



## Between Exalt and Power: Depictions of Female Protagonists in the Walt Disney Princess Franchise

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### Abstract

*Expatiate and elaborate, and no longer denoted as merely a source of boundless amusement, the Walt Disney Company is deemed to carry heavy meanings and instructive abstractions. Embracing characters vested with strong societal convictions, female heroines in particular have been the central interest of numerous scholars throughout the centuries. Therefore, within the general purpose of depicting the way female heroines are represented in the Disney Princess Franchise, this scientific paper establishes an examination of female characters spanning from classic to contemporary Disney Princess Movies. To demonstrate that Disney's princesses have become more complex and active characters over time, this paper first traces the rise of the Walt Disney Company unveiling the influence fairy tales had on the cinematic production. Then, it reveals the Princess Franchise as a major affluent and representative of female characters.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Portraying an unparalleled commitment to creativity, unequally paving the way for storytelling to amalgamate with innovative technologies, the art of captivating motion-picture did certainly revolutionize the world's entertainment industry. Applauded for its peculiar language and elaborate aesthetics, defined as "a form of entertainment that enacts a story by a sequence of images giving the illusion of continuous movement" by Word Web dictionary, the stories recorded by a camera hold a place of import as a form of art deemed highly creative. Seeking to guarantee a universe for the viewer to escape, translating words into a succession of moving pictures led to a revolutionizing turn in film industry.

Fitting perfectly the universe of attracting pictures and fascinating animations is literature. Regarded as a creative writing which "has always found particular pathways to exhibit the conceptions of individuals' judgments, motifs or intellects" (Mostefaoui & Hamza-reguig Mouro, 2022), literature is rendered an essential element of the cinematic production, the storytelling genre of fairy tales in particular contributed to the rise of a new trend; the Walt Disney Company. Indeed, while cinema is defined as a great medium that disperses moving pictures, and wonder tales very much as an inventively recognized body of writing of elevated artistic values, conjoining the two is but a creation of a true work of art. Embracing a unique ability of translating profound and abstract ideas and thoughts to the screen as enchantingly as literary fairy tales, the Walt Disney Company made sure to deliver surreal sounds and imagery to the world accompanied with unforgettable experiences full of high interaction of the senses and great identification to the stories.

In point of fact, intending to embark the viewer on an emotional experience fulfilled through a visual stimuli which enables the spectator to perceive, interpret and most importantly develop empathy towards the story and its characters, the utmost aim of Walt Disney is to provide, as Boyum (1985) declares, "the opportunity to identify with other human beings for a while and, vicariously participate in their lives" (p. 39). Generating experiences of long-term value and becoming an addictive lollipop enjoyed not only by children but by adults as well, Walt Disney characters became a true mirror of cultural norms and societal constraints.

To diffuse puzzling intentions, Disney aimed at creating memorable characters whose personalities always impress and deeds never stop astonishing. Generally extended to all characters, Disney's heroes and heroines are dressed with powerful messages congruous with the demands of the time, and carry dutifully the ethic of hard work. This, in fact, surprisingly affects the established relationships between male and female characters, their gender representation and the expected acts of female figures. The complex issue of women's representations throughout the female protagonists fills, therefore, a high place in Disney's projected fairy tale movies.

Boundlessly far-famed and infinitely prosperous, the Walt Disney Company did lay certain features and characteristics that became literally symbolic to the company. Indeed, in displaying

a historical analysis of the evolution of the Disney movies, the first short films were highly experimental, were generally open-ended and inventive, and expressed surprising vigour and original use of animation art and techniques; (...) they all took place in Twentieth century America, tended to be partial to the underdogs in the stories, and had heroes who often resembled Disney or Disney's aspirations (Zipes, 2006, p. 196).

However, when embarking on the 1930's the ideology of the movies changed. In other words, by erasing dreamlike and liberating aspects, Disney set forward more conservative, male chauvinistic and moralistic features to the fairy tale movies' female protagonists. This novel version of Disney strengthened traditional values such as cleaning-living, hard labour and subordination as keys for avoiding problems and succeeding notably in life. Arguably, those same ideological orders would become the basis of all Walt Disney's sequential cartoons, chiefly Disney Princess movies.

