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Sarah Wilde

Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern Day Fairy Tales

This paper examines the repackaging of contemporary Disney princess fairy tales in a post-feminist era and explores the extent to which these princesses are portrayed as post-feminist. Undertaking semiotic analysis and utilising Propp's (1968) character theory it examines the initial UK marketing material of Disney's most recent princess animations Tangled (2010), Brave (2012) and Frozen (2013). Drawing on the evolution of fairy tales and historical Disney princesses the analysis focuses on romantic love, the positioning of protagonist relationships and gender ideologies. It revealed that contemporary princesses, especially Brave surpass many traditional notions of gender. Evolving from a tale of a "heroine of life who has no story" (Tatar 1999, p.293), to one of an empowered and autonomous heroine. Yet some of the initial promotional material overshadows strong post-feminine ideals and thus subjects the princesses to the traditional resolution of romantic love.

Keywords: Post-feminism, Disney, semiotics, feminism, princess

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INTRODUCTION

The media culture produces powerful ideologies that create a framework in which audiences "interpret, understand and make sense of some aspects of social existence" (Hall 1993 cited Holtzman 2000, p.34). These values can create "myths" or "false consciousness" of reality (Storey 2012, p.3) and what it means to be "male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless" (Holtzman 2000, p.3). Feminists have analysed the film industry for the disfigured images and cultural constructs of women that are reproduced to create patterns of oppression and inequality (Gill 2007; Humm 1997). The Walt Disney Company, a $142.92 billion (Forbes 2014) media and entertainment conglomerate is renowned for its prowess as a fairy tale storyteller. Fairy

tales have always been at the forefront of popular culture (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008), not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a tool for children to explore "morals and societal ideals of good and evil" and often ideals of femininity (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008; Corsaro 1997 cited Tanner et al. 2003). According to folklorist Zipes (1999), Disney "appropriated the fairy tale" (p.333) and encapsulated their meanings and conventions and intertwined them into a "cultural stranglehold" (p.339) of Disney ideologies, in what Wasko (2001a, p.125) defines as "Disneyfying" classic fairy tales.

This said, Disney has become synonymous with the princess fairy tale narrative, its "corporate logo is its castle" (Do Rozario 2004, p.34) and its kingdom full of perfect princesses worth $4 billion (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008; Batchelor and Hammond 2012). The princess film narrative began with its first animation Snow White in 1937 grossing "$8.5 million within its first month of release" (Wasko 2001a, p.14) and eleven princesses followed in her footsteps. However, the monopolisation of the princess fairy tale narrative and the messages conveyed has been criticised by folklorists, academics and feminists. The majority of criticism towards the Twentieth Century princess animations draws on similar conclusions to the way in which the Disney princesses are packaged to expose ideals of what it means to be a princess, and thus a young lady in a Westernised culture. The animations focus on negative gendered portrayals, in most cases passivity and submissiveness of the heroine in relationships with other characters, in particular male counterparts (Stone 1975; Henke et al. 1996; Do Rozario 2004; Lacroix 2004; England et al. 2011; Bradford 2012), sexualisation (Lieberman 1986; Bell 1995), and fabricated notions of romance and love (Stone 1980; Wasko 2001b; Haase 2008; Batchelor and Hammond 2012). As Dines (2002) states in Mickey Mouse Monopoly, these negative ideals of femininity and gender were "wrapped up in a magic kingdom wrapper and sold to children".

The 21st Century is argued to be in its second decade of post-feminism, which is celebrated for the liberation of feminism, freedom of oppression and movement to ideas of empowerment, choice and autonomy for women (Whelehan 2000; Gill 2007; Genz 2009; McRobbie 2009). In 2000, Disney began repackaging the way in which the princesses were communicated and launched the princess line, uniting the princesses with campaigns targeting young girls. However, in 2012 Disney shifted this focus again, launching the "I am Princess" advertising campaign (Disney 2012). This campaign derives as a strong marketing effort to counteract the negative backlash received for the majority of its princess animations, focusing on the new "girlhood" and autonomy in post-feminist culture (England et al. 2011, p.555). Princesses are repackaged with positive associations of bravery, compassion and loyalty that girls can adhere to, giving examples of self-acclaimed princesses in the form of everyday girls who are talented musicians, surfers and gymnasts.

In addition, criticism has arisen regarding post-feminism; McRobbie (2009) discusses this as "anti-feminism" (p.1) and discussions of fourth-wave feminism in the UK have started to arise, including issues such as media sexism (The Guardian 2013a). This said, in a post-feminist culture, popular media continues to illustrate unrealistic perceptions of women (Byerly and Ross 2006).

This paper examines the repackaging of contemporary Disney princesses in a post-feminist era and explores the extent to which these princesses are portrayed as post-feminist. The study undertakes semiotic analysis of the initial UK marketing material of Disney's most recent princess animations Tangled (2010), Brave (2012) and Frozen (2013) through exploring the extended first run trailer and main theatrical posters, then touching on the films themselves. The princess is examined under Propp's (1968) character and narrative theory and using work by Barthes (1967) to decipher

the "connotative meaning and symbolic messages" of the narratives (cited Dyer 1982, p.128), in particular the extent to which stereotypical gender ideologies perpetuate within modern day princess narratives. The analysis is based on a UK perspective of post-feminism, but utilises Westernised literature from the UK and US. While Whelan (2012) analysed Tangled's narrative from a feminist perspective, the initial communications of the three newest princesses have never been explored and thus provides a gap in the research. The study firstly focuses on the history of fairy tales and historical princesses to situate Disney's dominant fairy tale ideologies and structures.

The Evolution of the Fairy Tale

Bottigheimer (2009) and Zipes (1997) acknowledge oral tales began through storytellers who shared "belief systems and teachings of their culture" (p.3), reshaped through generations. Tales contained "matriarchal mythology" featuring goddesses or dominant young princesses (Duff 2000, p.9; Zipes 2007). Yet in the Middle Ages and into the Fifteenth Century these narratives transformed through the invention of printing press into literary tales (Zipes 1999). Additionally, matriarchal structures of female power and gender were dispersed or suppressed to suit the dominant themes of patriarchy (Haase 2004, p.15);

> "A system of social structures and practice in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". (Walby 1990 cited Pilcher, p.10)

To suit patriarchal ideologies, young princess were replaced with an active hero and goddesses became witches or evil stepmothers (Zipes 2007, p.7).

