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'A Princess Strives for Perfection'. Modelization of Women in Disney Movies from *The Little Mermaid* to *Brave*

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ABSTRACT

The modelization of women in what is known as Disney "Princesses" movies has changed notably since the creation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937 until nowadays. While at the beginning the role of female characters was linked to housework and marriage, this stereotype changed gradually ending up with the production of Disney "Princesses" movies in which the heroines are depicted as active women who take control of their lives without the need of a man for a happy ending. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the changes in the modelization of women in Disney "Princess" movies through the analysis of gender archetypes and, specifically, through the analysis of the *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Brave* (2012). These two movies represent a change in the portrayal of women since they break with the tradition depicted in previous movies and introduce a renewed image far from the typical "Princess" gender archetypes.

Keywords: Disney Princesses, Women, Heroines, Modelization, Archetypes, Tradition.

RESUMEN

La modelización de la mujer en las películas de "Princesas" Disney ha cambiado notablemente desde la creación de *Blancanieves y los Siete Enanitos* en 1937 hasta nuestros días. Mientras que al principio el rol de la mujer estaba unido al trabajo doméstico y al matrimonio, este ha ido cambiando gradualmente hasta la producción de películas de Disney "Princesas" en las que las heroínas se presentan de manera activa, tomando el control sobre sus vidas y sin la necesidad de un hombre para sus finales felices. El objetivo de esta disertación es investigar los cambios en los arquetipos de género en las películas de "Princesas" Disney y, específicamente, en el análisis de *La Sirenita* (1989) y *Brave: Indomable* (2012). Ambas simbolizan un cambio en la representación de la mujer ya que rompen con la tradición de las películas anteriores presentando una imagen renovada lejos de los tradicionales arquetipos de género de las "Princesas."

Palabras clave: Princesas Disney, Mujeres, Heroínas, Modelización, Arquetipos, Tradición.

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0. Introduction

Disney Princess Line is one of the most influential merchandise companies in the United States, which includes anything from dolls to costumes. This line provides children the opportunity of acting like the role models that are represented through their movies. For instance, in the Official Disney Princess Website, users can choose one "Princess" and watch an introductory video where it is explained why girls dream about becoming a "Princess", ending with the quotation: "for every girl who dreams big, there is a princess to show her it is possible: dream big Princess." In these videos, the roles of "Princesses" are shown, in a positive and even aspirational way, with the absence of the most traditional heroines.

The first Disney "Princess" created is *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937, which is also the first animated feature-length movie released. Despite of being successful, it shows the most sexist stereotypes of women presented in a Disney "Princess" movie. Particularly, Snow White is depicted as a submissive woman who waits passively to be rescued by a Prince Charming to marry him. However, since then, many changes have occurred in the modelization of women in Disney "Princesses" movies, which I will look at when I analyze the archetypical roles of women repeated over decades. I will be focusing on analyzing *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Brave* (2012) which were the two movies that created a new category and broke with the previous tradition of "Princesses."

For this dissertation, I planned to study the typical roles that represented women during the twentieth century and its evolution until our days. Roles of women have also changed in real life, through the three waves of feminism in which women have obtained more rights. As we shall see throughout this dissertation, I analyze how these roles developed towards a sphere in which the negative archetypes that defined women started to disappear by creating figures of independent women who took control of their own lives.

For the analysis of the roles that represented "Princesses" in most of the movies, I use the Adela Turin's work *Los cuentos siguen contando: algunas reflexiones sobre los estereotipos* in which the author provides a description of the roles that represented women

in tales wrote in Spain and France during the twentieth century. These roles coincide with the archetypes presented in Disney "Princess" movies too, particularly in the earliest productions. For the classification of the heroines, I base on Juliana Garabedian's research "Animating Gender Roles: How Disney is Redefining the Modern Princess" in which she lists the movies according to the role of the "Princesses." Three of the categories presented by Adessa Towbin et al. in their article "Images of Gender, Race, Age, and Sexual Orientation in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films" provide me a theoretical frame to differentiate the categories of "Princesses" that I present in this dissertation. Additionally, I use Amy M. Davis' work *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation* to obtain background and ideas that complemented this thesis.

In this dissertation, I analyze thirteen "Princess" movies. The reasons why I have chosen these movies are, firstly, because I thought that all of them were part of the Official Disney Princess list. After visiting the Official Disney Princess Webpage, I discovered that *Frozen* (2013) and *Moana* (2016), the most recent movies, were not on the list. Nonetheless, I decide to include them in my dissertation, because they present positive images of women that contrast with the typical image of traditional "Princesses" shown among the earliest movies. Furthermore, as I reference to the whole group as Disney "Princesses," despite not all of them being officially part of the group, I am going to use inverted commas for this term. All the movies that I have analyzed are presented in an appendix, with the names of their corresponding heroines and "Princes."

The title chosen for this dissertation uses a quotation from *Brave* "a princess strives for perfection" (*Brave* 00:06:40 - 00:06:47) that is told by Merida's mother, Elinor, when she explains to her daughter the meaning of being a princess. Still, Merida objects to it and demonstrates that she does not fit in this tradition. Symbolically, she opens the door to the last generation of "Princesses" in which women are independent and do not need to marry.

The division of this dissertation is structured in four main parts. First of all, in the first chapter (Ch.1), I introduce the history of animation and the creation of Walt Disney's Studio, providing an overview of Disney nowadays. After that, I present the history of the

three waves of feminism comparing it with the changes in the modelization of women in Disney. In the following chapter (Ch.2), I provide an analysis of the different stereotypes of women presented in Disney "Princess" movies, and the duality between good and bad women. The next chapter (Ch.3) consists of the classification of the thirteen Disney "Princess" movies in three different categories from passive to more active roles with an explanation on what makes them different and how they follow the different aspects of the archetypes that represent women. Lastly, in the fourth chapter (Ch.4), the movies *The Little Mermaid* and *Brave* are analyzed, setting out the differences between them and the previous movies, and comparing them in detail following the same classification used in chapter three (Ch.3).

1. The world of Disney Movies and the real world

The history of animation movies dates back to 1902 when the short film *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* by James Stuart Blackton was released. He is considered the father of animation movies due to the fact that he revolutionized the industry of this field using picture film for the first time, instead of a band with drawings projected in a praxinoscope as it used to be (Duran 12). From that point on, the process of animation in moviemaking has experienced several changes since the creation of Walt Disney's Studio, or Disney Brothers studio as it was called then, in Los Angeles in 1924 (Davis 39).

Nevertheless, it was not until 1935 when Disney decided that it was the perfect moment to create the first animated feature-length film in history, due to the fact that the company had earned enough money by those times (Duran 26). Since the creation of the studio until then, Disney had already released several short series such as *Alice's Wonderland*, that was the very first Disney series created during the 1920's; *Silly Symphonies*, also created during the 1920's; *Three Little Pigs*, during the 1930's; and the most remarkable Disney character, *Mickey Mouse* in 1928 (Duran 26-25).

