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Masters in Sound and Image



The Portrayal of Female Characters in Mainstream Animation

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to my beloved boyfriend, my family for supporting me, and every woman who ever faced discrimination solely based on their gender.

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Abstract

The present dissertation consists of a historical analysis of mainstream animation movies in addition to television series, and how society helped shape them, how they helped influence its audiences (both positively and negatively), and their evolution. This dissertation will also examine how the female gender has been treated and portrayed throughout the years, exploring its sociological connotations, in the medium of animation. Along with a study on how representation is important to evade any type of out-casting. It will also include a comparative analysis between the researched themes and *The All-Nighter* (2015), a short film created as the final project of the Masters in Computer Animation's curriculum.

Keywords: Feminism, Disney, mainstream animation, representation, television, films, influence

Table of Contents

List of Figures v

1. Introduction 1
   1.1 The Author's Artistic Development 2
   1.2 Presentation of the Research Subject and Final Project 2
   1.3 Dissertation Reading Specifications 4
   1.4 The Problematic 4
   1.5 Research Methodology 10

2. Evolution of Female Characters Throughout Animation History 11
   2.1 The Golden and Silver Ages 13
      2.1.1 Snow White and the First Female Animation Characters 13
      2.1.2 Tex Avery 21
      2.1.3 Cinderella and Aurora 24
      2.1.4 Peter Pan 27
      2.1.5 Cartoon Shows and Shorts 33
   2.2 The Renaissance 40
      2.2.1 Jessica Rabbit And The Renewed Interest In Animation 40
      2.2.2 Hayao Miyazaki 43
      2.2.3 The Little Mermaid and Cartoon Sitcoms 50
      2.2.4 New Shorts and Television Series 52
      2.2.5 Our New Heroines 56
   2.3 21st Century 80
      2.3.1 1st Decade 80
      2.3.2 2nd Decade 83
   2.4 Conclusion 98

3. Character Portrayal 99
   3.1 Physical Characterization 99
      3.1.1 Heroines are Beautiful and Villains are Ugly 99
      3.1.2 "Real" Bodies 106
      3.1.3 The Sexualisation of Chel 111
      3.1.4 Expressions 115
      3.1.5 Face Proportions 119
      3.1.6 All Women are the Same 124
      3.1.7 Men are the Norm, Women the Exception 126
      3.1.8 "I now pronounce you Extraordinary and Plain" 129
   3.2 Personality 132
      3.2.1 Real Characters come from Real People 138
      3.2.2 Goals and Drives 139
   3.3 Gender Binary 140

4. The All-Nighter 143
   4.1. Development 143
   4.2 Why a Woman 145

5. Conclusion 147

References 149
   Bibliography 149
   Webography 152
   Filmography 156

Annex: Synopses of the Mentioned Films 162

List of Figures

Fig. 1 – A “pretty” black woman, talking to caricaturized black people in *Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* (Lantz, 1941) – Lantz, W. (Director). (1941). *Scrub me mama with a boogie beat* [Television broadcast]. USA: Universal Pictures.

Fig. 2 – Left to right top row: Kida (Trousdale & Wise, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, 2001), Mulan (Cook & Bancroft, *Mulan,* 1998), Jasmine (Clements & Musker, *Aladdin,* 1992), Tiana (Clements & Musker, The Princess and the Frog, 2009). Left to right bottom row: Jane (Lima & Buck, *Tarzan,* 1999), Ariel (Clements & Musker, The Little Mermaid, 1989), Belle (Trousdale & Wise, Beauty and the Beast, 1991), Esmeralda (Trousdale & Wise, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996) – Retrieved from http://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/227-movies-at-the-theater/69804225?page=1 (01/05/2015)

Fig. 3 – Sequence of images of Kuzco and Pacha hugging, and suffering an awkward moment subsequently. – Dindal, M. (Director). (2000). *The emperor's new groove* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Pictures.

Figures 4 through 8 – Disney, W. (Producer). (1937). *Snow white and the seven dwarves* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 4 – The Prince and Snow White meeting for the first time.

Fig. 5 – The Queen looking at Snow White’s interaction with the Prince.

Fig. 6 – Snow White telling the seven dwarves her love story.

Fig. 7 – Snow White about to send Prince charming a dove with a kiss.

Fig. 8 – The Queen talking to the hunter.

Fig. 9 – Screenshot of *Snow White* (Fleischer D. , 1933), starring Betty Boop. – Fleischer, D. (Director). (1933). *Snow-white* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

Fig. 10 – Betty Boop compared to Helen Kane. – Retrieved from http://www.planetzot.com/cartoon_info.php?id=192#prettyPhoto (23/06/2015)

Fig. 11 – Betty Boop in *The Old Man of the Mountain* (Fleischer D. , 1933) – Fleischer, D. (Director). (1933). *The old man of the mountain* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Productions.

Fig. 12 – Betty Boop in *Red Hot Mamma* (Fleischer D. , 1934) – Fleischer, D. (Director). (1934). *Red hot mamma* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

Fig. 13 – Snow White compared to Claudette Colbert – Retrieved from http://www.frockflicks.com/disney-princess-historical-influences-snow-white-1937/ (30/07/2015)

Fig. 14 – Betty Boop in her classic pose. – Retrieved from http://robot6.comicbookresources.com/2011/02/who-owns-betty-boop-it-isnt-fleischer-studios-court-finds/ (27/08/2015)

Fig. 15 – Snow White dancing. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1937). *Snow white and the seven dwarves* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 16 – Colleen Moore, actress and flapper. – Retrieved from http://web.emerson.edu/tartuffe/2012/09/19/famous-flappers/ (27/08/2015)

Fig. 17 – Fay Wray, conservative actress. – Retrieved from http://glamourdaze.com/2012/11/the-1930s-the-golden-age-of-glamour-for-womens-fashion.html (27/08/2015)

Fig. 18 - Olive Oyl. – Romanelli, D. (2012). *Wilco & popeye - "dawned on me"* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbHTaPk8Qmk

Fig. 19 – Olive Oyl being tugged between Brutus and Popeye. - Fleischer, D. (Director). (1935). *Pleased to meet cha!* [Television broadcast]. USA: Fleischer Studios.

Fig. 20 – Boy tree trying to save girl tree from the evil old tree. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1932). *Flowers and trees* [Television broadcast]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 21 – Girl tree admiring her caterpillar ring. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1932). *Flowers and trees* [Television broadcast]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 22 – The Rooster prepared to offer the Hen an ear of corn. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1935). Cock o' the walk [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 23 – The spectator chickens waving at the Cock. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1935). Cock o' the walk [Television broadcast]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Figures 24 through 26 – Avery, T. (Director). (1943). *Red hot riding hood* [Television broadcast]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Fig. 24 – Red Riding Hood, Granny, and the wolf fighting with the narrator.

Fig. 25 – Image sequence of the wolf's reaction to seeing Red onstage.

Fig. 26 – Red taking off her cape.

Fig. 27 - Rural Riding Hood. – Avery, T. (Director). (1949). *Little rural riding hood* [Television broadcast]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Fig. 28 – A picture of Red Hot Riding Hood. – Avery, T. (Director). (1949). *Little rural riding hood* [Television broadcast]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Fig. 29 – Jessica Rabbit performing in the club. – Zemeckis, R. (Director). (1988). *Who framed roger rabbit* [Motion picture]. USA: Touchstone Pictures.

Fig. 30 – Cinderella admiring her magic-made dress – Disney, W. (Producer). (1950). Cinderella [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 31 – Phillip and Aurora talk in the woods. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1959). *Sleeping beauty* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 32 - Grace Kelly. – Retrieved from http://slotho122.deviantart.com/art/grace-kelly-color-89476239 (30/07/2015)

Fig. 33 - Marilyn Monroe. – Retrieved from http://itsyregi.com/make-up-tutorials/makeup-for-your-eye-shape/ (30/07/2015)

Fig. 34 – Sequence of images from the scene where the Prince meets Cinderella for the first time. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1950). *Cinderella* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Figures 35 through 49 – Disney, W. (Producer). (1953). *Peter pan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 35 – Mr Darling fixing her husband's tie.

Fig. 36 – The family trying to comfort Nana after she fell.

Fig. 37 – Wendy about to sew Peter Pan's shadow on.

Fig. 38 – Sequence of images of the places the Darling children want to visit (Mermaid Lagoon, the Indian Encampment, and the Jolly Roger, respectively).

Fig. 39 – The Jolly Roger as seen flying over London.

Fig. 40 – Wendy carrying a washing jug and bowl into the nursery.

Fig. 41 – Image sequence of Wendy reacting to Peter's observation.

Fig. 42 – Tinkerbell pulling Wendy away from Peter.

Fig. 43 - Sequence of images from the "mermaids try to drown Wendy" scene.

Fig. 44 – Peter laughing as the mermaids taunt Wendy.

Fig. 45 – Peter swooping in and grabbing the conch shell out of Wendy's hand.

Fig. 46 – Sequence of images of Peter quieting Wendy, and she forgetting what she was previously peeved about.

Fig. 47 – Sequence of the native woman sending Wendy for wood.

Fig. 48 – Tiger Lilly Eskimo kissing Peter Pan.

Fig. 49 – Sequence of Wendy accepting her destiny and walking the plank.

Fig. 50 – Minnie and Mickey Mouse. – Retrieved from http://stores.ebay.com/poster-art-house/disney-movie-posters-/_i.html?_fsub=15 (15/07/2015)

Fig. 51 – Daisy and Donald Duck. – Retrieved from http://www.disneyclips.com/imagesnewb/daisyduck3.html (15/07/2015)

Figures 52 through 55 – Kinney, J. (Director). (1954). *Donald's diary* [Television broadcast]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 52 – Daisy concocting a perfume.

Fig. 53 – Daisy letting her handkerchief fall expecting Donald to get it.

Fig. 54 – Daisy taking money from Donald's wallet.

Fig. 55 – Daisy reading "How to Catch a Husband.

Fig. 56 – 1928 Minnie Mouse. – Jackson, W. (Director). (1932). *The grocery boy* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 57 – Mickey showing love to Minnie. – Rudish, P. (Director). (2015). *Doggone biscuits* [Television broadcast]. USA: Disney Television Animation.

Fig. 58 – Daisy and Donald being burned by the sun. – Rudish, P. (Director). (2014). *Adorable couple* [Television broadcast]. USA: Disney Television Animation.

Fig. 59 – Tweety and Granny catching Sylvester red-handed. – http://mortalinstrumentsinfernaldevices.tumblr.com/post/3391836845/tmi-dream-cartoon-cast-just-for-the-fun-of-it (1/08/2015)

Fig. 60 – Witch Hazel concocting a potion. – Jones, C. (Director). (1954). *Bewitched bunny* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Fig. 61 - Bugs Bunny courting Daisy in *Hare Splitter* (Freleng, 1948) – Freleng, F. (Director). (1948). *Hare splitter* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Productions.

Fig. 62 – Penelope the cat being assaulted by Pepé le Pew who thought of her as another skunk (Jones, *Past Perfumance*, 1955). – Jones, C. (Director). (1955). *Past perfumance* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Productions.

Fig. 63 –Petunia and Porky Pig in *Naughty Neighbours* (Clampett, 1939). – Clampett, R. (Director). (1939). *Naughty neighbors* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Fig. 64 – Mama Bear in *Bugs Bunny and the Three Bears* (Jones, 1944). – Jones, C. (Director). (1944). *Bugs bunny and the three bears* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Fig. 65 – Lola Bunny's entering the court in *Space Jam*. – Pytka, J. (Director). (1996). *Space jam* [Motion picture]. USA: Warner Bros. Family Entertainment.

Fig. 66 – Bugs Bunny as Brunhilde in What's Opera Doc? (Jones, What's Opera, Doc?, 1957). - Jones, C. (Director). (1957). *What's opera, doc?* [Television broadcast]. USA: Warner Bros. Cartoons.

Fig. 67 – Mother sewing, father reading the paper. – Cannon, R. (Director). (1951). *Gerald mcboing-boing* [Motion picture]. USA: UPA.

Fig. 68 - The singer finding Frankie on the other side of the door after Johnny was killed. – Hubley, J. (Director). (1951). *Rooty toot toot* [Motion picture]. USA: UPA.

Fig. 69 – Roger and Eddie running away from the cops. – Pytka, J. (Director). (1996). *Space jam* [Motion picture]. USA: Warner Bros. Family Entertainment.

Fig. 70 - Jessica Rabbit (1988) – Pytka, J. (Director). (1996). *Space jam* [Motion picture]. USA: Warner Bros. Family Entertainment.

Figures 71 through 74 – Miyazaki, H. (Director). (1988). *My neighbour totoro* [Motion picture]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

Fig. 71 – Mei, Satsuki, Totoro, and Chu and Chibi Totoro doing a ritual.

Fig. 72 – Satsuki with Mei on her back next to Totoro on the bus stop.

Fig. 73 – Mei lying on Totoro.

Fig. 74 - Totoro, Chibi Totoro (on Totoros head), Mei, Satsuki, and Chu Totoro (1988)

Figures 75 through 78 – Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2001). *Spirited Away* [Motion picture]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

Fig. 75 – Chihiro bored during the trip.

Fig. 76 - Yubaba and Chihiro.

Fig. 77 – Haku offering Chihiro a rice cake.

Fig. 78 - Chihiro running after Haku.

Figures 79 through 80 – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1989). *The little mermaid* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 79 – Ariel singing to an unconscious Eric.

Fig. 80 – Ariel singing how she would love to be part of the human world.

Fig. 81 - Tiffani Thiessen as Kelly Kapowski in Saved by the Bell (Bobrick, 1989-1993) – Retrieved from http://www.rsvlts.com/2014/06/04/kelly-kapowski-sex-symbol/ (20/08/2015)

Fig. 82 - The Simpsons family. – Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Simpsons (05/06/2015)

Fig. 83 - The Blue Fairy's lifelikeness to Geppetto's caricature. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1940). *Pinocchio* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 84 – Lois and her expanding boobs. – Retrieved from http://www.comicvine.com/lois-griffin/4005-43709/ (05/06/2015)

Fig. 85 – Meg as the Sarlacc in the *Star Wars* parody of *Family guy*. – Retrieved from http://vsbattles.wikia.com/wiki/Meg_Griffin (05/06/2015)

Fig. 86 - Lois and Meg Griffin. – Retrieved from http://captions.ararchive.com/index.php/morphs/sfw/lois-and-meg-griffin (05/06/2015)

Fig. 87 – Furrball, Elmyra, Hamton, Babs, Sweetie, Buster, Plucky, Montana Max, and Fifi posing in front of Acme Looniversity. – *The looney beginning* [Television series episode]. (1990, September 14). In T. Ruegger (Producer), Tiny Toon Adventures.

Fig. 88 – Buster and Babs Bunny during the opening theme. – *The looney beginning* [Television series episode]. (1990, September 14). In T. Ruegger (Producer), Tiny Toon Adventures.

Figures 89 through 91 – Trousdale, G., & Wise, K. (Directors). (1991). *Beauty and the beast* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 89 – Belle at the bookshop.

Fig. 90 – Belle and the Beast on the balcony.

Fig. 91 – Belle impatient as Gaston bothers her about how women should not read.

Fig. 92 – Aladdin admiring himself in the mirror. – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1992). *Aladdin* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 93 – Jasmine and the Sultan discussing her love life. – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1992). *Aladdin* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Figures 94 through 100 – Bluth, D. (Director). (1994). *Thumbelina* [Motion picture]. USA: Don Bluth Entertainment.

Fig. 94 – Thumbelina's mother reacting to her birth.

Fig. 95 – Thumbelina and prince Cornelius getting married.

Fig. 97 – Thumbelina meeting Cornelius for the first time.

Fig. 98 - Grundel Toad pulling Thumbelina to him.

Fig. 99 – Thumbelina as a butterfly.

Fig. 100 – Thumbelina about to me married to the mole.

Figures 101 through 103 – Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Directors). (1995). *Pocahontas* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 101 – Pocahontas and John Smith meeting.

Fig. 102 – Pocahontas saving John Smith's life.

Fig. 103 – Pocahontas saying goodbye to John Smith.

Figures 104 through 110 – Trousdale, G., & Wise, K. (Directors). (1996). *The hunchback of notre dame* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 104 – Esmeralda rescuing Quasimodo from the mockery of the people.

Fig. 105 – Esmeralda reacting at Frollo's proximity and proposition.

Fig. 106 – Frollo making Esmeralda to choose between him and death.

Fig. 107 – Esmeralda, Phoebus and Djali (the goat) looking happily at Quasimodo.

Fig. 108 – Quasimodo celebrating with the townspeople.

Fig. 109- Esmeralda teasing Frollo.

Fig. 110 – Esmeralda about to clean and comfort Quasimodo after the townspeople assaulted him.

Fig. 111 – Esmeralda smiling at the spectators.

Figures 112 through 120 – Musker, J., & Clements, R. (Directors). (1997). *Hercules* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 112 – Zeus, Hera, and baby Hercules in Mount Olympus.

Fig. 113 – Hercules trying to reach Megara's soul while rapidly aging, in the river Styx.

Fig. 114 – Hercules choosing Megara over Olympus.

Fig. 115 – Hercules about to save Megara from the centaur.

Fig. 116 – Image sequence of Hades reminding Megara how she traded her soul to save the one she loved and how he left her for another woman.

Fig. 117 – Megara washing her hair.

Fig. 118 – Megara crushed by a pillar after pushing Hercules out of the way.

Fig. 119 – Hades teasing Hercules over Megara's betrayal.

Fig. 120 – Hades telling Megara to seduce Hercules.

Figures 121 through 133 – Bluth, D. (Director). (1997). *Anastasia* [Motion picture]. USA: Fox Animation Studios.

Fig. 121 – Young Anastasia dancing with her father.

Fig. 122 – Dimitri noticing Anya's eyes compared to those of the painting.

Fig. 123 – Anastasia hearing about Dimitri being a con artist.

Fig. 124 – Anastasia saving Dimitri on the train.

Fig. 125 – Dmitri saving Anastasia from sliding off the broken bridge.

Fig. 126 – Anastasia asking Dimitri to stop talking because it is upsetting her.

Fig. 127 – Anastasia's body with the coat.

Fig. 128 - Dimitri dumbfounded upon seeing Anastasia's look at the ballet.

Fig. 129 – Anastasia in her gala outfit while Dimitri tries to talk to her grandmother.

Fig. 130 - Anastasia in her dream.

Fig. 131 – Dimitri holding Anastasia as she cries.

Fig. 132 – Image sequence of Anastasia tackling Rasputin to the ground where they both struggle.

Fig. 133 – Anastasia destroying Rasputin's reliquary.

Figures 134 through 142 – Cook, B., & Bancroft, T. (Directors). (1998). *Mulan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 134 – Shang noticing her breasts.