Although this study focuses on gender issues within fairy tales, tales could also be explored in terms of social class. Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century fairy tales reflected notions of elitism and separation, dominated by upper class writers who transformed literary tales into a children's genre for the educated (Zipes 1997); these served as training manuals for young girls and males (Lieberman 1986; Barchers 1988), exploring "virtues and transgressions" that groom children into correct social functions (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008, p.279; Duff 2000). Ideal young ladies were beautiful, feminine and submissive and males heroic (Zipes 1997; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008).

In the Nineteenth Century fairy tales were adapted to teach girls how to become "domesticated, respectable and attractive to a marriage partner through gendered values" (Sperry and Grauerholz 2003, p.714). Such fairy tales reflected the Nineteenth Century's view of "true womanhood"; a value system that denotes a true woman's honourability and respectability based on four virtues: "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 1966, p.152). Housework was exercise and craft was the "appropriate occupation" for the "valiant" housewife who found happiness through her husband (Welter 1966, p.174). Men however, were associated with "independence", proposing bravery and strength (Rose 1992, p.15).

Feminism and the Fairy Tale Princess

The overarching themes and messages expressed in fairy tales have been extensively examined. As liberation movements in the Twentieth Century progressed, a redefinition of sexual and social roles appeared in which women challenged fairy tale ideals and their lack of desirable female behaviour (Rowe 1979). Zipes utilises Barthes' meaning of myth "transformation of cultural and contingent into what appears natural and inevitable" to convey the purpose of fairy tales (cited Sellers 2001, p.9). For feminist readers, such as Rowe (1979, p.214) fairy tales appropriated patriarchal functions and warped them into "romantic myths" that made female subordination seem romantic and a perfect fate. Moreover, further analysis determined female protagonists to be poor girls or beautiful princesses who are rewarded for passivity, innocence and obedience.

Male protagonists are rewarded with wedded bliss illustrating women as prizes to be won (Zipes 1986; Bacchilega 1997; Sellers 2001).

It is evident that fairy tales as a genre fall under the concept of patriarchal folklore (Craven 2002). However, feminist writers argue that fairy tales can envisage women positively and elude concepts of matriarchy, such as Carter's collection of modern day fairy tales, The Virago Book of Fairy Tales (cited Bacchilega 1997). These reinventions indicate that narratives can encompass leading heroine protagonists that push a feminist agenda and in turn become strong feminine role models (Haase 2004).

Disney's Fairy Tale Princess

The Twentieth Century fairy tales captivated audiences in new ways; they transitioned from primarily literary based to animation. Walt Disney "cast a spell on the fairy tale narrative" (Zipes 1999, p.332) and transformed it to suit a "Westernised culture of wholesome family entertainment" (Zipes 1994, p.333) and has dominated these traditional literature narratives of Grimm, Perrault and Andersen ever since (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). His fairy tale Snow White became an instant success and the princess narrative continued in the form of Cinderella in 1950 and Sleeping Beauty in 1959.

Through each century the moral messaging depicted in fairy tales reflected "expected norms of behaviour in society for females in particular" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008, p.279). These ideologies also concerned feminist readers. To conceptualise the analysis in the next section, Disney's first three princesses are examined through existing literature to illustrate Disney's ideals of gender.

During the release of Snow White critics remained mostly positive through the 1930s - 1940s (Wasko 2001b). The animation resembled a time of "happiness and utopia" for people who were devastated by the Great Depression (Zipes 1997, p.2). However, criticism arose in the 1950s. For Lieberman and Yolen the power exerted by Disney over its mass audience had created a "beauty contest motif", which eradicated the ability to develop "true magic" for oneself (cited Rollin 1987, p.91). Furthermore, the social conventions, in terms of gender, almost mirror those in Grimm's original fairy tale and with it Nineteenth Century ideals of true womanhood. Gilbert and Gubar (cited Tatar 1999, p.293) argue that Snow White is passive, merely an object of possession for the prince and a "heroine of life who has no story". She exemplified little dialogue and action involved forms of domestic work, which was used as "servitude to gain love" (England et al. 2011, p.563; Wasko 2001b; Whelan 2012).

Cinderella demonstrated post World War II cultural thinking of women. Women's liberation expanded during wartime, embracing male roles in the public sphere (Hollows 2000). Yet in the post-war period in the 1950s, in what Friedan coined the Feminine Mystique, women succumbed to old notions of the domestic sphere and again "True Womanhood" (Hollows 2000; Genz 2009; MacDonald 1995; Giles 2002). Popular media enforced notions of "feminine fulfilment" by reasserting women's concerns of family and home (Genz 2009, p.30). Cinderella is subjected to domestic servitude for her stepfamily, whose happy ending is incomplete without the romantic prince charming (Sperry 2007; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). Cinderella is powerless in the tale, Henke et al. (1996) argues this powerlessness represents the ideology of a perfect girl for upholding feminine attributes of compassion, kindness and loyalty during slavery and abuse. Women as an object of beauty are projected when Cinderella becomes a true heroine only when presented in a ball gown (Stone 1975), implying marriage and social status is only possible if you are beautiful.

Disney, in his third fairy tale Sleeping Beauty, attempted to enforce ideals of femininity such as subordination. She holds the least power in her journey, passive to the point at which she spends a lot of the animation asleep waiting for her prince to restore her to her royal throne (Bottigheimer 2009). Her beauty is served as an object of desirability (Bell 1995; Zipes 1986).

Protagonists are punished for their beauty and sexuality through slavery, poison or imprisoned in a tower. Moreover, gender roles are executed through oppositions of good and evil. A princess through passivity represents virtuousness and beauty defines grace and goodwill, whereas villains such as Maleficent in Sleeping Beauty are active and ugly and thus evil (Wasko 2001a; Bell 1995; Tatar 1999). Under patriarchy, women are only judged on this spectrum, youthful and beautiful or old and undesirable. It is also evident that these heroines lack control over their own journey and their role as women is falsified (Whelan 2012). The title of each animation acknowledges their leading roles as protagonists, yet these princesses are damsels in their journey, unable to survive or be happy without a hero. A strong focus for fairy tales, in oral, written and cinematic form is the plot and journey of the protagonist and the transformation that allows them to complete their journey (Zipes 2012; Bottigheimer 2009).

