyas 11) is gaining control over her own destiny. If being a princess means giving up her individuality, she does not want to be a princess (Saladino 51).

As with the conflict in *Tangled*, the central conflict in *Brave* follows three steps. The first step is that Queen Elinor imposes her traditional values on Merida's ambition (Saladino 96). Merida rebels against her mother and is deliberately disobedient, since the queen seems to be the reason why Merida is miserable and bored with her existence. The Queen's motives seem selfish, at first. However, the audience comes to learn that she merely feels that her daughter is destined to act like a princess based on her birth right (Saladino 97).

The second step, which causes the conflict to reach its climax, is that the mother's traditions come to dispute with the daughter's ambitions. In other words, the princess finds the courage finally to stand up against her mother's expectations of her and is ready to try and convince her of her wishes. When Merida, being the firstborn of her clan, shoots for her own hand in the archery tournament, the conflict reaches its climax (Saladino 100). When she rips out of her dress, she literally frees herself from the rules and restrictions put on her through the expectations connected to her birth right (Saladino 100; Wilde 143). When Merida cuts her mother's tapestry, she finally finds a powerful way to express her feelings rather than her complaints: she is not going to be like her mother (Saladino 100–101). Merida finds strength in her disobedience and sets off on her quest for self-reliance (Saladino 101).

During the third and final step, it is time for the princess's ambition to triumph over her mother's tradition. This step consists of two conflicts: Merida's need to gain agency and find a way to articulate her perspective to her mother, and her desire to change her fate. The first conflict is 'solved' since Queen Elinor is changed into a bear and cannot speak. Merida can finally speak freely to her mother and get her point across. Scenes in which mother and daughter are cooperating point out that Merida has broken the surface of self-reliance and is one step closer to achieving control over her own destiny (Saladino 106). Now Merida can finally speak to her mother, she has to find a way to fulfil her desire to change her fate. To do so she must try to change her mother's perception of her position as a princess. When seeing her daughter in the wild, Queen Elinor starts realizing that there is more to her than being a perfect princess. During Merida's monologue to the lords of the clans, a monologue

which her mother feeds her, Merida has finally achieved self-reliance. The fact that her mother feeds her this monologue implies that the princess wanted something more than self-dependence alone. Truly to have control over her own destiny, Merida wants the approval of the most dominant authority of her life: her mother (Saladino 107). When her traditional mother accepts her ambitious wishes, illustrated by the miming of Merida's monologue, the princess can finally announce that she is not willing to meet the expectations of society.

Even though Merida is in every way different from any princess we have seen so far, her story *does* show similarities to that of the others. For starters, Merida battles her mother to realise her goals, just as the first-generation princesses face a female force who troubles their lives. However, Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora are *submissive* to the female villain and are not able to do anything about their situation themselves. Merida, on the other hand, rebels against her mother, even changes her mother into a bear and eventually cooperates with her to defeat Mor'du, break the spell and gain control over her own destiny. Their 'fight' is not based on the 'villain's' jealousy, but is rather a matter of dispute and disagreement – a very customary adolescent struggle between becoming your independent self as opposed to a parent's wishes for you. Merida's struggle against her mother is therefore more relatable and realistic than the conflict between the earlier princesses and the forces that oppress them.

Just like the second-generation princesses, Merida is dissatisfied with her life. She is not interested in an arranged marriage and if that is what it means to be a princess, she does not want to be one. Her dream is self-reliance and she gets it. This is quite like Pocahontas who is trying to find her path, her destiny in life. She is a similarly adventurous young woman who stands up for her own beliefs (Dundes 353) and again marriage is not her ultimate goal (Towbin et al. 30). She stands up for others (Saladino 18) and shows herself to be courageous and wise. She rejects Kocoum, since she feels he is not the *right* man for her. However, when Pocahontas decides to stay with her people instead of leaving for England with John Smith, she chooses duty and loyalty to and of her people over her own desires (Matyas 36). Merida fights for her desires and she is not going to give in to duty and marry one of the sons from the other clans.

The second-generation princesses solve their dissatisfaction by falling in love (Stover 3; Do Rozario 56; Matyas 23). *The Little Mermaid's* Ariel rebels against her father when she goes out exploring and collects 'foreign' objects, like Merida goes out riding and climbing mountains. Ariel desperately wants to be "part of that world" and dance and sing among humans. When she meets Prince Eric, however, the reason she wants to become human changes into her desire to be with him, insinuating that the dissatisfaction with her life under the sea was caused by the absence of love (Matyas 24). The reason for her rebellion was to get her man (Matyas 25). *Aladdin's* Jasmine is, just like Merida, not interested in an arranged marriage. However, as the story unfolds, one sees that

Jasmine does not have a problem with the constitution of marriage, as long as it is with the *right* man. When Aladdin (or Prince Ali) enters the picture, her initial problems with palace life seem to be spontaneously solved: “Father, I choose Prince Ali!” Then there is Mulan, whose biggest wish is to be able to be who she is inside. She is quite like Merida: unable to impress the matchmaker because of her clumsiness, skilful in the army and, well, brave. However, because the film begins and ends in scenes which focus on finding a man to bring honour to her family, Mulan can be understood as being just another girl looking for a man (Giroux and Pollock 107–108). Contrariwise, Merida resists the ‘desired’ heterosexual outcome.

The reason Queen Elinor wants to betroth her daughter to a son of one of the other clans is that such a marriage will keep the peace in the land. Thus, like both the first- and second-generation films, the love life of the princess is the only way to secure the future of the land/kingdom (Do Rozario 53). When Merida, even though she has three brothers, rejects an arranged marriage, she endangers the peace in her land. However, by her actions, she provides herself with the opportunity to become an independent queen, with or without a man by her side. She breaks down the social constructions of women in her own world, subsequently suggesting ways for women in reality to do the same (Saladino 110).

Not only does Merida differ from the first- and second-generation princess, she also differs from her fellow third-generation princesses. Even though *Tangled* and *Frozen* do not focus on finding love, there are lovebirds to be united in the end. Rapunzel sets her own story into motion, however, by ending up with Flynn Rider the film implies that a quest of self-discovery is completed once a girl has found her man, while *Brave* proves that a girl does not need a man to be her true self. Although the ‘love at first sight’-scenario between Anna and Prince Hans in *Frozen* mocks the instant love affairs seen in previous Disney Princess films, she *does* end up with Kristoff eventually (this will be further explored in the next chapter). Therefore, the only princess to whom Merida is similar is Elsa, since she is the only other princess who does not end up with a man. In fact, Elsa is already queen, presenting Merida with a role model that she will be perfectly able to rule without a man by her side when her time comes.

Brave is the first film to completely break with the traditional Disney formula and she sets the first step towards creating more diverse female images for an audience consisting mainly of young girls (Stover 8). Yes, Merida is fed up with her situation, however, this merely turns out to be a niche for all Disney directors to build their stories on. Merida’s whole problem is that she does not want to get married, at least not now and not in a way arranged by her mother. Her narrative changes the Disney formula into ‘princess is dissatisfied with her situation and kicks against the status quo as often and hard as possible until it allows her to follow her dreams’. Merida’s dreams come true and this does not imply that little girls should have it all. They should simply have the power to choose their own

destinies and fates and Disney's traditional idea of heterosexual marriage is one option, but not a necessary end (Saladino 111).