Fig. 135 – Mulan (as Ping) uncovering her bandages.

Fig. 136 – Mulan dressed on her way to the matchmaker.

Fig. 137 – Mulan winning the checkers game with one move.

Fig. 138 – The boys about to steal the little girl's doll.

Fig. 139 – Image sequence of Mulan approaching citizens to warn them of the danger, and they pull away indignantly.

Fig. 140 – Mulan taking off her make-up at her ancestors' shrine.

Fig. 141 – Mulan presenting the sword of Shan Yu and the crest of the emperor to her father.

Fig. 142 - Ling, Chien-Pao, and Yao disguised as concubines.

Figures 143 through 145 – Chau, F. D. (Director). (1998). *Quest for camelot* [Motion picture]. USA: Warner Bros. Animation.

Fig. 143 – Gruber and Juliana, Kayley's mother, as he is about to use her in his plan.

Fig. 144 – Kayley as a child being patted by her father.

Fig. 145 – Kayley and Garrett meeting for the first time.

Fig. 146 – Shrek having put up the "Beware Ogre" sign. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Fig. 147 – Fiona reacting to finding an ogre saved her instead of a prince. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Fig. 148 – Fiona in her ogre form. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Figures 149 through 151 – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (2009). *The princess and the frog* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 149 – Naveen and Tiana as frogs.

Fig. 150 – Tiana in her princess costume dress.

Fig. 151 – Tiana waitressing.

Figures 152 through 154 – Andrews, M., & Chapman, B. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 152 - Elinor, as a bear, and Merida hunting fish.

Fig. 153 –A tapestry with an illustration of Merida and Elinor as a bear.

Fig. 154 – Merida peeking at one of the clans' first-born's strength.

Figures 155 through 158 – Greno, N., & Howard, B. (Directors). (2010). *Tangled* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 155 – Flynn and Rapunzel singing their feelings.

Fig. 156 – Rapunzel and her parents embracing each other.

Fig. 157 – Image Sequence of Rapunzel's daily activities.

Fig. 158 – Mother Gothel finishing reaping the flower's power onto her.

Figures 159 through 168 – Buck, C., & Lee, J. (Directors). (2013). *Frozen* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 159 – The troll with Arendelle's Royal family.

Fig. 160 – Anna mourning her parents' death against Elsa's bedroom door.

Fig. 161 – Anna and Kristoff about to be wedded by the trolls.

Fig. 162 – Hans rejecting Anna.

Fig. 163 – Elsa holding Anna's frozen body.

Fig. 164 – Elsa's ice blast hitting Anna in the heart.

Fig. 165 – Anna dancing with Hans.

Fig. 166 – Kristoff carrying dying Anna.

Fig. 167 – The Queen, Elsa, and Anna in comparison.

Fig. 168 – Anna and Elsa's profile.

Fig. 169 – Early concepts of Anna. – Retrieved from http://tyrannyofstyle.com/costume-design-animation-disney-frozen (26/08/2015)

Fig. 170 – Early Concepts of Elsa. – Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Early_concept_art_of_Frozen%27s_Elsa.jpg (26/08/2015)

Fig. 171 – Hiro and Baymax training. – Hall, D., & Williams, C. (Directors). (2014). *Big hero 6* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 172 – Fred, Go Go, Baymax, Hiro (scanning them), Wasabi, and Honey Lemon. – Hall, D., & Williams, C. (Directors). (2014). *Big hero 6* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Figures 173 through 187 – Docter, P., & Del Carmen, R. (Directors). (2015). *Inside Out* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 173 – Riley and her parents eating dinner.

Fig. 174 – Riley's parents cheering her on, and Riley looking embarrassed.

Fig. 175 – Riley, next to her mother, wearing a striped jumper.

Fig. 176 – Riley smiling.

Fig. 177 – Anger, Joy, Fear, Disgust, and Sadness surrounding the console.

Fig. 178 – Anger exploding at the thought of no dessert.

Fig. 179 – Snow White (Disney, 1937) – Disney, W. (Producer). (1937). *Snow white and the seven dwarves* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 180 – Cinderella (Disney, 1950) – Disney, W. (Producer). (1950). *Cinderella* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 181 – Aurora (Disney, 1959) – Disney, W. (Producer). (1959). *Sleeping beauty* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 182 – Ariel (Clements & Musker, 1989) Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1989). *The little mermaid* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 183 – Pocahontas (Goldberg & Gabriel, 1995) – Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Directors). (1995). *Pocahontas* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 184 – Elsa (Buck & Lee, Frozen, 2013) - Buck, C., & Lee, J. (Directors). (2013). *Frozen* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 185 – Jasmine (Clements & Musker, Aladdin, 1992) – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1992). *Aladdin* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 186 – Megara (Clements & Musker, Hercules, 1997) - Musker, J., & Clements, R. (Directors). (1997). *Hercules* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 187 – Jane (Buck & Lima, Tarzan, 1999). – Lima, K., & Buck, C. (Directors). (1999). Tarzan [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 188 – Esmeralda (Trousdale & Wise, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996) – Trousdale, G., & Wise, K. (Directors). (1996). *The hunchback of notre dame* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 189 – Evil Queen transformed into wicked witch (*Snow White)*. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1937). *Snow white and the seven dwarves* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 190 – Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty*). – Disney, W. (Producer). (1959). *Sleeping beauty* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 191 – Female red-skin (*Peter Pan*). – Disney, W. (Producer). (1953). *Peter pan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 192 – The Ugly Step-sisters *(Cinderella*). – Disney, W. (Producer). (1950). *Cinderella* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 193 – Ruffnut and Astrid training catching dragons. – Sanders, C., & Deblois, D. (Directors). (2010). How to Train Your Dragon [Motion picture]. USA: DreamWorks Animation.

Figures 194 through 200 – Disney, W. (Producer). (1953). Peter pan [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions

Fig. 194 – Mrs Darling in her children's nursery.

Fig. 195 – Mr Darling yelling at his children.

Fig. 196 – The mermaids waving at Peter Pan.

Fig. 197 – Tiger Lilly refusing to talk to Captain Hook.

Fig. 198 – The Indians carrying the Lost Boys to camp.

Fig. 199 – The Lost Boys saluting Peter Pan.

Fig. 200 – The pirates throwing knives.

Fig. 201 - Blue Fairy blessing Pinocchio. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1940). Pinocchio [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 202 – Rita, on right, is the only female dog in Dodger's gang. – Scribner, G. (Director). (1988). *Oliver & company* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 203 - Anastasia (Bluth & Goldman, Anastasia, 1997). - Bluth, D. (Director). (1997). *Anastasia* [Motion picture]. USA: Fox Animation Studios.

Fig. 204 - Marina (Johnson & Gilmore, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas,* 2003). - Johnson, T., & Gilmore, P. (Directors). (2003). *Sinbad: Legend of the seven seas* [Motion picture]. USA: DreamWorks Animation.

Fig. 205 - Thumbelina (Bluth & Goldman, 1994). - Bluth, D. (Director). (1994). *Thumbelina* [Motion picture]. USA: Don Bluth Entertainment.

Fig. 206 - Odette (Rich, *The Swan Princess*, 1994) – Rich, R. (Director). (1994). *The swan princess* [Motion picture]. USA: Rich Animation Studios.

Fig. 207 - Sam (Lord & Miller, *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*, 2009). – Lord, P., & Miller, C. (Directors). (2009). *Cloudy with a chance of meatballs* [Motion picture]. USA: Sony Pictures Animation.

Figures 208 through 214 – Dindal, M. (Director). (2000). *The emperor's new groove* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 208 – Close-up of Yzma's face.

Fig. 209 – Image sequence of Kuzco analysing Yzma's face.

Fig. 210 – Yzma tugging on Kronk.

Fig. 211 – Kronk and Yzma's eyes in the dark.

Fig. 212 – Yzma's eye poking out of the keyhole.

Fig. 213 – Sequence of two images of Yzma rubbing her eyes.

Fig. 214 – Image sequence of Yzma raising her dress to show a dagger, and Kuzko and Pacha's reactions to it.

Fig. 215 - Margaret Kerry acting as Tinker Bell for the animators to reference. – Retrieved from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2299738/The-real-life-models-helped-inspire-Walt-Disneys-best-loved-iconic-characters.html (18/05/2015)

Fig. 216 - Tinker Bell's hourglass figure. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1953). *Peter pan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 217 – Gaston flexing his biceps. – Trousdale, G., & Wise, K. (Directors). (1991). *Beauty and the beast* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 218 – Johnny Bravo on a date taking pictures of himself. – Retrieved from http://www.buzzfeed.com/andreborges/whoa-momma#.fjAd9yARq (07/07/2015)

Fig. 219 – Maria from *The Book of Life* (Gutierrez, 2014). - Gutierres, J. R. (Director). (2014). *The book of life* [Motion picture]. USA: 20th Century Fox Animation.

Fig. 220 – Sequence of two images of character Beryl singing about how women should accept their bodies in the short film *Body Beautiful* (Quinn, 1990). – Quinn, J. (Director). (1990). *Body beautiful* [Motion picture]. England: Beryl Productions.

Figures 221 through 225 – Quinn, J. (Director). (1988). *Girls night out* [Motion picture]. England: Beryl Productions.

Fig. 221 – Beryl talking on the phone to one of her girlfriends.

Fig. 222 - Two friends of the lead at the club.

Fig. 223 – The lead's big bum as seen from behind.

Fig. 224 – The striper's underpants.

Fig. 225 – Sequence of images of a pedestal shot of the striper's body from legs to face.

Figures 226 through 229 – Sanders, C., & Deblois, D. (Directors). (2002). *Lilo & stitch* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 226 – Nani's full body.

Fig. 227 – Nani's face in disbelief.

Fig. 228 – Nani, angry, grabbing Lilo.

Fig. 229 – Nani and David building a sandcastle over Lilo.

Figures 230 through 255 – Paul, D., & Bergeron, E. (Directors). (2000). *The road to el dorado* [Motion picture]. USA: DreamWorks Pictures.

Fig. 230 – Chel after running into Altivo, the horse.

Fig. 231 – Tulio, Miguel, and Chel reacting to the gold being thrown into an abyss.

Fig. 232 – Chel's body in different positions.

Fig. 233 – Miguel doing a growling sound as describing what he thinks of Chel.

Fig. 234 – Chel giving Tulio a massage.

Fig. 235 – Tulio giving Chel a massage.

Fig. 236 – Sequence of images of Chel being nowhere near Tulio's mouth during an intimate moment.

Fig. 237 – Chel saying goodbye to Miguel with a kiss on the lips.

Fig. 238 – The most plasticity seen in either Tulio or Miguel.

Fig. 239 – Collection of some of Chel's reactions.

Fig. 240 – Sam Sparks and Flint expressing shock. – Lord, P., & Miller, C. (Directors). (2009). *Cloudy with a chance of meatballs* [Motion picture]. USA: Sony Pictures Animation.

Figures 241 through 146 – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (2009). *The princess and the frog [*Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 241 – Charlotte trying to charm the Prince.

Fig. 242 – Charlotte Expressing fear.

Fig. 243 – Charlotte wishing upon a star.

Fig. 244 – Tiana smiling.

Fig. 245 – Tiana tired.

Fig. 246 – Tiana irritated.

Figures 247 through 25 – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1989). *The little mermaid* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 247 – Ariel.

Fig. 248 – Vanessa.

Fig. 249 – Scowling.

Fig. 250 – Shouting.

Fig. 251 – Cackling.

Fig. 252 – Merida concept art by Daniel Lopez Muñoz – Retrieved from https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/daniel-l%C3%B3pez-mu%C3%B1oz (19/08/2015)

Fig. 253 – Merida's design in the movie (left) and Merida's merchandise design (right). – Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/08/merida-brave-makeover_n_3238223.html (19/08/2015)

Fig. 254 – The description of the archetypical cute character. – Blair, P. (1949). *Advanced animation.* Laguna Beach: Foster. (p. 15)

Fig. 255 – Face proportions in adults and babies. – Retrieved from http://www.craftsy.com/blog/2013/08/childs-face-mastering-proportions/ (01/07/2015)

Fix. 256 – 16-year-old Aurora's face. – Disney, W. (Producer). (1959). *Sleeping beauty* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Fig. 257 – 21-year-old Elsa's face. – Buck, C., & Lee, J. (Directors). (2013). *Frozen* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 258 – Ariel's 16-year-old face. – Clements, R., & Musker, J. (Directors). (1989). *The little mermaid* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 259 – Rapunzel's 18 year-old face. – Greno, N., & Howard, B. (Directors). (2010). *Tangled* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 260 – Lucille from *A Monster in Paris* (Bergeron, 2011). – Bergeron, B. (Director). (2011). *A monster in paris* [Motion picture]. France: France 3 Cinéma.

Fig. 261 – Rapunzel's mother compared to Anna and Elsa's mother. – Retrieved from http://disneytheory.com/2014/03/24/thefrozentheory/ (14/06/2015)

Figures 262 through 263 – Greno, N., & Howard, B. (Directors). (2010). *Tangled* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 262 – Rapunzel looking at their reflection, as Mother Gothel laughs at her own joke.

Fig. 263 – Image Sequence from Mother Gothel's aging scene.

Fig. 264 – From left to right, Fear, Sadness, Joy, Disgust, and Anger. – Retrieved from http://blogs-images.forbes.com/scottmendelson/files/2015/06/pixar.jpg (21/08/2015)

Fig. 265 – *Inside Out*'s characters in a minimalistic style. – Retrieved from http://blogs.indiewire.com/animationscoop/rave-review-pixars-inside-out-20150618 (21/08/2015)

Fig. 266 – A teardrop, a star, a raw nerve, a brick, and a broccoli. – Retrieved from http://elchabelo.tumblr.com/post/124116848954/the-importance-of-basic-shapes-in-animation-all (21/08/2015)

Fig. 267 – Male characters and their traced jaws. – Retrieved from http://every-flavored-bean.tumblr.com/post/112569173199/every-woman-in-every-disneypixar-movie-in-the#notes (21/08/2015)

Fig. 268 – Female characters and their chin lines. – Retrieved from http://every-flavored-bean.tumblr.com/post/112569173199/every-woman-in-every-disneypixar-movie-in-the#notes (21/08/2015)

Fig. 269 – Collete (*Ratatouille*). – Bird, B. (Director). (2007). *Ratatouille* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 270 – Nakoma (*Pocahontas*). – Gabriel, M., & Goldberg, E. (Directors). (1995). *Pocahontas* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 271 – Clio the Muse (*Hercules*). – Musker, J., & Clements, R. (Directors). (1997). *Hercules* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 272 – Tanana (*Brother Bear, 2003*). – Blaise, A., & Walker, R. (Directors). (2003). *Brother bear* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 273 – Chaca (*The Emperor's New Groove*). – Dindal, M. (Director). (2000). The emperor's new groove [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Pictures.

Fig. 274 – Audrey (Atlantis: The Lost Empire). – Trousdale, G., & Wise, K. (Directors). (2001). *Atlantis: The lost empire* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 275 – Grandmother Fa (*Mulan*). – Cook, B., & Bancroft, T. (Directors). (1998). *Mulan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 276 – The Witch (*Brave*). – Andrews, M., & Chapman, B. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 277 – Maudie (*Brave*). – Andrews, M., & Chapman, B. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 278 – The Chipmunks and the "Chipettes" watching Alvin and Brittany duel in a video game in *Chipmunk Adventure* (Karman, 1987) – Karman, J. (Director). (1987). *Chipmunk adventure* [Motion picture]. USA: Bagdasarian Productions.

Fig. 279 - Dragon with her eyelashes and red lips. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Fig. 280 - Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man – Retrieved from http://pacman.wikia.com/wiki/Ms._Pac-Man (7/12/2015)

Fig. 281 – Sequence of images of Dragon and Donkey's chase scene. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images

Fig. 282 – Tarzan as a baby with his parents. – Lima, K., & Buck, C. (Directors). (1999). *Tarzan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 283 – Mulan's parents, Fa Zhou and Fa Li. – Cook, B., & Bancroft, T. (Directors). (1998). *Mulan* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 284 – Elinor and Fergus at the archery contest. – Andrews, M., & Chapman, B. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 285 – Elinor reacting to the disgusting cake. – Andrews, M., & Chapman, B. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 286 – Kuzco, and Pacha and Chicha with their children. – Dindal, M. (Director). (2000). *The emperor's new groove* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Fig. 287 – Helen and Bob drying books. – Bird, B. (Director). (2004). *The incredibles* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 288 – Zeus and Hera with baby Hercules. – Musker, J., & Clements, R. (Directors). (1997). *Hercules* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Feature Animation.

Fig. 289 – Carl and Ellie reading in their nook. – Docter, P. (Director). (2009). *Up* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 290 – Jack and Maddie Fenton in their ghost catching gear. - Hartman, B. (Creator). (2007). *Danny phantom* [Television series]. Nickelodeon, US.

Fig. 291 – Ellie and Carl lying on their picnic blanket. – Docter, P. (Director). (2009). *Up* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Fig. 292 – Images of volcanoes Lele and Uku compared to each other from the short *Lava* (Murphy J. F., 2014). – Murphy, J. F. (Director). (2014). *Lava* [Motion picture]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.

Figures 293 from 302 – Rich, R. (Director). (1994). *The swan princess* [Motion picture]. USA: Rich Animation Studios.

Fig. 293 – Odette challenging Derek.

Fig. 294 – Derek startled from the sudden attitude.

Fig. 295 – Derek and Odette being separated by their parents.

Fig. 296 – Odette furious at just being hit with a tomato.

Fig. 297 – Derek and his friend putting up a "No Girls" sign.

Fig. 298 – Derek reading by the fireplace.

Fig. 299 – Odette reading lying across an armchair.

Fig. 300 – Odette flirting with a guard as Derek watches from afar irked.

Fig. 301 – Odette finishing beating Derek at cards.

Fig. 302 – Odette and Derek meeting for what is seems like the first time.

Fig. 303 – Sequence of two images of Fiona transforming into human. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Fig. 304 – Fiona and Shrek getting married. – Adamson, A., & Jenson, V. (Directors). (2001). *Shrek* [Motion picture]. USA: Pacific Data Images.

Fig. 305 – Chihiro in the car with her parents. – Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2001). *Spirited away* [Motion picture]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

Fig. 306 – Garnet, Amethyst, Steven, and Pearl in the kitchen. – Suggar, R. (Creator). (2013). *Steven universe* [Television series]. US: Cartoon Network.

Fig. 307 - Rose Quartz (Steven's mother) and Greg. – Suggar, R. (Creator). (2013). *Steven universe* [Television series]. US: Cartoon Network.

