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A MAIDEN AND A HERO
A Study of Disney's Snow White and Moana and the
Changing Image of the Disney Princess

ABSTRACT

Over the years, Walt Disney Pictures have introduced a cast of female characters who have captured the imagination of millions of little girls around the world. These characters have created an image of the "Disney princess", which is prevalent in popular culture today. The characterisation of the Disney princess, however, has changed throughout the years to reflect the changing societal norms placed on women. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the image of the Disney princess has evolved by analysing the first and latest princesses, Snow White and Moana respectively. My goal is to find out if the characterisation of the Disney princess has changed to show a more active, self-sufficient, and free representation of a woman instead of the passive and love-oriented woman of the early days of Disney.

The theoretical framework used in this thesis is the archetypal approach to literary criticism, which builds on Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a set of ideas and images inherent to the human mind that is shared by people across different cultures. These ideas are called archetypes. Archetypes themselves are vague and cannot be accurately represented but they appear in the form of archetypal images, which show a representation of an archetype through the lens of the views of the individual creating it. Archetypal literary criticism is concerned with examining works of literature in regards to their representation of different archetypes through the archetypal images they contain. Especially fairy tales and folklore contain images of many archetypes, which is why I have chosen this theoretical approach to analyse these two films based on a fairy tale and folk tale respectively. In this thesis I take a look at the characters of Snow White and Moana in relation to the archetypes they represent to highlight the differences between the "classical princesses" of the earlier days and the "modern princesses" of the newer Disney films.

In this analysis Snow White is found to be a representation of the traditionally feminine "Maiden" archetype which is characterised by beauty, innocence, helplessness, and passivity. This is in line with the dominant view of women at the time of the film's release. Moana, in contrast, represents the "Hero" archetype which does not align with traditional values of femininity and instead places a greater emphasis on character agency and growth. This shows that the characterization of the Disney princess has, indeed, changed to reflect the changes of society.

Keywords: Disney princess, Archetype, Archetypal image, Maiden, Hero

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Elokuvastudio Walt Disney Pictures on vuosien saatossa esitellyt joukon naispäähenkilöitä, jotka ovat innoittaneet ja inspiroineet miljoonia nuoria tyttöjä ympäri maailman. Nämä hahmot ovat toimineet roolimalleina monille lapsille ja luoneet kuvan "Disney -prinsessasta", joka vallitsee populaarikulttuurissa tänä päivänä. Disney -prinsessojen luonnehdinta on kuitenkin muuttunut vuosikymmenten kuluessa heijastaen kehitystä, joka on tapahtunut yhteiskunnan naisille asettamissa normeissa. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on havainnoida prinsessojen kuvauksessa tapahtunutta muutosta tarkastelemalla Disneyn ensimmäistä prinsessaa, Lumikkia (eng. Snow White), ja viimeisintä prinsessaa, Moanaa. Tarkoituksenani on selvittää, onko Disney -prinsessa muuttunut vuosien saatossa passiivisesta ja rakkautta etsivästä naisesta aktiiviseksi, itsenäiseksi toimijaksi, jolla on muitakin tavoitteita kuin rakkaus.

Tutkielman teoreettisena taustana toimii arkkityyppinen kirjallisuudentutkimus (eng. archetypal literary criticism), joka pohjautuu Carl Gustav Jungin teoriaan arkkityypeistä ja kollektiivisesta alitajunnasta (eng. the collective unconscious). Kollektiivinen alitajunta on joukko kuvia ja ajatuksia, jotka ovat yhteisiä koko ihmiskunnalle kulttuuriin katsomatta. Ne ilmenevät arkkityyppisinä kuvina esimerkiksi tarinoissa ja unissa. Arkkityyppisessä kirjallisuudentutkimuksessa tutkitaan kirjallisuutta sen sisältämien arkkityyppisten kuvien valossa. Koska erityisesti sadut ja kansantarut sisältävät paljon kuvia arkkityypeistä, valitsin tämän lähestymistavan tutkimaan kahta Disney -elokuvaa, jotka perustuvat satuun ja kansantaruun. Tutkin Lumikin ja Moanan hahmoja suhteessa arkkityyppeihin, joita ne edustavat korostaakseni eroja Disneyn alkuaikojen "klassisten prinsessojen" ja nykypäivän "modernien prinsessojen" välillä.

Tutkielmassa käy ilmi, että Lumikki edustaa perinteisen feminiinistä "neito" -arkkityyppiä (eng. maiden), joka on kaunis, viaton, avuton ja passiivinen. Tämä mukailee elokuvan julkaisuajan naiskuvaa. Moana sen sijaan edustaa "sankari" -arkkityyppiä, joka ei kuvasta perinteistä naisellisuutta vaan korostaa toimintaa ja kasvua. Voidaan siis todeta, että Disney -prinsessan luonnehdinta on muuttunut yhteiskunnan naiskuvan mukana.

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1. Introduction

Since their first feature-length animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937),

Walt Disney Pictures have become known for adapting traditional fairy tales and folklore into

animated form. Though often not completely faithful to the fairy tales they are based on,

Disney films manage to retain much of the sense of magic and childlike wonder of their

source material. This may be largely due to the fact that however freely adapted some of the

films may be (such as *Frozen*, which only takes a small number of elements from Hans

Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Snow Queen*), they are always filled with themes,

symbols and character archetypes commonly found in fairy tales.