Scholars explored Propp's work surrounding the fairy tale genre. Propp theorised "thirty-one functions" of a fairy tale, most notably rescue and a wedding and seven core "dramatis personae", such as a villain, hero, princess or prize (Tatar 1999, p387; Duff 2000; Zipes 2012). The romantic plot is more dominant in Disney fairy tales than those of Grimm and other literary tales. Stone (1980) argues that by utilising a more romantic humanised tale it creates a heroine that "lacks in ambition and who is willing to sing or clean through her troubles, while awaiting her prince" (p.32), again reinforcing a negative ideology of femininity as nothing more than submissive to all masculine rule.

According to Bell (1995) Disney adapted its narrative of femininity to adhere to societal changes. In the 1960s, a second wave of feminism emerged, attempting to redefine sexual and social roles of women (Rowe 1979; Whelehan 1995). For many feminists, the restriction to the domestic sphere became a punishment of self-oppression and idealisation. Romantic love was blamed for illustrating a feminine identity based on a dependence on men (Hollows 2000). This said, Disney has tried to surpass these narrow ideologies in the form of Beauty and the Beast and The Little Mermaid. Do Rozario (2004) utilised Propp's character theory to show that each princess is becoming more proactive, making their own choices within tales.

As post-feminism took ahold in the 1990s, Disney reviewed its narrative in the creation of Pocahontas and Mulan who began to "disrupt patriarchy" (Do Rozario 2004, p.47; Stover 2013) and rhetoric shifted from "any prince to the right prince" (Stover 2013, p.4). However, studies have showed positive representations of gender in some cases are disguises, female protagonists are still dominated by a male world and ideals of romantic love still exist (Tanner et al. 2003). Even Mulan, a strong powerful princess, is subjected back into the feminine roles of society (Dines 2001).

The moral teachings in oral tales have filtered through into literary and cinematic princess narratives. Entertainment is information, and young adults could interpret these ideologies of what is deemed masculine and feminine. Males are always heroes and females always subordinate, or else undesirable and wicked. Thus, these fairy tales execute stringent guidelines for young adults. Although there may have been a slight shift in power with each princess, the underlying theme of romance and finding the one true love, is still evident in most of the princess narratives.

What follows below is a semiotic analysis of the theatrical posters and trailers of Tangled, Brave and Frozen, which will be analysed as individual case studies. The

analysis focuses on romantic love, the positioning of protagonist relationships and gender ideologies, focusing on the signification of post-feminist content (Barley 1983). It considers how princesses have evolved and have been repackaged to portray traits of empowerment and independence (McRobbie 2009), and to what extent it maintains previous Disney gender ideologies.

TANGLED: THE ACCIDENTAL ACT OF TRUE LOVE

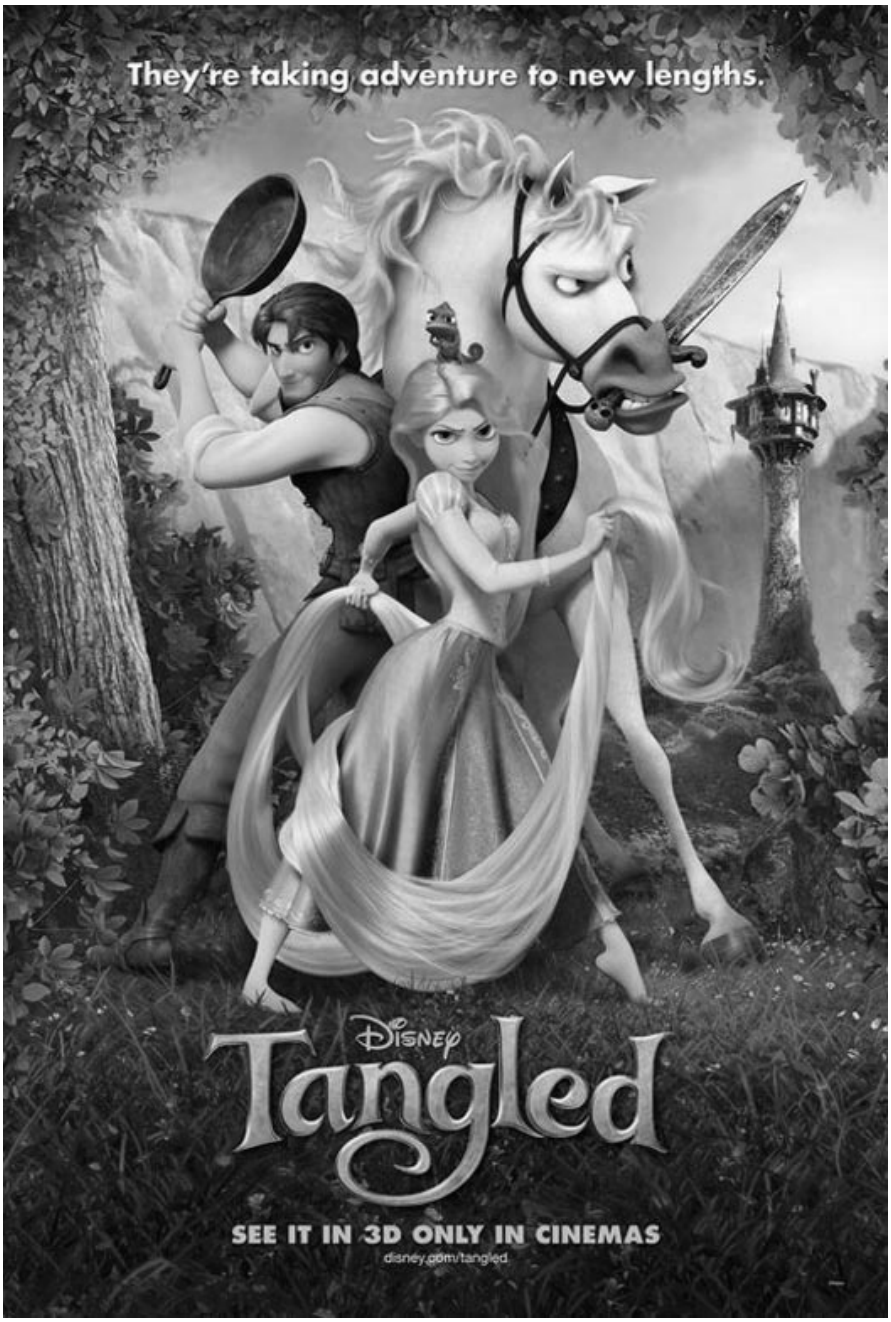
According to Gauntlett (2008) society evolved drastically in the Twenty First Century. Gender inequalities are almost unknown and instead there is a focus on the notion of "justice and equality" (Banyard 2010, p.206). As explored, Disney hasn't perfected a princess that emulates such post-feminist traits and continues to produce princesses that "carry ideological baggage of their time" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008, p.52). In 2010 Disney released Tangled, a reworking of Grimm's Rapunzel (Grimm 2013). Tangled is a tale of a young spritely princess, Rapunzel, with 70 feet of magical hair, who is imprisoned in a tower by Gothel, an evil witch. Her adventure of self-discovery begins when Flynn, a thief on the run, stumbles into her tower and strikes a deal to guide her to the floating lights she sees through her window (Disney 2014).