Fig. 308 – Sara (the student) studying as the Sandman panics from the window. – Novais, B. (Director). (2015). *The All-Nighter* [Motion Picture]. Portugal.

Fig. 309 – Hobbes and Calvin sliding down a slope. – Retrieved from http://www.wsj.com/articles/calvin-and-hobbes-americas-most-profound-comic-strip-1425656199 (20/08/2015)

Fig. 310 – Jeremy (*Zits*'s protagonist) late for school. – Retrieved from http://popcultureguy-don.blogspot.pt/2011/01/comic-strip-spotlight-zits-launches-new.html (20/08/2015)

Fig. 311 – Sara yawning. – Novais, B. (Director). (2015). *The All-Nighter* [Motion Picture]. Portugal.

Fig. 312 – The sandman looking at Sara. – Novais, B. (Director). (2015). *The All-Nighter* [Motion Picture]. Portugal.

1. Introduction

Animation is "The artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms" (Wells, 2013). In 1824, Peter Roget presented his paper: The Persistence of Vision with Regard to Moving Objects, to the British Royal Society. According to this theory the succession of a series of still images can be made to have the illusion of movement (Rhead, 2012). This theory was the foundation of film and animation, and soon after many scientists began inventing various objects that produced such an illusion.[1] The first traditionally animated film recorded was called *Fantasmagorie* (1908) by Émile Cohl, a French caricaturist some times entitled the "Father of Animated Cartoon" (Popova, 2011) and justifiably so. Since the early nineteen hundreds scientists and artists from all over the globe have added to the rich history that is animation, from Russian stop-motion movies with dramatic complexity, like *The Cameraman's Revenge* (Starewicz, 1912), to character development in hand-drawn animation, such as Winsor McCay did in *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) for his vaudeville act.

Animation has been such a big part of the art scene and storytelling since the beginning of the 20th century that its increasing influence is of no surprise to anyone. This dissertation is by no means trying to blame animation (or cinema in general) as the single culprit of how the World views the female gender, but it will focus on how it has influenced the masses regardless.

On challenging situations that happen in cartoons Leslie Cabarga wrote, "*One simply must not question cartoon conventions after all!*" (1988, p. 98). Arguing that some things are maybe better left unquestioned, he uses *Popeye the Sailor* (Fleischer Brothers, 1933) as an example. What if Brutus were to always keep his own supply of spinach around? Or what if Popeye himself were to eat the spinach sooner? What he means is that cartoons are meant to be nonsensical, random, non-subjected to nature's laws if need be; dissecting them would not be prudent. But, ignoring Cabarga's counsel, many find it interesting to address what conventions the cartoons ignore or marginalise in not paying attention to logical narrative questions. Thus, ignoring his advice as well, this dissertation will analyse much of how cartoons and animated movies have represented female characters.

[1] Thaumatrope, Zoetrope, flip book, and praxinoscope, among others.
[2] For example, John Smith is continuously considered Pocahontas's boyfriend, and not John Rolfe, whom she

1.1 The Author's Artistic Development

As a small child I had an infatuation with moving pictures and things that made me laugh, I always watched cartoons and felt a deep love for them. But before that I was already an artist in the making, I used to paint and draw wherever I could (or could not) if I felt the need to express myself or if I had a sudden inspiration. Since I could hold a pencil my parents have always encourage me to develop my artistic talents, I was always in afterschool groups dedicated to art. I had always known I had a talent to be developed, I had always been praised for my works, but it was not until I was ten years old that I had my first confirmation that that was exactly the path I wanted to pursue; for the next three years my art teacher accompanied me, singled me out, and always expected more and worked with me to reach my potentials. After that it was just a matter of time until I discovered how creating for animation was my true passion. I analysed them, made them, adored them… It was no surprise to anyone when I chose to pursue that as a career.

Similarly, I have always had a strong sense of justice. I have always despised any situation where I thought someone was not being treated fairly. As I grew older I always found myself irritated by people belittling girls, making sexist jokes, or generalizing sexes all together. That translated later to me calling myself a "feminist" once I learned the proper meaning of the word, and how it stands for equality. So naturally whenever the opportunity were to arise for me to investigate both my love for animation and feminism I would not hesitate to grasp it.

1.2 Presentation of the Research Subject and Final Project

In *The Portrayal of Female Characters in Mainstream Animation*, we will focus mainly on how women are and have been represented in mainstream animation movies, how the world has influenced their portrayal, and how their portrayal has influenced the world. We will discuss what kind of impact it has on women and men's development regarding the female sex, what these characters embody, and how they have evolved since the first full-length cartoon was shown in cinemas.

This research explores the complex relationship between early and late 20th century female representation in animation, and how feminist ideologies have influenced modern animation. Although we will largely focus on Disney's creations, this dissertation will also compare and discuss other studios' creations. From original movies, to animated shorts and television

series, the only things we will not examine are sequels, neither full-length nor television series, because they are almost never a part of the original film's cannon[2]. We will also make comparative analyses between them along the way, as well as expose the societal and psychological issues it constructs.

Because it is necessary to make a short animated film during the second year of the Sound and Image Masters course in the Catholic University of Portugal's School of Arts, my final project emerged after a creative brainstorm of things that fill my life. I developed an idea based on my constant sleepiness, and how my fellow classmates and other friends of mine who were also students would usually rather work at night: *The All-Nighter* (2015) (*A Directa*, in its original Portuguese title) is a 5 minute 21 second-long short film, and has two main characters: Sandman, an amorphous semi-genderless creature (apart from the "man" in its name), and Sara, a student whose exam date is approaching at an alarming pace. The story focuses on Sandman's attempts at making Sara fall asleep through various tricks and gimmicks, but she unconsciously fights him because she has yet to finish doing all her revisions. We see them going head-to-head with each other throughout the film, with Sara having no real knowledge of his existence, only feeling his work's consequences, and the Sandman trying desperately to overcome each new obstacle that Sara unknowingly puts in his way. The film ends with the Sandman sighing in relief after finally accomplishing his duties before disappearing into thin air, but the viewer finds Sara literally drooling over an exam, and we realise that the Sandman made her fall asleep after she was already in class.

I had to make many decisions on how I wanted my movie to be, amongst my research I decided I wanted the student to be female, not only because of the correlation to my dissertation's theme, but also because there was no reason for her not to be female. She is purely supposed to be a character with whom any student would be able to relate to; I tried to make her reactions as neutral as possible, neither typically feminine nor masculine. Subsequently, when somebody watches the film, they will be able to see themselves or someone they know in her place, thus, I would have been able to successfully produce a character that is female, who does indeed look like one, but does not necessarily portray any stereotype shown to us during the course of animation history.

[2] For example, John Smith is continuously considered Pocahontas's boyfriend, and not John Rolfe, whom she chose to be with at the end of *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World* (Ellery & Raymond, 1998).

1.3 Dissertation Reading Specifications

This dissertation will be divided into five parts, although independent from each other it is recommended that the reader read it in order to best comprehend the idea and messages being conveyed.

Uncommon words or colloquialism will be explained in the footnotes, as well as some explanations to situations that need quick contextualization. Every film mentioned will have a synopsis intended for those who may not be familiar with the films in question, which explains the exaggerated dimension of this dissertation, however some film synopsis will be included in an annex instead of in-text, because its inclusion would have disrupted the flow of information. Whenever a quote from a movie is added its time-code will appear right after the quote in an "hour: minute: second" format (00:00:00).

It is also recommended that the reader keep in mind that whenever any adjective regarding appearance is used (pretty, beautiful, normal, ugly, etc.) it is used in accordance to societal standards and not as the personal judgement of this author, or is it to be considered a universally acknowledged truth. Furthermore we will analyse the way women were designed in each era as seen in our time.

Additionally, this work comprises a considerable amount of figures. This option was chosen as the object of study is so focused on visual analysis where the images are too intricate to always be described, if not too exhausting to read. There are things that are worth being seen to be able to achieve a thorough understanding. The figures are always accompanied by a caption that includes a brief description. The origin of the figures is properly identified in the list of figures.

1.4 The Problematic

"Women in the Western world nowadays seem to seek images which could define their identity. The search is motivated by a kind of disorientation and a deep uncertainty in modern women." (von Franz, 2001, p. 1) – Western women seek paradigms with which to identify and, over the years, the media has given them plenty. Because the world is still a vastly patriarchal place (Martin, 1984), most of the mass-media information that reaches women is about how they should look, how rich women live their wonderful lives, and how they should behave (mostly to attract a man).

Throughout the years, children, especially in developed countries, have been exposed to animated movies and television series since early childhood; as time goes by, this is more and more true thanks to globalization, and since cartoons are the cheapest sources of entertainment for young children, parents or guardians tend to rely on them to calm or distract them (Bryant & Zillmann, 2002).

Animation as a part of television programs plays an important role in children's development since animation often has children as its target audiences. The use of cognitive skills and how they relate to many aspects inside the animation such as narrative, character, and many more, influence what knowledge and skills they acquire from watching animation. It influences their cognitive and social development with things that they have not obtained from their parents and teachers at school. This issue raises questions such as what children can learn from watching animation, or how children of different ages and cultures make sense of it in their development process (Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2013). *"What does seem to be agreed upon by psychiatrists and psychologists studying the impact of the media upon children, however, is that visual media have an influence on children (and on adults for that matter) because film appeals to the sense of fantasy, even when the images being portrayed are "realistic" (such as with documentaries)"* (Davis A. M., 2007, p. 30).

Television in itself has been under the scrutiny of the public for some time, especially for its downsides on brain development[3], however it is up to each parent to know how much television their child should consume, *"With respect to children over two, the authors emphasize the importance of content in mediating the effect of television on cognitive skills and academic achievement. Early exposure to age appropriate programs designed around an educational curriculum is associated with cognitive and academic enhancement, whereas exposure to pure entertainment, and violent content in particular, is associated with poorer cognitive development and lower academic achievement.*" (Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2013). What cartoon studios should ultimately focus on is what messages they are feeding their targeted audiences, and how to better use their powers in influencing them.

Because of the continuous influence of the media, and how it portrays women, to this day the female gender is still considered weaker or lesser compared to that of men[4]. For

[3] There are many researchers who believe in television's ability to powerfully decrease and even damage brain function in children. (Winn, 2002)

[4] *"Using [like a girl] as an insult is a hard knock against any adolescent girl. And since the rest of puberty's really no picnic either, it's easy to see what a huge impact it can have on a girl's self-confidence. We're kicking off an epic battle to make sure that girls everywhere keep their confidence throughout puberty and beyond, and making a start by showing them that doing it [like a girl] is an awesome thing"* (Always, 2014)

example, the female gender is used as an insult when describing less than well-performed activities (a bad ball is thrown, it was thrown "like a girl", even though many tests were conducted where no real difference between the capacities of boys and girls was determined, Cook & Cook, 2008), there are many negative stereotypes (Johnson, Murphyb, Zewdiec, & Reichardb, 2008) that keep women from achieving their goals as easily as men do, examples include the on-going existence of jobs defined as "boys clubs"[5]; the idea that women are more prone to be family oriented than work oriented (Bowen, 1993), and that their intelligence is not acknowledged with as positive reinforcement as their physical appearance.

In Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) there is a conversation between two characters that goes as followed, "(…) *and I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman's fickleness. But perhaps you will say, these were all written by men*." To which the novel's heroine responds, "*Perhaps I shall. – Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything.*" (pp. 265-266) In this last quote Anne (Austen's heroine) connects the single-sidedness of literature with larger issues of female education, directly linking the gender imbalance in literature to gender inequality in society. This book was written in early nineteenth century and to this day it still holds a valid point about the media's influence in the public.

To this day, makeup and other body-changing garments[6] are still targeted almost exclusively to women. Telling them, through marketing techniques, that their bodies and faces, as they are, are not good enough; to the point where un-retouched photographs of a celebrity, showcasing her real skin and flaws, is flooded by awful remarks, until her followers started defending her.[7]

All these narrow views of women are imposed on the general public through media, as television, cinema, and the Internet become more and more globalized, the way beauty is perceived gets more and more constricted (Fleras, 2011); which then also affects issues like race, disabilities, and sexuality. In a fictional series titled *House* (2004-2012), a television

[5] One example of a "boys club" job is the animation field (Tupper, 2014; Amidi, 2009; Lange, 2015)
[6] Such as *Spanx,* bodysuits that intend to give the wearer a slim and shapely appearance, as said by the creator in an ABC article (Patria, M. (2012, November 29). Spanx founder reveals how to build a billion-dollar business. Retrieved July 13, 2015.); and push-up bras, made to give the wearer fuller/bigger breasts, using what they already have.
[7] For example, pop artist Beyoncé, was under scrutiny of the public after pictures of her without any Photoshop retouch were leaked online. (Mizoguchi, 2015)

show about a painkiller-addicted doctor, Gregory House, the lead has a conversation with another doctor that really puts in plain words this problematic. After Dr Cameron, another character in the show, expresses how she feels for the parents of the autistic child they are treating: "Is it so wrong for them to want to have a normal child? It's normal to want to be normal." To which Dr House responds: "Spoken like a true circle queen. See, skinny, socially privileged white people get to draw this neat little circle. And everyone inside the circle is "normal". Anyone outside the circle needs to be beaten, broken and reset so that they can be brought into the circle. Failing that, they should be institutionalized. Or even worse: pitied."[8]

"*The idea that animation is an innocent medium, ostensibly for children, and largely dismissed in film histories, has done much to inhibit the proper discussion of issues concerning* representation*."* (Wells, 2013, p. 187) Television and movies are a big part of what creates normativity (Jevtic, 2011), and if there is a lack of representation it could lead to *othering,* which is a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream; it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination (Johnson J. , 2004), or even lead to complete intolerance of what is different.

In children, lack of representation can lead to the bullying of children who do not fit into the categories that are classified as *normal*. Representation means not only "able white males" will be able to do and be whatever they want, but other genders, ethnicities, and people with handicaps will be able to as well, without any negative connotations being applied.

This dissertation, however, will not focus on race, sexuality, or people with disabilities, it will focus on female representation in animation and expose to an extent the harms or advancements it brings womankind.

"*Like many art forms in the twentieth century, animation has been subject to the revisionist readings of the lobby for political correctness, and has inevitably been found wanting, particularly in its use of racist caricature and its sexist bias*." (Wells, 2013, p. 187) Even though innocent in their intention, and probably not wanting to cause actual offense, merely trying to be funny, some authors still mock who they are representing in the movies and reduce them to jokes.

[8] Hoselton, D. (Writer), & Sigel, N. (Director). (2006). Lines in the Sand [Television series episode]. *House M.D*. Los Angeles, CA: Fox



Fig. 1 – A "pretty" black woman, talking to caricaturized black people in *Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* (Lantz, 1941)

In *Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* the (black) characters live in a place called Lazytown and nobody is being productive until a boat brings this plainer female character without the grotesque exaggeration of any feature, and when she arrives everybody starts singing and moving. If we compare that character to the residents of Lazytown we will notice how the audience is supposed to think the woman on the left as the prettiest, because she is not as exaggerated as the rest. She also exhibits features characteristically European (thinner lips, lighter skin, smaller nose, etc.), which is one of the most important topics we are going to discuss in this dissertation.

Mainstream animation film has developed and established a certain "safe" look to it, which fails to take advantage of all the freedom and nonconformity that comes with such an art form. Animation is an artistic form of expression that can be more graphic and experimental in the design of characters, layouts and backgrounds. So much so, that women film-makers see in animation an opportunity to express themselves in ways that are not available to them elsewhere, here they are able to create a specific feminine aesthetic, "*More than any form of film-making,* [animation] *offers the opportunity to operate in a safe space and create* auteurist *cinema outside the constraints of patriarchal norms*" (Wells, 2013, p. 199).

Unfortunately, to guarantee success, big production studios neglect to take advantage of the inherent plasticity of animation. They confirm what has been popular before (Hoke, 2013), take it apart to find the common thread, and then re-adapt it to make another box-office hit.

The problem is not that they transform the industry so that the only way to ensure success is if people follow the same exact recipes as others have before, but, besides narrative-wise, it creates a stereotype amongst female protagonists where they generally exhibit the same basic type of beauty, personality flaws and strengths, shortcomings and qualities; some examples include: doe eyes, small mouth and nose, long legs and tiny waist, determined personality, usually clumsy or blabber-mouths, they can sing, and, ultimately,

have good hearts. One American artist, Meridith Viguet, has even coined a term for that kind of look: *Sugar Cookie* (2010), as she states: *"All the European Disney princesses. Like sugar cookies: sparkly, white, sometimes too sweet for their own good"*. If they are not white, they are designed with much of the same characteristics as before, but with slight alteration like the shape of the head or mouth. The setback of this pattern is that it renders any other kind of look as secondary or antagonistic look, unless their ugliness is relevant to the plot in some way, that is why we see big-nosed or small-eyed characters as minor: the goofy friend (who usually dubs as comic relief), the wise friend or family member (who serves as the mentor) (Campbell, 2008), and very lean faces or other types of sharp features are given to the villains.

Undeniably, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so even though these features are pleasant, there can also be an unlimited amount of features that are also aesthetically pleasing to someone. Unfortunately the *sugar cookie* style is fed to the viewer as "the fairest of them all", so deviating from that formula gets more and more difficult with every passing movie. We can analyse animation through time and (western) country, and continuously find the same kind of design in the mainstream media.



Fig. 2 – Left to right top row: Kida (Trousdale & Wise, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, 2001), Mulan (Cook & Bancroft, *Mulan,* 1998), Jasmine (Clements & Musker, *Aladdin,* 1992), Tiana (Clements & Musker, The Princess and the Frog, 2009). Left to right bottom row: Jane (Lima & Buck, *Tarzan,* 1999), Ariel (Clements & Musker, The Little Mermaid, 1989), Belle (Trousdale & Wise, Beauty and the Beast, 1991), Esmeralda (Trousdale & Wise, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996)

In present times, artists seem to be less and less willing to deviate from the norm, with the characters' aspect funnelling down to just the handful of characteristics mentioned before (big, round, light-coloured eyes; thin lips, thin body, and long legs) (Smith A. , 2013). Some argue that it is because animating women is more difficult than other types of characters

(Amidi, 2013), others say that the bigger companies have simply established the look of success and refuse to deviate from it, except on a few singular cases, for example Merida (Andrews & Chapman, *Brave,* 2012) (Murphy M. , 2012), but even she was then made to fit the formula in later marketing versions, as we will see further along into this essay. This entire subject is all very harmful especially to young girls and boys who are faced with these images from a very early age, when they are most impressionable. "*Children imitate what they see, hear and observe to be true.*" (Healy, 2010) They are bound to want to be like their heroes, and while for some make-believe will make them feel like they are, soon that will not be enough, and they will want to physically be as "perfect" as what they see.