A major part of Disney's image has to do with princesses, princes and happily-ever-

afters. The princesses Disney have introduced over the years have captured the imagination

of millions of young girls across the world and left a lasting mark on popular culture. In this

thesis I will consider how the characterisation of these Disney princesses has changed from

the classical princesses before the 60's to the princesses in modern Disney films by

examining Disney's first and latest princess and the archetypes they represent.

Before progressing further, I must first define the term "Disney princess". According

to the Disney princess website, as of now, the official princess line-up consists of eleven

female characters. The criteria Disney use to select the official princesses are unclear, as there

are some characters not on the official list who are, in fact, princesses and whom many would

consider Disney princesses (such as Anna and Elsa from *Frozen*). On the other hand, Mulan,

who is an official princess, is royal neither through heritage nor through marriage. Thus, for

the purposes of this paper I will use a broader definition of the term "Disney princess" and

use it to refer to any human female protagonist in a Disney animated film.

The changing characterisation of the Disney princess has been studied by Jena

Stephens who compares the modern princesses Tiana, Rapunzel, and Merida to Disney's

earlier princesses. In her study she examines the princesses in terms of their strength and their compliance with gender norms and, unsurprisingly finds that the earlier princesses conform to traditional ideas of femininity while the modern princesses have less feminine traits and appear to be, as measured by Stephens' metrics, stronger characters. In this thesis I will attempt to support Stephens' findings by showing the similarities between Snow White and the typical characterisation of the feminine archetype "the Maiden" and Moana's connection to the "Hero" archetype.

2. Theory of Archetypes

The main theory I will use is the archetypal approach to literary criticism, which is based on Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious. I will use a collection of Jung's works and *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* by Guerin et al. as my main sources. In order to provide a thorough explanation of archetypal literary criticism, I will need to give a brief summary of the basic ideas of Jung's theory. I will then continue to illustrate how archetypal criticism can be applied to analysing fairy tales and describe more in depth the two common character archetypes relevant to my thesis.

2.1 Archetypal Literary Criticism

The archetypal approach to literary criticism is built on Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Though Jung himself did not apply his theories to literature and instead used them mainly to explain the human psyche, his theories have "… expanded the horizons of literary interpretation for those critics concerned to use the tools of the mythological approach and for psychological critics who have felt too tightly constricted by Freudian theory." (Guerin et al. 204). Jung's influence is also the primary reason for the common use of the term "archetype" among critics of myth and folklore (Guerin et al. 204).

In his works Jung introduces the concept of the collective unconscious. It is an inborn, deep layer of the human unconscious which is common to all individuals regardless of ethnicity or culture ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 3-4). The collective unconscious is filled with archetypes; common images and patterns which can manifest themselves as archetypal images in different forms through various mediums, e.g. dreams, fairy tales and folklore. These archetypes are the same in every individual's unconscious, but the forms they take vary depending on the person and their social environment and views: "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its color from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 5). Archetypes themselves, according to Jung, cannot be accurately defined and their nature can only be speculated through constructing a general image based on their many representations, which Jung calls archetypal images (*Four Archetypes* 5). The terms *archetype* and archetypal image should not be confused as they have separate meanings. The difference between archetypes and archetypal images is best explained in the following passage: "The archetype is not defined by the content of any one manifestation nor even by the accrued total of all its manifestations. Archetypes are apolitical; archetypal images are political; archetypes are not ideological; archetypal images are located within ideologies" (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 13). Thus, the representations of archetypes in any form observable to human beings appear as archetypal images as they inevitably reflect the ideologies of the culture they appear in.

Jung argues that the tales and myths of cultures around the world are similar to one another because of this shared set of archetypes inherent to every human mind: "The collective unconscious – so far as we can say anything about it at all – appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the

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collective unconscious" (Jung, "Psyche" 152). This idea is at the base of archetypal literary criticism which acknowledges the existence of archetypal patterns in the myths and literatures of the world:

> Although every people has its own distinctive mythology that may be reflected in legend, folklore, and ideology – although, in other words, myths take their specific shapes from the cultural environments in which they grow – myth is, in the general sense, universal. Furthermore, similar motifs or themes may be found among many different mythologies, and certain images that recur in the myths of peoples widely separated in time and place tend to have a common meaning or, more accurately, tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions. Such motifs and images are called archetypes. Stated simply, archetypes are universal symbols (Guerin et al. 184).

The aim of archetypal literary criticism is to find archetypal patterns in literature and analyse the symbolism behind them.

2.2 Archetypal Images in Fairy tales

In *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales* Marie-Louise Von Franz recounts a story about an experiment an acquaintance of hers, a young American English teacher, had conducted. In the experiment he read one of his classes a short story by a modern writer and then a fairy tale. A few days later he asked them to write down both stories as accurately as possible from memory. The difference was astounding. Almost every student could recount the fairy tale with great precision but could not do the same with the short story (16). This would suggest that there is some inherent quality in fairy tales that makes them embed themselves deeply into the human brain. In fact, many fairy tales have been spread purely orally and have never been published in written form and would thus need to be memorable. Von Franz argues that this has to do with the collective unconscious:

> This shows that in fairy tales there is a pattern that fits into the unconscious of everybody and is therefore retained more securely. We know now that memory formation has to do with emotion. The more emotionally impressive something is, the more it sticks in the memory. And therefore, because the kind of fairy tale that expresses collective structures touches the emotions more deeply, it stays better in one's memory (16).