On the 11th of May 2013, Merida was officially crowned as the eleventh Disney Princess in Walt Disney World. Her royal celebration has caused much controversy, though, since people were appalled by her new "sexed up" Disney Princess look ("Together We Can Keep"; Stewart, 2013) (see Appendix A). Writer and co-director Chapman does not hide her opinion about the 2D version of the princess:

[...] look at the attitude. Look at how she's posed. Look at how much tinier her waist is and how much bigger her boobs are. Look at the off-shoulder dress. It's just that they have sexed her up. And you can look at the childlike proportions of the real Merida's face and her body and see that she's not fully a woman yet, but she's not a straight-waisted girl either. You can't escape the hourglass voluptuousness of this redesigned version. ("A Mighty Girl Interviews")

What happened during Merida's Disney Princess Makeover was exactly what Chapman wanted to avoid when she designed the princess. She designed her to represent a regular teenage girl, just the way girls look in real life. She wanted her personality and physique to embody her daughter "so that she would have a role model"; a character that young girls could relate to "and not feel inadequate when they watched her" ("A Mighty Girl Interviews"). During the creation of Merida, the designers specifically refrained from the 'perfect princess'-mould and gave her a modern twist. She is a strong and independent character along with her imperfections and created to help the audience see the difference between a character like her and the 'perfect princesses'. The makeover put her right back into the status quo mould, something which truly upsets Chapman ("A Mighty Girl Interviews"). Even *The Daily Show*-host Jon Stewart (2013) was astonished by Merida's metamorphosis: "Come on! The whole message of *Brave* was that girls don't have to fit in with society's expectations". In a time where girls are confronted with images of perfect, sexy, skinny models, an imperfect role model like Merida with a normal waist and messy hair is very welcome. She is 'perfect' through her imperfections.

CHAPTER 4

FROZEN

“Only an act of true love can thaw a frozen heart”

– Grand Pabbie (*Frozen*)

Even though sometimes presented as ‘just another Disney Princess film’, that is *not* what Disney’s latest hit *Frozen* is (Dicker v): the presumed Prince Charming turns out to be an intriguer; romantic, heterosexual love is not the main focus; and the bond between two sisters proves to be most powerful of all. It is the first Disney Princess film which stars two princesses as protagonists⁴ (Wilde 146). The film has gained immense popularity amongst young girls, having sold over \$5.3 billion worth of dolls, dresses, home décor and so on (Suddath, 2015). The film’s immense popularity might be the reason Elsa and Anna have not been added to the Disney Princess Line, but have a merchandise of their own (“List of Disney Princesses”).

One of the bigger questions this film puts forward is ‘what is true love?’ and this question is not as easily answered as it was in previous princess generations. When Elsa puts ice in Anna’s heart, it can only be thawed by an ‘act of true love’ (see opening quote of this chapter). Since Anna believes Prince Hans is her true love and “a true love’s kiss” is proposed as the needed – and, given Disney’s history, stereotypical – act of true love, the characters assume that Prince Hans is the only one able to save Anna (Garcia 94; Saladino 131–132). However, this is where the plot takes a different turn. The initially sweet, perfect Hans turns out to have put up a façade and reveals himself to be a schemer:

ANNA. She froze my heart and only an act of true love can save me.

PRINCE HANS. A true love’s kiss. Oh, Anna, if only there was someone out there who loved you.

Anna’s life is still in danger. Fortunately, not much later, Kristoff realises *he* loves Anna and Anna and Olaf come to the same conclusion:

OLAF. Love is putting someone else’s needs before yours. Like, you know, how Kristoff brought you here to Hans and left you forever.

ANNA. Kristoff loves me?

⁴ Actually, it is Queen Elsa and Princess Anna. However, I will refer to both as ‘princesses’ to keep things uncomplicated. Besides, Elsa is still a princess at the beginning of the film.

OLAF. Wow, you really don't know anything about love, do you?

.....
ANNA. I need to get to Kristoff.

OLAF. Why? Oh, I know why! There's your act of true love right there. Riding across the fjords like a valiant, pungent reindeer king!

Kristoff and Anna try to reach each other as soon as they can, but at the same moment, Prince Hans is preparing to strike Elsa. When Anna sees this, she is torn: will she save herself by running to her assumed true love Kristoff or will she sacrifice herself to save her sister Elsa? She chooses the latter, a selfless decision despite all her sister has done to her, from ignoring her for years to, literally, freezing her heart (Law 24). She throws herself in front of her sister and at that very moment, Anna's body freezes completely, scattering the sword Hans tries to kill Elsa with (Crosby 60). Realizing what her sister has done for her, Elsa bursts into tears and hugs her frozen sister, who quite instantly starts to melt:

ELSA. You sacrificed yourself for me?

ANNA. I love you.

OLAF. 'An act of true love will thaw a frozen heart.'

However, it was not only Anna's heart that was frozen. The opening of the film already hints towards another frozen heart when the ice-men sing:

This icy force both foul and fair
Has a frozen heart worth mining
So cut through the heart
Cold and clear
Strike for love and strike for fear
See the beauty sharp and sheer
Split the ice apart
And break the frozen heart

The other frozen heart is Elsa's. She decides to "[not] let them in, [not] let them see" to hide her powers from the outside world until she can control them. However, not letting other people, especially her sister, in turns out to be the cause of all her troubles. Though Anna longed to spend time with her and needed her presence, especially after the death of their parents, Elsa persisted in shutting her and

everybody else out. When ‘yielding’ to sisterly love, Elsa’s heart is able to thaw: “‘Love will thaw’. Love. Of course! [...] Love!” By saving Elsa’s life, Anna turns out to be the key to her sister’s ability to control her powers (Crosby 51). Thus, two acts of true love are performed: Anna who sacrifices herself for her sister, an act of true love with which she could thaw her own heart; and Elsa realizing her affection for her sister, therefore melting her own heart, becoming her true self and thereby able to control her powers (Venkat 37). Thus, in this film, true love is not based on heterosexual romance, but on familial love and the powerful bond between two sisters who love each other despite everything (Law 24; Saladino 132; Wilde 147; Crosby, 2016).