Theatrical Poster

The theatrical poster for Tangled (Figure 1) presents Rapunzel in the forefront of the image, holding dominance over the other characters standing behind her. By placing Rapunzel higher than the male in the frame of the image, she is dispelling the ideologies of "the passive dependant female and active male" shown in previous princesses and studies of advertisements (Williamson 1979 cited Shields and Heinecken 2002, p.45). Moreover, it signifies Rapunzel as able to protect herself, dispelling old notions of reliance on a prince to save the damsel in distress. Thus further representing the idea of an independent post-feminism woman. Satire is also apparent with the horse holding a sword as a weapon, Flynn, the male protagonist of the film, with a frying pan and Rapunzel's hair. The fact the male is holding a domestic object as a weapon juxtaposes the traditional domestic roles associated with women (Byerly and Ross 2006).

However, set identifications of femininity are signified through the princess' physical beauty (Genz 2009). Her angelic face, doe eyes and regal attire places Rapunzel as the object of beauty, similar to previous princesses (Mulvey 1975; Shields and Heinecken 2002). Moreover, the fact that her hair is also her weapon further evokes the concept of an object of beauty, protecting herself through her physical appearance.

Figure 1 – Tangled Film Poster UK (IMDb, 2010)



In terms of masculine and feminine stereotypes, the theatrical poster diffuses the concept of male and female as a binary opposition of active: passive (Barley 1983). Utilising Propp's functions of a fairy tale, the use of the word "they're" indicates that the journey is undertaken by both protagonists and not just subjected as a role assumed for the hero.

Film Trailer

The poster portrays positive qualities of a dominant princess, yet the film trailer at times juxtaposes the positive repackaging of Rapunzel with more traditional views of women. In the positioning of the opening credits of the trailer, the Disney castle corporate logo

(Do Rozario 2004) enforces the perception of an "image-creation" which embeds associations between a princess and Disney (Danesi 2002, p.183). In the beginning of the trailer, the castle from Tangled is shown as the shot transitions into the Disney castle logo, utilising the message Disney is princess. Rapunzel's physical appearance and the setting she is subjected to denote a damsel in distress. Yet, the tale surpasses the Grimm's traditional tale, as Rapunzel does not wait to be saved by her prince, but to be shown the "world outside her window". The audience is introduced to the fairy tale and its princess through first person narrative of Flynn, Rapunzel's protagonist counterpart who dominates most of the scenes in the trailer. Her first scene depicts her hitting Flynn around the head with a frying pan. The domestic product reinforces the sexist gender roles of women and their place in the domestic environment (Stewart et al. 2003).
Moreover, the fact Rapunzel's narrative is led through the eyes of a male protagonist signifies that she is subjected to conventions of Mulvey's notion of patriarchal "male gaze", in which Flynn in terms of Propp's stock character is the hero and thus the subject, and Rapunzel the princess and therefore the object of his gaze (Byerly and Ross 2006, p.17; Chandler 2002). However, the oppression of female voice and feminine roles are challenged as the trailer progresses. Flynn narrates the tale, but the scenes depict Rapunzel as dominant. The earlier Disney princesses shared little dialogue throughout their stories; it was often the woman's place in society to smile at men as they made jokes, but never "create humour of their own". Moreover under the patriarchal gaze, women were condemned to sexist humour (Shifman and Lemish 2010, p.871). In a post-feminist culture, women and humour are now associated with empowerment and freedom of expression. This said, many jokes are made at the expense of Flynn, carrying strong connotations of post-feminist humour signified through Flynn's narration "first I said no can do" followed by Rapunzel throwing him out of the tower by her hair (Shifman and Lemish 2010). Rapunzel illustrates humour at her own expense, such as flattening Flynn with her abundance of hair. Her humour illustrates that traditional masculine and feminine traits are changing within social conventions and women can take on this trait and surpass the notion that "men act and women appear" (Berger 1972 p.41).

This surpasses previous Disney films, where the princess was illustrated as subordinate to the male, even if the male hero had only a minor presence within the narrative (Zipes 1995 cited Do Rozario 2004). Additionally, Rapunzel seems nonchalant about the handsome stranger who stumbles into her tower. Again, different from the first princess tales, where the plot revolved around true loves kiss. She dreams of adventure and uses him to get out of the tower. Her dream is presented as something different from previous princesses; she dreams of seeing the world, not to marry the first man that walks into her life. Yet, as the trailer progresses so does their relationship; Flynn becomes not just a physical guide, but also helps Rapunzel discover her identity. The use of proximity through haptic and kinesics is depicted to symbolise the romantic closeness of the two protagonists, during the scene in which the couple watch the floating lanterns from a boat (Edgar-Hunt et al. 2010). The trailer therefore prepares the audience for a romantic tale, focusing on the two main protagonists and their journey together.

The Animation

Some key concepts of the film are redundant in the trailer. Mother Gothel plays an integral part in Tangled; she is the reason why Rapunzel is trapped within the tower and the fact Rapunzel needs to "protect her magic hair", as illustrated in the trailer, as well as why she wants to break free from solitude (Wasko 2001a). Rapunzel's magical hair is the reason that Mother Gothel stays youthful. From a feminist perspective, these traits

resemble patriarchal ideologies of women (De Lauretis 1984) and exemplify the falsified notion of beauty being sought after, a paramount trait in femininity. However, this relationship between the heroine and the villainous mother are not shown in the trailer, instead focusing on the relationship between Rapunzel and the hero, Flynn, to push romantic ideals. The film portrays a typical Disney princess narrative in which the protagonist embarks on a journey, finding her true self and confronting evil in the form of Gothel. A twist in the ending of the fairy tale arises in the sense of being rescued by her prince, in which they save each other from danger and achieve fulfilment through true love's kiss (Zipes 1995; McCallum 2002 cited Frus and Williams 2010).