Von Franz goes on to argue that due to being passed on and retold by generations, fairy tales are "one of the best kinds of source material for studying the 'nature constants' of the collective psyche", as they retain only the elements that express a generally human structure when being passed on (17). Even Jung himself stated that he found fairy tales to be one of the clearest expressions of the archetypes of the collective unconscious ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 5).

I will now describe two common character archetypes as they appear in fairy tales and folk lore.

2.2.1 The Maiden

This archetype has many forms and names, including "the Maiden", "the Virgin", "the Princess" and "the Damsel in Distress" but in this thesis, I will use the term "Maiden". The Maiden is a young, innocent, and beautiful female character who is often characterised as good and pure. Many female characters in fairy tales represent this archetype. According to Guerin et al., the Maiden is, like most other female characters according to Jungian theory, a representation of the femininity that is present in all of us (187). Jung's Maiden is half of the mother-daughter dichotomy in which it represents the pure, innocent and youthful side of traditional femininity (e.g. "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious").

According to Jung, one of the defining characteristics of the Maiden archetype is helplessness and a reliance on others to save her from trouble: "The maiden's helplessness exposes her to all sorts of dangers, for instance of being devoured by reptiles or ritually slaughtered like a beast of sacrifice" ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 184). This is most likely why "Damsel in Distress" has become a popular term to describe this archetype. A common motif connected to the Maiden archetype is the "princess (maiden) abducted" motif, where a young innocent maiden, often a princess, is kidnapped either by a monster or an evil man (Garry and El-Shamy 382). Due to the helpless nature of many

images of the Maiden archetype, they often also appear in connection to images of the male rescuer archetype (Fernández Rodríguez 52).

One feature typical to the Maiden is feminine beauty. Her beauty is often her defining feature and may even be her only noteworthy characteristic. She would most likely be described as "beautiful, pretty or fair" (Nanda 248). According to Nanda, beauty in fairy tales is often associated with youth, goodness, and purity, which are also characteristics of the Maiden archetype. The Maiden's beauty is often rewarded but may also sometimes be a source of danger as it may inspire intense jealousy in other women (Nanda 248-249).

A common fairy tale type which features an image of the Maiden archetype as the protagonist is the "innocent persecuted heroine" tale, as Jones names it, where "the female protagonist is presented as being the undeserving victim of various hostile antagonists ("The Innocent Persecuted Heroine" 20-21). According to Jones, these tales typically consist of the following acts:

I. Act One – the heroine is persecuted or threatened in her family home;

II. Act Two – the heroine is attacked, interfered with or otherwise abused in her attempt to be married;

III. Act Three – the heroine is displaced, slandered or calumniated after she has given birth to children. ("The Innocent Persecuted Heroine Genre" 17)

Jones states that this is the structure most often found in the innocent persecuted heroine story, however, some tales falling under this genre only feature the first two acts. He further explains that persecution is also not necessarily present in all of the acts and may only appear in one or two ("The Innocent Persecuted Heroine" 21).

2.2.2 The Hero

The Hero, like the Maiden, has appeared in many different forms throughout history in literature, films and folklore alike. Though the word "hero" brings to mind a strong, courageous prince or knight wielding a sword and slaying dragons, the fairy tale hero is often

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depicted as an ordinary person with seemingly no special powers or skills. Their only defining quality is their willingness to embark on an adventure where their true potential is realised (*The Fairytale* 56). It is, therefore, difficult to define character traits common to the hero archetype, as its different manifestations tend to differ from one another. Thus, the hero archetype should be defined by actions rather than character traits. According to Von Franz, "The best way to understand a hero figure is to look at what he does. Because, […] fairy tale figures are very abstract. They have very few personal traits" (21).

What makes an archetypal Hero is their journey. Joseph Campbell describes the typical structure of the journey of the archetypal Hero, divided into three parts: departure, initiation and return. All images of the Hero archetype do not necessarily go through every stage of the journey and the order may also differ from that described by Campbell. It is also worthy of note that while Campbell refers to the Hero with masculine pronouns, he does not specify that the Hero must be a man; indeed, he describes the Hero as "the man *or woman* who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms" (18, my emphasis).

Though the Campbellian Hero's journey does allow a female Hero, it has been criticised for using a male Hero as the default and not taking into account the ways in which a female Hero's journey might differ from that of her male counterpart. Lori Campbell argues that, while the spiritual journey of the male and female Hero may be similar, the obstacles they face on their respective journeys will often differ, which should be acknowledged in discussion on female heroes (7). Scholarly discussion on the hero archetype is often "framed solely in terms of masculine-gendered activities" (Jorgensen 19) and, though stating that the Hero may also be a woman, Joseph Campbell also presents a son's relationship with his mother and father and a man's pursuit of the love of the "Goddess" as vital parts of the Hero's journey. Campbell's idea of the Hero's journey can, however, also be applied to

female heroes with some modifications (Bovaird-Abbo 37; 51). I will now describe the Hero's journey as outlined by Joseph Campbell. I have omitted the parts of the journey that pertain specifically to male experiences and are thus not applicable to my analysis of Moana, a female character.