1.5 Research Methodology

The first research done for this dissertation was an unconscious one made before the theme was even chosen, present in any film with a female character, in every feminist critique, in anyway I did not feel my gender was being fairly treated; so when starting the objective research I first examined many books and papers that covered subjects like feminism in film, and Disney princesses, the influence of media in our lives, and such, written mostly by sociologists, film critics, or female artists. In addition, I used other search elements for this dissertation including character drawing textbooks, production of animated films and other documents written by other professionals in the area, related to the historical evolution of the characters in animated films and television series, and documents and papers written by other students.

The first chapter to be developed was the State of the Art, where I had to make an extensive research throughout the history of mainstream animation's films and television series, including the visualization of most, as well as some independent films for purposes of comparison and contrast. Secondly would be the Character Portrayal where I used books on how to develop characters as reference to what is more commonly seen, as well as a thorough character analysis on how female characters have been portrayed across the years regarding each part. Then I discussed the parallels between my theme and my short film. In the end I was left with the Introduction and Conclusion, where I explained what my thesis would consist and why I felt it was important to explore this theme, and where I concluded my findings and understandings, respectively.

2. Evolution of Female Characters Throughout Animation History

Many books and theses have been written about the subject of how female characters have been portrayed in live-action as well as animation works, several of which will be cited along this dissertation. Many discuss the lack of equality between the male and the female character, the difference in how women are viewed versus how men are viewed. These differences are so discernable that the *Bechdel Test* was developed to make sure a movie of any kind gives its female characters a chance to be "people", rather than just plot devices. The *Bechdel Test is* a short test developed and presented in a feminist comic strip by Alison Bechdel called *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1985), that is used as a way to call attention to gender inequality, and to affirm that women are under-represented in films due to sexism. To pass the test a movie must satisfy the following requirements: The movie has to have at least two women in it; who talk to each other; about something other than a man (Bechdel, 1985).

Since animation's first full-length feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (Disney, 1937), and because it is viewed mainly as a for-children medium, animation has been under scrutiny of the masses to make sure it conveys children moral and respectable messages; and since a few years back, women have started to resent their representation (Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995), and have begun to put pressure on companies for the equality and strengthening of female characters.

As Marie-Louise Von Franz wrote: *"If we look for feminine archetypal models of behaviour, we at once stumble over the problem that the feminine figures in fairy tales might have been formed by a man, and therefore do not represent a woman's idea of femininity but rather what Jung called the anima – that is, man's femininity."* (2001, pp. 1-2). A lot of the female role-models we are shown as children do not give young girls or women realistic aspirations and will, more often than not, distort their way of thinking and make them believe they must act and want things that may not be completely natural or true to their innate instincts.

Also, there are a lot of tropes about women, actions done to them, for them, with them, against them, and much more. Tropes are devices and conventions that a writer can reasonably rely on as being present in the audience members' minds and expectations, "*a common or overused theme or device*"[9], they have to do with an agreed-upon narrative, an archetypal reading of a story or situation according to the simplest and most widely-held

[9] Trope. (2003). In Merriam-Webster's dictionary (11th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

beliefs, a kind of narrative stereotype (Deutsch, 2009). This is not necessarily nor intrinsically bad, it is just an easier way to tell a story or describe a character. Sadly some tropes often perpetuate offensive stereotypes that pigeonhole women as only being able to have a limited type of personality, such as the "Madonna-whore" complex[10] (Freud & Jung, 1912) where women can only be one or the other, either sweet "virgins": nice, caring, may or may not be actually virgins, but either way always "pure". Or evil "whores": selfish egocentric, may or may not have a lot of actual sex, but either way she is not to be trusted. So many tropes are used on women's characters because it releases the writer from coming up with new stories.

The *Manic Pixie Dream Girl,* a term coined by Nathan Rabin as: *"The Manic Pixie Dream Girl exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures."* (2007) She is a female character that serves as the romantic interest to the male lead. She is the extraordinary, colourful, happy, free-spirited girl made to help the dull, introverted, male protagonist come out of his shell. But in every movie they are not relatable to women, because this character is shallow and exists just to be interesting without being "too much of a headache" to the lead, she is a male fantasy whose only purpose is to advance the lead's storyline. An example of this is *Elizabethtown* (Crowe, 2005) where upon meeting a sunny flight attendant, on the way to his father's funeral, she tries to help him embrace life once again. The rest of the film develops around their romance and on him attainment a more positive outlook on life. And similar to this trope many others exist that stereotype women: "The Damsel in Distress", the woman who is always in need of a man to save her[11]; "The Smurfette Principle", when there is only one female character in the midst of multiple male characters to show diversity, to have the qualities stereotypically attributed to women, or to give the protagonist a love-interest[12]; and "Ms Male Character", a situation in which the creator of a show or movie (though, more commonly seen in comic books or video games) creates a female version of their male hero to appeal to female audiences, the base of the design is the hero, but with clichéd womanly features or colour changes[13].

[10] In *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985), a movie about five high school students of different *cliques* getting to know each other during Saturday detention, a conversation between the two female characters illustrates the "Madonna-whore" complex really well: "Well, if you say you haven't, you're a prude. If you say you have, you're a slut. It's a trap. You want to but you can't, and when you do you wish you didn't, right?" Because either way, you will be labelled as only one, and labelling constricts you from being whoever you want to be.

[11] Vintage cartoons have overused this trope in shorts like *Popeye* (Fleischer Brothers, 1933), where Olive was constantly in the need of being saved.

[12] In *Aladdin*, Jasmine is the only female character throughout the entire movie, aside from background characters.

[13] For example Minnie Mouse is a copy of Mickey Mouse but feminized.

While there are also many, many tropes for male, such as "Real Man Hate Affection" where man cannot show any kind of affection towards another man, or too much affection by the fear of coming off as homosexual, for example in *The Emperor's New Groove* (Dindal, 2000), a movie where a selfish emperor Kuzco learns the meaning of friendship and altruism after being turned accidently into a Llama by Yzma, the villain, and bonds with a peasant named Pacha.



Fig. 3 – Sequence of images of Kuzco and Pacha hugging, and suffering an awkward moment subsequently.

At the end of the movie, when both Pacha and Kuzco are happy they won against Yzma, they hug for a second and then act very embarrassed and uncomfortable.

There are countless more tropes dedicated to stereotyping women and, even though many are dedicated to men as well, it is interesting to note how many of those are about how one should not act like a woman[14].

2.1 The Golden and Silver Ages

2.1.1 Snow White and the First Female Animation Characters

The first notable and significant female character, since she marks the start of a whole genre of movies (fairy-tale animations) and a style of characters was also the protagonist in one of the first feature-length animation films in the world (Cavalier, 2011); her name is Snow White, and she was the lead in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (Disney, 1937), also known as the first "Disney princess".

[14] "Guys are Slobs", cleanliness is a woman's domain. "A Man Is Not a Virgin", if he is, he is a boy. "Manly tears", the manly way to cry. (TV Tropes, 2015)



Fig. 4 – The Prince and Snow White meeting for the first time.



Fig. 5 – The Queen looking at Snow White's interaction with the Prince.

Originally a simple German fairy tale told by word-of-mouth, and published for the first time in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm[15], this story, much like other European fables, was popular due to its morals (good triumphing over evil, and evil being punished). Snow White is best known for her physical features (red lips, black hair, pale-white skin) and the fact that she is "the fairest of them all".

The action of the story advances when the Evil Queen asks her magic mirror who the fairest one of all is, to which it replies that she is to be surpassed in beauty by her own stepdaughter, Snow White. Blinded with jealousy the Queen sends her huntsman to kill her stepdaughter, but unable to do so he lets her flee into the forest and gives the Queen the heart of a wild animal pretending to be Snow White's.



Fig. 6 – Snow White telling the seven dwarves her love story.

Snow White takes refuge in the forest in the house of seven dwarfs to hide from her stepmother. The dwarfs grow to love their unexpected visitor, who cleans their house and cooks their meals. But one day while the dwarfs are at their mine, the Queen who had discovered the truth that Snow White was alive arrives at the cottage disguised as an old peddler woman and persuades Snow White to bite into a poisoned apple. The dwarfs, warned

[15] The Grimm Brothers were German academics, linguists, cultural researchers, lexicographers and authors who together specialized in collecting and publishing European folklore tales during the 19th century.

by the forest animals, rush home to chase the witch away, but they are too late to save Snow White from the poison. They place her in a glass coffin in the woods and mourn her. Luckily, a Prince, who had fallen in love with Snow White before all of this happens to be passing by and awakens her from the wicked Queen's deathlike spell with "love's first kiss."



Fig. 7 – Snow White about to send Prince charming a dove with a kiss.

We start straightaway with a beautiful girl, envied by an older woman past her prime, who happens to have all these qualities (kind, a beautiful singing voice, humble, etc.), and also mimics the beauty standards of its real-life time period (Plummer, 2012), she is not very curvy, positively flat-chested, and has a short hairstyle. Immediately the adaptation of this story reveals certain ideals looked for in a woman and unknowingly tells children that that is what the idyllic woman should look like. For girls this becomes what they must aspire to become, and for boys what they must aspire to have.



Fig. 8 – The Queen talking to the hunter.

The Queen is also beautiful, but her attractiveness comes from a place of vanity, so it would become her undoing. The Queen envies Snow White's youth and natural beauty, where hers is fading, because old age is not to be considered as lovely, ironically she transforms herself into an old woman and dies as such.

If we compare Snow White to *Betty Boop,* a cartoon character from the same time period (Betty Boop having started her adventures in the Fleischer Brothers' *Talkartoons*

(Fleischer D. , 1929-1932), in 1930, is therefore older than Snow White), we see similarities between both these female leads (Klein, 1996), helped by the fact that they share the same creator, Grim Natwick (Klein, 1996, p. 87), who had worked before Disney at Fleischer Studios.



Fig. 9 - Screenshot of *Snow White* (Fleischer D. , 1933), starring Betty Boop.

Betty Boop's first cartoon appearance was in the 1930 short *Dizzy Dishes* (Fleischer D. , 1930) as a caricature of Helen Kane (Fleischer R. , 2005, p. 56), a popular singer at the time.



Fig. 10 – Betty Boop compared to Helen Kane.

Betty also has sports dark hair, a feminine and delicate demeanour, and is lean, but not too thin; but while Snow White maintains a "wholesome" and conservative appearance, Betty Boop is a caricature of the Jazz age flapper, she wears a strapless, backless, mini-dress and is always revealing one of her garters. They are opposite sides of the same coin; both mirror their age's beauty norms, and reflect what the ideal woman should look like. So much so that by 1934 Betty's curves were toned down to look slimmer to accompany said standards.



Fig. 11 – Betty Boop in *The Old Man of the Mountain* (Fleischer D. , 1933)



Fig. 12 – Betty Boop in *Red Hot Mamma* (Fleischer D. , 1934)

Betty was a contrast in appearance to her contemporaries, like Minnie Mouse[16], but due to morality codes imposed by the National Legion of Decency[17] and the Hays Code[18] (Purcell, 2001), and because the studios also wanted to avoid scandal and market Betty as child-friendly and/or as their logo (much like Disney has done with Mickey Mouse) (Klein, 1996, p. 84). Betty Boop cartoons were soon restrained to have much less innuendos and Betty made to wear longer clothes. Her storylines also stopped having as many aggressive sexual gags, and she became a bland character whose shorts became a lot more focused on her co-stars[19]. She also was a "*lovable victim*" (Klein, 1996, p. 81), never the heroine always the prey, common for the age when it came to its female protagonists.



Fig. 13 – Snow White compared to Claudette Colbert

Claudette Colbert was a popular Broadway and Film star, between the years 1919 and 1987, and supported the same dramatic purple eye shadow with dark lashes, particularly thin

[16] More on Minnie Mouse farther ahead in this dissertation.
[17] The National Legion of Decency was an organization dedicated to identifying and combating objectionable content, from the point of view of the Catholic Church in the United States, in motion pictures. For the first quarter-century or so of its existence, the legion wielded great power in the American motion picture industry.
[18] Popularly known as the "Hays Code", the Motion Picture Production Code was the set of industry moral guidelines that was applied to most United States motion pictures released by major studios from 1930 to 1968.
[19] A puppy named Pudgy and an inventor named Grampy.

pencil brows, rosy cheeks, and bright red lips (Dick, 2008) we see on Snow White. As well as the same short up do.

These looks were all the fashion at the time, adopted by many personalities. Colleen Moore, for example, was a popular actress and flapper who began her career during the silent film era, became one of the most fashionable stars of the time and helped popularize the bobbed haircut[20]. Fay Wray, another popular actress of the time whose acting career lasted 57 years, and was one of the first "scream queens"[21].



Fig. 14 - Betty Boop in her classic pose.



Fig. 15 - Snow White dancing.



Fig. 16 - Colleen Moore, actress and flapper.



Fig. 17 - Fay Wray, conservative actress.

Both supported such a look, the only difference being Snow White represented the conservative, longer-dress wearing house wife, while Betty Boop embodied the short skirt wearing, burlesque dancing bachelorette.

Snow White and Betty Boop have stood the test of time, either honoured or parodied, but immortalized as female symbols in animation history. The success of the first American

[20] A short haircut cut straight around the head at about the jawline level, and typically with fringe.
[21] A "Scream Queen" is the name given to an actress who has become associated with horror films.

feature-length cartoon movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves,* was a surprise to many that thought the film would be a failure (Epstein, 2005), yet the profits made from it would come to help build the current Disney Studios facility in Burbank, in which many of the Disney movies and shorts are made to this day.

In 1933 a comic strip was adapted into a series of animated shorts by the Fleischer Studios, in which one of its main characters also fits the descriptions above: her name was Olive Oyl and she was Popeye's love-interest. In *Popeye the Sailor* Olive is portrayed as very tall, and very skinny, with tightly wound hair, and enormous feet. Her build is a caricature much in-tune with the times: almost flat-chested, boyish haircut (short), androgynous silhouette (Style Caster Team, 2010), unlike Snow White and Betty Boop who rendered timeless values of attractiveness.



Fig. 18 - Olive Oyl.

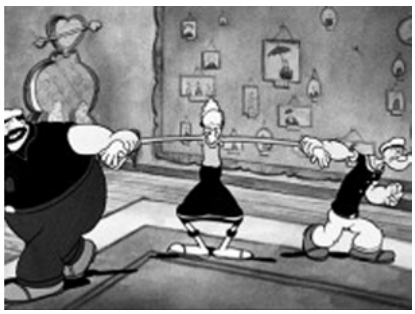


Fig. 19 – Olive Oyl being tugged between Brutus and Popeye.

Oddly, even though Olive Oyl was created by a man, she seems to be more in tune with the fashion (Langston-George, 2014) of the age, than with what men found sexually attractive. However, personality and narrative-wise, Olive Oyl has mostly been a "Damsel in Distress" for Popeye to save.

In general, if we explore the early short films of animation, we see the sexualisation or idolization of female characters everywhere, indiscriminately, we see lead male characters being caricaturized freely, while lead female characters are consistently elevated to a point where they are not even human[22] anymore, but something to conquer.

[22] In a sense where one cannot identify with them anymore.



Fig. 20 – Boy tree trying to save girl tree from the evil old tree.

From 1929 to 1939 Walt Disney Production produced *Silly Symphony* (Disney, et al., 1929-1939), which is a collection of 75 animated shorts made to accompany music, which are independent from one another. The shorts hardly ever included continuing characters, such as Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck, usually composed of one time characters made specifically for each short.

One of them was *Flowers and Trees* (Gillett, 1932), where the story begins in the middle of a nature scene all of the plants are contributing to the music that is playing a fight breaks out between an old rotten male tree and a young one for the attention (and love) of a female tree, when the young tree wins the fight the rotten tree retaliates by lighting a fire that consumes the meadow, and before the animals and plants are able to extinguish it, ultimately the old tree itself.



Fig. 21 – Girl tree admiring her caterpillar ring.

The short ends with the boy-tree asking the girl-tree in marriage by using a caterpillar as a ring.

There is only one stereotypical female character in the whole short, her eyes are almond-shaped with long eyelashes, her treetop is fuller (paralleling hair), she has plumper lips, and unlike the other characters, and she is not too expressive with her face. Her features are also more realistic and less caricaturized. The other characters either have no gender-

defining features, or in the case of the trees, since she is the only one that has separate characteristics than the others, are categorized as male, and every one of those characters communicates very widely with their facial expressions.

Throughout the Golden Age we see a typical storyline in cartoons, particularly in Disney. Whenever there was a female love-interest to the lead character is almost always a prize to be won. In the *Cock O'the Walk* (Sharpsteen, 1935) that is also the case. A young brown rooster and a black boxing cock fight for the love of a white and slender hen (the other chickens that appear in the movie are multi-coloured and plump), until she discovers a photo of the cock with his wife and kids, slaps him, and kisses the rooster, giving him the stamina he needed to win.

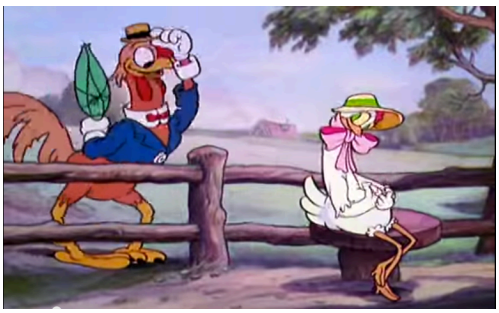


Fig. 22 – The Rooster prepared to offer the Hen an ear of corn.



Fig. 23 – The spectator chickens waving at the Cock.

2.1.2 Tex Avery

In the 40's, Tex Avery an American cartoonist known for his creation of Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, and Droopy (Avery & Canemaker, 1996), an anthropomorphic duck, pig, rabbit, and bloodhound respectively, created a short called *Red Hot Riding Hood* (1943). In which the three main characters of *Little Red Riding Hood* (Brothers Grimm, Little Red Riding Hood, 1812) story (the little girl, the wolf and the grandmother) tell the narrator they are tired of the same old story.



Fig. 24 – Red Riding Hood, Granny, and the wolf fighting with the narrator.

They are displeased with the story about a little girl called Little Red Riding Hood and how, by disobeying her mother, both she and her grandmother are eaten alive by a wolf; before a lumberjack cuts it open releasing them. The narrator begins to tell the tale of *Red Hot Riding Hood,* so the new story starts with the wolf in a limousine whistling and getting excited at passing women, Grandmother lives in the penthouse of a huge, luxurious building, and Red (no longer a little girl, but a young woman) works at a nightclub. The wolf goes into the nightclub, sits, has a drink, and when the curtains on stage open up to show Red with a red cape, who takes it off an reveals a skimpy red *onesie*[23], and starts singing and dancing, which drives the wolf mad with lust.