However, the narrative embodies a more autonomous view of true loves kiss and enforces the concept of "the right prince" (Stover 2013, p.4). Moreover, the theatrical poster celebrates the post-feminist princess who is dominant and empowered. Yet the trailer loses this notion slightly leaving Rapunzel under the narration of Flynn. Whelan (2012) notes, she is a contemporary princess in an all too traditional setting. She might not have waited for her prince to come and rescue her and have dreams of her own, yet a man stumbled across her tower, she accidently falls in love and her journey is reconciled through true loves kiss.

A BRAVE NEW PRINCESS

Merida in the literal sense is the bravest princess of the Disney princess line. Brave (2012) unlike the other Disney princess narratives discussed in this paper, is not an adaption of a fairy tale, but it has connotations of a Disney fairy tale, such as magic that helps solve or create distribution in the narrative. The story follows the tale of a passionate and headstrong princess, who is determined to make her own path in life, she defies a custom of arranged marriage that brings chaos to her kingdom. Granted one wish, Merida must rely on her bravery and her archery skills to undo a beastly curse (IMDb 2012).

Theatrical Poster

Of all the film advertisements, the Brave poster shown in figure 2 is the most prevailing in encapsulating the "girl power" ideology (Gauntlett 2008). Merida stands alone as a female protagonist, something that is new to the Disney princess narrative and the strong rendering of the image enforces attitudes of what it means to be brave. This is exuded in her loaded bow, denoting archetypal masculine traits of control, dominance and skill (Stewart et al. 2003). She is relying on nobody but herself, a departure from many of the Disney princesses, who were subjected to the roles of damsels in distress (Stone 1980). The blue lights create a trail from the title to Merida, almost creating a metaphorical connection between the two demonstrating that she is brave, or that she must follow the path to be brave. The focus in the frame is not on her physical attractiveness as a princess (Bell 1995), but on the action and the setting around her. She moves away from being an "object" (De Lauretis 1984, p.37) within a patriarchal culture; incorporating Propp's theory, she becomes the subject (Chandler 2002), a "signifying practice" (De Lauretis 1984, p.37) of a post-feminist princess who is autonomous and in control of her own narrative.

As Kress and Leeuwen (2002, p.348) state, colours can connote direct values and associate values onto the audience. The grey and dark blue tones in the background create an interpersonal meaning of mystery or danger, juxtaposed with the high saturation of orange hair and deep blue attire indicate a roguishness and uplifting persona (Kressand and Leeuwen 2002; Danesi 2002). Towards the bottom of her attire

Merida blends into the woodlands, extenuating her vagabond, free persona. This is further enforced with her hair that stands out wild and free.

Figure 2 – Brave Film Poster UK (IMDb 2012)

Her dominance as a post-feminist princess is communicated linearly through the theatrical poster, trailer and film.

Film Trailer

Merida is also the lead protagonist within the trailer, displaying new traits as a contemporary princess. She introduces herself to the audience, the first princess to ever lead her own tale. The first-person narrative (Chandler 2002) allows the audience to follow Merida in her rebellion against social conventions of a princess. Merida defies stereotypical gender codes, utilising themes of conflict and adventure. Merida is a princess that has found her voice and will rebel against anything she does not believe in, including to participate in an arranged marriage as a result of a competition. Applying

Propp's character theory (1968), a journey is based on a hero who endures gruelling tasks, yet the women are either damsels in distress or a prize to be won. Heroines are tested by their physicality, a beautiful face and perfect temperament (Stone 1975). The new Disney princesses have surpassed this notion, adopting the function of a hero and thus dispelling Propp's role of a princess. Merida is a departure to those gender roles, as a post-feminist princess she no longer fits within the character framework. Merida is proactive and confronts the challenges she must face, instead of waiting for her prince to save her (Stone 1975, p.45). Her rebelliousness replicates the elements of feminism that has been enforced for young women in society, through her actions of empowerment and choice (McRobbie 2009; Wood 2009). She also opposes stereotypical binary oppositions of gender representation and incorporates both masculine and feminine traits to enforce these ideals (Shiftman and Lemish 2010). These attributes are signified from the very beginning as she rides through the woods on her horse, shooting her bow and arrow. Also in the way she refuses marriage and rebels against her family. Her acts of tomboyish nature connote the protagonists "desire for freedom and mobility" and are a sign of ''independence and self-motivation'' (Frus and Williams 2010, p.160).

Queen Elinor, Merida's mother is perceived as a 'villain' for the ideologies she holds towards marriage and what it means to be a princess, different from the wicked, jealous mothers such as Maleficent (Wasko 2001; Bell 1995). Propp focuses on a false hero in his theory, however extending on this, Elinor represents a false villain. Following the same ideals as Propp's false hero, yet it's a counter point, she is not really evil and through her changing relationship with Merida also becomes a helper. She is connected to Merida through the constant battles of what is considered true traits of femininity and beauty (Tatar 1999). The relationship between mother and daughter is central to the narrative of Brave. It connotes strong aspects of "matriarchal mythology" (Duff 2000, p.9; Zipes 2007) and overrides the notion of "female subordination" (Giroux 1999, p.102). In the trailer and the film, women not only dominate the narrative, but also dominate the men within the narrative. Queen Elinor is in control of her family and the kingdom, forever dictating orders to her husband. Men are portrayed as dumb and emotionally unstable and this is signified when a male suitor throws a tantrum when he doesn't win the competition and is rejected by Merida; this enforces the notion of feminist humour and power over the narrative (Shifman and Lemish 2010).