However, despite this new, broader exploration of true love, the film does deal with Disney’s familiar ‘love at first sight’-scenario, though in a completely different way than before. When the palace gates open “for the first time in forever” in honour of Elsa’s coronation, Anna is filled with excitement. Finally, “there will be actually real life people” and she will not have to talk to the pictures on the wall anymore, even if it is just for the day. As we are used of previous princesses, Anna dreams of love and the possibility of meeting “the One” that day. When she sings “But then we laugh and talk all evening / Which is totally bizarre / Nothing like the life I’ve led so far”, she implies that “the One” should be able to change her boring life, a wish similar to that of the first- and second-generation princesses. Not much later, she, quite literally, bumps into Prince Hans of the Southern Isles and there we have it, love at first sight. Anna and Hans seem perfect for each other: “Our mental synchronization / Can have but one explanation / You and I were just meant to be”. Hans even asks Anna to marry him, after having known each other just a couple of hours. Being used to previous Disney Princess films, this quick proposal does not come as too much of a surprise. However, quite unexpectedly, it does for the other characters in the film. Disney uses the other characters to mock the ‘love at first sight/true love’-scenario, the scenario which they have exploited in the first- and second-generation films (Crosby 58). When Anna and Hans ask Elsa to bless their marriage, the latter refuses:

ELSA. You can’t marry a man you just met.

ANNA. You can if it’s true love.

ELSA. Anna, what do you know about true love?

A couple of scenes later, Kristoff is appalled by the fact that Anna intended to marry a guy she only knew a couple of hours:

Wait. You got engaged to someone you just met *that day*?

.....

Hang on! You mean to tell me you got *engaged* to someone you *just met that day*?

.....
 Didn't your parents ever warn you about strangers?

In the dialogue that follows, Kristoff interrogates Anna with simple questions about Hans, questions to which everyone who really knows their beloved would know the answer. Anna has answers; however, they do not answer the questions sufficiently. His interrogation and the quote given above criticise the 'I fell in love at first sight and he is my true love'-scenario that Disney has used in so many previous Princess films. Everything they had relied on since *Snow White* in terms of true love is invalidated here. By having Elsa and Kristoff mock the instant love between Anna and Hans, they mock the foolishness of love at first sight (Venkat 37; Crosby 58). In fact, even Anna and Hans's love eventually parodies Disney's previous notions of true love (M. Davis 51), since Hans turns out to be a schemer and Anna was about to marry someone she indeed knew nothing about.

Another thing *Frozen* teaches its audience is that it is okay to be different (Law, 2014; Saladino 132). Because of Elsa's powers, she is forced to live in isolation: she locks herself up in her room so no one will know that she is different and when the truth comes out, she runs off into the mountains to live in solitude. There she learns to accept herself for who she is, strongly worded in the song 'Let It Go', which has become "an incredible anthem of liberation" (Snetiker, 2013; Rahiman 122; Venkat 38). Elsa is the "flawed hero", someone the audience can relate to (Niemic and Bretherton, n.p.). Not surprisingly, it is Elsa who has become the most popular of the two young women and whose merchandise outsells that of her sister (Niemic and Bretherton, n.p.). However, the audience should not ignore the playful, light-hearted and humble Anna when it comes to the lessons to be learnt from the film. Even though her sister has ignored her for several years and refuses to bless the marriage between her and Hans, Anna displays love for and faith in her sister throughout the whole film. Her unconditional love for and faith in her sister mean that she is not afraid of her, even though other people call her a monster: "She's my sister. She would never hurt me." Finding Elsa drives the film (Crosby 59) and Anna's love for her sister is what encourages her. While Elsa had to reject others to find the courage to finally be and accept herself, Anna's courage grows through love (Niemic and Bretherton, n.p.). Her courage enables her to show (physical) strength and leadership. She resolves problems and is willing to learn. Anna's ability to forgive is admirable. Although Elsa has shut her out for years and freezes her heart on top of it, Anna is resolute to sacrifice herself because of her commitment to their relationship (Niemic and Bretherton, n.p.). Because of her empathy, acceptance and commitment, Anna can forgive her sister in a (frozen) heartbeat. Therefore, it is Anna's persistence, bravery, love, passion, leadership and forgiveness that "are the underlying ingredients of the film's impact" (Niemic and Bretherton, n.p.). In the end, it is Anna who – though unintentionally – saves herself, her sister and the fate of the kingdom (Saladino 132; Wilde 147; Crosby 60).

Although, just like *Tangled* and *Brave*, *Frozen* takes a completely different path when it comes to the development of the plot, it does show similarities to previous Disney Princess films. First, this film stars a princess who is dissatisfied with her situation. Recalling the frustration of Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, Rapunzel and Merida, it is now Anna's turn to verbally display dissatisfaction with her current life and a desire for more. She is fed up with being locked in the palace with a sister who refuses to give her any attention. So, when the day of Elsa's coronation arrives and the palace gates open for the day, she is beyond excited. Dreaming of meeting "the One", Anna seems to fall back into the second-generation mould of falling in love to solve her problems. She does a fair attempt, but unfortunately, her assumed true love turns out to be a schemer. In the end, Anna proves to be different from the previous princesses and solves her dissatisfaction with palace life through the love she has for her sister, saves the kingdom and takes agency when it comes to changing the fate of her future life – and all without the help of a man.

Disney has defined the expression of 'true love' ever since the very first Princess Film in terms of a heterosexual romance. When Snow White falls into a coma because she took a bite of the poisoned apple, she can only be awakened by "love's first kiss". When *Sleeping Beauty's* Aurora pricks her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and consequently falls into a slumber, only "true love's kiss" can break the spell. Thus, acts of true love, often true love's kiss, have always been needed to solve the problems. However, *Frozen* breaks with the 'heterosexual romance' notion, putting forward the idea that true love can comprise so much more than a male-female relationship. This is vividly illustrated by Anna's selfless decision to sacrifice herself to save her sister instead of running along to Kristoff in the hopes of saving herself. Disney (finally) shows that heterosexual fulfilment is not the only possible definition of true love.

Anna falls head over heels for Prince Hans and he seems to have done the same for her, proposing to her that same evening. Instant love is something one can find in many Princess films, especially those of the first generation and *The Little Mermaid*. In these films, the instant love was for a prince, so that love was never truly questioned since it was the perfect base for living happily ever after. In the second-generation, as the princesses started to fall for men who endangered the future of the kingdom, questions started to be raised. However, the princesses did always end up with the man they fell for in the first place. Generally, love at first sight was never questioned. *Frozen* approaches love at first sight in a different way. When Anna and Hans announce that they are engaged, Elsa and Kristoff do not push to hide their opinion that Anna's behaviour is foolish. When Hans turns out to have different intentions than he first let through, the vanity and silliness of love at first sight are brought to light, consequently judging the moments of instant love in previous Disney Princess films.

In some of the previous films, while love at first sight might not have been the main focus, there was still a man to be found by the end of the film, such as in *BB* and *Tangled*. *Frozen* also features a love story that shows a developing love, namely the relationship between Anna and Kristoff. Kristoff only realises he loves Anna, with some help of his reindeer Sven, when he has brought her back to the palace to receive true love's kiss from Hans. When Anna, with some help of snowman Olaf (what would they be without their sidekicks), realises that Kristoff loves her, she can recognize the feelings she has for him. When reunited with her sister, she throws him a meaningful smile and they share a kiss towards the end of the film.