Accordingly, the major interests of this scientific undertaking is to initially tincture the rise of the Walt Disney Company by the early Twentieth Century reckoning the great influence the genre of enchantment and its sense of disillusionment had on Disney movies; leading to the birth of the new cinematic genre of the fairy tale film genre lately recognized as the Disney Princess Franchise. Then, as issues surrounding women's portrayal through the female heroines undertake a large place in Disney's formula, the second aim of this paper is to display the way the heroines featured in the Disney Princess franchise are depicted over time. In fact, based on a large selection spanning from both classic and contemporary Disney official Princess Movies, these critical analyses are for certain quite eminent for investigating the article's major interest: unveiling the nature of contemporary wonder tale retellings in the cinematic branch, in order to understand to what extent their differences from what is regarded the 'canonical' fairy tale proves to be a real challenge to the tradition.

## ***2. On the Uprise of the Walt Disney Company***

“In the era of interdisciplinary, nothing is healthier than trying to see the literature's verblativity from the perspective of cinema and the movie iconicity from the perspective of literature” (Brito, cited in Gualda, 2010, pp. 201–220). Indeed, gone a time where literary writers had supreme authority, the early Twentieth Century was marked by a team of directors, screenwriters, animators and producers vital for the invention of every single movie. In truth, numerous artists in the first decades of the Twentieth Century projected magical narratives on the screen, but “none of the early animators ever watched the intensity with which [Walt] occupied himself with the fairytales” (Zipes, 2006, p. 196). To put it differently, Walter Elias Disney established a world's forever premier and best-known provider of entertainment and disillusioned amusement company; The Walt Disney Company.

As a matter of fact, the genesis of Walt Disney dates back to the 1920's where, along the assistance of his friend and gifted Kansas City film animator Ub Iwerks, Disney built the Laugh-

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O-Gram films studio and begun producing cartoons based on fables and fairy tales. Joined in the studio by several animators mainly Hugh Harman, Rudolf Ising, and Isadore Freleng, Walt Disney adapted and adopted many of the the Grimm brothers and Perrault's tales, including Puss in Boots, Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk.

Consecutively and ambitiously craving for further success, Disney's astonishing career was transported to Hollywood where he created the Disney Brothers Studio with his brother Roy. Named later on the Walt Disney Company, Disney made sure to project unique storytelling through the nouveau power of elevated cinematography techniques. On the upcoming years, therefore, Disney created the flourishing animated shorts, The Silly Symphonies. Not only prospering, but these 1930's widely popular music cartoons paved the way for the next Disney's ambitious project; Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Engaging all the possessed earnings and even asking for loans to finance this project, the Disney's 1937 released feature length cartoon in full sound and colour laid down the red carpet for a newly envisioned production of wonder tales.

Since this moment on, meticulously attentive to novel technological inventions and carefully precise about the copyright as royalties of his productions, Disney never stopped returning to traditional literary fairy tales; a great influence that helped in the establishment of the fairy tale movie genre. Accordingly, never quitting delighting nor stopping growing and delivering fairy tale adaptations, the Walt Disney Company productively projected a whole collection of movies including *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), which led to the birth of an all-encompassing Disney Princess Franchise.

### **3. *Between Ink and Cameras: Fairy Tales on the Screen***

Wondrous and expatiate, attractive in its nature and captivating in its characters, wonder tales were regarded as the perfect narrative genre to be transferred and adapted on the screen. The enchantment of tales, marvellous structure of characters and magical content of the stories was impressively suitable to the new cinematic techniques and approaches of the literary text. Earning massive privilege and huge popularity over the written text, the tale's visual side was greatly praised and lead to the uprise of a whole fairy tale movie genre; a Disney Princess Franchise repleted with social convictions and stereotypical doctrines.

#### **3.1. *Once Upon a Time: Defining the Wundermärchen Genre***

Hostile but bewitching, deemed a lieu of ordeals and exploration par excellence, the striking genre of fairy tales embarks its readers into a splendid world where animals talk, where time and distance differ, where objects carry a magical dimension and where the 'happy ending' is the only

route to close up the tale. Quite marvellous and wondrous, and born out of a recital passed along by word of mouth, the fairy is the prosopopoeia of the marvellous. Originating from the Latin word “fata”, the term historically referred to the Fates, Gods of Hades who swirled the fates of humans.

Impressively filled with typical mythical entities, such as giants, dwarfs, mermaids, unicorns and fairies, fairy tales are short narratives dripping with dullness and ambition, and full of fierceness, determination and perseverance. Wonder tales-some other alternative term from the German Wundermärchen- project a different world; a counter world wherein hypocrisy, moral corruption and competition are viewed as the result of social and political interactions.