Disney's project of creating the first animated feature-length movie seemed to be a gamble, or a risk because it was difficult to know whether the audience was ready for this type of movies and, above all, whether the audience was ready to enjoy them (Davis 89). Some comments criticized the project calling it "Disney's folly" but the truth is that its enterprise meant a change in the perception of cartoons, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (from now on *Snow White*)*,* released in 1937, was the highest-grossing movie of that year and it even received an Oscar (Duran 26-27). From there on, Disney has changed the world of animation movies, and other companies are going to follow its footsteps. However, Disney's revenues did not only come from films, but also from merchandising such as dolls, linen and different items related to the first Disney "Princess" (Davis 90).

After the great success of *Snow White*, the company decided to invest their benefits in new projects (Davis 90). However, the following Disney animation movies were not as acclaimed as *Snow White* owing to the beginning of the World War II (Duran 27-28). On the other hand, during the War, Disney made propaganda and short movies to support the war cause (Watts 103). During the fifties, Disney launched new movies that became classics of the animation world, for instance *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) or *Peter Pan* (1953), plus the introduction of new animated moviemaking techniques that allowed the company to earn large sums of money (Duran 29-30). Several years after Walt Disney's death in 1966, the film *The Little Mermaid* (1989) stood out showing how the studios returned to their former glory (Duran 33).

Moreover, Walt Disney's Company moved into the world of Hollywood films producing *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) and *Pretty Woman* (1990) among others. In addition, during the 1980s, Disney opened its first TV channel and nowadays, the company owns several businesses such as different magazines, musicals, video games, cruise lines, theme parks, toys, clothes, and electronics between others (Krapfenbauer 30-31). In relation to merchandising lines, it was not until 2001 when the Disney Princess Line was created (England 155).

Currently, Disney Princess Line, as explained on the website Disney Consumer Products and Interactive Media, "celebrates the dreams and magical adventures of the heroines from Disney's timeless tales" emphasizing that all children have their goals and that "there's a Disney Princess to help inspire them and show them it's possible." This statement indicates how Disney "Princess" Line establishes role models that are followed by children. Each of them has her unique personality, her own dreams and objectives while children choose one as their favorite to imitate. The Official Disney Princess Website publishes an official list with the "Princess" models that Disney presents to its audience. On the other hand, not all the feminine protagonists are included on this list, as it excludes the heroines in *Frozen* (2013), and *Moana* (2016). Leon Lazaroff clarifies that in the case of *Frozen*, there is a franchise just for this movie and it is one of the highest grossing franchises. *Moana* has also its own merchandise line, as it can be seen in Disney Store Website. However, the main characters of these movies portray a positive role of women that resembles the ideals depicted in *Brave*, whose protagonist is the last incorporation of the Official Disney "Princess" list.

Concerning the representation of women during the second half of the twentieth century, Molly Haskell enumerates the classical roles of the times or, "the great women roles" as she puts forward the idea that they that consisted of "whores, quasi-whores, jilted mistresses, emotional cripples, drunks. Daffy ingénues, Lolitas, kooks, sex-starved spinsters, psychotic Icebergs, zombies and ball breakers" (qtd. in Dix 234). Briefly, these stereotypes were repeated in movies of the second half of the twentieth century, becoming archetypes which consist of developed stereotypes with new elements that have become a cultural factor kept among generations (Cawelti, qtd. in Seiter 23). Furthermore, some of these archetypes of women were depicted in Disney to some extent, by means of good passive women who were sweet, emotional and asexual, or bad women who were assertive, intelligent and erotic (Davis 124).

Moreover, archetypes portrayed in American cinema during the twentieth century tended to influence the audience by the ideas portrayed in the movies. Some Disney audiences protected the archetypes of women depicted in the plots transforming these

messages into a metonym of America described as the "happiest place on Earth" (Giroux 98). Henry A. Giroux argues that Disney transformed real life into fantasy, and that children absorbed the messages that the movies conveyed (Giroux 99).

Taking into account the history of feminism in the United States, the twentieth century was crucial for women's rights. The society started to move towards equality in different spheres, and the representation of women in cinema was one of them. In the case of Disney, equality has not appeared simultaneously with the three waves of feminism. Nevertheless, there are three different categories distinguished regarding the image of women portrayed by Disney.

To begin with, while Disney "Princess" movies between 1937 and 1957 depicted an image of passive naïve women under the role of homemakers (Garabedian 23), the first wave of feminism was on its last phase. The previous remarkable events of the nineteenth century such as the Seneca Falls Declaration in 1848, or the Right to Vote in 1921 (Rampton) could not easily change the image of women in Disney. During the last phase of the first wave, while women were accused of acting "unladylike" participating in demonstrations or strikes (Rampton), Disney was presenting an image of beautiful naïve "Princesses." For example in *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *Cinderella* (1950), the heroines dreamt of a charming prince who would find them and save them. However, in American society from the thirties until the sixties, despite the achievements of the first wave, there were stereotypes like those shown in Disney. Amy M. Davis points out the way in which women were seen as housewives and mothers who had to be beautiful, wear fashionable clothes and fit into the confines that society had established for them (117).

From the seventies onwards, Disney started to portray a different image of the "Princesses" where the protagonists did not "sit passively pining for her lover to find and rescue her" (Davis 160). The new women wanted adventures and, to break the rules as *The Little Mermaid* (1989) did with her father. Nonetheless, at the end of these movies, women end up with a man. This is precisely the moment when the second wave of feminism asked for leadership roles, for abortion or contraceptive methods (Rampton). Groups such as the

Redstockings or the bra-burners fought for the liberation of oppressive feminine elements, throwing make-up away or burning bras (Rampton). During the seventies, women workers were around 47%, while in the forties they were around 25% (Davis 162). However, between 1989 and 1998, the roles shown in Disney "Princess" movies fell into bourgeois feminism which depicted stereotyped elements such as how important it was to be beautiful, to find a man, and to be loyal to your family (Davis 179).

The third wave of feminism started during the nineties and it asked for universal womanhood and inclusiveness. From this point on, women defended their beauty for themselves, and not as sexualized objects (Rampton). This only started to be reflected in Disney from the beginning of the twenty-first century onwards when Disney "Princesses" were less complimented for their beauty, did not fall in love as easily as the previous ones, or did not even find a "Prince." Additionally, in the case of the "Princesses" in *Brave* (2012)*, Frozen* (2013)*,* and *Moana* (2016), love was not the main plot and they presented strong statements such as Elsa telling to her sister Anna "you can't marry a man you just met" (*Frozen* 00:26:37), or Merida fighting for not being controlled. These declarations broke the tradition of needing a man for a happy ending in Disney "Princess" movies demonstrating that alternative endings in which women play leadership roles were possible (Garabedian 24).

In the following sections of this dissertation, a comparison of the roles of women in Disney "Princesses" movies will be used to illustrate the changes, by analyzing the two movies which broke with the tradition of their times, which were *The Little Mermaid* and *Brave.* Their protagonists opened the door to a new category showing new roles of women that were revolutionary for those times.