The overarching theme in Brave is a battle between mother and daughter, not between a princess and her prince. Elinor is introduced to the audience by Merida as someone "who is in charge of everyday of my life". Elinor's physical appearance and language utilise connotations of a classic princess and feminine stereotypes signified by her green, well-fitted dress and her hair tied back with a plait (Brzuzy and Lind 2008). The trailer illustrates short scenes in which she continuously gets the role of a princess wrong. Through her instructions given to Merida of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of a princess, "don't place your weapon on the table, a lady doesn't stuff her gob", enforce the negative view that Merida has to perform fixed gender roles (Thornborrow and Coates 2005).

Merida juxtaposes these connotations through her physical appearance and language used in the trailer. Merida's natural attire is a long blue dress and in terms of gendered ideologies blue is resembled to be more masculine (Buikema and van der Tuin 2009). Her hair is also wild and free demonstrating her physical desire for freedom of self. When she is placed in her tight fitted suitor's dress that suppresses her feral hair. Her body language becomes stiff, signifying her awkwardness and unnaturalness in her new role as a suitor for marriage. Clothing illustrates gendered identity in which women

must perform femininity through expression and appearance, often physically suppressing the female's movement through attire (Brzuzy and Lind 2008).

Merida rebels against this notion and in reaction to her mother's orders the social codes of retaliation and disagreement (Chandler 2002) are shown through Merida falling back on her bed and exclaiming 'oh mum!' This said, while Queen Elinor's actions are enforcing the traditional traits of a princess and therefore stereotypical view of women in society, Merida's actions resemble a more post-feminist princess; further illustrating that femininity is "no longer a core value for women today'" (Gauntlett 2008, p.11). This is furthered in her assertiveness in not conforming to an arranged marriage in her expression: "I'll fight for my own hand" in which she physically and symbolically rips out of her dress that suppressed her from being her true self.

The Animation

The overarching theme of female independence (McRobbie 2009) is concurrent throughout the promotional communications and film. The false villain notion is dismissed through the film and follows a journey of self-discovery and learning of how to fix a broken bond between mother and daughter. The trailer references this through the text in the trailer "In every age, family is king and the bravest journey's are never taken alone".

Brave represents a different princess tale; it does not end with true love's kiss. As Stone (1980, p.24) states, the true meaning of a fairy tale is that, "happily ever after meaning wasn't about meeting ones prince but about finding ones self", this is true of Merida, redundant of a prince all-together. The tale represents a post-feminist text through the shift from "binary" of what femininity should be, to the "diverse" post-feminist princess where women can take the lead (Cheu 2007, p.17; Lotz 2001 cited Gill 2007). She does not conform to the dominant norms of masculinity and femininity that have been subjected to men and women through society (Butler 1999). This is shown through her independence in the theatrical poster and her rebelliousness and autonomous nature towards marriage, being a stereotypical lady and throughout the trailer. Merida is a positive role model for children; she represents different attributes that have never occurred in previous princess films. She has a voice and uses it to gain her freedom.

Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) conducted a study that found feminine beauty is a dominant theme in all Disney princess narratives; those with heavy emphasis had survived in popularity. This said, Brave was Disney Pixar collaboration, thus in terms of animation she physically resembled something different from previous princesses. Although it wasn't the most successful Pixar film, it grossed $65 million in its first weekend release (Forbes 2012). However, during Merida's transition into the princess line, Disney moulded Merida's image to resemble the other princess in the franchise, regressing her to glossy hair and a slimmer waist. From this, Change.org ranked a petition of over 200,000 signatures in which Disney had to change the princess back into her original persona. By doing this Disney eradicated everything she stood for as a princess (The Guardian 2013b). Disney however, in their next princess film transitioned back to some original notions of a Disney princess.

FROZEN: A TALE WHERE FAMILY REIGN SUPREME

Frozen (2013) is not only the latest animation to join the Disney princess line, but also the highest grossing animation picture of all time, with box office sales of $1.3billion (The Telegraph 2014). Frozen is an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's The Snow Queen, first published in 1844, which follows a young girl who embarks on a journey to

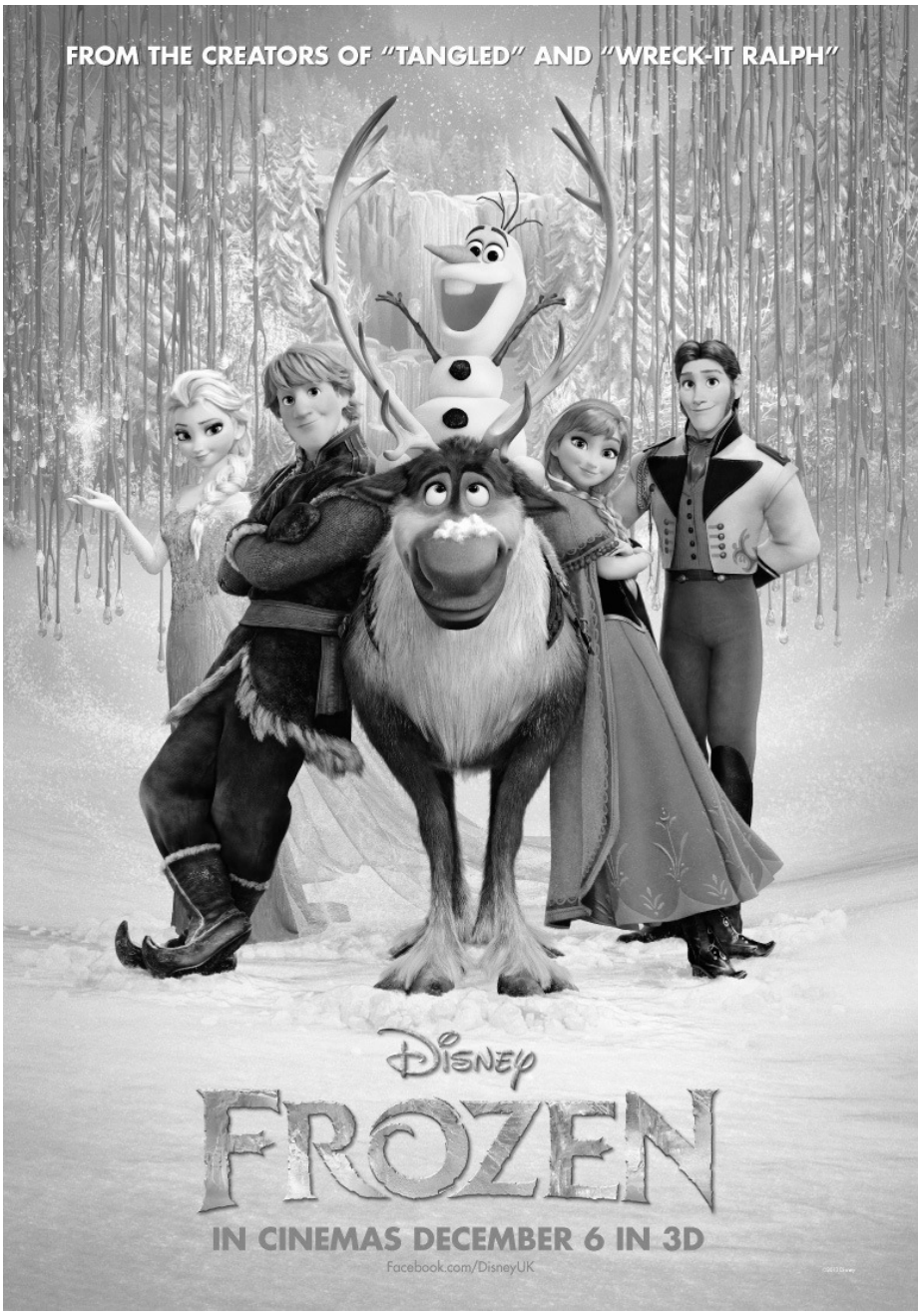
save her male friend from the Snow Queen (Andersen 2013). The Disney fairy tale adaption is a comedy adventure, featuring Anna a young naïve, but highly spirited princess and her sister Queen Elsa who battles with a strong icy power. Anna and her new founded companions Kristoff, Olaf the snowman and reindeer Sven embark on an adventure to save Arendelle from its wintery spell (IMDb 2013).