Put to govern, influence and direct human fates, the fairy and her evil counterparts; the witch, are a crucial part of the narrative (Zipes, 2006). In his book "The Brothers Grimm: Complete Fairy Tales Grimm VS. Disney", Vincenzo di Kastiaux declares that: "a fairy tale signifies belief in the supernatural, not the suspension of belief. We all believe in the extraordinary of Once Upon a Time" (cited in Zipes, 2011, p. 221). In other words, being a radiant fairy or old, demolished fairy, fairy tale characters are incessantly immortal and possess supernatural powers allowing them to award qualities or curse, protect or condemn to misery and finally bless or punish.

Moreover, male figures are pictured differently and projected as disfigured ogres, attractive giants and expedient magicians. Instruments of enchantment, the magic wand par excellence; being made of simple branch or real jewel, certainly add magic, mesmerism and much symbolism to the narrative. Finally, love is passionately reached after numerous overcame ordeals to be ergo put under the fashionable heading of "they lived happily ever after", as Bettelheim confirms:

Struggling against serious difficulties of life is unavoidable and is an integral part of human experience, but if instead of turning back, we firmly face unexpected and often unfamiliar ordeals, we overcome every obstacle finally end up victorious (Bettelheim, 1976)

Portraying, therefore, the complex journey of its enchanting characters, wonder tales enable their characters to escape life obstacles and delve into a universe of boundless leisure and infinite pleasure. In his classic reference book, the 1977 [1946] edition of *The Folktale*, Thomson defines a wonder tale as: “a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite creatures and is filled with the marvellous. In this never-never land, humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princesses” (Thomson, 1977).

Furthermore, the wonder narrative has been written down as to include the "wondrous element" (Propp, 1968). Put differently, to pioneering scholars like Vladimir Propp and Jack Zipes, the wondrous element is a supernatural power which brings about change in a character's life. Propp (1968) further asserts that: "plenty of fairy tales do not become fairy tales when written; some produce fables and others become myths or epics. But, for a folk tale to become a fairy tale, it is compulsory to include a wondrous element." Arguably, other scholars affirm that the fairy tale dominating feature is the marvellous phenomena; an element that the professor of German and Comparative literature Jack Zipes (2006) entitles "the celebration of wondrous change".

Promising, henceforth, all kind of astonishing exploitations and captivating outlets, fairy tales do undeniably exalt a universe full of magic and wonderment. Indeed, a genre endorsing much excitement and appealingness inculcated greediness and passion for the Walt Disney Company to provide the viewer with an unforgettable magical experience; a one where action is vested by characters and words are highly and audibly uttered by personages.

### **3.2. On Fairy Tales between Literature and Cinema**

Ranked among the very first narratives to be adapted into movies, wonder tales proved to be quite eligible to the film adaptation narrative patterns. Indeed, through the power of ink found in fairy tales in particular, and by virtue of the dreamlike audible and graphic features adopted by cinema, both of fairy tales and cinema wished for a history of their own; a long recorded narrative of past events which ensures the continuum of their empires. Therefore, in the greatest attempt of "making the unseen visible" (Flavin, 2004, p. 5), both of literary and cinematographic fairy tales produce stories which work through temporal succession. Both refer to, or connote, pre-existent materials. Fiction works through a pre-existent language, film through the raw data of the physical world which its camera record. In both cases, words and images give off associations which go beyond the immediacy of their physical objects (Orr, 1992, cited in Bane, 2006, p. 12).

Accordingly, backdating to 1896 –the year after the first public showing of August and Louis Lumière's 'cinematograph' in Paris in 1895- the first movie to incorporate wonder tale motifs and themes is assigned to director George Méliès' *Le Manoir du Diable*. Attempting to fulfil a large void in the world of cinema by laying a peculiar touch of the fantastic, the dreamy and the wishful, the universe of entertainment knew an outburst of short and feature length, animated and live-action produced fairy tale movies.

However, very much responsible for the everlasting status wonder tales gained in adults' cinematographic and television culture is for certain Walt Disney. Highly attracted and

mesmerised by the fairy tales' unparalleled creative narratives, the Walt Disney Company surely paved the way for the rise of the new cinematic genre of the fairy tale movies.