Departure, the first part of the Hero's journey, consists of five stages, three of which I will describe here. The departure begins with the call to adventure, which can come in many forms, but usually involves a "herald" which is often supernatural in nature. This herald typically appears out of nowhere and presents the Hero with a quest (J. Campbell 46-47). The Hero is then forced to abandon their familiar life and environment and accept that their old ideals and emotional patterns no longer suit their needs as they must undertake a journey which also serves as a sort of spiritual passage (47). According to Campbell, the destination of the journey is often presented as a far-away mystical place to symbolise the growth of the Hero's spirit (53). The Hero rarely goes out to seek adventure of their own volition but is instead invited into it by fate as stated by Von Franz: "That is perhaps the decisive essence of the true hero: that he does not have the ambition to achieve anything great by himself, that he has only the wish to be true to himself…And therefore, the true hero is most frequently a person forced into great achievements by fate" (84). It is typical of the female Hero to be perceived in the beginning as someone incapable of heroic feats and characterised as an "unlikely hero" (L. Campbell 10). After the initial call, there may be a period of time in which the Hero refuses to leave behind the world they know to travel to the unknown. Joseph Campbell calls this stage the "refusal of the call".

After the Hero has decided to answer the call, the next part of the departure phase is the arrival of supernatural aid. This is usually the first encounter a Hero will have on their journey (J. Campbell 63). The aid can come in many forms ranging from wise wizards to fairies and other magical creatures, though most often it takes a masculine form. According to

Campbell, this figure represents "the benign, protecting power of destiny" and offers reassurance to the Hero (66). The supernatural aid is a manifestation of nature's will to help the Hero on their noble quest and an assurance in the midst of their feeling of powerless in the face of a world of unknown, that "though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings, protective power is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart and even immanent within, or just behind, the unfamiliar features of the world" (J. Campbell 66).

After being joined by their supernatural companion, the Hero encounters a guardian of the entrance to a "zone of magnified power" (J. Campbell 71). They must defeat this guardian to cross the line between the safe, known world and a world of unknown. Campbell calls this the crossing of the first threshold. According to Campbell, the threshold signifies "the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe" (71).

After passing the first threshold, the Hero can then progress to the second part of the journey, the initiation, in which they gain the knowledge and power to complete their task. It consists of six acts, three of which I will detail here. The initiation begins with the road of trials. In this part of the journey the Hero must overcome challenges and "miraculous tests and ordeals" with the aid of their supernatural ally in order to complete their mission (J. Campbell 89). This is a long and perilous path with a multitude of barriers to be passed and small victories and losses in between (100). According to Campbell, the trials are not necessarily physical dangers but may also be psychological in nature and serve to help the Hero in their spiritual journey (89). This kind of non-physical trial is especially common for the female Hero, who often does not have access to traditional weapons, such as swords, and must overcome the trials by using her words instead (Bovaird-Abbo 51).

According to Campbell, towards the end of the initiation phase, the Hero will achieve the highest state of their being and understanding, preparing them for the final challenge of their journey. Armed with this new knowledge and skill, they can then complete their mission (139). Campbell calls this the "apotheosis". After completing their mission, the Hero may receive a gift from a divine figure in the final stage of the initiation, which Campbell names "the ultimate boon" (176).

When the Hero has completed their quest, they begin the final part of their journey where they return home. I will not go too in depth here as the return phase in *Moana* is very brief. Returning from the other side to the ordinary world where their journey began, the Hero must learn to apply their newfound knowledge and skills to the sphere of their normal life and find a balance between the otherworldly and ordinary (J. Campbell 201-202; 212-213). This brings the Hero back to where they started but a changed person, marking the end of the Hero's journey.

3. The Classical Princess: Snow White

According to the classification of Disney princess generations used in Stephens' study, the first generation of Disney princesses includes Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora (95). As Disney's first princess, Snow White created the foundation for what has since come to be known as the classical princess. She is sweet, kind, innocent and beautiful. She sings about finding love and befriends forest animals. She is the representation of traditional values of femininity and as such, is a clear image of the Maiden archetype.

3.1 A Brief Summary of *Snow White*

Snow white is a well-known traditional fairy tale and Disney's 1937 animated adaptation is one of their best-known films to date. It tells the story of Snow White, a princess living under

the rule of her evil and vain stepmother. Her stepmother is afraid that one day Snow White may pass her in beauty, and so she asks her magical mirror every day who is the fairest of the land. One day her fears are realised as the mirror informs her that Snow White is the fairest of them all. In a jealous rage the queen orders her huntsman to kill Snow White and bring back her heart in a box as proof. The huntsman finds Snow White but cannot bring himself to kill her and instead urges her to flee into the woods as the queen is after her life.

In the woods Snow White finds a cottage which belongs to seven dwarves whom she befriends and decides to stay with. Meanwhile the queen discovers that Snow White is still alive when her mirror still names Snow White as the fairest of the land. The queen devises a plan to kill her stepdaughter by disguising herself as an old lady and giving her a poisoned apple enchanted to make anyone who eats it fall into an eternal slumber that can only be broken by the kiss of true love. The plan works and Snow White falls into a deep sleep. The dwarves, saddened and angry when they discover Snow White seemingly dead in the cabin, chase the queen until she falls off a cliff to her death. To preserve her beauty in death the dwarves decide to place Snow White in a glass coffin in the woods. One day, a prince who once met and fell in love with Snow White comes by and is sad to see her dead. He gives her a kiss which breaks the spell and in typical Disney fashion they marry and live happily ever after.