2. Women in Disney "Princess" movies

In the earliest Disney "Princess" movies, there is a clear difference between the good woman who is the princess, and the bad one, who is the evil stepmother or witch. This duality of good and evil however is not just found in Disney but relates back to much earlier representations of women. In particular this duality resembles the two biblical images of women, Eve and Virgin Mary. These two figures represent the two opposing depictions of women as either perfect and good or evil. On the one hand, Eve is guilty of having opened the doors of sin representing temptation for having induced Adam to eat the Forbidden Fruit, while daring to disobey God. On the other hand, Virgin Mary has never committed any sin. She is passive, assuming God decisions and acting as an intermediary between Heaven and Earth (Allen 396). In *The Bible*, then Eve's active role is linked to her representation as evil and the Virgin Mary's passiveness is related to her goodness. This duality of good and evil is shown in Hollywood films up until the twentieth century and was present in many other spheres of society where the woman is presented as one of two extremes: good and passive or evil and active.

Specifically, in the world of cinema, there is a genre known as "women's films" which is constituted by movies whose audience is mostly female, as it occurs in Disney (Davis 123). Within this genre, there is a subgenre known as "female double film" in which two women have a confronted relationship, one of them good while the other is bad (Davis 124). Namely, *Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Little Mermaid* and *Tangled* (2010) depict this duality to some extent because they present images of the good princess and the evil woman. For example, in *Snow White*, the protagonist is a young girl who apart of being beautiful is obedient and likes to do housework. She wants to be found by a Prince, to marry him. On the other hand, her stepmother envies her beauty. She has knowledge about magic and deceives her stepdaughter by using her cunning. The image of Mary is connected to the one of *Snow White* since they share their passivity and goodness, while the image of Eve is connected to the stepmother's power over magic.

In Disney studios, between 1937 and 1967, the period that Davis names the "Classic Years", Walt Disney classified his audience in female versus male instead of using other

classifications such as "race, age or education levels", as Davis proposes (130). Furthermore, Davis highlights how Walt Disney had the idea that women were good or bad, a "dual nature" (131). Likewise, Walt Disney's love relationships were limited to only two, his first love who got married to another man while Walt Disney was in France, and his wife (Davis 111). These facts may have influenced his view of women as good or bad, which contributed to the image portrayed in his movies during the "Classic Years."

Furthermore, the classification of women's roles between good and bad goes beyond Disney "Princess" movies coinciding with the representation of gender roles in children's tales. In fact, Adela Turin in *Los cuentos siguen contanto: algunas reflexiones sobre los estereotipos* analyzes different children's stories written in France and Spain from the thirties to the sixties taking into account the roles that represented women and men. The author suggests that the stereotypes in children's stories have a significant bad influence on young girls (7-9). Turin illustrates it with an example of a girl from the United States who declared that she could not become a doctor because in her book it was said that she could only become a nurse (7-9). In respect to Disney, from *Snow White* to *Moana* several female roles have developed which move slightly away from stereotypes while other roles remain similar.

To begin with, the first role Turin describes is that of girls as victims of hope living isolated (47). It consists of girls who live imprisoned inside their own houses because they were educated to be submissive. Yet they dream of a better life. As a matter of fact, all Disney "Princesses" live isolated somehow by a physical barrier (*Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Aladdin* (1992), and *Tangled*) or by the conditions established by their society or family (*The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), *Brave, Frozen,* and *Moana*).

The second role of girls presented by Turin is that of passive girls who do housework and mostly waiting to be rescued (47-48). Specifically, "Princesses" from 1937 to 1959 show this image (*Snow White, Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*) having in common that the protagonists have a miserable life ruled by their stepmothers or fear of the villain of

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the story and, to reach freedom, they do nothing except dream about being saved by their "charming prince." They also fit the Virgin Mary image because most of the protagonists are, good women who are passive, sweet, emotional and asexual (Davis 125). However, this representation of women changes in later movies, where women are presented as trying to escape or use magic to be saved, or even "Princesses" who do not have a miserable life such as: *Mulan,* who wants to be honored by her family; *Pocahontas,* who wants to stop the war; *The Princess and the Frog,* whose protagonist has a job with the objective of obtaining enough money to fulfill her dreams; and the "Princesses" in *Brave, Frozen,* or *Moana* who want to be listened to and understood by her communities, and who fights for it.

Moreover, Turin gives weight to the image of the mother pointing out: "la madre de las niñas es una 'madre –preceptora', una educadora a menudo represiva" (28). On the other hand, David represents the image of stepmother that appears in *Snow White, Cinderella* and *Tangled* as a "destructive-mother" (103). Both "tutor-mother" and "destructive-mother" have in common the function of showing their daughters what is right and what is wrong. As Davis argues, the "destructive-mother" "oppresses the girl and keeps her for finding love" at the same time that she tries to push her daughter into a career by somehow blocking love (Davis 103). After all love is the most powerful dream of *Snow White* and *Cinderella.* It is also the dream of Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* and Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, who do not have a stepmother, but instead have an evil enemy who impedes love. In addition, all these evil women are strong and make the "Princesses" obey them by intimidation. As Davis discusses, the idea of the "destructive-mother" depicts the mother-daughter relationship that occurs during the teenage years (108). The author observes that during these years, the concept of mother splits in a kind of duality in which there is "the 'good' mother (whose biological relationship to the daughter is maintained) and the 'bad' mother, who is distanced, typically, from the heroine by making her a stepmother" (Davis 108). Specifically, this image is portrayed in *Tangled* when Rapunzel decides to run away with Flynn:

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. That's okay, what she doesn't know won't kill her, right? Oh 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. Wahoo! Best day ever! (*Tangled* 00:32:02 -00:32:39).

Rapunzel has an episode of ups and downs when thinking about what her mother would think when she discovers that her daughter has run away from the tower.

In reference to wicked stepmothers or witches, they tend to be represented as thin and tall, with the exception of Ursula who lately follows the same pattern. Nevertheless, wicked characters are usually ugly, and this is shown through the proportion of their face with exaggerated elements such as a pointed nose, and imperfections such as expression lines and warts. By comparison, "Princesses" are always portrayed beautiful without any imperfections. Wicked women are associated with the image of Eve since they introduce evil in the plot and they are very canny. Moreover, these women are either widowed or single, to some extent they represent an image of "sexually frustrated women" that, by contrast, is not shown in single male characters (Davis 217). Wicked women do not have couples, whereas in the movies where the duality between good and evil women is presented, the "Princesses" end up married.

Furthermore, Turin presents the image of "fantastic" mother, the one who is always happy and willing to do anything she is asked to do (25). In other words, the "fantastic" mother is a passive woman who is subordinated to her husband like the Virgin Mary. There is only one in Disney "Princess" movies: Aurora's mother, whose role is to be sat next to the king, supporting him, and even she only has one line in the whole movie. In the case of the heroines in *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Aladdin*, their mothers are completely absent during the film. In the case of *Pocahontas*, her mother died, and the mother of Elsa and Anna died too.