Like many previous Princess films, *Frozen* focuses on the relationship between two women. However, it is the first film which does not pit female against female. Up until now, if a Disney Princess film centred on the affairs between two women, they were related to each other as heroine and villain – Snow White and the Wicked Queen, Cinderella and Lady Tremaine, Aurora and Maleficent, Ariel and Ursula, Rapunzel and Mother Gothel, and, to some extent, Merida and Queen Elinor. In Princess films, “Disney always relies on women to create the conflict between good and evil” (Trites 50; O’Brien 178). Elsa and Anna's relationship is not based on jealousy or rivalry, but it focusses instead on female bonding and sisterly love to foster female empowerment (Crosby, 2016). Their love for each other is the key to solve the conflict and only puts forward positive lessons to be learnt.

Without a doubt, *Frozen* does not fit the Disney formula as established by *Snow White*, though it does contain elements of it. Elsa is in a miserable position because she does not know how to control her powers. The only way she sees out of this situation is by living in solitude in the mountains. Although she ends up in isolation, she does take matters into her own hands when it comes to ‘solving’ her problem. Anna feels miserable because the palace gates are always closed and her sister has dissociated herself from her. This situation becomes even more miserable when her sister sets off an eternal winter. Anna's instant love connection with Hans seems to be, just like old times, a way to save herself from misery, however, this is not what determines their happily-ever-after. They do so once they have completed the quest to stop winter and bring back summer, a quest on which both sisters have, each in their own way, grown as individuals. The love between Anna and Kristoff, something which does make the film fit the traditional formula and contributes to living happily ever after, is a love found within the process of the narrative. It is only recognized at the end of the film after Anna has established her goals and saved the kingdom. Elsa remains single, therefore rejecting, just like *Brave's* Merida, the idea that a woman's ultimate goal is in finding heterosexual fulfilment. Although there are some points which do hint towards the mould of the traditional Disney formula, *Frozen* proves that the Disney animators are finally ready to ‘let it go’.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONTEMPORARY PRINCESS

With the launch of the Disney Princess line in 2000, all the princesses were presented as a single unit (Whelan 25; Wilde 133). In 2012, Disney decided to shift their focus and they introduced the 'I Am A Princess'-advertising campaign (Disney Channel, 2014). This campaign aims to neutralise the negative backlash against the princesses from the earlier generations, focusing instead on "new girlhood" and individuality (Wilde 133). In this campaign, the princesses encourage girls to be brave, compassionate and loyal. In the meantime, Disney has come up with a second Disney Princess campaign named 'Dream Big, Princess' (Disney, 2016). This campaign celebrates the qualities each princess possesses, encouraging children to, as the slogan suggests, 'dream big' (Loveday, 2016): "For every girl who dreams big there's a princess to show her it's possible" (Disney, 2016). All thirteen princesses are presented as role models to young girls. The princesses prove to girls that they can achieve and do anything, no matter what their dream or goal is. Indeed, there is something to be learnt from every film, for example Snow White's kindness, Ariel's curiosity, Belle's patience and Mulan's bravery. However, as children form ideas of who they are and what the world is like through various forms of media (Drotner 301; Tanner et al. 355), is that the message that sticks with them, that they, as Hall (1999) would argue, decode? Or do they adopt the gendered depiction of the male and female roles?

As a major brand, Disney influences the way its audience forms ideas about societal norms and that audience consists mainly of young people (Ward 2; A. Davis 42; Booker 3; Tanner et al. 366). Through its extensive merchandising, including the just mentioned Princess-campaigns, children swim in a sea of Disney images (Smoodin 10; Henke et al. 229). The merchandise is one of the reasons Disney is so successful at influencing gender roles, since it sells products which correspond with the films (Garabedian 24). The extensive availability of consumer products related to the Disney Princess films "blurs" the division between play and reality (Smoodin 10; Wohlwend 58). When children play with their Princess toys, they take the social cues they have seen in the films and reinforce these ideas by repeating them while playing (Garabedian 24). Playing with their Disney Princess toys teaches them how to be a princess (Garabedian 23), therefore allowing children to *live* in-character (Wohlwend 58). This would not be that troubling, were it not that the films are full of gender stereotypes (Tanner et al. 369). Disney shapes its narratives by the 'Disneyfication' of the fairy tale plot, that is, they adapt contemporary cultural changes so they fit the Disney formula for both commercial success and the Disney worldview (Ward 90). Part of the Disney worldview is shaping the characters of women through broader stereotypes which reflect and help shape the attitudes of a wider society (A. Davis 1). Especially in the first- and for a large part also the second-generation films, Disney has used the

princesses to teach its audience about the position of girls and women in American society (Whelan 27). Since every young girl wants to be a princess when they grow up (Orenstein, 2016), they become believable and relatable to children (Whelan 26) and they can easily identify with these helpless dark horses who eventually triumph over evil, that evil representing the children's parents (Stone 48).

Each retelling and rewriting of a fairy tale must be considered in its own specific historical frame of reference, of course (Mollet 111). In the nineteenth century, fairy tales were altered so they would teach girls the appropriate gendered values (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 714). A woman had to embody the values of true womanhood, as recorded by Barbara Welter (1966): piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Only then would she be respectable and attractive as marriage material (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 714). Therefore, fairy tales incorporated in their strangeness patriarchal functions and packed them into "romantic myths", which made female submission seem a romantic and a perfect destiny (Rowe 214). The first-generation films, and consequently the traditional Disney formula, are based on these associations of traditional femininity, therefore encouraging these traits in American culture during their time of release (Stover 2). These films link 'princesshood' to contemporary societal conventions regarding girls and their place in society (Whelan 23–24). Created during a time when women were stereotypically seen as the homemaker, the films contributed to this image rather than promoted women's progression towards gender-equality (Garabedian 23). The first-generation princesses embodied the contemporary virtues of ideal girlhood and they were therefore not allowed any imperfections. Consequently, their individual character was not required to develop, since they were already considered perfect (Stone 45; Rahiman 123). This image of the perfect woman is probably caused by the fact that these princesses were animated according to a male perspective (Bell 107; Henke et al. 233). Since there were no women involved in the animation and drawing of the first-generation princesses, the male writers and animators had the freedom to design their version of the perfect woman (Stone 45; Bell 107; Matyas 45; Whelan 23). What happened was that they created female characters which were one-dimensional and stereotypical (Matyas 11). These princesses' value is defined by their appearance rather than their skills or intellect (Towbin et al. 30; Guo, 2016), since beauty is considered "the essential quality of femaleness" (Craven 138). Though the titles of the films acknowledge their leading roles as protagonists, the first-generation princesses are damsels in their journey, passive, submissive and unable to survive or find happiness without the heroic actions of their male counterpart (Wilde 136), something which is rooted in the Disney formula.