Defined as any kind of cinematic representation that employs motifs, characters and plots generally found in the oral and literary genre of the fairy tale to recreate a known tale or to create an original screenplay with recognizable features of a fairy tale (Zipes, 2012, p. 96), the early Twentieth century fairy tale cinematographic genre established itself similarly to the way traditional fairy tales established themselves as a genre between the Seventeenth and Nineteenth centuries. The fairy tale movie was thus known as Zipes (2011) pontificates:

Any kind of cinematic representation that employs motifs, characters, and plots generally found in the oral and literary genre of the fairy tale to recreate a known tale or to create an original screen play with recognizable features of a fairy tale (Zipes, 2011, p. 9)

To this end, wonder tales started to be overtly adapted declaring a revolutionizing turn in film industry. Not only a unique means of careless amusement and entertainment, but Walt Disney Studios released films that featured strong ideological messages through either a compassionate princess, or in the case of Mulan and Pocahontas, a headstrong heroine. In fact, these women were taken out of the context of their films and created a franchise where they could all appear together on the same product; The Disney Princess franchise.

#### ***4. Female Heroines- A Staple Aspect for Representation***

Deemed to be a mirror of passionate reality and bitter truth, for any Disney Princess film to breathe into life there must be the crucial presence of characters. In other words, to give life to the story's various characteristics and meanings, characterization is of primary importance. In the same line, scholar Mead confirms that:

Often we arrive at an awareness and an understanding of a character's identity, problems, desires, values and aspirations that is somehow more coherent, more complete than the knowledge we have of people we have known and even lived with for years (Mead, 1990, p. 440)

Characterization is, thus, more than just impersonation; it is a thorough glare into self-knowledge, and human's psyche and perception. As a matter of fact, the discussion about characterization of Disney Princesses depends on the role the literary fairy tale heroines played. Widely contingent on the time period, cultural influences, and the values of the storyteller, the role of the heroine is deemed inconsistent marking an enormous change over time.

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In his book *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales Children and the Cultural Industry*, Jack Zipes denotes the way the *wundermarchen* has evolved based on the social context in which it is told. In other words, fairy tales used to be perceived as dangerous, but “by the beginning of the nineteenth century, fairy-tale writers had learned to rationalize their tales and to incorporate Christian and patriarchal messages in to the narratives” (Zipes, 1997, p. 4–5).

Moreover, intending to reinterpret the fairy tale genre to reflect the values of Europe’s middle-class and aristocratic inhabitants, the admired wonder tale writers of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen could but influence the depiction of fairy tale heroines in turn. Indeed, at a time where femininity was defined by reservation and restriction, the confining unfashionable gender roles impacted the stereotype of female passivity in fairy tales. Mc Glathery (1991) further showcases the way feminist critics highlighted the lack of agency that fairy tale heroines possess, the constraints imposed on them by the patriarchal society outvoicing that:

Feminist critics understandably have tended to emphasize the passivity of fairy tale heroines, for their concern is with the very real and severe constraints that patriarchal society in early modern Europe placed on women’s activities. The romantic heroines especially have been singled out as exemplifying the patriarchal ideal of feminine passivity (McGlathery, 1991, p. 51).

These specific historical contexts have ergo informed the social perception of every fairy tale heroine projected. Becoming a reference to whom girls tend to lean on, regarded a denotative staple of American Girlhood, the Disney Princess Franchise displayed an everlasting impact on shaping the perception regarding the representation of women through the female protagonists. Verily, since its release in 2000, the Disney Princess Franchise established itself as the new lens through which normative female characters are explored and investigated. To unveil, therefore, the place female characters occupied in fairy tale movies, it is of high importance to trace the way heroines moved from controlled objects to progressively empowered heroines all along the various generations of the Princess films.

### ***5. Disney Princess Franchise: On Disney’s Submissive Formula***

Operating as a primordial tool for projecting the norms and patterns which dominate the society, the Disney Princess heroines have for so long functioned according to the fixed formula. Quite submissive and shuttering, the classic 1930’s ideology of the Princess movies set forward more conservative and male chauvinistic beliefs. This nouveau formula would consequently become the framework of all Walt Disney’s Princess movies.