Besides mother and girls, grandmothers are also relevant characters when they appear in a Disney "Princess" Movie. For Turin, this character tends to appear as an old lady with white hair who is marginalized in the family (36). In particular, *Pocahontas, Mulan,* and *Moana* are the only "Princesses" who have a grandmother. Pocahontas'

grandmother is reincarnated in a weeping willow and only the heroine and John Smith talk to her. With reference to Mulan's grandmother, she is very traditional and has a connection with her ancestors as well as being clumsy. Regarding Moana's grandmother, she is very wise and knows everything about myths, stories, and supernatural elements of the Motunui Island. The three grandmothers have a strong connection with their granddaughters. Additionally, due to the fact that they are too wise to be considered part of the family, they end up marginalized. The wisdom of grandmothers is encompassed by the image of Eve.

In contrast, more varied roles represent men in these movies. As Turin illustrates, male roles are infinite in children's tales (39). However, they used to be cold and did not show their feelings (Turin 41). In Disney "Princess" films, according to Ana-Maria Krapfenbauer's classification, one role is that of men who "die very early in the film" as is the case with the fathers in *Cinderella*, *The Princess and the Frog*, and *Frozen*. Another role according to Krapfenbauer, is of men who are "clumsy, idiotic and behave like children themselves", as the fathers of the heroines in *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *Brave* are. The third role Krapfenbauer identifies is that of "proud […] loving fathers, [who] cannot communicate properly with their children and drive them away", as seen in the fathers of Ariel, *Mulan*, *Pocahontas*, and *Moana*. Finally Krapfenbauer identifies the role of men who are "powerless to help and protect", which Rapunzel's father is an example of (58). What is more, according to my figures, fathers appear in 12 out of 13 movies, contrasting with mothers who appear 9 out of 13 times (counting stepmothers as mothers).

3. The evolution of the concept of "Princess"

Meredith Viguet on DeviantArt created a guide on how to draw a Disney girl in which she gave a very accurate description of the physical appearance of the heroines comparing the body of a real woman to Jasmine's body, reaching the conclusion that all Disney heroines until 2010 look similar, with a slight variation. Some of the characteristics described by Viguet were: bigger heads to look childish, tiny waists, no hips, no muscles, medium-sized bust and long legs. Viguet's definition coincides with S. Chyng's argument, where the author asserts that "female characters are portrayed as overly sexual; they typically have unnaturally small waists, large breasts, big eyes, and batting eyelashes" (qtd. in Towbin et al. 35-36). Nevertheless, the image of the Disney "Princesses" changes after *Tangled* with the creation of "Princesses" with a more age-accurate body with shorter limbs, smaller bust, but being still extremely thin. Indeed, the only "Princess" who is portrayed with the measures that resemble the average of a teenager' body is *Moana* in 2016, who has been criticized for not being as thin as her counterparts (Brook). In particular, one former Disney World worker who interpreted Belle illustrated how if one of the actresses had an acne breakout or their arms became chubby, she would be fired for not being perfect (Ruiz).

One modern approach to Disney "Princesses" is presented by one of the characters in *Moana*, Maui the Demigod, who pointed up that "if you wear a dress and you have an animal sidekick, you're a princess" (*Moana* 00:52:13-00:52:17). According to this approach, *Mulan* who is neither descendant of a royal family nor marries a prince is considered a Disney "Princess." Kristen Page-Kirby puts forward that "'Princess' has just been shorthand for 'girl at the center of movie" making wider the concept of "Princesses." In regards to animal sidekicks, they are an element that all Disney princesses share. There is a huge development, from forest animals such as birds, rabbits, squirrels or fawns during the earliest movies, to horses or tigers. Sidekicks are not always animals, sometimes they are objects personified, as Olaf the snowman in *Frozen*. Caitlin Joanne Saladino focuses on "Princesses' pets" and highlights that the sidekicks serve as relief, companionship and even therapists (20). Comparing men's sidekicks in the same movies, "Princes" do not have any

pets, or if they do it is a horse, with the exception of *Aladdin*, who has a monkey as a sidekick, while Jasmine has a tiger. Differences between animals linked to women and men have been seen for centuries, for example, in Anglo-Saxon England, men were buried with high-status animals such as horses or dogs, in contrast to women, who were buried with boar's teeth (Leyser 7).

Together with the physical appearance and the presence of sidekicks, in Disney "Princess" movies there are other elements that have been repeated or developed in "Princess" movies. Mia Adessa Towbin et al. shed light on four topics that are portrayed in Disney movies: women's appearance is valued more that their intellect, women are helpless and in need of protection, women are domestic and likely to marry, and overweight women are ugly, unpleasant, and unmarried (30). This analysis will provide the theoretical frame for the classification of the heroines, excluding the last topic about overweight women due to the fact that villains were already described in the previous chapter (Ch.2).

The differences between the heroines are divided by Juliana Garabedian, providing different categories, according to the roles the "Princesses" have in common, highlighting the differences between each category (23) while Joan Nyh describes the differences between each movie. Using these data, the following classification is comprised of three groups:

- The first group is formed by the earliest "Princess" movies, which are *Snow White, Cinderella,* and *Sleeping Beauty*. These movies all have protagonists who are "passive fairy tale princesses" (Nyh 19).
- The second group is formed by the movies *The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Pocahontas, Mulan, The Princess and the Frog,* and *Tangled.* All of the "Princesses" in these films save their princes at some point in the plot (Nyh 21). These "Princesses" also yearn to discover and explore beyond the world around them, but the fulfillment of their dreams depends on a man.
- The last category contains movies in where love is not the main issue of the plot (Nyh 26). The movies are *Brave, Frozen,* and *Moana*.

To begin with, in the first group of "Princesses", beauty is one of the important factors and their intellect is almost not valued. For instance, *Snow White'*s stepmother wants to kill her because the magic mirror stated that her stepdaughter was "the fairest in the land" (Towbin et al. 30). In the case of *Cinderella*, her stepmother and stepsisters are jealous of her beauty and humiliate her forcing her to do the housework as if she was their maid (Davis 101). With regard to Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, the first gift provided when she was born was beauty (Towbin et al. 30). In short, these "Princesses" are complimented 55% of the time for their appearance compared to 11% for their skills (Guo). Moreover, these stories have been adapted into American society changing their characters into the stereotypes of white, suburban, middle-class, and heterosexual women (Giroux 133). For example, Davis highlights the parallelism of the dresses of these "Princesses" with the ones of "Grace Kelly" or "Christian Dior" (101).

The "Princesses" of the first group need protection by being saved by a man in order to escape from their miserable lives. For instance, in *Snow White,* the dwarfs are the ones in charge of getting rid of the wicked witch, while the "Princess" is woken up by a Prince's kiss. *Cinderella* is saved for being a maid by being found by the prince. Aurora is woken up by a Prince's kiss too. In other words, men are portrayed as true heroes, because they save the "Princesses" from their horrible lives. The stories of this group coincide with "Propp's thirty-one functions of a fairy-tale", in which Sarah Wilde points out that there is always "a villain, hero, princess or prize" (136). In these movies, the "villain" is the wicked witch or stepmother, the "hero" is the "Prince" who saves the "Princess" from her life of misery, and the "Princess" is also the "prize" since she ends up marrying the "hero" who has saved her before.