To conform to societal changes, the second-generation princesses become more proactive and make their own choices in their tales (Bell, 1995; Do Rozario, 2004). Though still celebrated for their appearance, they are equally valued for their abilities and intelligence (Towbin et al. 30; Guo, 2016). The image of the happy homemaker and satisfied wife was not completely abandoned; however, it was no longer the only accepted option to be a 'respectable woman' (A. Davis 169). *The Little Mermaid*

introduced the metamorphosis of the helpless damsel into an adventurous heroine with a voice (Stover 3). However, though these princesses seem more active and independent, they are still dominated by a male world and the ideals of finding romantic love still exist (Tanner et al., 2003). The second-generation films centre on women who desire to be free of social restrictions, however, their happily-ever-after relies on returning to the traditionally expected role of women (Garabedian 23) and thus the traditional Disney formula. They might be introduced in the films as strong, independent and self-empowered figures, allowed to skim the surface of post-femininity, however, they are reduced into the “patriarchal fold” when they fall in love and are subjected to the traditional resolution of true love’s kiss (O’Brien 180; Wilde 147). Falling in love is not necessarily a bad thing, of course. In fact, as Frank Krutnik (1991) argues, all classic Hollywood-film protagonists are “engaged within, and defined through, two causally-related trajectories”: the general story and a heterosexual love plot (4). The balance between the two or the dominance of one over the other is dependent on the genre of the film. Moreover, as Joseph Swain (2002) claims, the falling-in-love is not the main action of the plot (165–166). No one ever questions the love relationship of the leading couple (166). In the tradition of classic comedy, the action of the film – and thus the general story – is involved with overcoming obstacles to their living happily ever after (166). Consequently, it is the wrath of the villain which drives the plot (Do Rozario 47). Thus, it is not the falling-in-love-scenario which sends the ‘wrong’ message to the audience. It is the fact that the princesses seem to forget any ambitions and wish for expeditions they had at the start of the film once they have found their male counterpart (Henke et al. 247; Matyas 27). Moreover, any progression in the characters of the successive princesses merely seems to function preponderately to keep up the patriarchal status quo while silently recognizing the alterations in the roles of women in contemporary society (Henke et al. 246). Thus, Disney’s representation of the characters of the first- and second-generation princesses has barely changed (O’Brien 156). They have responded to some changes in social and cultural context, however, the historic, conservative gender identities and the Disney formula remain unchanged (O’Brien 156).

The main criticism toward the twentieth century princesses was that they were “packaged” in a way that promoted ideals to what it meant to be a princess and thus a lady in a Westernised culture and that evoked negative gendered portrayals (Wilde 133). However, England et al. (2011) have noted a positive shift in the characters of the princesses. They concluded that they started increasingly to show “masculine characteristics”, such as strength and leadership, throughout the three generations. The “ratio of feminine characteristics” decreased simultaneously (561–562). In terms of character traits, the princesses are becoming increasingly free of an idea that these qualities can be gendered as one thing or another and they expected future princesses to be depicted progressively less gender stereotypical (565). Indeed, the third-generation princesses challenge many traditional ideas of gender. They are empowered and autonomous heroines (Wilde 132) and, as Whelan (2012) calls them,

“progressive princesses” (29). She defines the progressive princess as a princess “who rejects stereotypical behaviour” and who can balance assertiveness with compassion (29). Moreover, the progressive princess trades negative, traditional feminine character traits for more positive and traditionally masculine ones (29), as predicted by England et al. (2012). For example, she abandons passiveness for agency and obedience for rebellion. They are complex characters with a variety of traits, which is a true departure from the undeveloped, historical princess (Wilde 147). Thus, the progressive princess described by Whelan (2012) has an androgynous character and is a new kind of heroine and princess (29). They appear ready to achieve their goals without the need to find love in the end (Saladino 51), but they do live happily ever after. The cause for doing so now lies in overcoming the antagonist and growing as an individual instead of defeating the villain and finding love (Crosby 50–51). Their images are more diverse and therefore more appealing to a young female audience (Stover 8), since they are no longer damsels in distress, but present more modern feminist ideals which break the norm, reject expected gender roles and they have therefore more layered and engaging characters (Garabedian 22; Garcia 78). The princess is now not defined by how she is born, but rather by her own actions (Garabedian 25). Disney’s princesses have progressed from that of helpless damsels to independent heroines (M. Davis 48) and their stories increasingly let go of the traditional Disney formula. The progressive third-generation princesses prove that gender is a “free-floating artifice” which is not limited to one body (Butler 346). Therefore, one *takes on* gender as de Beauvoir (qtd. in Butler 347) argues. Therefore, the opportunity exists to take on another gender just as well (qtd. in Butler 347). The princesses prove that even though they were born in female bodies, that does not mean they automatically need to take on the socio-culturally constructed model of the ‘matching’ gender. They choose to refrain from the constructed image of the perfect princess and show that a Disney fairy tale “holds no gender to any specific notions” (Garcia 91). Perhaps, in a couple of years, we will look back on these princesses and see a new stereotype. For now, however, they represent role models to the twenty-first century audience.

In terms of physique, all princesses represent what is commonly portrayed as the ‘perfect image of a woman’. Their bodies are slender and slim, their waists are tiny, they have big eyes and conventionally pretty faces (Orenstein, 2006). They are, in other words, ‘eye candy’. Appearance is also highly valued, especially in the first-generation films and in some of the second-generation ones (Guo, 2016). For example, The Wicked Queen and Lady Tremaine despise Snow White and Cinderella for their beauty and Gaston’s motivation for marrying Belle lie in her appearance, not in her skills: “The most beautiful girl in town [...] That makes her the best!”. When Elsa and Anna see each other for the first time in years at Elsa’s coronation, Anna is afraid she accidentally insults Elsa on her appearance:

ELSA. You look beautiful.

ANNA. Thank you. You look beautiful-ler. I mean, not 'fuller'. You don't look fuller. But more-more beautiful.

ELSA. Thank you.

The awkwardness of this conversation highlights the importance of appearance and the fear of being "fuller" than the Barbie doll prototype. Thus, even though Disney may give the princesses more agency in their own stories, they do continue to rely on unnatural, unhealthy, supposedly 'perfect' doll-like body representations (Orenstein, 2006). The only princess who does not conform to this idea of ideal beauty is Merida. She has a normal waist, relatively small eyes, a freckled face and messy hair. An imperfect princess, compared to all the perfect ones. However, the most relatable image of a woman Disney has presented its audience with so far ("A Mighty Girl Interviews"). When Merida was added to the Princess line, her appearance was adapted to match that of her fellow princesses, which caused commotion amongst a large audience including the creator of Merida, as illustrated in Chapter 3 (Appendix A). It is unfortunate that Disney feels obliged to change their imperfect-perfect princess to match the others. Hopefully they will not feel the necessity to do so in the future.

On 23 November 2016, the world will be introduced to a new princess: the Hawaiian Moana Waialiki in the film *Moana* (Appendix B). What are we to expect from Moana? The film is written by men, thus without involvement of a woman in the creation of the plot. Therefore, one might expect Disney to fall back in its old ways, relying on the familiar Disney formula it was just overcoming. The title of the film also directly refers to the princess, thus the "boy problem" is either not a problem anymore, or Disney has created this film especially for a young female audience. Either way, *Moana* will again be different from previous films. Judging from the trailers, it does not come across as a typical Princess film at all. In fact, the film could rather be considered an action film than a princess one (Fresh Movie Trailers, 2016). Moreover, when directors Ron Clements and John Musker were present at the last edition of Comic Con they revealed that there is no romance in the film (Stack, 2016). Moana will be the third princess to not have a love interest, after Merida and Elsa, and it will be the second Disney Princess film without a love story in the plot. The film will merely focus on the Hawaiian protagonist going on a hero's journey and finding herself along the way (Stack, 2016). When looking at Moana's body, she does not seem to have a minute waist as the typical princess would have. She would therefore be the second princess, after again Merida, to differ from the other princesses in terms of physical appearance. All these differences sound very promising in terms of Moana being a relevant role model for twenty-first century children and the letting go of the Disney formula.