Most of all, the 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* not only displays a turning point in Disney’s career, but also demonstrates Disney’s novel technical and narrative operatic system; a



conception that would be fixed on every new production. Likewise, another post- *Snow White* commercial hit revealing “Disney’s methodology and formulaic pattern” (Zipes, 2006b, p. 204) is Cinderella. Based on the 1697 Charles Perrault recounting of the ancient fairy tale, this Disney’s 1950 academy award-nominated movie truly informs about the kind of stories Disney would be projecting.

Consequently, categorized as “a rags-to-riches story” by Jack Zipes, such narratives emphasize the story of the typical defining Disney character, the Cinder girl. As a miserable lady, this female protagonist is endowed with a passive agency that displays the character’s submissive spirit. Possessing a fancied beauty, the cinder girl seeks romance believing that only the true love of the prince can save her from misery. Marrying the prince charming to get the ‘happy ever after’ is the only way for the female character to survive. Associating, therefore, women to rigid beauty standards and outvoicing their needs and desires through the male character strongly became the new persisting trend to the broader struggle of female representations.

Indeed, it is of high import to declare that in his *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé*, Charles Perrault did already start manipulating the portrayal of female characters in fairy tales. Going “beyond mere stylistic expansion and embellishment” (Tatar, 1987, p. 27), Perrault made sure to replenish the stories with powerful messages fitting time demands. Highly affecting the established relationship between male and female characters, their gender portray and the well expected acts of female figures, Perrault created characters that would simply strengthen the norms and diffuse the stereotypes all men desired. In this peculiar context, Teverson (2013) denotes that:

In Perrault’s tales, the heroines are often passive figures awaiting revival at the hands of a bold prince, self-sacrificing models of virtue and chastity who triumph of their willingness to conform to the patriarchal order, or wayward women who have drifted out the orbit of patriarchal control and who need to be chastised for their curiosity or their disobedience ( p. 58)

Arguably, Perrault’s extensively manipulated tales only reinforced classic characteristics of obedience, beauty and innocence and displayed women’s passiveness all by fulfilling male’s worldview and patriarchal ego. As literary fairy tales were the basis of all Disney’s production, this thus only leads one to confirm and highlight the ingredients which constituted the Princess movies. Over decades, such elements have as well shaped the public’s expectations about the fairy tale cinematic genre and its female protagonists. Within the end of the Twentieth century, however, scholars from various fields begun to critically question the morals projected through Disney movies. As Disney Corporation gained massive popularity, feminist researchers in

particular started questioning the representation of female characters and the roles they occupied in their proper movies.

Ascendant in their portrayal of gender roles and projection of a patriarchal and sexist order populated by stereotypes of gender, race and class, among the very first scholars to question the appropriateness of Disney's interpretation regarding the portrayal of female characters, their roles and their interaction with the opposite sex is Maria Lieberman. To those 1970s critics, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* hold strong patriarchal conditions which tend often to be presented as a neutral thing to the world. Indeed, via selecting stories in which female protagonists are beyond passivity; almost "barely alive" (Lieberman, 1972, p. 384), Disney highly accentuated the passivity of the heroines. Furthermore, in scrutinizing the number of times the passive, kind and bewitching heroine is victim of painful punishments, Lieberman (1972) names this patterns as "the archetype of suffering heroine" (p. 390).

In addition, entirely radicalizing the opposition within female gender is the new astonishing established dichotomy of 'kind- passive-defenseless girls' and 'evil-active-powerful' villainesses. Deceivably categorizing the female protagonists, Disney fairy tales further lay the idea that all villains are women, therefore, claiming that evil forces are of feminine nature. Equally investigating the dichotomy set forward, the feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar deduce that it is a men's tendency to lay and divide images of female characters as either passive and wanted or active and awful. Not possessing much choice, then, women are encouraged to embrace activeness by becoming atrocious or abdicate their creativity by becoming defenseless objects and voiceless properties.

Quite conservative and humiliating, it is essential to highlight that beauty is the lonely feature that glorifies the women and values her presence. Verily, in a male chauvinistic canon which does not really triumph differences, the Disney Princess Franchise proudly layed down the way women must physically look. As Lieberman (1972) pontificates: "beauty is most cases their most valuable asset if not the only one" (p. 384). Urging for change, therefore, feminist scholars shouted out for the crucial need of new narratives reflecting brand new perspectives. No longer capable of identifying with old passive Disney characters, women asked for powerful, fearless princesses; a call that would be progressively granted through the upcoming generations of the Disney Princess films.