Theatrical Poster

The theatrical poster shown in figure 3 highlights the main characters in the narrative. Central to the frame, Sven and Olaf are the most predominant in the poster. Anna, on the right shares the rest of the image with Kristoff the male protagonist, who she mirrors both in the poster and in the "social codes of masculine traits" through her slouched body, arms folded and legs crossed over stance (Wood 2009, p.3). The body language indicates ideals of feminist equality (Stover 2013), again as a contemporary princess dispelling binary oppositions of gender inequality of men and women as dominant: submissive (Barley 1983; Cheu 2007). Anna is not portrayed as an object based on desirability and physicality, such as Sleeping Beauty (Stone 1975; Bell 1995). This is signified through her attire of every day clothes and not overtly regal gowns, illustrating a more relevant, realistic princess for children to relate to.

Elsa however is positioned in the background of the poster. The title of the story symbolises her powers and the fact she freezes the land and therefore a powerful character within the narrative. Yet she is mostly hidden away behind the male protagonist, therefore her body language represents a physical withdrawal from the poster, indicating a sign of submissiveness, which reinforces stereotypical ideals of femininity (Goffman 1976 cited Browne 1998). Furthermore, in gendered advertisements men are often at the forefront of the frame, representing high status and virtue, whereas women in the background represent depravity and low status (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Moreover, her physical appearance connotes physical ice and snow and this is signified in the pale blue colours of her dress and the white hair, of which almost blends into the background colours of the poster. Elsa holds power and control over each character in the narrative and this poster loses this translation and presents her as secondary.

Figure 3– Frozen Film Poster UK (IMDb, 2013)



Film Trailer

Anna is portrayed as a heroine with girl power (Gauntlett 2008); she balances both feminine and masculine traits such as compassion towards others, but also evokes independence as something that is natural and good (Stewart et al. 2003). This is shown when she saves herself and Kristoff from Wolves and in her fearlessness against the snow monster, indicating stereotypical masculine gender codes of "bravery and strength" (Rose 1992, p.15). Again this opposes the traditional ideology of the princess who waits to be saved form danger (Whelan 2012). Post-feminist humour (Shifman and Lemish 2010) is also a main device used within Frozen, the first introduction to Anna is of her waddling across the snow, her clothes literally frozen, into the warmth of a house;

she then proceeds to make a joke regarding the business of selling ice, in a land that is already covered in ice and snow. The trailer shows Anna as opinionated, driven and not needing someone to guide her through her life. This is illustrated through the speech "I know how to stop winter" which connotes post-feminist attributes of self-belief and independence (Gauntlett 2008).

She is the predominant feminine hero in the trailer, who dismisses old traits of passivity to embark on her journey to save Arendelle (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). As discussed in the previous section, Anna also surpasses the notion of a passive princess within Propp's Character Theory (1968) and emulates the roles of a hero within Propp's framework, confronting challenges and villainess creatures along the way (Stone 1975). This notion of a strong post-feminist heroine is reinforced in the questions that engage the audience in relation to main characters in the trailer "who will save they day? The ice guy, the nice guy, the snowman, or the no man?" This is again a message to illustrate that the male hero doesn't always have to save the day. Yet at the same time presumes the notion of the dominant male hero as prevalent.

However, her post-feminist attitudes are compromised in the scene in which she literally falls for prince Hans and expresses "you're gorgeous". Although she is taking the dominant role and is overtly forward with Hans, indicating female autonomy, she presents the social script that people fall in love quickly or at first sight and this is further evoked in the film (England et al. 2011). She also stumbles on her words, which indicates nerves, also utilising "a doe-eyed adulation of the male" (Duff 2000, p.253). This opposes her post-feminist actions throughout the rest of the trailer and in the film poster in which she is foregrounded and the prince is placed significantly behind her.

Frozen revolves around the relationship between two female protagonists. Extending on Propp's notion of a false hero, Elsa also resembles a false villain in the scene at the beginning of the trailer where she causes destruction over Arendelle, signifying evilness and categorising her as the villain of the tale. However, Elsa is somewhat absent in the trailer and the focus of the narrative is on the relationship between Anna and the male protagonists, Kristoff and Hans. This reinforces the ideology of males as dominant characters in both cinema and society mapping sexual differences of males as protagonists and females as submissive (De Lauretis 1984).

Kristoff, the leading protagonist in trailer, is illustrated as the helper in Anna's journey. Their relationship utilises the notion of post-feminism and gender equality (Banyard 2010). Anna saves them from danger by fighting off a pack of wolves, and jumping off the cliff to save them from the snow monster. Again perpetuating stereotypical masculine traits such as bravery (Rose 1992). Kristoff however, is illustrated as domesticated, when he begins cleaning his sleigh after Anna has dirtied it. This again utilises the shift from binary oppositions to a post-feminist ideal of equality, where both genders intertwine and can take the lead (Cheu 2007).