Of course, Disney is not the only influence in the lives of children and not the only source of 'education' to them. Our social relations, educational institutes and beliefs are another important

factor when it comes to forming our ideas about society (Wynns and Rosenfeld 91). For children, the essence of the 'problem' is how they are generally raised. Namely, boys and girls are brought up differently. Boys are taught to be brave, girls to be perfect (Saujani, 2016). Girls are taught to aspire after marriage, however, boys are not (Adichie, 2013). Girls are taught to shrink themselves so they will not harm a boy's ego (Adichie, 2013). A girl can be ambitious, but not too much since there are other things expected of her (Adichie, 2013). Adichie (2013) asks herself a simple question: why is it that women are expected to cook and not men? Are women born with a special cooking gene? Or is this the result of years of socialization that women see cooking as their role? Since many of the famous cooks in the world, who have acquired the fancy title of 'chef', are men, the former cannot be the case. Thus, it must be years of socialization which has appointed housework to women and breadwinning to men; aspiring to marriage to women and being brave to men. For this socialised gender division to change, people's mentalities must change. For people's mentalities to change, role models must put forward new ideals for them to adopt. For people to adopt these new ideals, they need to be confronted with them on a daily, accessible basis, making them question the current societal norms and stand up and do something to change them. Only then will the position of women, or any other minority group, change. But someone has to take the first step and there lies an opportunity for Disney. By letting go of the traditional formula and from now on presenting its audience with strong, independent female characters, they can teach their viewers, both male and female, from a very early age onwards that men and women are equal and there are no specific roles assigned to either of them.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that to continue to appeal to the twenty-first century audience, Disney is changing the way they create their Princess films and increasingly letting go of the formula they established in 1937. The world knows many strong female role models who fight for gender equality and better opportunities for women. Girls should not be held back and raised to be perfect. Girls, and women for that matter, have the right to be brave, to control their own destiny, make their own mistakes, learn from them, grow and thrive. Giving women the confidence to do so starts at an early age. Little girls look towards media to find role models they can relate to. Therefore, as a medium with a major influence on the lives of young children and the way they form ideas about themselves and the world around them, it is Disney's task to provide role models which are in fact ambitious, independent and strong and who truly enable girls to dream big and prove them that no mountain is too high. To do so Disney is forced to let go of the traditional Disney formula and explore all aspects of life from a different angle, whatever it may be.

Over the past few years, Disney has presented us with four twenty-first century princesses who are real role models. Rapunzel, who used to live to help and serve others, namely Mother Gothel, shows us that it is okay to choose for yourself and live your own life. Merida refused the path she was expected to take, namely that of an arranged marriage, and refused to be a perfect princess and therefore fit the traditional mould. She fought for her right to be able to decide her own fate. Elsa was forced to hide the fact that she is different. She had to learn how to control herself and act as the perfect person that she was expected to be. However, once she "let it go", she could accept herself for who she was and when she learnt to let love into her heart, she could truly be herself. Anna has every reason to hate her sister since she shut her out for years and, to make matters worse, frozen her heart. However, Anna is not bitter towards her sister at all. She loves her sister and forgives her in a heartbeat. She is courageous, shows leadership and performs a selfless action by saving her sister's life. In the end, she saves herself (though unintentionally), her sister and the kingdom. Lastly, the relationship between Elsa and Anna shows us that there is more to life than heterosexual romantic fulfilment. A familial bond can be just as strong and important. These princesses show us that there is so much more to a woman than what is (or at least, was in the earlier generations) – stereotypically – expected of her. The door these princesses have opened and the directions they have chosen their narratives to go in, sketch a promising image for future princesses, since they will probably become increasingly progressive and independent. Let us hope that when it comes to future princesses, Disney will not fall back into its old ways, presenting us with passive, submissive princesses who abandon their dreams to be with a man. It is princesses like Rapunzel, Merida, Elsa and Anna we want to see more of in the

Disney Princess films to come. The journey continues with Moana, whose film, if we are to interpret from the trailers, will continue the princess's liberation of the traditional formula.

Just let it go, Disney. Let it go.

APPENDIX A MERIDA'S TRANSFORMATION



Before



After

APPENDIX B
MOANA



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

- Aladdin*. Dir. Ron Clements and John Musker. Perf. Scott Weinger, Robin Williams and Linda Larkin. The Walt Disney Company, 1992. Film.
- Beauty and the Beast*. Dir. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. Perf. Paige O'Hara, Robby Benson and Jesse Corti. The Walt Disney Company, 1991. Film.
- Brave*. Dir. Mark Andrews and Brenda Chapman. Perf. Kelly Macdonald, Billy Connolly and Emma Thompson. The Walt Disney Company and Pixar Animation Studios, 2012. Film.
- Cinderella*. Dir. Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson. Perf. Ilene Woods, James MacDonald and Eleanor Audley. The Walt Disney Company, 1950. Film.
- Frozen*. Dir. Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee. Perf. Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel and Jonathan Groff. The Walt Disney Company, 2013. Film.
- Mulan*. Dir. Tony Boncroft and Barry Cook. Perf. Ming-Na Wen, Eddie Murphy and BD Wong. The Walt Disney Company, 1998. Film.
- Pocahontas*. Dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. Perf. Mel Gibson, Linda Hunt and Christian Bale. The Walt Disney Company, 1995. Film.
- Sleeping Beauty*. Dir. Clyde Geronimi. Perf. Mary Costa, Bill Shirley and Eleanor Audley. The Walt Disney Company, 1959. Film.
- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Dir. William Cottrell and David Hand. Perf. Adriana Caselotti, Harry Stockwell and Lucille La Verne. The Walt Disney Company, 1937. Film.
- Tangled*. Dir. Nathan Greno and Byron Howard. Perf. Mandy Moore, Zachary Levi and Donna Murphy. The Walt Disney Company, 2009. Film.
- The Little Mermaid*. Dir. Ron Clements and John Musker. Perf. Jodi Benson, Samuel E. Wright and Rene Auberjonois. The Walt Disney Company, 1989. Film.
- The Princess and the Frog*. Dir. Ron Clements and John Musker. Perf. Anika Noni Rose, Keith David and Oprah Winfrey. The Walt Disney Company, 2009. Film.