With reference to marriage and housework, in the first group, the romantic plot is the most important issue. Nevertheless, the role of these "Princesses" creates a stereotype that, as Wilde argues, fosters the "negative ideology of femininity as nothing more than submissive to all masculine rule" (136). Krapfenbauer remarks that Disney "Princess" movies from 1937 till 1959 are based on Victorian tales, showing images of women "submissive, self-denying, modest, childlike, innocent, industrious, maternal, and angelic"

(35). In short, the image depicted by Disney "Princess" is that of being subordinated to men and being good girls, resembling the image of goodness of Virgin Mary. Furthermore, it is common that in this group men exchange few words with women, or they do not even talk to each other, to make the "Princesses" fall in love with them. On the subject of housework, "Princesses" carry out domestic work happily as Krapfenbauer explains looking back over the song *Snow White* sings at the beginning (54): "I'm wishing, for the one I love, to find me today. I'm hoping, and dreaming, of the nice things he'll say" (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* 00:04:48 - 00:05:14). She sings it together with her friends, the birdies, while she is cleaning the backyard of her stepmother's house. As *Snow White's* friends, the sidekicks of this group of "Princesses" are all the "cute" animals from the forest such as birdies, butterflies, fawns, little mice or bunnies which emphasize the fragility of the "Princesses", contrasting with their men who ride horses.

Continuing with the second group of "Princesses", Disney incorporated legends of different ethnic groups and stories based on reality that differs from the classic fairy-tales. Yet the most remarkable change is that, just at the beginning of the plot, the main issue is not marriage or love. Rebellious women start to appear such as Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* who does not follow her father's rules, Jasmine in *Aladdin* who argues against her father's rules which force her to get married by telling him: "I am not a prize to be won" (Aladdin 00:51:18-00:51:24), or Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* who does not believe in dreams coming out of the sudden and works hard for fulfilling her aspirations. Nevertheless, all these movies end up with the "princess-needs-prince plot" (Garabedian 23) in which men become a key element for helping the "Princesses" to make their dreams come true.

On the topic of with physical appearance, it starts to be less valued in "Princesses" from 1995 onwards presenting a gap between them and the "Princesses" from 1989 to 1992 as it can be seen in figure 1. From *The Little Mermaid* who receives a 28% of compliments related to her skills and 44% related to her looks, to Rapunzel in *Tangled* who receives 45% of compliments by her skills and 27% by her looks. The turning point came with the release of *Pocahontas* (1995).
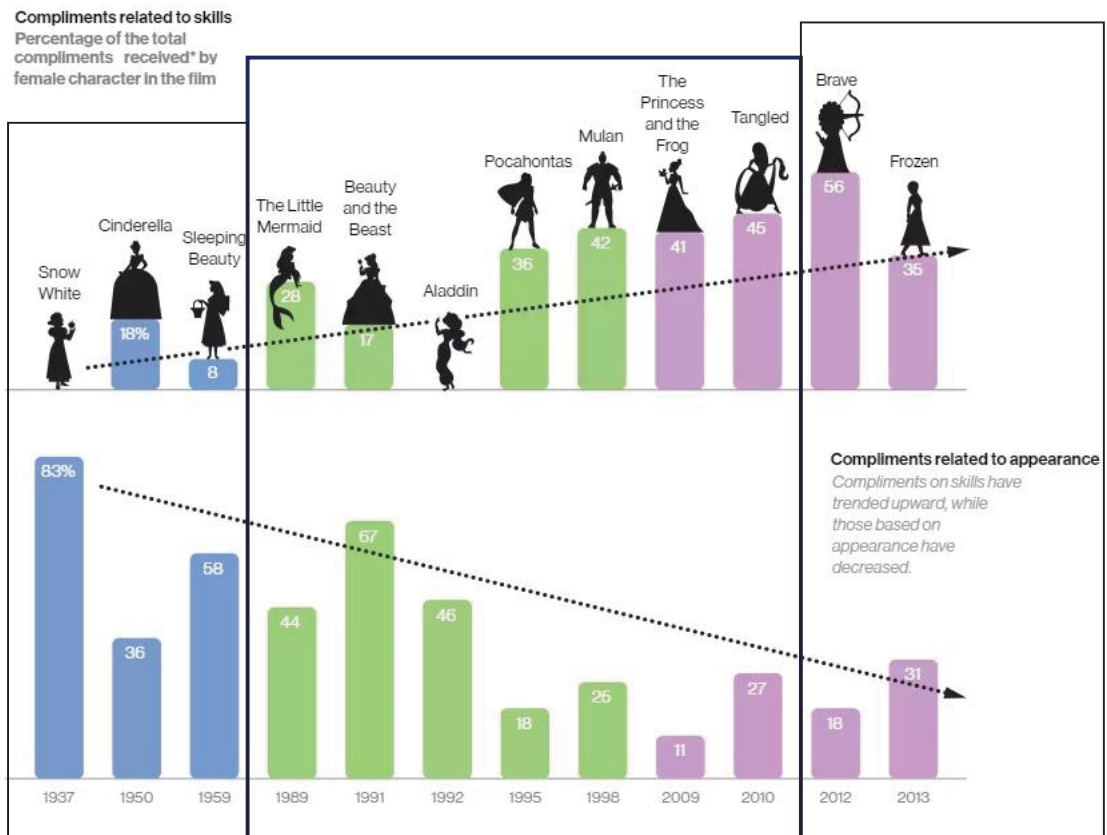
Fig. 1. Compliments to Disney "Princesses" by Álvaro Valiño and Kelsey Nowakowski; "For Princesses, the Question Remains: Who's the Fairest?" http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/01/explore-disney-princess-ability-versus-beauty/

An example of how the "Princesses'" looks were regarded more highly than their skills until *Pocahontas* is found in the songs. For example, Ursula sings to Ariel:

> You'll have your looks, your pretty face. And don't underestimate the importance of body language, ha! The men up there don't like a lot of blabber. They think a girl who gossips is a bore. Yet on land, it's much preferred for ladies not to say a word. And after all, dear, what is idle babble for? Come on, they're not all that impressed with conversation. True gentlemen avoid it when they can. (*The Little Mermaid* 00:42:51-00:43:19)

A similar situation occurs when Belle is going to the town center to run errands while she is reading a book. People criticize her because a beautiful woman does not need knowledge:

"Now it's no wonder that her name means beauty, her looks have got no parallel. But behind that fair facade, I'm afraid she's rather odd. Very different from the rest of us" (*Beauty and the Beast* 00:06:18 - 00:06:30). Apart from the changes in compliments, Rapunzel in *Tangled* is the first "Princess" who is made by computer-generated imagery (Nowakowski) and at the same time presents a less sexualized body that resembles the image of an eighteen-year-old girl but is still extremely thin.