3.2 Snow White as an image of the Maiden Archetype

Snow White, like her fellow classical princesses, is a clear representation of the Maiden archetype as she displays many of the characteristics common to its different images. The story of *Snow White* also follows the structure of the innocent persecuted heroine story outlined by Jones and contains some of the archetypes often associated with the Maiden archetype.

Snow White's defining characteristic is her beauty. She is depicted as beautiful and described as having "lips red as the rose, hair black as ebony, skin white as snow". These colours have a long history of being connected to beauty and health (Sammern), and thus serve to emphasise Snow White's youthful beauty. The significance of Snow White's beauty is also shown through the film's dialogue. When the titular character is first introduced to the viewer through the opening story book scene, she is described as "a lovely little princess". The tendency to define Snow White through her physical attributes continues throughout the film, as other characters discuss her mostly to remark on her beauty. One example of this can be found in the scene where the queen summons the magic mirror to tell her who is the fairest in the land and it answers: "Famed is thy beauty, Majesty. But hold, a lovely maid I see. Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Alas, she is more fair than thee". The dwarves are also taken by Snow White's beauty when they find the princess asleep on their beds. Sneazy immediately remarks: "She's mighty pretty" and Bashful responds: "She's beautiful, just like an angel" (35:06).

Snow White's beauty poses a danger to her but is also her salvation. The major conflict in the film is caused by the queen's envy of her stepdaughter's beauty. This envy runs so deep that she is willing to resort to any means necessary to dispose of Snow White and be the fairest of the land again. However, Snow White is also rescued from her predicament by her beauty. When the queen is dead and Snow White is in a death-like sleep, the dwarves place her in a glass coffin because, as the narrator explains, she is "so beautiful, even in death, that the dwarfs could not find it in their hearts to bury her" (01:18:48). This allows the Prince, who is also drawn in by Snow White's beauty, to find her and awaken her with a kiss.

In addition to being beautiful, Snow White also displays the innocence associated with the Maiden archetype. This innocence is portrayed through colour symbolism and the

heroine's actions throughout the movie. Colours are assigned various symbolic meanings in different cultures and in most cultures of the western world, the colour white has been associated with purity and innocence since the Middle Ages (Van Leeuwen 16). Thus, Snow White's name alone evokes an image of a girl who is pure and innocent. The princess is also surrounded with white at several points in the film. In the scene where Snow White is first shown to the viewer, she is surrounded by white flowers and white doves. This serves to solidify her image as a pure, innocent Maiden in the viewer's mind. In her glass coffin, she is also surrounded by white flowers, which shows that she is, even in a death-like sleep, pure. Snow White's innocence is further shown in her actions throughout the film. She displays a level of trust in strangers only one who is untainted by the world could be capable of. This is first shown in her meeting with the dwarves, to whom she immediately takes a liking and feels comfortable enough to stay with. She also does not suspect the queen in her disguise of an old lady offering her an apple, despite the forest animals sensing danger and trying to warn her. This shows that Snow White is innocent and does not possess cynicism or distrust.

One of the common characteristics of the Maiden archetype is helplessness. Snow white also exhibits this as she spends most of the film running or hiding from danger, unable to confront it. Her helpless nature is first shown in her unfortunate situation in the beginning of the movie. She is stuck under the tyranny of her evil stepmother but cannot do anything to free herself. Instead, she sings to a wishing well, hoping for her true love to find her and take her away: "I'm wishing (I'm wishing)/ for the one I love/ to find me (to find me)/ today" (04:33). Nowhere, however, is her helplessness as apparent as in the scene where she runs away into the forest, warned by the huntsman of her stepmother's plan to kill her. What follows is an extended scene of Snow White running in the dark forest in horror as she imagines monsters lurking in the trees and is grabbed by branches she imagines as sharp-nailed hands. The scene portrays Snow White as frightened, small and helpless in a terrifying

dark forest, which is accentuated by the spinning movement of the background and the use of perspective. Eventually Snow White simply collapses on the ground and begins to cry, unable to face the terrors of the forest any longer. Snow White is later also shown in a helpless state when she falls into a deep sleep and only saved by her male rescuer, the Prince.

The story of *Snow White* follows the structure of the innocent persecuted heroine story outlined by Jones and, indeed, Jones mentions the original fairy tale as an example of an innocent persecuted heroine tale that only includes Acts One and Two ("The Innocent Persecuted heroine" 19). According to Jones, the persecution directed at the heroine in the first act of the story is mainly initiated by her relatives in her family home (21). Act One in Disney's *Snow White* is very short and is mostly conveyed through text in a story book which recounts the story of the titular princess:

> Once upon a time there was a lovely little princess named Snow White. Her vain and wicked stepmother the Queen feared that one day Snow White's beauty would surpass her own. So she dressed the little princess in rags and forced her to work as a scullery maid. (01:36).

This short passage gives a glimpse into Snow White's home life and the persecution she faces at the hands of her stepmother. This is shown further through a scene beginning with Snow White scrubbing the stairs leading to the castle. After setting the stage the story quickly progresses to the second act when Snow White meets the Prince and begins to dream about marrying him.