Secondary sources

- "A Mighty Girl Interviews 'Brave' Writer/Co-Director Brenda Chapman on the Merida Makeover." *A Mighty Girl*. A Mighty Girl, 15 May 2013. Web. 11 Sep. 2016.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "We Should All Be Feminists." *TED*. TED Conferences, LLC., 29 Apr. 2013. Web. 16 Oct. 2016.
- Ahern, Amy L., Kate M. Bennett, and Marion M. Hetherington. "Internalization of the Ultra-thin Ideal: Positive Implicit Associations with Underweight Fashion Models Are Associated with Drive for Thinness in Young Women." *Eating Disorders* 16.4 (2008): 294–307. PDF file.
- Andersen, Hans Christian. *Fairy Tales*. Trans. Pat Iverson. London: Penguin Group, 1994. Print.
- Arabian Nights: A Selection*. Trans. Sir Richard F. Burton. London: Penguin Group, 1997. Print.
- Aristotle. "Oeconomica." *Metaphysics*. Trans. G. Cyril Armstrong. London: William Heinemann, 1962. 327–424. Print.
- Baker, Christina N. "Images of Women's Sexuality in Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Black- and White-oriented Women's and Men's Magazines." *Sex Roles* 52 (2005): 13–27. PDF file.
- Baker-Sperry, Lori, and Liz Grauerholz. "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales." *Gender & Society* 17.5 (2003): 711–726. PFD file.

- Bazzini, Doris G., William D. McIntosh, Stephen M. Smith, Sabrina Cook, and Caleigh Harris. "The Aging Woman in Popular Film: Underrepresented, Unattractive, Unfriendly, and Unintelligent." *Sex Roles* 36.7–8 (1997): 531–543. PDF file.
- Bean, Kellie. "Stripping Beauty: Disney's 'Feminist' Seduction". *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*. Ed. Brenda Ayres. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2003. 53–63. Print.
- Bell, Elizabeth. "Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies." Bell, Haas and Sells 107–124.
- Bell, Elizabeth, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, eds. *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender and Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.
- Booker, M. Keith. *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010. Print.
- Brode, Douglas. *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment*. Austin, USA: University of Texas Press, 2005. Print.
- Bryman, Alan. *Disney and His Worlds*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Butler, Judith. "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire." *During* 340–353.
- Chmielewski, Dawn C., and Claudia Eller. "Disney Restyles 'Rapunzel' to Appeal to Boys." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 9 Mar. 2010. Web. 28 Sep. 2016.
- Click, Melissa A., and Michael W. Kramer. "Reflections on a Century of Living: Gendered Differences in Mainstream Popular Songs." *Popular Communication* 5.4 (2007): 241–262. PDF file.
- Coltrane, Scott. "Elite Careers and Family Commitment: It's (still) about Gender." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 596 (2004): 214–220. PDF file.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos, and Joan Kirkby. *Gender Studies: Terms & Debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.
- Craven, Allison. "Beauty and the Belles: Discourses of Feminism and Femininity in Disneyland." *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9.2 (2002): 123–142. Print.
- Crosby, Sarah Chase. "Letting Gendered Spaces Go: Striving Toward Gender and Nature Balance through Bonding in Disney's *Frozen* and *Maleficent*." Diss. Iowa State University, 2016. PDF file.
- Davis, Amy. *Good Girls & Wicked Witches: Changing Representations of Women in Disney's Feature Animation, 1937-2001*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. Print.
- Davis, Meagan M. "From Snow to Ice: A Study of the Progression of Disney Princesses from 1937 to 2014." *Film Matters* 5.2 (2014): 48–52. PDF file.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. "Upping the Anti (*Sic*) in Feminist Theory." *During* 307–319.
- De Wereld Draait Door*. VARA. NPO 1, Amsterdam. 8 Mar. 2016. Television.
- Dicker, Rory. *A History of US Feminisms*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2016. Print.
- Disney. "Dream Big, Princess – Be A Champion | Disney." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 11 Feb. 2016. Web. 23 Sep. 2016.
- Disney Channel. "Disney I Am A Princess – TV Commercial." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 5 Feb. 2014. Web. 7 Sep. 2016.
- Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne C. "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess." *Women's Studies in Communication* 27.1 (2004): 34–59. PDF file.
- Drotner, Kirsten. "Global Media through Youthful Eyes." *Children and Their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study*. Eds. Sonia Livingstone and Moria Bovill. New York: Routledge, 2001: 283–306. Print.

- Dundes, Lauren. "Disney's Modern Heroine Pocahontas: Revealing Age-old Gender Stereotypes and Role Discontinuity under a Façade of Liberation." *The Social Science Journal* 38.3 (2001): 353–365. PDF file.
- During, Simon, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 1999. Print.
- England, Dawn Elizabeth, Lara Descartes, and Melissa A. Collier-Meek. "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses." *Sex Roles* 64.7–8 (2011): 555–567. PDF file.
- Fresh Movie Trailers. "Disney's MOANA – TRAILER #3 (2016)." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 Sep. 2016. Web. 6 Oct. 2016.
- Garabedian, Juliana. "Animating Gender Roles: How Disney is Redefining the Modern Princess." *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* 2.1 (2015): 22–25. PDF file.
- Garcia, James Randall. "The Princess Evolution: From Snow White to Rapunzel in Disney Animation." Diss. University of Colorado, 2014. PDF file.
- Giroux, Henry A., and Grace Pollock. *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010. Print.
- Gow, Joe. "Reconsidering Gender Roles on MTV: Depiction in the Most Popular Music Videos of the Early 1990s." *Communication Reports* 9.2 (1996): 151–161. Print.
- Gunter, Barrie. *Television and Gender Representation*. London: John Libbey & Company Ltd, 1995. Print.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. *The Complete Fairy Tales*. Trans. Jack Zipes. Vintage Books, 1987. Print.
- Guo, Jeff. "Researchers Have Found a Major Problem with 'The Little Mermaid' and Other Disney Movies." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 25 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Sep. 2016.
- Haas, Lynda. "'Eighty-Six the Mother': Murder, Matricide, and Good Mothers." Bell, Haas and Sells 193–211.
- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *During* 507–517.
- Hazell, Vanessa, and Juanne Clarke. "Race and Gender in the Media: A Content Analysis of Advertisements in Two Mainstream Black Magazines". *Journal of Black Studies* 39.1 (2008): 5–21. PDF file.
- HeForShe. "Emma Watson Speech for HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 Program at World Economic Forum 2015." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 23 Jan. 2015. Web. 16 Oct. 2016.
- Henke, Jill B., Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Nancy J. Smith. "Construction of the Female Self: Feminist Readings of the Disney Heroine." *Women Studies in Communication* 19.2 (1996): 229–250. PDF file.
- Hoerrner, Keisha L. "Gender Roles in Disney Films: Analyzing Behaviors from Snow White to Simba." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19.2 (1996): 213–228. PDF file.
- Jeffords, Susan. "The Curse of Masculinity: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*." Bell, Haas and Sells 161–172.
- King, C. Richard, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. *Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. Print.
- Krutnik, Frank. "In a Lonely Street: *Film Noir*, Genre, Masculinity." London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- LaCroix, Celeste. "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines from The Little Mermaid to The Hunchback of Notre Dame." *Popular Communication* 2.4 (2004): 213–229. PDF file.
- Law, Michelle. "Sisters Doin' it for Themselves: *Frozen* and the Evolution of the Disney Heroine."