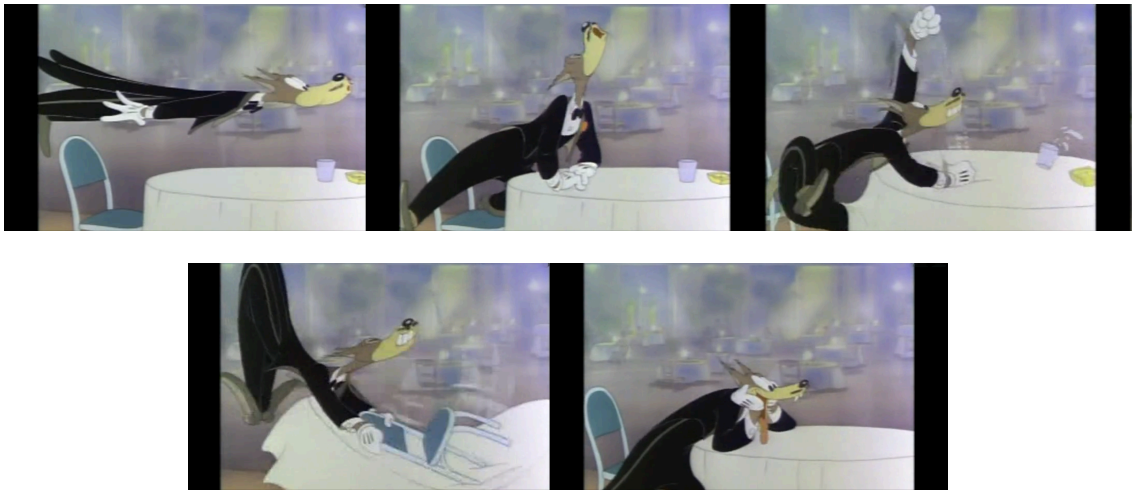


Fig. 25 – Image sequence of the wolf's reaction to seeing Red onstage.



Fig. 26 – Red taking off her cape.

At the end of her song, the wolf grabs her and sits her next to him at his table where he proceeds to try and convince her to go away with him, she refuses giggling and saying, "You wolves are all alike." (00:04:00) Adding that she is going to visit her grandmother, he insists once more and she answers shouting in a deep, mannish voice: "NO!" (00:04:46), she then runs outside and catches a taxi to Granny's; the wolf gets in his car and follows after her. He reaches the grandmother before Red, and she in turn becomes infatuated with the wolf, trying

[23] A bodysuit.

to grab him, kiss him, and running after him, making the wolf say in a pleading voice, “Grandma, control yourself!” (00:05:58). They continue their chase all around the apartment until the wolf falls out of the window injuring himself. Cut to the wolf bandaged, sitting at the same table from before swearing off women, until the curtains open up and there stands Red about to do her show again, upon seeing her the wolf kills himself and his ghost starts whistling and panting over Red.

There are several other Tex Avery shorts following *Red Hot Riding Hood,* that feature a Red-like character: *Swing Shift Cinderella, The Shooting of Dan McGoo,* and *Wild and Woolfy* (all three from 1945, the latter two starring Droopy), *Little Rural Riding Hood* (1949), and many others, including some cameos in other cartoons. *Little Rural Riding Hood* tells the story of a country wolf who is invited to the city by his cousin to see the “Real Red Riding Hood” (00:01:54), but after the wolf reacts too excitedly at “city Red” his cousin decides to drive him back to the country, where the cousin himself reacts in the exact manner to “rural Red”., The first Red Riding Hood introduced to us is the “rural Red”, she is small-chested, lanky with no curves, has enormous feet, and protruding front teeth. She is designed to be unattractive so that the audiences find humour when the calm city cousin reacts overly excited to her appearance. While the other Red in every short she appears in is overwhelmingly attractive and seductive, and never falling for her suitors.



Fig. 27 - Rural Riding Hood.



Fig. 28 – A picture of Red Hot Riding Hood.

She is depicted as the epitome of beauty wherever she appears, she is curvy, with an ample bosom, her eyes are heavy lidded with thick eyelashes, she has a pouty mouth, and even the way she walks and talks is also meant to be pleasing to the eye and ears, she sways her hips and shoulders when she walks, and her voice is soft and sung, making her a complete flirt all-around.

The wolf is a metaphor for lust and the male libido (Avery & Canemaker, 1996), and it is ironic how the he reacts to Granny’s advances, because she is making him feel how

anyone being subjected to unwanted courtship would feel; he gets a taste of his own medicine, if you will.

Jessica Rabbit (Zemeckis, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit,* 1988) is a direct homage to Red, because of her attributes; she is also meant to be eye candy to men and is subject to much of what Red was, in the movie.



Fig. 29 – Jessica Rabbit performing in the club.

2.1.3 Cinderella and Aurora

Cinderella (Disney, *Cinderella*, 1950) and Aurora (Disney, *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959) are both representatives of beauty standards of their time and, like Snow White, they are taken from the life of luxury they were born into and made to become humble by circumstances.

Based on the fairy tale of the same name by Charles Perrault (1697), *Cinderella* tells the story of a young girl of the same name, whose aristocratic father married a woman named lady Tremaine before dying, in an effort to not leave Cinderella without a parent.



Fig. 30 – Cinderella admiring her magic-made dress

With a wicked stepmother and two jealous stepsisters who keep her enslaved and in rags, Cinderella stands no chance of attending the royal ball the King is throwing in order to fin the Prince a wife. When her fairy godmother appears and magically transforms her reality into a dream come true, Cinderella captivates the handsome Prince Charming at the ball, but

when the spell wears off at midnight she runs away leaving just one of her glass slippers behind. After skimming the town in search of the lovely girl, the Prince finds Cinderella and slips on her perfectly fitted shoe. Happy to find his true love, the Prince takes her to the palace, they get married, and live happily ever after.

Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* was based on *The Sleeping Beauty* by Charles Perrault (1697) and *Little Briar Rose* (1812) by the Brothers Grimm; it begins when a new princess is born to King Stefan and his wife. Filled with jealousy over not being invited to the christening, the evil witch Maleficent curses Princess Aurora to die on her 16th birthday.



Fig. 31 – Phillip and Aurora talk in the woods.

Thanks to Aurora's guardian fairies, she only falls into a deep sleep that can be ended with a kiss from her true love. Prince Phillip and Aurora fall in love and to prevent Phillip from rescuing Aurora, Maleficent kidnaps and imprisons him. The good fairies help free Phillip, so that he can awaken Aurora, and he battles Maleficent fiercely to get to her. In the end Phillip saves the whole kingdom and his beloved Princess.



Fig. 32 - Grace Kelly.



Fig. 33 - Marilyn Monroe.

Blonde was very hip at the time, thanks to actresses like Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly, so naturally both these 50's princesses were blonde as well. The hourglass figure a must have, and as always, they were "flawless" women.

Some defend that it is the naturalness of these heroines that win the hearts of their respective princes, *"(Disney's Cinderella)'s naturalness, even more than her beauty, is what attracts the Prince. At the ball, every other woman tries to outdo the next with forced shows of sophistication. She wins him by simply being herself."* (Brode, 2005, p. 130) But, firstly, by themselves their looks already raise the standards of beauty high, and expecting them to be natural makes them almost unattainable. They are perfect, yes, but they are drawn, there is virtually nothing natural about them. And secondly, Douglas Brode, the author of that citation, is trying to persuade the reader that it is not merely Cinderella's attractiveness that fascinates the Prince, but her personality; which is not the first take the viewer has upon watching that scene: The Prince looks at her from a distance and is instantly mesmerized by her pure beauty.



Fig. 34 – Sequence of images from the scene where the Prince meets Cinderella for the first time.

As far as storytelling goes, the Prince's expression, enhanced by the camera angles and colours, give the spectator the impression of love at first sight, so not, as Brode held, Cinderella's demeanour that fascinates the Prince.

Even if someone were to try and argue that it was their characters that conquered the Princes' hearts, the fact that they each only meet for short minutes before marrying makes it a somewhat fanciful notion.

2.1.4 Peter Pan

Peter Pan (Geronimi, Jackson, & Luske, Peter Pan, 1953), based on the 1911 book *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie, tells the story of a boy who did not want to grow up so he ran away to Never Land. The film begins with the audience meeting the Darlings, Mr and Mrs Darling have three young children, Wendy, John and Michael, and we learn that the children love to play make-believe and that Wendy, the eldest child, is a natural storyteller. The father is an austere but goofy man, who gets himself into funny situations because of his temper; the mother is a sweet, loving woman full of patience; while Michael is still a toddler, John likes to believe himself a gentleman already, and Wendy is motherly in her demeanour.



Fig. 35 – Mr Darling fixing her husband's tie.



Fig. 36 – The family trying to comfort Nana after she fell.

Their nanny is a dog called Nana, and she takes care of all the children in the house, but when Mr Darling trips over her, furious with how foolish he looked, he traps her outside saying nannies should be people not dogs. He also states that Wendy was no longer young enough for the nursery and tells her she will soon be getting her own room. After that Mr and Mrs Darling leave to a party, whilst their children stay home alone. That night we see a light flying through their nursery accompanied by a boy, Wendy wakes up to meet a boy who calls himself Peter Pan. He is looking for his shadow and trying to attach it back with soap, she offers to help and begins talking to him. He admits he had come to their window many times before to listen to her stories about bravery and good over evil. Afterwards Peter invites her to go with him and his fairy home to Never Land, she agrees only if her brothers can join and Peter accepts.



Fig. 37 – Wendy about to sew Peter Pan's shadow on.

Before he teaches them how to fly, Wendy attempts to give Peter a kiss which drives Tinker Bell, his fairy, mad with jealousy and she tries to rip Wendy's hair while pulling her away from Peter. Peter shows them how to fly, by using fairy dust and happy thoughts, and because Nana is tied-up in the yard with no way to stop them, they fly away to Never Land. When they arrive Tinker Bell quickly fools the Lost Boys, who are Peter Pan's companions there, into shooting down the "Wendy Bird", when Peter discovers Tinkerbell's deceit he immediately banishes her for a week, because forever was too long, and the fairy, now sad, abandons their side. While there, John wants desperately to meet pirates, Michael (who is just a toddler) the Indians, and Wendy the mermaids; the pirates try to shoot the children down, the mermaids appearing jealous towards Wendy for being with Peter - "Who is she?" (00:37:35), "A girl?!" (00:37:40), "And in her nightdress, too!" (00:37:42)- Try to drown Wendy; and the Lost Boys, John, and Michael are captured by the redskins.



Fig. 38 – Sequence of images of the places the Darling children want to visit (Mermaid Lagoon, the Indian Encampment, and the Jolly Roger, respectively).

Peter saves princess Tiger Lilly from the hands of the evil pirate Captain Hook, Peter's sworn enemy after he ripped the pirate's hand off and fed it to the now stalker crocodile. He brings her to her camp where her father, the chief, congratulates Peter and throws a party in celebration of the safe return of his daughter. Tiger Lilly flirts with Peter, and at one point Eskimo kisses him to the point where he get red and has a goofy smile; Wendy resents that affectionate gesture and after being sent to collect firewood by an older Indian woman she drops everything and just walks back to the hideout where Peter and the Lost Boys live.

Hook develops the ingenious plan of inviting Tinker Bell to his ship, sympathising with her about the horrid way Peter treated her and swapped her for Wendy, and convinces Tinkerbell to reveal their hideouts with the promise of taking Wendy away from Peter Pan. The Lost Boys and the Darling children are captured, and as the pirates make Wendy walk the plank, Peter saves her, fights and defeats the pirates with the help of the boys, and takes the Darlings back to London, before their parents get home.



Fig. 39 – The Jolly Roger as seen flying over London.

In this film Wendy is treated many times as a maid or servant, and several other times seen and expected to be always taking care of others, subordinate, accomplished (in sewing, cleaning, etc.), kind, and other things that are stereotypically ascribed to women. *"(...) as a consequence of the kind of education given to Victorian girls, who were taught from an early age how to become good wives and good mothers as well."* (Magalhães & Leal, 2007)



Fig. 40 – Wendy carrying a washing jug and bowl into the nursery.

At the beginning of the movie, Wendy is depicted as having the personality of her mother, though more immature, she is calm, sweet, and motherly if slightly patronising when it comes to her father, who is haughty, loud, and rash, and her siblings, but that is comprehensible as they are both younger than her. After Peter tries to stick on his shadow with a bar of soap and wakens Wendy in the process, she says that sewing would be the proper way to do it, she gets her sewing kit from the drawers and sits Peter on the bed, before starting to sew, showing herself skilful in the act. As she does she keeps talking to Peter about nothing specific and the following conversation ensues:

Peter, scratching his head: “Girls talk too much.”

Wendy, laughing but then gloomy: “Yes, girls talk too... Hm? Oh…”

Peter, taking out his flute and getting more comfortable: “Well, get on with it, girl.”

Wendy: “My name is Wendy, Wendy Moira Angela Darl-”

Peter: “Wendy's enough.”
(00:13:18)

How she is treated in this scene by Peter and how she reacts, is meant to show how childish Peter is, but what it shows even more is the superiority he feels over girls in general, because he did not say “You talk too much.” He generalized and it is made off as a funny thing, because indeed Wendy was being very chatty, and it is a known stereotype of women (Monaghan, Goodman, & Robinson, 2012, p. 189). At the time, it was not just Peter being immature; it was a joke to get audiences to laugh at its genuineness.



Fig. 41 – Image sequence of Wendy reacting to Peter’s observation.

How she reacts at his comment is very submissive way to react, she is simply sad. She takes the remark and just withdraws in what is an attitude of embarrassment, even if only for an instant before continuing with the scene happy to be able to go to Never Land, she never argued with Peter Pan‘s remark.

In this fairy tale every female character, with the exception of adults, were written in Barrie’s book to be fawning over Peter Pan, but the way they act in the movie is the interpretation of the artists who made the movie happen. Tinkerbell gets furious with the notion of Wendy kissing Peter, and pulls her hair violently.



Fig. 42 – Tinkerbell pulling Wendy away from Peter.

In the mermaid lagoon scene when the mermaids start cooing over Peter, trying to get his attention, and saying how much they love his stories, they are emitting a flirtatious manner also regularly attributed to women, and when they react negatively to seeing another girl with him they mock Wendy by trying to pull her in to the water, one even says "Too good for us, eh?"(00:37:52), in an indignant fashion when Wendy refuses; this shows how a lot of people view women in competition for a man, how when they get jealous, try to destroy one another, make them feel bad or physically hurt them[24].

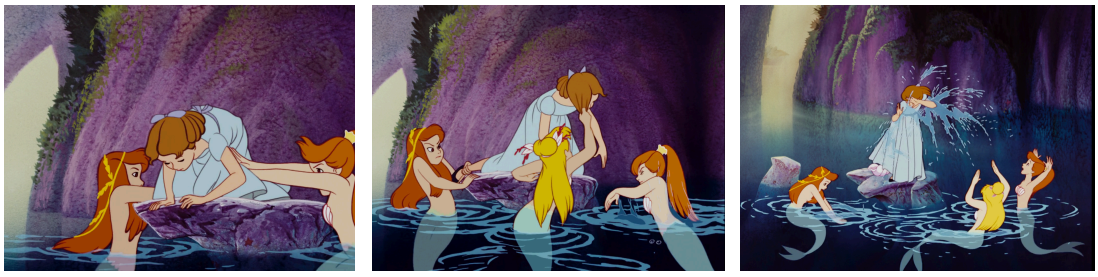


Fig. 43 - Sequence of images from the "mermaids try to drown Wendy" scene.

There is an air of "Madonna vs. whore" (Ricktopher, 2012) going here, with pure and fully clothed Wendy as the "virgin" and the barely covered, wicked mermaids as the "whores".



Fig. 44 – Peter laughing as the mermaids taunt Wendy.



Fig. 45 – Peter swooping in and grabbing the conch shell out of Wendy's hand.

Meanwhile, Peter Pan just laughs as he watches the whole thing happen only intervening when Wendy, tired of being harassed, holds a conch in her hand threateningly about to hit the mermaids. Only then does he swoop in and take it from her hand, explaining that the mermaids were merely playing.

[24] Also occurs later in the film, when Captain Hook kidnaps Tinkerbell and starts manipulating her emotions, to get information out of her, by using Peter's newfound relationship with Wendy: (Hook feigning sympathy) *"The way of the man with a maiden… Taking the best years of her life and then… casting her aside like an old glove!* (…) *But we mustn't judge Peter too harshly, m'dear, it's that Wendy who's to blame!"* (00:53:34).



Fig. 46 – Sequence of images of Peter quieting Wendy, and she forgetting what she was previously peeved about.

As Wendy is about to protest, Peter puts his hand on her mouth silencing her. This scene gives the impression that quarrelling women can only be calmed by a man, and Peter displays dominance over Wendy when physically shushing her, it is very to the viewer unsettling to see her so passive to his demeanour.



Fig. 47 – Sequence of the native woman sending Wendy for wood.

Later, in the Indian scene, when everyone is seen celebrating Peter Pan being honoured as a hero for saving Tiger Lily from Hook, as Wendy is participating in the dance and is stopped by an older brave woman who sends her to get firewood, "Squaw[25] no dance. Squaw get'em firewood." (00:51:03) She is not pleased but obliges.



Fig. 48 – Tiger Lilly Eskimo kissing Peter Pan.

Upon her return, Wendy is nodding happily to the music being played, but as soon as she notices Tiger Lily being too affectionate with Peter, and Peter enjoying it as he blushes at her rubbing her nose on his, Wendy drops the wood and stomps away, soon leaving the festivities entirely, early, and sad. Again hitting the key that all women want is the attention

[25] Squaw means Indian woman/wife (it is presently considered a slur).

of men and if they cannot get it, they will have no interest in other activities. Her only real reaction, the only time she stops in the middle of a duty, is when her feelings are overwhelmed when she sees her romantic-interest being wooed by someone else.



Fig. 49 – Sequence of Wendy accepting her destiny and walking the plank.

Even though Wendy does react disgruntled with most situations, she never actively does anything to stop them or correct them, and at the end she is even saved by the boy. While he is the main character, she could have tried to do something and not just passively wait for her fate.

All of this demonstrates very well how older generations, and especially men, prize the perfect girl (Rivers, 2008, p. 6): kindness, charm, subordination, accomplishment, generosity, and what they found to be insolent or disagreeable at the time of the movie and in the movie's timeline: cheekiness, badgering, impishness, chattiness, sulkiness. It is absolutely a cultural thing, but nonetheless a very harmful way to treat women or to expect women to be, because it limits them.