## **6. *Towards a Pronounced Female Agency***

Gone the time where Disney's female characters were shuttered, where unfair and constraining societal norms and patterns were exultant, and where power and success were at the service of men only, the end of the Twentieth century witnessed the birth of newly empowered

female figures. Indeed, bygone the time period of women's submission to the norms and subjugation to the men as it is now the appropriate instance of granting voice and mundanity to the heroines. Vividly replacing normative female passivity by and openly novel pronounced agency, Disney granted a completely new reinterpretation version of the classic fairy tale female personages. Put differently, twisted and reversed, these active contemporary female characters provide women with more control, power, independency and presence.

A character allotted agency and created to delete old-fashioned stereotypes is Ella in *Ella and the Prince*. As glorious as the *Cinderella* fairy tale gown transformation, Kenneth Branagh brought Cinderella into the Twenty First century women power. Made of a strong will heroine, this *Cinderella* version transports the audience into the original tales revisionists fought against. As the movie closely follows the classic tale, Ella demonstrates women's determination and strength to surpass oppression though committed from the same sex. In other words, by appropriating herself to the degrading demands of her family, Ella makes use of her abused identity as a badge of survival and bravery.

Embracing the portray of a determined woman bravely aiming at succeeding without the help of the 'prince charming', love from the first sight was not a thing that Ella wished for. Proving herself as a powerful woman able of rescuing herself, kingdom and Prince Charmont, Ella fearlessly said to her step-mother at the end: "I was not able to protect my father from you, but I will protect the king and kingdom from you". Embodied through Ella, Disney's female characters denote the long way they overcame from a complete submitted object to a courageous bold lady.

Another empowering character belonging to the contemporary Disney stream is Rapunzel of *Tangled* (2010). Displaying an unparalleled motivation to discover the unknown, portraying a pure determination to rescue herself from the so long retrieving castle, and representing a powerful and audacious spirit a woman must embrace, Rapunzel proved to be among Disney Princess's strongest female characters. Earning massive applauds from the public, Rapunzel insisted on saving herself, the kingdom and the people from evil malfeasances as an independent fighter full of ambition and wisdom.

The Twentieth century was, therefore, a time of glory for Disney princesses. Reinterpreted versions of old tales certainly represent female protagonists as active characters possessing powerful values and strong personalities. Endowing the female figures with a pronounced agency depicts the much progress done in empowering the female characters. In truth, such examples of *Ella and the Prince*, *Tangled*, or *Frozen* or *Belle* mirror heroines deep search for success, determination and independence; a thorough look into a restored recognition and an eternal onward motion.

## **7. Conclusion**

Happily ever after, it is here that this scientific paper reaches its end. To pure lovers of artistically projected narrations, to enthusiastic spirits fond of creativity, the Walt Disney Company have certainly never stopped deceiving its audience. Marvellously captivating and wondrously intense, the Disney Princess Franchise in particular mesmerize spectators and dislocate their rationality into a universe full of magic and enchantment. Attributing much of its origins to the fairy tale storytelling genre which “has existed ever since the beginning of time” (Merwan Messaoudi & Hamza-reguig Mouro, 2021), the Disney Princess Franchise served as an outlet from constraints, fear and desire. Indeed, not only an innocent instrumentality of amusement, the Disney Company always inculcate strong messages and valuable meanings to present to the audience; i.e., fascinating though, Disney made sure to create characters that embody strong ideological values.

Harshly falling under the category of gender roles, female characters in particular were drawn to portray societal conventions and realistic male patriarchy. Greatly influenced by the role female characters embraced in old fairy tale versions, the Disney’s first generation heroines, spanning from 1937 to 1959, highlight the lack of agency and the constraints these women had to carry. Throughout the upcoming years, however, the Disney Princess industry have become more progressive in the way of portraying their heroines. Innovative productions including *Ella and the Prince* and *Tangled* denote powerful heroines outbursting with internal reflection, personal outgrowth and deserved self-esteem.

Quite impressive and surreal, the manner in which those newly empowered female protagonists are granted control and strength is ambiguously astonishing. Verily, either in a positive or negative manner, Disney Princesses or villainesses hold power in the productions. Therefore, after long years of an extensively manipulated women’s representation, the Disney Princess Franchise delivered more active and self-reliant female heroines; a delighting progress that enlightens the long absent female spirits.

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