In Act Two, Snow White's goal is to be reunited with the Prince and to marry him as illustrated by the song "Someday My Prince Will Come":

> Someday my prince will come
> Someday we'll meet again
> And away to his castle we'll go
> To be happy forever I know
> Someday when spring is here
> We'll find our love anew
> And the birds will sing and wedding bells will ring
> Someday when my dreams come true

As is typical, however, of the innocent persecuted heroine story, Snow White is the victim of hostile forces attempting to prevent her from reaching her goal of marriage. The Queen's persecution of Snow White continues in the second act as she tempts the princess to take a bite of a bewitched apple that induces a deep, death-like sleep. The Queen's plan is thwarted by the Prince, however, and the story ends in Act Two with Snow White getting her happy ending with the Prince.

4. The Modern Princess: Moana

In contrast to Snow White, Moana represents a new kind of Disney princess who takes control over her own fate. Stephens lists Tiana (*Princess and the Frog*), Rapunzel (*Tangled*) and Merida (*Brave*) as the new generation of princesses, however I will include Moana as she undoubtedly would be included in this generation if the movie *Moana* had been released at the time of the articles publication. In recent years, Disney has attempted to distance their female protagonists from the traditional princess image, even occasionally ridiculing it, as illustrated by a conversation between Moana and her companion Maui in *Moana*:

> MOANA. Okay, first, I'm not a princess. I'm the daughter of the chief.
> MAUI. Same difference.
> MOANA. No-
> MAUI. If you wear a dress and you have an animal sidekick, you're a princess.

While Snow White adheres to the Maiden archetype, Moana represents the archetype of the Hero.

4.1 A Brief Summary of *Moana*

Disney's *Moana* (2016) is based loosely on Polynesian folklore and tells the story of Moana, the daughter of the chief of a fictional island called Motunui. Moana, who has always longed to leave the island to see what is beyond the reef surrounding it, is constantly at odds with her

father, who has explicitly forbidden anyone from leaving the island for their own safety and would like Moana to follow in his footsteps and become the next chief. At the beginning of the story, the idyllic life on Motunui is disrupted as all the coconuts on the island are found to be rotten inside and the reef is empty of fish. Moana's grandmother, who calls herself "the village crazy lady", explains that this has been caused by Maui, a demi-god, who stole the heart of the goddess of life and nature Te Fiti. With Te Fiti's heart gone, the whole world will eventually be swallowed by death and darkness unless a hero sails across the ocean to return the heart to Te Fiti.

Unbeknownst to Moana, the Ocean, which has a mind of its own, has chosen her as the hero to embark on this quest. When Moana was a child, the Ocean tried to give her the heart of Te Fiti, which had sunken to the bottom of the ocean when Maui was struck down by a demon of earth and fire, Te Ka. Moana's grandmother, who saw the ocean give the heart to Moana, has kept it safe since and now hands it to Moana to take back to Te Fiti. Despite being initially conflicted due to her father's insistence that she stay on the island, the death of her grandmother drives Moana to steal a boat and leave to find Maui so they can return the heart of Te Fiti together. She finds Maui on a small island and together they manage to overcome many challenges and find their way past Te Ka to Te Fiti's island only to find her gone. Moana realises that Te Ka is in fact Te Fiti, transformed when her heart was stolen from her. Moana gives the heart to Te Ka and watches as she turns back into Te Fiti and revives the world. Moana can then return to her island a hero.

4.2 Moana as an image of the Hero Archetype

Moana's adventure follows the Hero's journey as described by Campbell where it pertains to female Heroes. She lives a quiet life on her island home, until she is called to adventure to save her village from a looming threat. Her grandmother acts as the herald who invites her to adventure by explaining to her the reason behind the sudden catastrophe that has befallen

their village and handing Moana the heart of Te Fiti for her to return. One could also argue that the herald is the Ocean who gave the heart to Moana when she was a child. Moana differs from Campbell's hero slightly in that she is eager to go on a journey even before being called to adventure and is bored with her mundane life on the island. Ever since she was young, Moana has had a longing to see what is beyond the reef surrounding her island. So, contrary to Campbell's hero, Moana does not begin her journey merely in order to save her village but also guided by a sense of longing to know the unknown. Moana is an unlikely Hero in the sense that she has never ventured beyond her island and does not have the skills needed to sail the ocean. This notion is later brought up by Maui, who continuously doubts the Ocean's decision to give her the heart of Te Fiti.

The supernatural aid comes to Moana in the form of two different entities. First, Moana meets the Ocean, which turns out to be a sentient being with anthropomorphic features. It is unclear how the Ocean came to be sentient or why it chose Moana, but it is undoubtedly a useful ally to her as she spends most of her journey sailing. The Ocean's willingness to help Moana is a clear indication to her that nature itself is on her side on her quest. Throughout the movie, whenever she is doubting her ability to return the heart of Te Fiti, she reminds herself that the Ocean chose her for the task and is able to continue with more confidence. This aligns with Campbell's description of the supernatural aid as a reassuring presence on the Hero's journey (66). Moana's second supernatural ally is Maui, whom Moana's grandmother describes in the tale of how Te Fiti's heart was stolen: "He was a demi-god of the wind and sea. He was a warrior. A trickster. A shapeshifter who could change form with the power of his magical fishhook". Maui, too, joins Moana on her adventure, though, unlike the ocean, he does so reluctantly.