The Animation

The overarching post-feminist notions are not as strongly utilised in the promotional material as in the film. Anna is a girl power princess, playful, yet head strong (Genz 2009) and this is depicted in many ways through the trailer and by her stance in the poster. Frozen resembles a feminist genre of fairy tale that is a "camouflage wrapping seductive images around hard truths" (Sellers 2001, p.15). The narrative depicts strong moral messaging. Anna needs to find an act of true love to save her from dying and turns to prince Hans for true loves kiss, enforcing ideals of past princesses (Tanner et al. 2003). Rejected by prince Hans at the end of the film, to which he prevails as the villain, a twist to traditional Disney fairy tales. Turning back to the hero of the tale, Anna

dispelled stereotypical notions of the princess narrative and "performed the final rescue, without the involvement of a prince" (England et al. 2011). Anna saves her sisters life, by sacrificing her own, eradicating sexist ideals in many ways, such as true loves kiss does not always save the day, but acts of trust, selfless love and family reign supreme. These are harsh lessons for children to learn; yet it propels the positive post-feminist message of empowerment (McRobbie 2009), illustrating the importance of finding oneself and not through a prince (Stone 1980).

However, the strong powerful moral message of the fairy tale is questioned through Anna and her love for Hans. A potential reading of the theatricality of the scene in which they sing a love song is almost satirical of the traditional role of a Disney princesses and women in society (Dines 2001). Even Kristoff pokes fun at the idea that Anna is marrying someone she only just met. Anna is a complex character, naïve as the traditional princesses, yet headstrong in a dangerous world. Although this concept is eradicated when Hans becomes the villain, the overall journey still ends in romance giving off strong mixed messages to the powerful climax of the rescue. In the climaxing scenes Elsa becomes redundant from the narrative and the fairy tale still ends in true loves kiss. Albeit, the notion of true love's kiss changes to finding the "right prince" (Stover 2013, p.4), but it still instills the Disney's resolution of romantic love (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Do Rozario 2004), which is also the underlying focus of the trailer.

CONCLUSION

Disney has attempted to repackage the princesses to meet the social conventions of women in the Twenty First Century and there is a lot to celebrate about these new heroines. They are complex characters with a variety of traits, a departure from the historical princesses of the past. No longer an object of servitude or a "heroine of life who has no story" (Tatar 1999, p.293), they have their own agenda, dreams or quests that differ from the traditional princess, finding a man and winning him over with their beauty (Bell 1995). Furthermore, in terms of gendered roles each female protagonist extends the role of princess within the terms of Propp's (1968) stock characters and heroines.

Anna and Rapunzel are both packaged to represent feminist equality (Stover 2013) through the theatrical posters. Rapunzel holds dominance over other protagonists and Anna mirrors her male counterpart dispelling binary gender oppositions (Cheu 2007). In the trailer, the princesses are humorous, opinionated and headstrong individuals (Shifman and Lemish 2010). They have set goals and dreams and embark on their own adventures.

Although the contemporary princesses have surpassed many of the stereotypical gender ideologies of the traditional princesses, there are still similarities that are dominant in the narrative. This is mostly shown in the trailer, which juxtaposes the post-feminist repackaging of the princesses. Rapunzel's story is told through a male narrator, who dominates the majority of the scenes, leaving her subordinate in the tale of her own journey. The Frozen trailer also focuses on a love triangle between Anna, Kristoff and Hans thus perpetuating the social script of love at first sight (England et al 2011). Disney allows the princesses to skim the surfaces of post-femininity, giving them enough heroic power to save the day and embark on their own dreams, then swiftly subjects them to the traditional resolution of romantic love and true loves kiss (Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Do Rozario 2004).

Moreover, Elsa who is most similar to Merida is powerful and dominates the narrative within the film. However, the way in which she is packaged in the trailer and

poster makes her totally redundant of the strong narrative. Consequently, the differences shown between the initial marketing communications and the films do not convey the post-feminist ideals (Genz 2009) that are overtly prominent within each princess narrative. The marketing promotions do not reflect the repackaged ideals shown in "I am princess" campaign, they become blurred and romanticised notions of the strong female messaging evident within the films. Therefore, the ways in which the princesses are being repackaged and marketed to its audience are not truly post-feminist.

Additionally, there has been significant evidence to illustrate the existence of feminist fairy tales (Haase 2004). However, it is questionable whether Disney would utilise these tales in their princess narrative structure. Brave is the closest resemblance to a feminist fairy tale and the only contemporary princess to be truly communicated as a post-feminist princess. Merida violates every notion of a traditional princess and her strength as a post-feminist heroine is significantly marketed to the audience through the theatrical poster and film. Disney empowered Merida by giving her the lead in her own narrative, as well as dominance in the poster, which celebrates freedom of oppression and liberation of women (Gill 2007; Genz 2009). She emulates the post-feminist traits illustrated through the "I am Princess" initiative such as bravery and courage. The end of her journey is her freedom and equality in life to be a fully autonomous individual, who isn't subjected to gendered ideals of man and women, subject: object, husband and wife (Barley 1983).

Yet when Disney regressed the princess and moulded her to fit in line with Disney, it demonstrates the overtly gendered ideologies of beauty that Disney still enforces onto its princesses and its audience. Merida resonated with her post-feminist audience and this is mirrored through the petition to change her refigured animation back to its original (The Guardian 2013b). Brave is a different princess, yet may never be seen again and this proposes questionable outcomes of what she symbolises as a role model. Being empowered and independent is a good thing, yet forever an outcast within the princess ideology. As the discussion of fourth-wave feminism is apparent (The Guardian 2013a), as well as the irregularity surrounding the notion of post-femininity, it is hard to decipher to what extent the princesses are post-feminist, as the unrealistic perceptions of women are still somewhat evident within the media landscape (Byerly and Ross 2006). This challenges the notion of an era of gendered equality (Gauntlett 2008) and also indicates that Disney still perpetuates societies "expected norms of behaviour for females" (Reid-Walsh and Mitchell 2008, p.279). It is therefore interesting to see whether Disney's next princess will meet the convictions of fourth-wave feminism.

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