2.1.5 Cartoon Shows and Shorts

Daisy Duck and Minnie Mouse were both embodiments of their time and throughout. Their bodies are feminine but not overtly feminized, since they are "Ms Male Characters", both are their counterparts' spitting image, Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck but with eyelashes and different clothes.

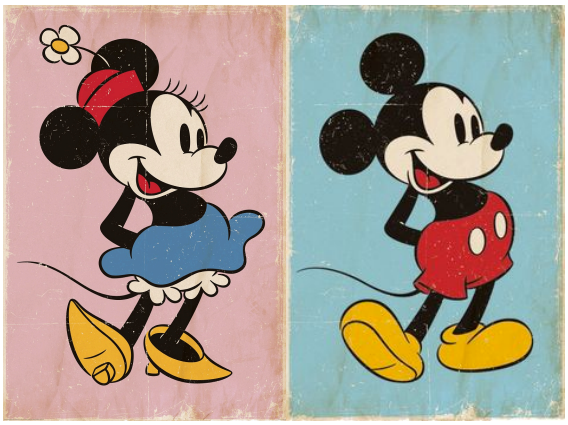


Fig. 50 – Minnie and Mickey Mouse.

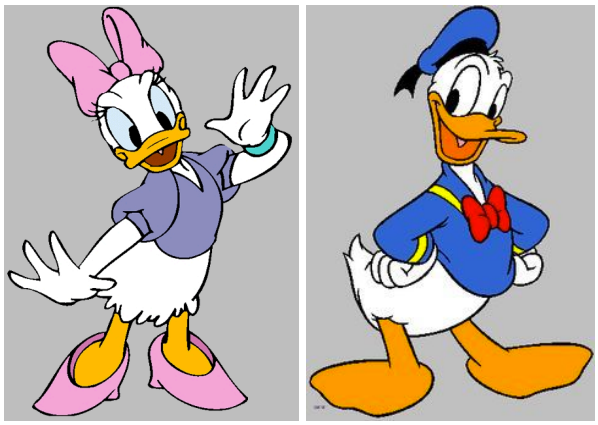


Fig. 51 – Daisy and Donald Duck.

When Disney animator Fred Moore was designing Minnie Mouse he located key differences in the design of both mice: even though Minnie was drawn copied of Mickey, she used lace underwear, high heeled shoes, a small hat, heavier eyelids and lashes. Moore also recommended the animators that Minnie's poses and mannerisms should be girlish. Her mouth would not open as wide as Mickey's, the skirt always showing a little bit of underpants to demonstrate cuteness, and her little finger in the extended position would also help keep Minnie Mouse as feminine as possible.

In the 50's, Daisy represented a more coquettish stereotype of women, while Minnie embodied a more wholesome personality. Daisy is many times portrayed as a seductress, trying to get a man or his money, while at the same time, once more comfortable to show her true nature; she is hot headed (Andrae, 2006, p. 45). In the 1954 short *Donald's Diary*[26] (Kinney, 1954) Donald is writing in his diary and narrating (in a different, more intelligible voice than his usual buccal speech[27]) about how he meets Daisy. She was able to snare him into a relationship in which they got to know each other better and Donald got to meet Daisy's family. Finally, Donald decides to ask her in marriage but when waiting for her to finish getting ready, he falls asleep. In his dream he envisions a marriage as bad as can be, she is shown not taking care of her appearance, only expecting to get his money, not being a good housewife, and bossing him around. When he finally wakes up, he runs away from her and ends up as a guard somewhere in the desert.

[26] *Donald's Diary* was also Daisy Duck's last appearance in Golden Age cartoons.
[27] Buccal speech is an alaryngeal form of vocalization that uses the inner cheek to produce sound rather than the larynx.



Fig. 52 – Daisy concocting a perfume.



Fig. 53 – Daisy letting her handkerchief fall expecting Donald to get it.



Fig. 54 – Daisy taking money from Donald's wallet.

Daisy is portrayed as a young lady who wants to desperately marry. She conquers Donald by stalking him after reading a book "How to Catch a Husband".

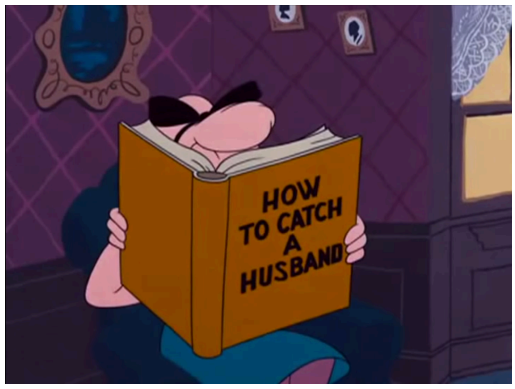


Fig. 55 – Daisy reading "How to Catch a Husband.

The short was the last one of the Golden Age where Daisy appeared in, and it portrayed her as a gold-digging, clingy, and careless wife and shows how it is better (and have more freedom) to work in the army, then it is to be married. It is a comedy and everything in it is just meant to make you laugh, but these kinds of reoccurring gags always made to make marriage feel like a prison, or even hell, to men (Johnson R. , 2009).

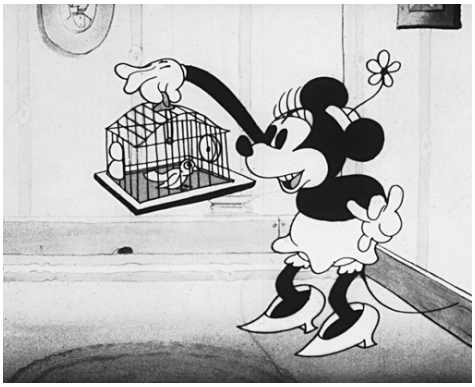


Fig. 56 – 1928 Minnie Mouse.

Minnie on the other hand is many times seen usually keeping to herself until someone (usually Mickey) sees her and tries to court her. Of course it always depends on the story of the short films, but it generally did not stray far from this during the Golden Age cartoons. This illustrates the pattern created through time that divides women in two categories: Virgins and whores.

This trope prevents female characters from being more than the labels given to them, and is a dichotomy that likewise exists in the real world, so its perpetuation in media will maintain the dichotomy alive. Making them choose whether they want to be virginal or have a bad reputation is imprisoning, and keeps the characters one-dimensional. And men then act and treat women in different ways according to each one's "disposition"; not respecting in reality the person who they are regarding (Gaudette, 2011). *"(...) just as the Whore is meant to be punished, the Madonna is to be preserved and worshiped. Her personhood is disregarded*." (O'Malley, 2012).

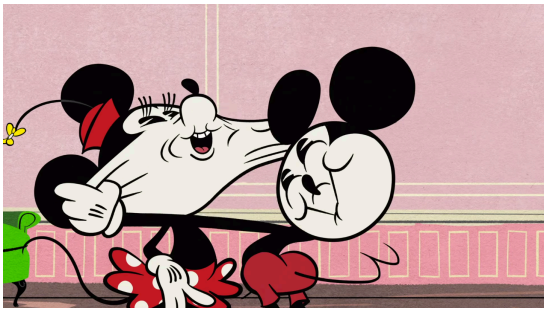


Fig. 57 – Mickey showing how he loves Minnie.



Fig. 58 – Daisy and Donald being burned by the sun.

In modern-day times, though, Daisy and Minnie are a lot more rounded characters, and are able to have multiple types of stories, reactions, and emotions. They are no longer stuck to the ideal female character of pretty but quiet or stereotypical eye candy and seductive, they can be funny without restrictions as long as they are still kept in tune with their base personality (i.e. Minnie is kind-hearted, Daisy is careful about her looks, etc.).

Looney Tunes (1930 - 1969) and *Merrie Melodies* (1931–1969), produced by Warner Bros., were some of the most influential and popular cartoons of their time, and even presently, yet it was only in 1950 that their first recurring female character was introduced. And even she was somewhat secondary. Two years later appeared another who, again, was not a lead character, but rather the antagonist.



Fig. 59 – Tweety and Granny catching Sylvester red-handed.



Fig. 60 – Witch Hazel concocting a potion.

The first was Granny, a co-star to Tweety Bird and Sylvester the Cat in many of their shorts, and the first regular female character. She was Tweety's owner and very

overprotective of him whenever he was in danger. She is an old woman and her character reflects it except when usually the story was hitting its climax she would get a lot stronger, feistier, and smarter.

The second one was Witch Hazel who served only as an antagonist for the lead characters; she is very stylized with green skin, a huge nose, and black frizzy hair. She is meant to be evil and do classic witch things, such as cackling, cauldron stirring, making evil spells, etc. But other than that her personality is pretty much boiled down to being just the antagonist to the hero.

In general both in the *Looney Tunes* and in *Merrie Melodies* characters were mostly male, except for sporadic secondary female characters.



Fig. 61 - Bugs Bunny courting Daisy in *Hare Splitter* (Freleng, 1948)



Fig. 62 – Penelope the cat being assaulted by Pepé le Pew (Jones, *Past Perfumance*, 1955).



Fig. 63 –Petunia and Porky Pig in *Naughty Neighbours* (Clampett, 1939).

On those rare occasions that female characters do appear, they are almost exclusively in the form of a sexualized object (Daisy Rabbit, Pepé le Pew's female cat, or Petunia Pig, for example), or the desexualized housewife (Mama Bear, Witch Hazel, etc.).



Fig. 64 – Mama Bear in *Bugs Bunny and the Three Bears* (Jones, 1944).

Other than them, other female characters were just passing. It was not until Warner Bros introduced Lola Bunny in 1996's *Space Jam*, a movie where a retired basketball player is brought on by cartoons to help save the world from evil space invaders through a game of competitive basketball, that the Looney Tunes gang gained another female character who would be an active part of the shenanigans.



Fig. 65 – Lola Bunny's entering the court in *Space Jam*.

Unfortunately, as we will discuss later, she would serve to be mostly eye-candy and as love interest to Bugs Bunny.

Ironically, a male character performed one of the most frequent representations of "woman" in the *Looney Tunes* cartoons: Bugs Bunny himself.



Fig. 66 – Bugs Bunny as Brunhilde in What's Opera Doc? (Jones, What's Opera, Doc?, 1957).

"*Of the 168 Bugs Bunny shorts theatrically released between 1940 and 1964, thirty-seven of them feature the rabbit "cross-gendered" – in other words, he imitates the behavioural, sartorial, and corporeal codes regularly associated with femininity and femaleness."* (Pomerance, 2001)

United Productions of America (UPA) (1943-2000) was an animation studio that was active from the 1940s until the 1970s. Founded in the wake of a Disney strike where many of its animators left the company and went on to create it (Van Eaton Galleries), UPA had a minimalistic approach, and used what is known as limited animation, that is to use as little frames as possible to convey a motion. It had this look because an ex-Disney animator, John Hubley, was not happy with Disney's "ultra-realistic style" (Dobson, 2009) and so their cartoons had limited movements within the frame, repetitive, and used fewer frames to represent a movement, only when needed did they add more animation. Their style was also very minimalistic, and when it came to colours and lines they were all very simple, and their

characters represented a very caricaturized version of their time, so it is interesting to see when a woman would appear in them.

UPA drew its major style influences from Modernism (Dobson, 2009), an artistic movement started in the beginning of the 19th century that branched out into Pop Art and later Minimalism. *Gerald McBoing-Boing* (1950), originally by Dr Seuss, tells the story of a young boy who can only speak in onomatopoeias and how no one really accepts him until a man hires him to make sounds for his radio show.

His mother and father are portrayed as stereotypical husband and wife, she is seen staying at home during the day, washing dishes, and sewing, which are very conventional traits attributed to a common housewife of middle-century United States of America.(citation needed) The father is also a stereotypical man of the house seen reading the newspaper and shaving, the father is the only family member who speaks, and Gerald's teacher's voice-off is the only female voice heard throughout the entire short.



Fig. 67 – Mother sewing, father reading the paper.

Another UPA short that was very much the narrative style of the age, *Rooty Toot Toot* (Hubley, 1951) is the story of a young lady, Frankie, on trial for the murder of her boyfriend, Johnny, who she suspected cheated on her with a nightclub singer. The barman tells the courtroom he saw Johnny go in the back with the singer and that he told Frankie what he saw. Then comes the singer who says she saw Johnny nervous and that when he went to the door three bullets came flying through it. When Frankie's lawyer goes to the stand he tells the audience how it was stray bullets fired by Johnny himself that killed him, and that he was trying to outrun them when they ricocheted toward him. Frankie's lawyer wins the case. That is until Frankie who had fallen for her lawyer mid-trial gets jealous when he hugs the nightclub singer and shoots him in the back.



Fig. 68 - Nellie finding Frankie on the other side of the door after Johnny was killed.

Both the nightclub singer, Nellie Bly, and Frankie's looks are simple and minimalistic UPA designs. Nellie's only colour is blue and Frankie's is red (on their clothes, the rest remains uncoloured), they are curvy, with very thin waists. Nellie is stereotypical nightclub singer, seductive, with a low voice, her face is long and the only details are eyes, mouth, and eyebrows, she has broad shoulders, her dress has a sweetheart neckline and she is very tall and thin. Frankie, on the other hand, is a jealous woman, who upon sensing her husband was cheating on her, did not hesitate to kill him. She is petit, curvier than Nellie, dons a big bow (or hat) on her head, and her head is very round, but just like Nellie, she is thin and wears a long dress with a sweetheart neckline, none of them have noses (unlike the men). They are clearly feminine and very clichéd, but at the same time, the style of this short expects it, it plays with it. The men are vey classic as well, but the difference is once again how the men have more distinguished looks than the women, as well of existing a bigger number of them.

2.2 The Renaissance

2.2.1 Jessica Rabbit And The Renewed Interest In Animation

From the 1980s onwards there was a revolutionary phase in which big entertainment companies reformed and reinvigorated their animation departments after a decline between 1970 and 1980 (Cagan & Vogel, 2012); and at Disney we see new movies come up[28] that did not have the success of its predecessors, such as *The Black Cauldron* (Berman & Rich, 1985) where the film failed tragically at the box-office, and the critiques weren't that much better, a critical consensus states "*Ambitious but flawed, The Black Cauldron is technically brilliant as usual, but lacks the compelling characters of other Disney animated classics.*" (Rotten

[28] i.e.: *Tron* (1982), *The Black Cauldron* (1985), *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986)

Tomatoes). However, come 1988 Disney paired up with Spielberg, who then proceeded to convince many major studios at the time to lend their characters to be included in the blockbuster hit *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). The story starts in 1947, and cartoon characters ("toons") are living beings that make cartoon shorts/movies in the same way that human actors make live-action productions.



Fig. 69 – Roger and Eddie running away from the cops.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit tells the story of a detective, Eddie Valiant who lost his brother to a cartoon murderer and now hates "toons". He is suddenly brought into a case about a man named Acme who was murdered by the accused toon Roger Rabbit, who wanted to prove his innocence. After suspecting Roger's wife, Jessica Rabbit, of foul play, Eddie then discovers that Acme and others were murdered to close a deal that would build an interstate that would pass through Toontown. Acme owned Toontown and left it to no on upon his death. When Eddie finally catches the murderer, Judge Doom, he recognizes the laugh of his brother's killer, and we find out that Judge Doom was actually a toon disguised as a human all along. And at the end Acme's will is found to be written with invisible ink on a paper Roger had all along, bequeathing Toontown to the toons.

This is the film that singlehandedly revived interest in animation made for theatres (Gore, 1999), and popularized the in-depth study of the history and techniques of animation. It is here, however, in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* where we find one of the top embodiments of female sexualisation for the male-gaze: she is curvy, with big breasts, wrist-sized waist, but broad hips, has long legs, childlike small nose, big "sultry" eyes, and a small mouth with bee-stung lips. She is a caricature of everything that is most sexy in a western woman, so everything is naturally emphasized. She is flirty to get what she wants, she even states in the movie, "I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way." To make her irresistible to men the writers play with the male's *anima* (von Franz, 2001) which means her personality is a projection of the man's unconscious femininity, making her just so women can hardly identify with her, and men cannot resist her.



Fig. 70 - Jessica Rabbit (1988)

She is made as a tribute in the film to the Film Noire "dames", "(…) *the crime movies, later to be called film noir, introduced a new archetype: the hardboiled dame. Shrewd, sexy, and strong-willed, these dames knew what they wanted, and stopped at nothing to get it."* (Muller, 2002, p. Book Jacket). Yet Jessica proves herself to be brave and compassionate throughout the movie, even to the extent of putting herself in danger to help her husband, and prove his innocence. Going back to the anima, that is a common problem in fairy tales as well cartoons made almost exclusively by men (Tupper, 2014), where the female characters are either flawless, have personalities that get to a point of not being relatable to women anymore, *"If we look for feminine archetypal models of behaviour, we at once stumble over the problem that the feminine figures in fairy tales might have been formed by a man, and therefore do not represent a woman's idea of femininity but rather what Jung called the anima -- that is, man's femininity."* (von Franz, 2001, p. 3). This explains how many of the female characters given to us are not a faithful representation of women, but the version idealized by men.

"*If men, in general, have used animation to echo and extend the premises and concerns of men in live-action film-making, then women have used animation to create a specific feminine aesthetic which resists the inherently masculine language of the live-action arena"* (Wells, 2013, p. 198) When analysing animation done by women we notice a resistance to the continuous sexualisation of women. A response against the "*male representations of women; masculine codes of composition and narrational construction; and personal, social and political agendas concerning men.*" (Wells, 2013, p. 199) It is usually more independent, less censored, and seeks to express its authors in a less idealistic way.

Citing Paul Wells, he lists the aspects of the feminine aesthetic thusly:

- Women's animation recognizes the shift from the representation of woman as object, to the representation of woman as subject. This seeks to move away from traditions in which women are merely erotic spectacles or of marginal narrational interest.

- The feminine aesthetic mistrusts language, perceiving it as the agent of masculine expression, preferring to express itself in predominantly visual terms, using a variety of forms, and reclaiming and revising various traditions.
- In order to construct a feminine aesthetic, it is necessary to abandon conservative forms, and create radical texts that may demand greater participation from the viewing audience.
- The feminine aesthetic seeks to reveal a woman's relationship to her own body; her interaction with men and other women; her perception of her private and public role; her social and political identity within the domestic and professional space, as determined by law; and also, the relationship between female sexuality, desire, and creativity. (Wells, 2013, p. 200)

Joanna Quinn's films are an excellent example of role-reversal and women's expression through animation. This English director's drawings are raw, funny, unrestricted.