In Moana's journey, the crossing of the first threshold takes the form of exiting the safe area of the reef surrounding Motunui and moving on to sail the vast ocean. The reef is

portrayed as a safe space and the ocean beyond it as an unknown realm of dangers, which is first shown in this conversation between Moana's father and grandmother:

> GRANDMOTHER. But one day, the heart will be found by someone who will journey beyond our reef, find Maui, deliver him across the great ocean to restore Te Fiti's heart and save us a-
>
> FATHER. Whoah whoah thank you mother, that's enough. No one goes outside the reef. We're safe here. There's no darkness, there are no monsters…There is nothing beyond our reef but storms and rough seas. As long as we stay on our very safe island, we'll be fine
>
> GRANDMOTHER. The legends are true. Someone will have to go.
>
> FATHER. Mother! Motunui is paradise! Who would want to go anywhere else?

There are strong waves at the edge of the reef, which act as the threshold guardian preventing the inhabitants of Motunui from easily venturing out to the open sea. Moana tries to sail through the waves in the beginning of the film and her failure almost costs her her life. Managing to pass the barrier between her safe, familiar world to enter the world of unknown marks the beginning of her journey and growth.

With the aid of her companions, Moana proceeds to the road of trials. Maui warns her of the dangers of her mission: "You wanna get to Te Fiti, you gotta go through a whole ocean of bad, not to mention Te Ka" (00:49:20). Moana, however, chooses to continue. She encounters her first trial when she and Maui are forced to fight a group of coconut-like creatures called the Kakamora, who have come to steal the heart of Te Fiti. Her next trial is stealing Maui's magical fishhook back from a giant crab, Tamatoa, who resides in the realm of monsters. Not all of Moana's trials are physical, however, and arguably her most important trial is helping rebuild Maui's self-confidence in his shapeshifting abilities. She needs Maui's help to restore the heart of Te Fiti but he has difficulties using his powers due to a low sense of self-worth. Moana reassures him by telling him: "Maybe the gods found you for a reason. Maybe the Ocean brought you to them because it saw someone who is worthy of being saved. But the gods aren't the ones who make you Maui – you are" (1:10:13). This trial tests

Moana's compassion and interpersonal skills as opposed to her ability to face danger. Having overcome these three challenges, Moana proceeds to her final trial: getting past Te Ka to Te Fiti. This, however, does not go according to plan and becomes the only trial Moana initially fails, resulting in Maui losing his confidence again and leaving Moana. The trials Moana faces test her both in ways that are more typical to a male Hero's journey and in ways that require her to use skills more often associated with female Heroes. This is interesting, as it paints Moana as a hero who has both masculine and feminine qualities.

After Maui's departure, Moana is left alone to complete her mission, which leads to her "apotheosis" moment. Throughout the film, Moana has struggled with finding herself and reaching a balance between the two conflicting sides of her character: the responsible future chief who loves her island and the adventurous voyager who wants to sail the seas. This conflict becomes apparent in her first song "How Far I'll Go", where she sings:

> I've been staring at the edge of the water
> 'Long as I can remember
> Never really knowing why
> I wish I could be the perfect daughter
> But I come back to the water
> No matter how hard I try
>
> --
>
> I can lead with pride
> I can make us strong
> I'll be satisfied if I play along
> But the voice inside sings a different song
> What is wrong with me?

Moana's apotheosis, then, is about resolving this inner conflict and realising her full potential by converging both sides into one. She does this with the help of her grandmother's spirit, which appears to her in her lowest moment and asks her: "Moana, listen, do you know who you are?" (1:20:46). In the song "I am Moana", Moana realises that she can love both her island and the sea: "I am the girl who loves my island/ I am the girl who loves the sea/ it calls me". She also connects her two identities as the village chief's daughter and a voyager:" I am

the daughter of the village chief/ We are descended from voyagers/ who found their way across the world/ they call me". By the end of the song, Moana has found confidence in her identity and abilities, singing: "come what may/ I'll find the way/ I am Moana". With her newly found confidence Moana reaches the end of her quest by using the skills in "way-finding" which Maui has taught her and sailing past Te Ka to restore the heart of Te Fiti. The final challenge, however, is not passing Te Ka as Moana realises that the fire goddess is, in fact, Te Fiti, corrupted after losing her heart. Moana must then remind Te Ka of her true nature and give her back her heart, which restores her back to her original form, Te Fiti.

To express her gratitude to Moana, Te Fiti rewards her with a gift – the ultimate boon. According to Campbell, the gift the hero receives is personalised to his/her specific desires or needs: "The boon bestowed on the worshiper is always scaled to his stature and to the nature of his dominant desire: the boon is simply a symbol of life energy stepped down to the requirements of a certain specific case" (175). This is the case in *Moana*, as the titular heroine is gifted with a boat of her own to replace the one she stole from her village at the beginning of the film. This gift is significant to Moana as it is a vehicle to realise her desire to explore the ocean.

Her mission completed, Moana returns home with the aid of the restored goddess Te Fiti. The film does not linger on the return phase but ends with Moana leading her village to sail the seas in search of new land. Thus, Moana completes her Hero's journey by finding a way to use her new skills in her old life and creating a connection between the old world of her village and the mystical world of the vast ocean.

5. Conclusions

The Image of the Disney princess has undoubtedly changed since the days of Snow White and the early princesses. Stephens argues that this is the result of a symbiotic relationship between society and the media, where the media reflects current trends in society and society

in turn takes influence from the media and evolves (96). As the ideal image of what a woman should be and how she should act has changed through the decades, so has the characterisation of Disney's female protagonists. This, in change, has influenced the way the young girls watching these films interpret their own role as a female member of society: "as women change, so does the archetype of the princess— i.e. the lead female character in Disney films, in accordance with the desire of the primary audience" (Stephens 105). It is, then, no surprise that Disney's first and latest princess and their stories represent different archetypes.