In this second group, "Princesses" are less helpless than in the first category, but some of them still need a "Prince" to make their dreams come true. For example, Davis refers to Ariel as a girl who "seeks adventure and works hard to achieve goals she has set for herself" (178) at the beginning. Yet the plot turns into a love story as soon as she meets Prince Eric (Garabedian 23). A similar situation occurs in *Aladdin*, Jasmine escapes once from the castle, she is rescued by Aladdin and then, he is the one who discovers her "a whole new world" (Krapfenbauer 55). "Princesses" in *Beauty and the Beast* and *Mulan* cannot fulfil their dream because they have to help their fathers' necessities and be "good daughters" (Davis 189-190). Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* is presented as a hardworking woman whose aspiration is to open a restaurant. Still, she does not possess enough money to make it real until she marries Prince Naveen who buys her the restaurant (Garabedian 23).

Taking into consideration marriage and housework, in the second group there are two "Princesses" who actually do not marry, but find love, and they are *Pocahontas* and *Mulan*. However, Pocahontas has to stay with her community out of duty as a restrained role (Towbin et al. 24). Mulan's grandmother does not congratulate her for saving their country, but instead criticizes her for coming back single, until Li Shang appears. In both cases, the fact that they have stopped wars is downplayed, and, as Nandini Maity argues, *Mulan* is still shown as "a girl in search of a man" (30). The main difference of this group with the first one as concerns love is that, with the exception of *The Little Mermaid*, "Princesses" do not fall in love at first sight. After saving the "Princes" at some point in the plot, men become crucial for the development of the happy ending (Wilde 136). For instance, as explained beforehand with Tiana, she becomes the "prize" again. As to

housework, they do not practice it anymore and they do not have the help of forest animals because their sidekicks are varied. In this group, "Princesses'" friends are fishes, horses or dragons.

In the third group of "Princesses", the main issue of the plot is not a love story, but to save a member of their family or their entire community instead. Happy endings do not depend on a man for the first time in Disney "Princess" films, and women become queens without getting married. The heroines of this category are able to fight for their dreams and obtain them by their own without needing a man to make them real.

Appearance is less praised than skills. In the movies from 2012 and 2013, beauty is complimented just in 25% of the time compared to 46% for skills (Nowakowski) and there are no songs celebrating their beauty. Their physical appearance is also more realistic, for example, Merida in *Brave* looks similar to her family and has a less-sexualized body, looking like a teenager. *Moana* resembles her family and she is the first "Princess" who presents a body more similar to the average of real teenagers. As Brook conveys, *Moana* is the first heroine without "a tiny waist and unusually long limbs." However, both Anna and Elsa in *Frozen* come back to the tradition of extremely thin bodies. A remarkable fact of "Princesses" in *Brave* and *Frozen* is that they are represented realistically because they wake up in the morning, with sleepy faces and uncombed hair contrasting with their previous counterparts who were always looking perfect.

In the third group, women are neither helpless nor need protection. For example, Merida is the first "Princess" who makes a statement in which she declares she is fighting for herself. Merida does not let anyone control her and fixes her problems without a man's help. Actually, she is struggling against getting married. *Brave* is also the first movie in which the "Princess" leads and narrates her own story (Wilde 143). As regards to *Frozen*, Queen Elsa runs away from the castle because she considers herself a threat for her own kingdom due to the fact that she cannot control her ice powers. She builds her own castle, and at the same time she sings: "the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all. It's time to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong. No rules

for me. I'm free!" (*Frozen* 00:32:47-00:33:08). Elsa is the first Queen heroine and, as Merida, does not want to be controlled. On the other hand, Princess Anna wants to save her sister from her loneliness. Asserting that she knows how to stop the winter and starting the trip in search of her sister by her own, she resembles a post-feminist idea in which she does not need anyone to lead her path (Wilde 146). Furthermore, *Moana* continues to break with the pattern of helpless women and, despite the rules of her father who does not allow her to go into the sea, she decides to go and find a way to save her people. She also has the power of interacting with the ocean, and it helps her when she needs it.

In the case of marriage and housework, this category breaks the pattern again. The only love relationship that occurs in these three movies is the story of Anna and Prince Hans, with whom she falls in love at first sight, resembling to the first group of Disney "Princesses." Nevertheless, her sister, Queen Elsa does not give them her blessing. Anna portrays an image of a naïve girl when it concerns love until she discovers that Hans is a traitor and that the one who really loves her is her friend Kristoff. This image contrasts with the fearless Anna who goes to find her sister alone, saves her friend, and is not afraid (Wilde 145-146). Nevertheless, the plot is not based on romantic love, but on how Anna saves her sister, Queen Elsa, and how this act of true love between sisters is what fixes Anna's frozen heart. Regarding *Brave*, Merida is the first "Princess" who rejects marriage. She teaches her mother how it is possible to break with the traditions while they both learn how sometimes everyone has to make sacrifices (Garabedian 24). *Brave* is the first movie without a happy ending concerned with love, in which Merida is her own hero (Garabedian 24). Concerning *Moana*, love does not appear in the entire plot of the movie. *Moana* is decided to save her people. Moreover, she is also the first Disney "Princess" who has a male human friend with no love interest. In short, *Moana* is depicted as an independent woman who is concerned about the problems of her island and determined to fix them by herself.

Disney has developed considerably since the creation of *Snow White*. The patterns that seemed to be common in "Princess" movies changed progressively until they were completely removed in the last group of heroines. Finally through Merida in *Brave*, Queen

Elsa in *Frozen* and *Moana* the modelization of women changed into a more positive and equalitarian view. Women are valued by their skills and are not just an object to worship for their beauty. Women can be free and fulfill their aspirations without the need of a man, apart from having initiative and do not let others control them.

4. Two movies which broke with tradition: *The Little Mermaid* and *Brave*

The Little Mermaid and *Brave* meant a change in the Disney "Princess" movies. Each of them broke with the previous tradition and created a new generation. As explained in the previous chapter (Ch.3), in *The Little Mermaid* an independent woman called Ariel, is portrayed, who wants to be free to follow her dreams. However, her dreams change after meeting Prince Eric, due to the fact that she falls in love at first sight, and her aspirations turn into conquering his heart. However, Ariel's adventurous spirit brings a "new wave" of gender roles, introducing the image of the first non-passive "Princess" (Stover 3). The six later movies present similar plots, with several changes from the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989 until the release of *Brave* in 2012. Hence, *Brave* breaks with the tradition of love stories, and the "happily ever after" ending is based on the pursuit of Merida's fate instead of the pursuit of a man. Merida is dubbed "Action Princess" due to the fact that she is her own heroine and does not follow the "Princess ideal" based on beauty, love, and femininity (Friedman).

4.1. Plot analysis and comparison

To begin with, the plots of both movies have some common ground as they present differences that are crucial for the changes on the modelization of women that created a new generation of "Princesses." Starting with Ariel, the heroine of *The Little Mermaid¸* she is the youngest daughter of the Sea King Triton. She yearns to know more about the human world and collects human goods without knowing the function of them. The barrier for Ariel is her father, who does not allow her to go to the surface because of the possible dangers of being seen by a human. Still, she goes up to the surface and once, she discovers

a human's boat party, where she sees Prince Eric and falls in love. After a hurricane, she saves him, making King Triton get angry destroying her collection of human items as punishment.