2.2.2 Hayao Miyazaki

In contrast with all the ideal and adult features we find in mainstream female characters, one Japanese artist finds himself to be unique in the field of female representation in animation; Hayao Miyazaki a Japanese film director, animator, screenwriter, and co-founder of Studio Ghibli, has his life's work as an inspiration to all who wish to write well-rounded female characters; when asked, *"Why do you always choose a girl as your theme?"* Miyazaki responded*: "I don't logically plan it that way. (...) At first, I thought, "This is no longer the era of men. This is no longer the era of taigimeibun.*[29]*" But after ten years, I grew tired of saying that. I just say, "cause I like women." That has more reality."*[30]*,* so just from this statement we can assume that the way he perceives women is a lot more open-minded than most other animators or directors, who treat women as a sub-species who are just not as simple to portray as men (Amidi, "Frozen" Head of Animation Says Animating Women is "Really, Really Difficult", 2013).

Miyazaki has been working in animation since 1963, where he got his first job as an in-between artist (an animator who focuses exclusively on drawing the frames in-between key-frames), at Toei Animation (Miyazaki, 2014). Since then he has rapidly ascended in the

[29] *Taigimeibun* can mean justification, justice, or a big good cause something like "for the human race".
[30] Kikan, I. (1994) Reprinted in *Shuppatsuten* by Hayao Miyazaki; published by Tokuma Shoten, 1996.

world of animation, being known for the past decades as one of the most popular and influential animators in cinema (Kenny, 2012). Hayao Miyazaki incorporates his own beliefs into his work, he first designs a world where he reflects his own views on treating the world with respect, then he connects it to the larger issue of the intersection of modern and traditional Japanese values. He creates characters that in one way or another demonstrate how best to make these values coexist in a rapidly growing technological world. And while other big name animation studios have made their transition into 3D, Miyazaki has continued to devote his work to 2D animation; two of his most notable works have been *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) and *Spirited Away* (2001).

My neighbour Totoro follows the story of two sisters, Satsuki and her younger sister Mei, move into a house in the country with their father to be closer to their hospitalized mother. One day Mei follows some mysterious creatures to a hollow tree and encounters Totoro for the first time, she eventually falls asleep on top of him, but when she wakes up, there are no creatures to be found and she cannot find the tree anywhere. After that, while waiting for their father's bus to arrive at the bus stop during a rainy night, Satsuki, with young Mei asleep on her back, meets Totoro, whose only shelter from the rain is a single leaf on his head. Satsuki notices this and gives him the umbrella she was carrying for her father, delighted, Totoro rewards her with nuts and seeds before leaving in his *Catbus* (who, as the name suggests is a cat shaped like a bus).



Fig. 71 – Mei, Satsuki, Totoro, and Chu and Chibi Totoro doing a ritual.

They then plant the seeds and a few days later they find the Totoros (Totoro, Chu (medium) Totoro, and Chibi (small) Totoro) doing a ritual dance around them, the girls join in and the seeds start sprouting, and then grow to combine and form an enormous tree. Totoro takes his friends and the girls for a ride on a magical flying top. In the morning, the tree is gone, but the seeds have indeed sprouted. After their mother fails to visit, Mei and Satsuki fight, and Mei leaves without anyone knowing to go visit their mother alone. Her disappearance causes worried Satsuki to ask for Totoro's help, who is thrilled to be of assistance. Totoro calls for Catbus who takes Satsuki to where her lost sister sits, then

together they are taken to the hospital, where they overhear that their mother simply could not make it because of a cold, and nothing more serious. The Catbus drives them both home, and then leaves disappearing out of sight. In the end credits, Mei and Satsuki's mother returns home and the sisters play with other children, as Totoro and his friends watch from a distance.

The film is very different from other mainstream animations because, firstly, it does not contain a very fast pace, it is not filled with constant action, it actually takes time for countryside shots and paused scenes, it shows Miyazaki's reverence for nature. The story unravels at its own time.

Mei and Satsuki are both very respectful of their traditions even though they are very young, they always take of their shoes (if they do not, they will try to not touch the floor with their feet), they pray, etc. Mei occasionally repeats her sister's actions and repeats what she says, which is very realistic to how young children behave especially towards an older sibling. Both of them play a lot outside (emblematic of the age and countryside where no technology exists), and help their father around the house.



Fig. 72 – Satsuki with Mei on her back next to Totoro on the bus stop.

Satsuki takes care and protects her sister, but can get very angry with her as well, she is very sad because of her mother's condition, but none-the-less has a happy attitude. Satsuki is taller than her sister, she is thin, has a very large forehead and short, dark brown hair. She has no distinguishing feature to separate her from a boy other than her orange overalls-dress, which is something not seen in the western culture, where if it is a girl, it should at the very least have prominent eyelashes.



Fig. 73 – Mei lying on Totoro.

Mei is a lot smaller than her sister, and chubbier, as toddlers should be. She has pigtails on her head, wears pink dress-overalls and the white shirt she wears underneath has puffy sleeves, she has more typical feminine attributed traits than her sister, but her face is a lot wider (probably to simulate chubby cheeks), and her mouth is very wide.

Mei's personality is just like that of any young girl: bright, sweet, and innocent. She, much like any other children, is extremely curious, following the smaller Totoros as soon as she sees them, as well as trying to get the dust creatures to come out of hiding. Mei has that bravery that can sometimes be seen in young children who are not aware of the dangers of the world, so upon finding Totoro, she is not the least bit afraid, to the point of falling asleep on him. She loves playing with her sister and is very eager to explore the house and its surroundings. She also cares deeply about her family, and becomes sad when she hears her mother still has to stay in the hospital. This emotion causes Mei to start crying, after Satsuki angrily snaps at her for protesting against their mother's homecoming being delayed. At the end of the story, Mei, along with her sister, is overjoyed when her mother returns home.



Fig. 74 - Totoro, Chibi Totoro (on Totoros head),
Mei, Satsuki, and Chu Totoro (1988)

The spirit is different from what we see in western mainstream animation, clearly Miyazaki had no formulas to follow he just did a story he wanted.

Spirited Away starts with Chihiro, a young 10-year-old girl, and her parents moving to a small Japanese town in the countryside, much to Chihiro's dismay.



Fig. 75 – Chihiro bored during the trip.

On the way to their new home, Chihiro's father makes a wrong turn and drives down a lonely one-lane road that dead-ends in front of a tunnel. Her parents decide to stop the car and explore the area. The three go through the tunnel and find an abandoned amusement park on the other side, with its own little town. When her parents see a restaurant with great-smelling food they decide to eat. However, Chihiro refuses to eat and decides to explore the theme park a bit more. She meets a boy named Haku who tells her that Chihiro and her parents are in danger, and they must leave immediately She runs to the restaurant and finds that her parents have turned into pigs. In addition, the theme park turns out to be a town inhabited by demons, spirits, and evil gods. At the centre of the town is a bathhouse where these creatures go to relax.

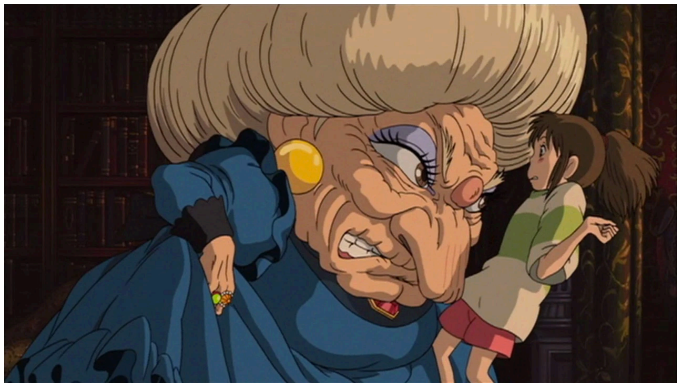


Fig. 76 – Yubaba and Chihiro.

The owner of the bathhouse is the evil witch Yubaba, who is intent on keeping all trespassers as captive workers, including Chihiro. After many ventures with Haku, where they discover who he really was before being imprisoned by Yubaba, Chihiro is told by Yubaba that in order to break the curse on her parents, she must identify them from among a group of pigs. After Chihiro correctly states that none of the pigs are her parents, she is given back her real name (which Yubaba had previously taken away, thus imprisoning Chihiro in that world). Haku takes her to the now dry riverbed and vows to meet her again. Chihiro crosses the river

and reunites with her restored parents, who do not remember what happened. The film ends with them walking back to their car and drive away.



Fig. 77 – Haku offering Chihiro a rice cake.

Chihiro has wide-set, small, black eyes; she has her brown hair caught in a ponytail with fringe loose in the front and wears, in the beginning of the movie, a baggy t-shirt with peach shorts, and yellow boots. She is skinny, like a child, and has no visible body attribute to distinguish her as female. Actually between Chihiro and Haku there is not much difference, at least not in the stereotypical sense, Haku's green eyes are narrow, he also has a longer nose, his hair is black and shoulder-length and straight cut, he has bangs and wears blue tones.

Both movies works have nature deeply embodied as a main theme, much like most of his works (*Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, Princess Mononoke, 1997) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Miyazaki, 1989) to name a few), in his own words*: "We need courtesy toward water, mountains, and air in addition to living things. We should not ask courtesy from these things, but we ourselves should give courtesy toward them instead. I do believe the existence of the period when the power of forests was much stronger than our power. There is something missing within our attitude toward nature"*[31]

He has also a deep appreciation for tradition, and many times worries that the Japanese youth is quickly losing its touch or no longer values Japan's rich culture and background.[32] His female protagonists include traits that are distinctively Japanese, while other traits are associated with more western ideals.

[31] Miyazaki, H. (2014) *Starting Point, 1979-1996.* VIZ Media LLC, (page 113)
[32] Boyd, J. and Tetsuya N. (2004) *Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki's Anime Film "Spirited Away".* The Journal of Religion and Film, Vol. 8, No. 2, page 2

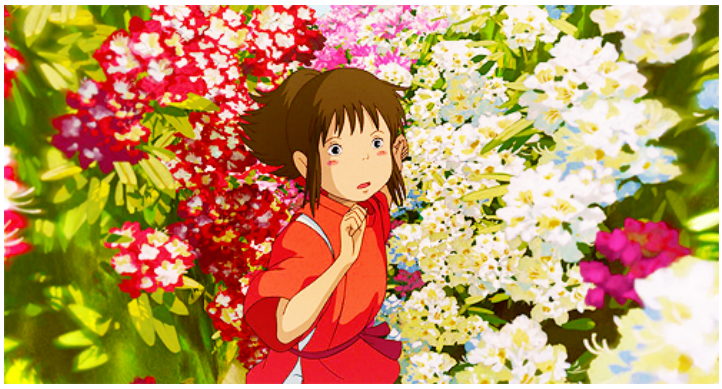


Fig. 78 - Chihiro running after Haku.

In reverence to Japan, they take on the contemporary culture of the *shoujo*[33] that is portrayed as innocent and cute, and contrasted to the hardworking Japanese male. However, Miyazaki's characters differ from the typical *shoujo,* by being more active, determined, and independent; personality wise, other *anime* productions, such as *Sailor Moon*[34] (which follows the story of Usagi, a middle school girl who is given a magical broach by a talking cat, and is able to transform herself into Sailor Moon, with the help of her friends, other Sailor Soldiers, they fight for love and justice to help protect the earth from other magical enemies), at the time also subverted from this traditional character trope, but at the cost of being at the mercy of complex, daunting forces that they could not control. Unlike these characters, Miyazaki's will take more control over the situation while being in line with *shoujo* mannerisms, in this way his characters could be reflected in Japanese culture while still displaying western models of courage and heroism that were commonly associated with male figures.

In *My Neighbour Totoro* Satsuki shows a great level of maturity for her age. She stands in as a maternal figure for her little sister, while their mother is away and finds her own solutions when the problem arises. Chihiro also demonstrates this maturity, but it takes her a while to achieve this. In the beginning of the film, she starts as the typical modern pre-teen, disgruntled and bored with her life. But when she is pushed into the alternate reality of the spirit world she must come into her own, making her own decisions and formulating her own path towards success through hard work and dedication. Miyazaki contributes this trend of strong female characters to the number of female animators at studio Ghibli[35]. Which would take us to another big problem with western mainstream studios, where if we would take time to view the credits scenes we would notice that there are very few women's names in artistic

[33] *Shoujo* means "young girl" in Japanese.
[34] Exists in manga (1991 – 1997) and anime (1992 – 1997, and released again in 2014 - present) form.
[35] UC Berkeley Events. (2010, July 6). *Hayao miyazaki in conversation with roland kelts* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZWmOYq3fX4 (06/02/2015)

positions. This in itself (the lack of women in creative roles) fosters some unrealistic expectations in heroines.

2.2.3 The Little Mermaid and Cartoon Sitcoms

While *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* brought back the interest of the public in theatrical animation, *The Little Mermaid* (Clements & Musker, 1989) brought back the magic people were used to from fairy tales in early Disney movies and marked the true beginning of the Renaissance Era.

The Little Mermaid, based on Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale of the same name, tells the story of a young mermaid who is obsessed with knowing the land above her. She openly disobeys her father, Triton, king of the seven seas, and continuously goes to the surface to watch the people. One day while looking inside a boat she notices a young prince, Eric, dancing and laughing, she immediately falls in love with him.



Fig. 79 – Ariel singing to an unconscious Eric.

After she saves him from the shipwreck, he falls in love with the voice that he heard singing while unconscious. When he wakes up Ariel had already left, afraid of being discovered. Determined to be with her new love, Ariel makes a dangerous deal with the sea witch Ursula to become human, in exchange for Ariel's voice the witch agrees but Ariel has three days to kiss Eric, and if not, she will turn back into a mermaid and belong to Ursula. But when plans go awry for the star-crossed lovers, the king must make the ultimate sacrifice for his daughter and exchange her life for his own. Ultimately, Eric defeats Ursula and Triton regains both his physical form and his power. Recognizing Ariel and Eric's true love for each other, the King gives Ariel legs and she marries her prince. They all live happily ever after.

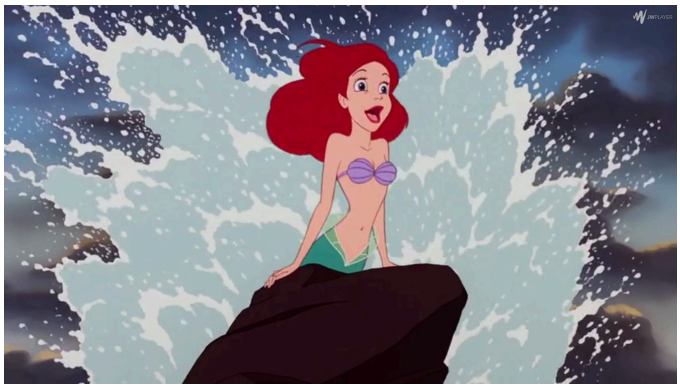


Fig. 80 – Ariel singing how she would love to be part of the human world.

Ariel's design and personality go hand-in-hand with the 80's vogue, but her figure still accompanies very much the "sexyfying" trend of Disney and other animations studios' female leads or love interests. Ariel has a minuscule waist, her hips wider, and her bust is fully developed. She is still a sixteen-year-old and she is given the (though impossibly hour-glassed) body of an adult model.



Fig. 81 - Tiffani Thiessen as Kelly Kapowski
in Saved by the Bell (Bobrick, 1989-1993)

Her big hair is also very in tune with the late eighties/early nineties trend. Her personality though, is a big advancement from earlier Disney characterization. She still falls in love at first sight, but the first goals we see in her is that she wants to know the world above the sea. Her personality is more rounded than earlier female animations, and relatable to young girls. Roger Ebert described her perfectly in his 1989 review: *"Ariel is a fully realized female character who thinks and acts independently, even rebelliously, instead of hanging around passively while the fates decide her destiny. Because she's smart and thinks for herself, we have sympathy for her scheming."*[36] She has the flaws of a regular, western teenager. She defies her father, she is curious, and she makes a fool of herself because she

[36] The movie was given 4 stars by Roger Ebert, a renown American critic, in November 17th 1989, information retrieved from http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-little-mermaid-1989 (17/07/2015).

follows the misguided knowledge of a seagull. This is the first step taken by a big studio to transform the way our heroines are represented.

2.2.4 New Shorts and Television Series

The best way for an audience to get to know a character is to watch them for a long time, and television series provide just that. With short, but multiple episodes, the audiences are capable of getting to know a character's different peculiarities and multiple layers to an extent not as commonly present in short films. In movies the information, if given, is usually given by exposition.

During the last half of the 90's, there was an increase in the dimensionality of gender roles or female cartoon characters in cartoon television such as lead characters like Daria (Eichler & Lewis, 1997–2001), Pepper Ann (Rose, 1997–2000), or the Powerpuff Girls (McCracken, et al., 1998-2005), and thanks to supporting characters who had prepared the terrain for such (Pomerance, 2001). But unfortunately two researchers reported in 1997 that there was still a constant and overwhelming reinforcement of sexism and gender stereotyping by cartoons, and that male cartoon characters still outnumber female cartoon personalities when it came to displaying a broader range of behavioural traits, and portray a wider variety of work-related roles (Pomerance, 2001).

The Simpsons (Groening, 1989 - Present) is a television series about a family of five people, mother, father, son, daughter, and baby. In every episode they get into adventures with some political or social commentary.



Fig. 82 - The Simpsons family.

The Simpsons demonstrates the typical American comedy family, which consists of ugly/fat husband with gorgeous wife[37]. However, Marge Simpson is designed the same way

[37] More on this on the section "I now pronounce you Extraordinary and Plain" of this dissertation.

as every character in the show, so we do not see a discrepancy that we see in early classic cartoons, for example the Blue Fairy in *Pinocchio* (1940) who is completely lifelike, while every other character is allowed to be exaggerated, extravagant, and caricaturized.



Fig. 83 - The Blue Fairy's lifelikeness to Geppetto's caricature.

This series has been around for twenty-six years and over the course of those years, every character has evolved one way or another to what they are today, while still maintaining basic characteristics: Marge is nice, Homer is dumb, Bart is rebellious, Lisa is smart, and Maggie is a baby. Marge has evolved into playing many one-episode roles. She has been a stay-at-home mother for most of the time, but she has also played an entrepreneur, real-estate agent, teacher, police officer, news anchor, driver, etc. Also from time to time we see her confronting the role she has been playing since the beginning. This occurs mostly just in single episodes, then it is back to basics.

Lisa, on the other hand, is the most developed and up-to-date character. She is almost always in tune with what is politically correct. She is a Buddhist because it is the only religion that preached peace and love and does not care who believes in it. She is a vegetarian because of her religion and because of what she feels for animals. She is a feminist, always striving for gender equality. She has a thirst for knowledge and wants to always be the best. She always fights for what she believes and when she shows her faults or goes too far, we are reminded that she is only eight years old, and especially that nobody is perfect.

In 1999, another cartoon sitcom came into existence, much in the style of *The Simpsons*[38]. *Family Guy* (MacFarlane, 1999 - Present) has a lot of the same characteristics as The Simpsons, so much so that the synopsis is exactly the same, but the jokes are presented differently. It runs around cut-scenes and cultural references. Its humour is a lot more adult, which makes the racy jokes all the more sexual, or misogynistic.