- Screen Education* 74 (2014): 16–25. PDF file.
- LeBeouf, Cheylyn Danielle. “‘The Witch as Bitch’: An Analysis of the Witch as Anti-woman.” Diss. Lamar University, 2013. PDF file.
- “List of Disney Princesses.” *Disney Princess*. Wikia, n.d. Web, 1 Sep. 2016.
- Loveday, Samantha. “Disney Reveals ‘Dream Big, Princess’ Initiative.” *LicensingSource.net*. Max Publishing, 16 Feb. 2016. Web. 23 Sep. 2016.
- Markula, Pirkko. “Firm but Shapely, Fit but Sexy, Strong but Thin: The Postmodern Aerobicizing Female Bodies.” *Contemporary Issues in Sociology of Sport*. Eds. Andrew Yiannakis and Merrill J. Melnick. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, Inc., 2001: 237–258. Print.
- Matyas, Vanessa. “Tale as Old as Time: A Textual Analysis of Race and Gender in Disney Princess Films.” Diss. McMaster University, 2010. PDF file.
- McKee, Alan. *Textual Analysis: A Beginner’s Guide*. London: SAGE Publications, 2003. Print.
- “Moana.” *IMDb*. IMDb.com, Inc., n.d. Web. 1 Sep. 2016.
- Mollet, Tracey. “‘With a Smile and a Song...’: Walt Disney and the Birth of the American Fairy Tale.” *Marvels & Tales* 27.1 (2013): 109–124. PDF file.
- Morawitz, Elizabeth Behm, and Dana E. Mastro. “Mean Girls? The Influence of Gender Portrayals in Teen Movies on Emerging Adults’ Gender-Based Attitudes and Beliefs.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 85.1 (2008): 131–146. PDF file.
- Murphy, Patrick D. “‘The Whole Wide World Was Scrubbed Clean’: The Androcentric Animation of Denatured Disney.” Bell, Haas and Sells 125–136.
- Niemiec, Ryan M., and Roger Bretherton. “The Character-Driven Person: How *Frozen’s* Anna, not Elsa Is an Exemplar.” *PsycCRITIQUES* 60.26 (215): n.p. PDF file.
- O’Brien, Pamela Colby. “The Happiest Films on Earth: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of Walt Disney’s *Cinderella* and *The Little Mermaid*.” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 19.2 (1996): 155–183. PDF file.
- Orenstein, Peggy. *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2011. Print.
- . “What’s Wrong With Cinderella?” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 24 Dec. 2006. Web. 14 Sep. 2016.
- Rahiman, Sherin K. “From Beautiful to Bold: The Politics behind the Transition of Disney Princesses from *Snow White* to *Frozen*.” *Singularities: A Transdisciplinary Biannual Research Journal* 3.2 (2016): 118–123. PDF file.
- Rose, Sonya O. *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth Century England*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992. Print.
- Rowe, Karen E. “Feminism in Fairy Tales.” *Don’t Bet on The Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in America and England*. Ed. Jack Zipes. New York: Routledge, 1987: 209–223. Print.
- Saladino, Caitlin Joanne. “Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney’s *Tangled* and Disney/Pixar’s *Brave*.” Diss. University of Nevada, 2014. PDF file.
- Saujani, Reshma. “Teach Girls Bravery, Not Perfection.” *TED*. TED Conferences, LLC., Feb, 2016. Web. 13 Sep. 2016.
- Sells, Laura. “‘Where Do the Mermaids Stand?’: Voice and Body in *The Little Mermaid*.” Bell, Haas and Sells 175–192.
- Silverstein, Brett, Lauren Perdue, Barbara Peterson, and Eileen Kelly. “The Role of Mass Media in Promoting a Thin Standard of Bodily Attractiveness for Women.” *Sex Roles* 14.9–10 (1986): 519–532. PDF file.
- Smoodin, Eric. *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

- Snetiker, Marc. "Disney's 'Frozen' Soundtrack: Ranking All Nine Original Songs." *Entertainment Weekly*. Entertainment Weekly Inc., 30 Nov. 2013. Web. 28 Sep. 2016.
- Stack, Tim. "Comic-Con 2016: *Moana* Heroine Won't Have a Love Interest in the Film." *Entertainment Weekly*. Entertainment Weekly Inc., 31 Jul. 2016. Web. 1 Sep. 2016.
- Stewart, Jon. "The Princess and the P.R." *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Comedy Partners, 16 May 2013. Web. 11 Sep. 2016.
- Stone, Kay. "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us." *The Journal of American Folklore* 88.347 (1975): 42–50. Print.
- Stover, Cassandra. "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess." *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2.1 (2012). PDF file.
- Suddath, Claire. "The \$500 Million Battle Over Disney's Princesses: How Hasbro Grabbed the Lucrative Disney Doll Business from Mattel." *Bloomberg*. Bloomberg L.P., 17 Dec. 2015. Web. 7 Sep. 2016.
- Swain, Joseph P. *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*. 2nd ed., The Scarecrow Press, 2002. Print.
- Tanner, Lisa Renee, Shelley A Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman and Lori K. Lund. "Images of Couples and Families in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films." *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 31.5 (2003): 355–373. PDF file.
- "Together We Can Keep Merida Brave!" *A Mighty Girl*. A Mighty Girl, n.d. Web. 11 Sep. 2016.
- Tomasevski, Katarina. *Women and Human Rights*. London: Zed Books, 1993. Print.
- Towbin, Mia Adessa, Shelley A. Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, Lori K. Lund, and Litsa Renee Tanner. "Images of Gender, Race, Age, and Sexual Orientation in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 15.4 (2004): 19–44. PDF file.
- Venkat, Vishaka. "A Feminist in Disney Movies: A Move away from Hegemonic Masculinity?" *Singularities: A Transdisciplinary Biannual Research Journal* 2.2 (2015): 34–40. PDF file.
- Ward, Annalee R. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002. Print.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18.2 (1966): 151–174. Print.
- Whelan, Bridget. "Power to the Princess: Disney and the Creation of the Twentieth-Century Princess Narrative." *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 29.1 (2012): 21–34. PDF file.
- Wilde, Sarah. "Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern Day Fairy Tales." *Journal of Promotional Communications* 2.1 (2014). 132–153. PDF file.
- Wohlwend, Karen E. "Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play." *Reading Research Quarterly* 44.1 (2009): 57–83. PDF file.
- Wynns, Scarlet L., and Lawrence B. Rosenfeld. "Father-daughter Relationships in Disney's Animated Films." *Southern Communication Journal* 68.2 (2003): 91–106. PDF file.
- Yinn, Wesley. "Is Disney's Portrayal of Maui, a Polynesian Demigod, In 'Moana' Culturally Insensitive?" *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 28 Jun. 2016. Web. 27 Oct. 2016.
- Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell." *Bell, Haas and Sells* 21–42.