Comparing Ariel's desire to know more, Merida in *Brave* is fond of archery, horse riding, climbing, and exploring the forest. However, her mother Elinor is always trying to make her follow the traditional role of a "Princess," by repeating what she has to do and what is not allowed:

> A princess must be knowledgeable about her kingdom. She does not doodle (…). A princess does not chortle, does not stuff her gob, rises early, is compassionate, patient, cautions, clean, and above all, a princess strives for, well, perfection. (*Brave* 00:06:12 -00:06:47).

To summarize, Elinor wants her daughter to be like her. When Elinor announces Merida's betrothal, she argues about it because she does not want to get married. On the day of the presentation of the suitors Merida fights for her own hand and wins. Hence, Elinor and Merida have an argument that ends up with Merida tearing apart her mother's tapestry, and her mother burning Merida's bow.

By this point, both Ariel and Merida have been presented as ambitious for wanting something that is forbidden to them. The punishments of their family towards their disobedience are similar, as both parents get rid of their daughters' most valued possessions that are part of their identity. The main difference in the plot at this point is the attitude of the "Princesses" towards their parents' reprimands and their aspirations. Ariel cries because she wants to get married with Prince Eric, while Merida runs away into the forest because she does not want to get married. Nevertheless, both "Princesses" have the same problem with their family: parents do not listen and impose their rules. As explained in chapter two (Ch.2), many "Princesses'" mothers have the role of tutors, coinciding with Elinor's attitude towards her daughter. Whereas, Triton is the kind of father, that does not communicate properly with his daughter. Ariel's problems are mysterious, unpredictable and irrational acts for her father (Turin 40) , who fits in the category of "destructive" due to the fact that he wants to block his daughter from love.

Returning to *The Little Mermaid's* plot, Ariel is deceived by the Sea Witch, Ursula, who takes advantage of Ariel's naivety to sign a contract in which the witch changes Ariel into a human. In comparison in *Brave*, Merida finds a witch who gives her a spell to change her mother in exchange for an amulet. However, the spell changes Merida's mother into a bear instead of changing her view on marriage.

Both "Princesses" use magic and there are witches who help them to do so. In spite of this, the image of the witches is different in both movies. While in *The Little Mermaid* Ursula envies the power of King Triton and wants to deceive Ariel to obtain it, the witch in *Brave* has no interest in Merida's life. Ariel and Ursula are depicted in the duality of good and bad women because the witch is cunning and ambitious about power, whereas Ariel is naïve and accepts the contract with Ursula without reading it or questioning the conditions. This "dual nature" of women resembles the duality between good and evil women depicted during the twentieth century. On the other hand, the witch in *Brave* is a secondary character who has no relevance in the rest of the plot. Furthermore, the way they break the spells makes both "Princesses" different from each other. While Ariel has to be given a "kiss of true love", Merida has to find the way to make peace with her mother. To put it another way, Ariel needs a man to be rescued, while Merida and her mother have to discover how to listen to each other and get to an agreement about Merida's destiny together.

Additionally in *The Little Mermaid*, Ursula appears disguised as a young lady who is going to marry Prince Eric, while Ariel's time is ended. Despite the wedding being stopped, Ariel goes back to the sea in the form of a mermaid and as Ursula's prisoner. Yet Ursula tricks King Triton into taking Ariel's place. The wicked witch becomes the Sea Queen until she is killed by Prince Eric, who marries Ariel at the end of the movie. By contrast, in *Brave*, Merida and her mother discover how to work together in order to survive in the forest while trying to discover how to break the spell. Finally, Merida's mother lets her decide for herself without following traditions. Mother and daughter save each other's lives, and at last, Merida's mother becomes human again.

In addition, in *The Little Mermaid* the man is in charge of saving the "Princess" and killing the evil woman. As it was seen in chapter three (Ch.3), there is a prize in fairy tales, and Ariel is the prize for Prince Eric because he becomes a hero by killing Ursula. Moreover, Triton's attitude towards Ariel living on the surface changes when she finds another man. Despite "the ideas for female independence" seen at the beginning when she was singing "bet ya' on land they understand. Bet they don't reprimand their daughters. Bright young women sick of swimmin' ready to stand" (*The Little Mermaid* 00:16:45-00:17:02), the plot turns into a love story in which the same song is changed into "what would I give to live where you are? What would I pay to stay here beside you? What would I do to see you smiling at me? (…) just you and me, and I could be part of your world" (*The Little Mermaid* 00:25:01-00:25:33). As Garabedian has points out, despite Disney's attempt to produce a new kind of movie in which women are more independent, it always falls back on the "princess-needs-prince-plot" (23).

In comparison, the plot of *Brave* diverges from the previous movies. Merida is the first "Princess" who narrates her own story, and the first one who does not sing, also does not get married and is allowed to build her own destiny. Contrasting with all her previous counterparts, she fights against getting married, in favor of gaining her independence. During the entire movie, she does not need the help of a man to rescue her. She practices activities that are "un-lady like" as her own mother tells her without changing her attitude despite the pressure of the presentation of the suitors. At the end of the movie, her mother learns to respect her, and Merida learns to understand her mother's ideas. *Brave* is the first Disney "Princess" movie which does not follow the tradition defined by Garabedian as "princess' fairytales which depend on a man for a happily ever after" (24).

4.2. Differences between Ariel and Merida in terms of physical appearance, protection and love plot

I will start by looking at Ariel, who follows the typical pattern of Disney "Princesses" described in the previous chapter (Ch.3) following Viguet and Chyng's patterns. She has a big head, a sexualized image that reduces her waist and accentuates her bust, and long limbs. Moreover Kesley Nowakowski points out that Ariel receives 44% of compliments related to her appearance and 28% related to her skills. The most remarkable aspect of her appearance is that she changes her body for the love of a man. Thanks to Ursula's cunning, she is persuaded to become a human, giving up her mermaid's tale and her voice for two long legs. As Maity highlights, she is able to change her means of communicating to become the "woman as a man wants her to be" (30). As it was explained in chapter three (Ch.3), Ursula sings her a song about how important physical appearance is and how she will conquer her man just with her body.

On the other hand, Merida breaks with the typical anatomy of previous Disney "Princesses." She still presents a big head and thin torso, but her body is less-sexualized that Ariel's due to the fact that Merida is shorter than Ariel, presenting smaller bust and shorter arms. She is also the first "Princess" with curly hair, which clearly differentiates her. For example, in the scene of the presentation of the suitors, her mother tries to hide Merida's hair under her dress, but she insists on leaving a strand of hair outside. Thereafter, when she fights for her own hand, she uncovers her hair. According to Nowakowski, she receives 18% of compliments because of her appearance and 56% because of her skills. She is also the first "Princess" who appears with uncombed hair after waking up, seeming more realistic.