Snow White, as an image of the Maiden archetype, reflects the views of her time of a woman as sweet, innocent, helpless, and passive. According to Jones, the innocent persecuted heroine fairy tale acts as a sort of coming-of-age story to guide young girls in navigating the difficulties of the three important stages of her life: childhood, finding a husband, and married life and childbirth. This is in direct reflection of the societal values placed on women in the cultures these tales are born in ("The Innocent Persecuted Heroine" 25). Moana, conversely, is an image of the Hero archetype and thus shows a more modern interpretation of what a woman should be. The Hero is not confined to any specific set of characteristics and is defined by their journey, which they ultimately manage to complete due to their own growth. Moana takes an active role in her story and shows character growth, which supports Stephens' claim: "the characterization of the princess has definitely developed into one of a more independent, strong, self-sufficient female character" (105).

Though Snow White and Moana represent different archetypes, it should be noted that there is some overlap between their characterisations. Particularly Moana displays some characteristics of the Maiden archetype. Moana is portrayed as beautiful; however, her beauty is never presented as a defining characteristic as in Snow White's case. None of the other characters in *Moana* comment on her appearance and it is never given any importance in the

story. A female hero may, indeed, be attractive and feminine, however, as opposed to the Maiden archetype, these qualities do not define her (L. Campbell 9). In contrast, Snow White's beauty is the root cause of the main conflict in her story and is often mentioned by other characters. Moana also displays moments of helplessness, constantly relying on her companions for the first half of the film. Her helplessness, however, is portrayed as a character flaw she manages to overcome by the end of the film, which is in stark contrast to Snow White, who remains helpless when her story ends. Moana's evolution is most clearly shown in the way she frames her quest to herself. At the beginning of her journey, she prepares to ask Maui to return the Heart of Te Fiti by repeating to herself: "I am Moana of Motunui. You will board my boat, sail across the sea and restore the heart of Te Fiti" (31:12). Later, during her apotheosis, she realises she does not need to rely on Maui to return the heart, exclaiming: "I am Moana of Motunui. Aboard my boat, I will sail across the sea and restore the heart of Te Fiti" (01:22:40).

Arguably one of the greatest differences between the Maiden in the innocent persecuted heroine tale and the Hero is their level of agency. The protagonist of an innocent persecuted heroine story is passive, and the story is generally moved forward not by her actions but by the evil forces that persecute her. This is shown in *Snow White*, as the heroine does not take initiative to reach her goals, instead simply reacting to things happening to her. The presence of the "Male Rescuer" archetype is also strong in *Snow White*, as the heroine is rescued first by the dwarves and then by the Prince. The opposite can be said of Moana, who learns to rely on herself and actively progresses the plot through her actions and choices.

The goals of the Maiden and Hero also differ from each other. In the innocent persecuted heroine story, finding love is presented as an important goal to the protagonist, whereas the hero's goal is completing his quest, whatever that may be. This difference is also exemplified by *Snow White* and *Moana*, as the former shows a main character whose only

objective in life seems to be finding love while the latter does not involve any romantic elements and is instead focused on its main character's quest to save her village. According to Stephens, this shift in the importance of love as a goal is one of the most essential differences in the characterisation of the Disney princess (101).

Stephens describes the change in the image of the Disney princess as a positive development and mainly paints the classical princesses in a negative light, calling them "insufferably agreeable" (99) and "passive and weak-minded" (100). According to Stephens, the modern princess are an improvement, stating that they are "no longer the helpless female[s] that once graced the shiny marble floors of a prince's castle" (103). Even Disney themselves tend to use the classical princess image mostly as a punchline in self-deprecating jokes in their more recent films such as *Ralph Breaks the Internet*. In one scene the character Vanellope stumbles upon the changing room of all the Disney princesses and has a conversation with them about what it means to be a princess. Vanellope introduces herself as a princess, which prompts the Disney princesses to ask her questions about what kind of princess she is. They ask her if animals talk to her, if she has been poisoned or cursed, and if she has had a true love's kiss. Finally the girls ask Vanellope if people assume all her problems were solved by a big, strong man and Vanellope's affirmative answer convinces them that she is, in fact, a real princess. This shows that even Disney view their older princesses as outdated and attempt to separate their newer female protagonists from the classical princess image. It must, however, be said that though the classical princesses reflect a different time and society, they are not inherently "worse" as characters or role models than their modern counterparts. Moana is not necessarily a better character than Snow White just as the Hero archetype is not necessarily better than the Maiden archetype when it comes to representing women. These different representations of the Disney princess are merely the product of their time and each have their own merits.

Whether the evolution of the image of the Disney princess is taking a positive direction or not, it is nonetheless an important topic of study. The Walt Disney Company have solidified their place as the biggest name in the animated film industry and the princesses they have created are some of the most beloved characters among children. The influence of these characters on the young, developing girls who see them as role models should not be underestimated. As Jones states, it is important to know what kind of characters Disney portrays in order to better understand the development of the next generation (105). Thus, the ever-changing image of the Disney princess remains relevant as long as it holds such a crucial place in children's media.

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