It is also remarkable how they differ in their need for protection. Ariel is constantly protected by her father who does not allow her to go to the surface and even sends a guardian to keep a close eye on her. Despite this protection, she is deceived by Ursula and, once in the human world she needs the help of her friends to try to break the spell. Furthermore, it is remarkable the fact that her father blesses her marriage. As Roberta Trites

points out, her father accepted her maturity when she found love, or, in other words he accepts that she is going to live with a different man and will be protected by him (8). Nonetheless, Merida is in a constant fight with her mother because she wants to be free and control her own fate. She fights, looks for a way to change her mother's mind, and breaks the spell by herself. As Danielle Morrison states, Merida fights against the pre-established patriarchal order without giving up her independence and wanting a man to save her as Ariel does (9). The main difference between the two "Princesses" is that Merida does not need help to achieve her ambitions, while Ariel needs constant help, and at the end of the movie, it is the man who kills the wicked witch and not her.

With regard to love and marriage, Ariel falls in love with Eric at first sight changing movie plot where she yearned for independence to explore, to depending on a man and changing her body to become a human without even thinking about it. Love triumphs, and she gets married with Eric at the end of the movie. On the other hand, the main issue in *Brave* is the fact that Merida does not want to get married and has to make her mother listen to her in order to change the tradition. The queen ends up allowing her to choose her own destiny and change the tradition. As it has been already explained, *Brave* is the first movie whose plot is not based on a love story at any point.

In short, Ariel falls under the archetype of victim who lives isolated and needs to be rescued by a man in order to escape. She is not understood by her father, who resembles both images of "tutor" and "destructive" towards Ariel. The characterization of Ariel into an adventurous woman ends up subordinated in a men's world, the extreme of goodness. By contrast, Merida presents a model of a woman where she is decided to fight for what she wants by showing her family that traditions need to change. This heroine is independent and wants to archive her aspirations despite the objection of her mother. Merida can neither be classified in the extreme of goodness nor in the extreme of evilness. She demonstrated that it is possible to have an image of good daughter and, at the same time, the image of a woman who fights for not being controlled.

5. Conclusion

Disney "Princess" movies depict female roles that have changed over the years. The earliest heroines were presented under gender archetypes in which women were classified as good or bad. Good women were those "Princesses" who lived in a world of isolation and were likely to do housework. These women lived subordinated to a patriarchal order in which men meant a key element for progressing in their lives. Moreover, good "Princesses" lived in a constant argument with their opponents, the evil women who were wise and presented an active position to obtain what they wanted. By contrast, these models of the image women have been reduced. The duality between good and evil women disappeared, as the image of homemaker. The most remarkable change occurred in the latest movies, with the reduction of women who needed a man as a key element for their happy ending disappeared

Three different categories can be distinguished and they correspond to three different stereotypes of women that developed from passive to active. The main changes between different categories were the disappearance of the duality between good and bad woman, an initiative for fighting against the barriers that isolate the heroines, also the rejection of housework, the reduction of compliments related to beauty and the increase of compliments related to skills, and the disappearance of marriages. It meant a development towards the reduction of the patriarchal order in "Princess" movies. As it is shown in the latest movies, men are not a key element women had to marry to reach their happy ending and the end of the submissive woman who respected the order obeyed by others.

The Little Mermaid and *Brave* were the turning point of their times due to the fact that they presented a new type of women that contrasts with previous "Princesses." In the case of *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel is the first of the "Princesses" who rebels against the rules imposed by her father. She is also the first one who wants to explore other worlds and who is dissatisfied with her life under the sea. Nevertheless, she resembles the model of women who falls in love easily and trusts naïvely a wicked witch so she can meet her "Prince" again. Taking into account that she tries to do something to be closer to her love, she differs from previous "Princesses" who just dreamt of their "Princes." In *Brave*, Merida

fights against her mother's control and specifically, against getting married. The plot of this movie turned into a story of a mother-daughter relationship in which they learn to listen and comprehend each other instead of ending up with a marriage. Merida does not respect the previous tradition of passive women by fighting for her own aspirations and archiving her goals by herself.

The Little Mermaid is followed by six different movies in which the protagonists, who imitate the path pursued by Ariel, have an adventurous spirit, rebel against the social order, or work hard to make their dreams come true. The concept of "dream" has also developed from "Princesses" dreaming of marriage, to "Princesses" dreaming of other aspirations such as honor, stopping wars or freedom. Nevertheless, in the second group of movies, the presence of a man is essential for the plot and for the happy ending.

On the other hand, after *Brave*, love is not the main issue of the plot and in the movies that precede it; the predominant image is that of a rebellious woman who fights for their own destiny or to save others without needing a man. The "Princesses" undertake heroic feats on and they are able to save their family and their communities. This image of rebellious women who follow their own path is maintained until the release of *Moana* in 2016. The trend of independent women in Disney "Princesses" has just started.

In conclusion, the modelization of women in Disney has experienced numerous changes since the creation of the company. As it has been studied through this dissertation, the changes in the portrayal of women cinema appeared latter than the achievement of women's rights. However, the two extremes of good and bad woman seem to have been decreased during the years. The latest models of women presented during the last category of "Princesses" in which women are independent, free and have control over their lives contrast with the images seen during the first decades of the company. Disney started a path towards equality in which women roles vary and are not linked to the traditional values represented during the twentieth century.

Appendix 1

<u>List of Disney "Princesses" movies</u>

Title of the Movies	**Heroines' Names**	**"Princes'" Names**
1. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)	Snow White	Unnamed
2. *Cinderella* (1950)	Cinderella	"Prince Charming"
3. *Sleeping Beauty* (1959)	Aurora	Philip
4. *The Little Mermaid* (1989)	Ariel	Eric
5. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)	Belle	"Beast"
6. *Aladdin* (1992)	Jasmine	Aladdin
7. *Pocahontas* (1995)	Pocahontas	John Smith
8. *Mulan* (1998)	Mulan	Li Shang
9. *The Princess and the Frog* (2009)	Tiana	Naveen
10. *Tangled* (2010)	Rapunzel	Flynn (or Eugene)
11. *Brave* (2012)	Merida	No couple
12. *Frozen* (2013)	Elsa & Anna	Elsa: no couple
		Anna: Kristoff
13. *Moana* (2016)	Moana	No couple

Sources

- <u>Primary sources</u>

Aladdin. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Walt Disney Pictures, Silver Screen Partners IV & Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1992. Film.

Beauty and the Beast. Directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. Walt Disney Pictures, Silver Screen Partners IV & Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1991. Film.

Brave. Directed by Brenda Chapman and Mark Andrews. Walt Disney Pictures & Pixar Animation Studios, 2012. Film.

Cinderella. Directed by Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske. Walt Disney Productions, 1950. Film.

Frozen. Directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee. Walt Disney Animation Studios & Walt Disney Pictures, 2013. Film.

Moana. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Walt Disney Animation Studios & Walt Disney Pictures, 2016. Film.

Mulan. Directed by Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook. Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1998. Film.

Pocahontas. Directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1995. Film.

Sleeping Beauty. Directed by Clyde Geronimi. Walt Disney Productions, 1959. Film.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Directed by William Cottrell, David Hand, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce and Ben Sharpsteen. Walt Disney Productions, 1937. Film.

Tangled. Directed by Byron Howard and Nathan Greno. Walt Disney Animation Studios & Walt Disney Pictures, 2010. Film.

The Little Mermaid. Directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. Walt Disney Pictures, Silver Screen Partners IV & Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1989. Film.

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