[38] Forrest, O. (2015, February 15). 10 Similarities You Never Noticed In Family Guy And The Simpsons. Retrieved August 26, 2015.



Fig. 84 – Lois and her expanding boobs.

Lois, (one of the female leads) is constantly put down for being a woman and is often overly sexualized while Meg is constantly being put down for being ugly. Lois and her daughter have the same face and head shape, but Meg has glasses and her body is not the typical curvy yet thin type which the media in general has told women they should be to be considered the pinnacle of beauty.

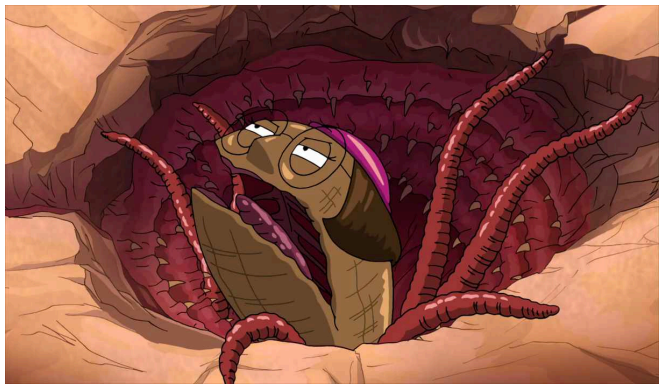


Fig. 85 – Meg as the Sarlacc in the *Star Wars* parody of *Family guy*.

Meg is considered hideous (in the series), and is often made fun of or mistreated. She is never taken seriously, with the expression "Shut up, Meg!" already being a catchphrase on *Family Guy*. Her own father delivers most of the abuse and is constantly passing gas on her face.

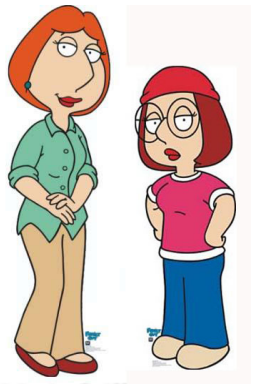


Fig. 86 - Lois and Meg Griffin.

Although in character centred episodes, characters are given more personality or more depth in order to deal with that episode's adventure. The show teaches viewers that a beautiful

woman should be objectified and sexualized, and can be treated however a man feels like it, and that ugly women should be put down, made fun of, treated like animals, etc. Nowadays, maybe those kinds of maltreatments are viewed only as ironic jokes, but many people let that behaviour influence their thoughts into justifying that it is acceptable to treat people badly if they fall within certain qualities (Ridgway, 2013).

Tiny Toon Adventures (1990) takes place in the fictional land of Acme Acres where the characters attend Acme Looniversity to get their Toon degree. Most of the faculty are the cartoons from the Looney Tunes, and all the Tiny Toons are basically child versions of the Looney Tunes: Babs and Buster Bunny (no relation) are similar to Bugs Bunny. Babs is pink and Buster is blue. Plucky Duck is a green and smaller version of Daffy Duck. Hamton J. Pig derives from Porky Pig; Elmyra Duff from Elmer Fudd, and so forth. But all the tiny toons have inspired but different personalities from the characters that based their designs.



Fig. 87 – Furrball, Elmyra, Hamton, Babs, Sweetie, Buster, Plucky, Montana Max, and Fifi posing in front of Acme Looniversity.

It is difficult not to see the girls in *Tiny Toons* as "MS Male Characters" because there is no male character deriving from a female character (because there are none), but since the Tiny Toons are much younger than their Looney counterparts and are not exactly from the same show, they actually do not fit the trope. Unfortunately, every female character always dons one or many more stereotypically female trait/attire so as not to exist a single doubt on what they are. There is not one recurring female character on the show that does not display a bow as part of her attire.



Fig. 88 – Buster and Babs Bunny during the opening theme.

Babs could be the Ms Male Character to Buster Bunny, but since they are both protagonists and were both based on the same character, even though they share a similar personality, they were created at the same time and share a spotlight, so Babs escapes the trope, unlike Lola Bunny, who is a blonde/beige version of Bugs created to be his love-interest and bring a feminine touch to the group.

2.2.5 Our New Heroines

Inspired by her antecedents, Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991) possesses an archetypal beauty, and much like the Princesses before her, she has a lot more character than before. *Beauty and the Beast* was based on the French fairy tale of the same name by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (published in 1756). The tale begins with a young prince who when denying an old woman refuge in his castle was turned into a monster until which time he found someone who could love him for the ugly beast he was.



Fig. 89 – Belle at the bookshop.

Ten years later in a nearby town, a girl named Belle sings about how she does not want to stay in her village and live the provincial life. She yearns for the adventures that she reads about in her books. We know that the villagers consider her to be the most beautiful woman there, and so Gaston, the town champion, wants her for his wife. Belle is the daughter of an inventor who sets off to see if he can present his invention in a fair. After being chased by wolves in the woods he reaches the Beast's castle where he seeks shelter. Beast finds him in the castle and keeps him prisoner. When her father's horse returns home alone, Belle rides the horse searching for her father. When the horse leads Belle to the Beast's castle, she insists that the Beast exchange her father for her, to which he accepts.



Fig. 90 – Belle and the Beast on the balcony.

After some time of being miserable, Belle and Beast bond and over time grow very fond of each other. Eventually Belle has to come home because of her father and when the villagers find out about the Beast (and that Belle's father was not crazy when telling people about it), they mobbed the castle. Gaston and Beast fight with the eventual downfall of Gaston. As Belle cries over Beast's injuries and professes her love for him, the curse is broken and every inhabitant of the castle returns to their human form, and live happily ever after.

Belle is one of the first female leads in the history of animation to show an interest in something that was neither love nor a man. She wanted to travel the world, have adventures, and meet interesting people.



Fig. 91 – Belle impatient as Gaston bothers her about how women should not read.

She wants out of the life she has, which she deems boring, and she could not care less about what the villagers around her gossip. Never once does she mention wanting to find love or the desire to get married, she wants to explore. She is very brave and compassionate, trading her life for her father's and defying the beast. She does not go for the typical "handsome hero", but finds love in beast's efforts at being kinder and gentler.

Aladdin (1992), based on the middle-eastern folktale of *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* from *One Thousand and One Nights*[39], tells the tale of the young penniless main character, in the streets of fictional Middle Eastern land of Agrabah. Aladdin is a poor boy who lives in the streets until he meets princess Jasmine, daughter of the sultan, and falls in love with her. After being tricked by the sultan's counsellor into going down an enchanted cave, he finds a magic lamp and releases its genie.



Fig. 92 – Aladdin admiring himself in the mirror.

Offering to grant Aladdin three wishes, Genie is tricked into getting them out of the cave without Aladdin wasting a single wish. Aladdin uses his first wish to become a prince. He goes to the palace disguised as a wealthy prince to impress both the Sultan and Jasmine. After initial rejection from Jasmine, the two end up falling in love with each other. After Jafar, the Sultan's counsellor, gets his hands on the lamp, he wishes to rule Agrabah. Jafar sends Aladdin to a faraway place, where Genie saves him, and entraps Jasmine in an hourglass. Aladdin comes back, saves everyone, and defeats Jafar by entrapping him in a lamp after he had wished to become a genie himself. In the end, Aladdin wishes Genie his freedom and the sultan grants Jasmine the power to marry whomever she wants, and she chooses Aladdin.



Fig. 93 – Jasmine and the Sultan discussing her love life.

[39] One Thousand and One Nights is a collection of Middle Eastern, West and South Asian stories and folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age.

Jasmine's main concern is to not marry who her father wants her to marry but rather whom she chooses. She is also seen commenting that the walls of the palace are her "cage". But after being caught following her escape from the castle and meeting Aladdin, Jasmine does not try again to leave. Jasmine is absolutely the only female who is not a background character, so she is valued essentially for her role in the male characters' life rather than by her own merit. She is desired for her status (by Jafar), for her beauty (by Aladdin), and cherished by her father for being his daughter, none of these characters actually enjoy Jasmine for who she is as her own person (except for Aladdin, after their adventure).

In *Thumbelina* (Bluth & Goldman, 1994), inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's 1835 tale of the same name, tells the story of a childless woman wishes very much to have a child. A little girl is born in a flower in the woman's garden as small as a thumb. Naming her Thumbelina, the woman takes very good care of her daughter.



Fig. 94 – Thumbelina's mother reacting to her birth.

Eventually Thumbelina falls in love with a fairy prince and they both vow to see each other again. After hearing her beautiful voice, a toad kidnaps Thumbelina to sing on her boat show and marry one of her sons. After escaping, Thumbelina is captured again when a bug finds her incredibly attractive, until all the other bugs find her repulsive and it abandons her. Meanwhile, the Prince is desperately looking for her. Thumbelina is brought in by a field mouse that takes care of her, but it too wants to marry Thumbelina off to a very rich mole.



Fig. 95 – Thumbelina and Prince Cornelius getting married.

After escaping all of this and a very deadly winter, with the help of friends, Thumbelina is finally reunited with her prince, who also got into trouble trying to save her. They marry, she gets wings, and they live happily ever after.



Fig. 96 – Thumbelina meeting Cornelius for the first time.

Thumbelina is only known across the land (by farm animals and such) for her beauty, singing voice, and tiny stature, not in any way by her personality or deeds. She and the fairy prince fall in love after one song, but unlike other movies where that may happen this song reveals nothing about their true personality. They just "magically" fit.



Fig. 98 - Grundel Toad pulling Thumbelina to him.



Fig. 99 – Thumbelina dressed as a butterfly.



Fig. 100 – Thumbelina about to me married to the mole.

Throughout the story Thumbelina is coveted because of her beauty. The big son of the toad had wanted Thumbelina because of how she looked. Mama toad wanted to cash in on her voice. The field mouse took care of Thumbelina but only because it wanted Mr Mole's riches, and the bug wanted to impress everyone with Thumbelina as its trophy partner. The Prince was the only one who had gotten to know her a little better (but only met her once) but he still

upon meeting her is only interested in her because of her beauty. This shows at least that his intentions were not as tainted as the other characters Thumbelina faces. This film unfortunately does not really show the evolution we see happening in Disney's films, because the main character has very little personality and has to be helped throughout the entire movie. She is the size of a thumb, which does not facilitate her ability to help herself. Maybe her reactions are those of so many young girls in her situation, but it still establishes a very poor hero and role model. And once again, most importantly, it teaches that to be loved by everyone you must be beautiful, and having a good singing voice does not hurt either.

Pocahontas (1995), based on true historic facts, tells the story of a young Native-American girl, daughter of her tribe's chief, and how she wants to find her own path in life. She falls in love with an English explorer that had come to the Americas to find gold with a large group of other white men.



Fig. 101 – Pocahontas and John Smith meeting.

John Smith and Pocahontas fall in love and bond over what they learn from each other, but her father disapproves, having wanted her to marry the tribe's hero warrior. Pocahontas seeks counselling from her grandmother, a spirit in a tree, who tells Pocahontas to follow her heart. Pocahontas then runs to save John Smith's life that was about to be taken for the murder of Pocahontas's former betrothed (who was actually killed by John's friend).



Fig. 102 – Pocahontas saving John Smith's life.

Pocahontas saves him by putting herself in front of her father's axe, but John is hurt anyway when he saved the chief's life by throwing himself in front of a bullet fired by the villain of the film. In the end, John Smith returns to England to get the treatment he requires and Pocahontas stays behind.

Much like Jasmine, Pocahontas is also to marry whom her father approves and much like Jasmine she wishes to follow her own path; but in this movie female counselling surrounds Pocahontas. She has her grandmother Willow who she visits often to get her advice and guidance, and her best friend Nakoma who supports her and wants only the best for her. It is very rare to see, before Pocahontas, a character who is surrounded by female support. Other than Aurora there really are not that many accompanying female characters. Snow White's only other female counterpart is the Evil Queen; Cinderella was continuously mistreated by all of her female family members and the Fairy Godmother only comes to satisfy her wish to go to the ball; and Ariel has six sisters, but none of them takes an active part in the movie, and the only other important female character is Ursula, who like all the other ones mentioned was the antagonist.



Fig. 103 – Pocahontas saying goodbye to John Smith.

It is also quite a different ending from what we expect because it is the first time a heroine does not end a movie with her loved one. It is refreshing to see she did not look completely distraught by that fact. She is happy to know that she can take whatever path she chooses and has the support of her father.

In 1996 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Trousdale & Wise), based on Victor Hugo novel of the same name (1831), premiered in cinemas everywhere. The story tells of a disfigured teenager who lives atop the cathedral of Notre Dame ringing its bells. The intolerant and racist judge Frollo adopted Quasimodo as a baby, after he murdered his gypsy

mother and a priest guilted him into doing so. Growing up locked in the bells' tower, Quasimodo envied all the other Parisians who had complete lives.

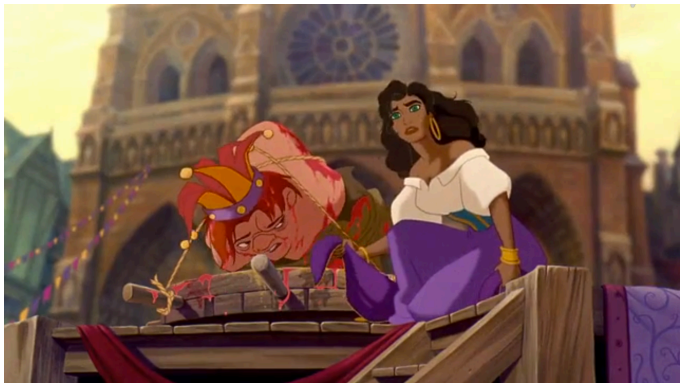


Fig. 104 – Esmeralda rescuing Quasimodo from the mockery of the people.

One day in a festival, Quasimodo escapes the cathedral and joins the fun. He meets Esmeralda, a beautiful Romani, who defends him when people attack and laugh at him. Esmeralda is also a street dancer who had enticed judge Frollo, and was now being prosecuted for witchcraft. She had previously met Captain Phoebus, when running away from Frollo's men, and falls in love with her and wants to help her escape.



Fig. 105 – Esmeralda reacting at Frollo's proximity and proposition.



Fig. 106 – Frollo making Esmeralda to choose between him and death.

Eventually she is captured and Frollo gives her the chance of either being his or burning at the stake. She chooses death over having to be with him. Quasimodo now disregarding any of Frollo's rules frees himself from the chains his master had imprisoned him with and saves Esmeralda from the ever-growing flames.



Fig. 119 – Esmeralda, Phoebus and Djali (the goat) looking happily at Quasimodo.



Fig. 108 – Quasimodo celebrating with the townspeople.

The movie's final moments have Frollo being killed, by falling off the cathedral, Phoebus and Esmeralda ending up together, and Quasimodo finally having human friends.



Fig. 109- Esmeralda teasing Frollo.

Esmeralda is a temptress, someone who everyone falls in love with. She is curvy and exotic[40], and her dances are seductive. She uses her allure to her advantages and to entertain. It is an interesting character and story where the trope of Virgin and Whore are both reflected in the same character. Esmeralda is seen as a Madonna by Quasimodo, who sees her as a saviour and pure; while Frollo sees her as a whore tempting him, seducing him, trying to make him sin.



Fig. 110 – Esmeralda about to clean and comfort Quasimodo after the townspeople assaulted him.



Fig. 111 – Esmeralda smiling at the spectators.

That is why she develops feelings for Phoebus, because he sees her not as one or the other. He sees her for the flawed, yet beautiful human being she is.

Another somewhat independent female character was that of Megara, in *Hercules* (Clements & Musker, Hercules, 1997). The film is loosely based on the legendary Greek mythology hero Heracles (in this adaptation they decided to use the Roman version of the name, Hercules).

[40] Calling someone "exotic" can be a form of othering, it is saying that person is different, desirable; they are not a part of what is called "normal". They are fetishizing someone solely based on the colour of their skin/accent. (Mason, 1998)

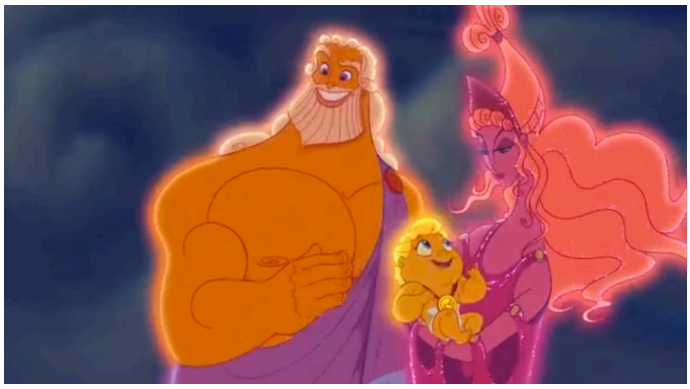


Fig. 112 – Zeus, Hera, and baby Hercules in Mount Olympus.

This is the story of a god taken from his parents as a baby and made to drink a poison that would strip him of his godliness (and supposedly kill him), but because he did not finish the whole poison he survives and retains his strength. One day he discovers who he really is, after years of thinking himself a freak because no one else was like him. His parents tell him he was a gift from the gods, and Hercules goes out to find the temple of Zeus to ask him who he truly is. Upon reaching Zeus, who happens to be his father, Hercules is told the only way to return to Mount Olympus and sit with the other gods is if he proves himself a true hero.



Fig. 113 – Hercules trying to reach Megara's soul while rapidly aging, in the river Styx.

After constant training with his coach, a satyr named Philoctetes, and trial after trial, and saving Mount Olympus and Greece from the terrible ways of Hades (god of the Underworld who wanted to rule everything), he is truly made a hero when he trades his life for that of the one he loves, Megara.



Fig. 114 – Hercules choosing Megara over Olympus.

When at the gates of Olympus, he is given the choice to abandon Megara and all he has in the mortal world to become a god, or give up being a god and being with his birth parents (all he had wanted for so long) to stay with Megara. He chooses the latter and the two live happily ever after as heroes.



Fig. 115 – Hercules about to save Megara from the centaur.

Megara is introduced to us as being "a damsel in distress", but as she put it herself: "I'm a damsel, I'm in distress, I can handle this. Have a nice day." (00:32:51). She does not feel like she cannot take care of herself, or that she needs help. She wants to get her job of convincing the centaur to join Hades's forces done. The only problem with that phrase is that she clearly needed help because she was literally being held by a creature ten times her size. But the message of self-sufficiency was verbalized so the message somewhat passes.



Fig. 116 – Image sequence of Hades reminding Megara how she traded her soul to save the one she loved and how he left her for another woman.

Because of her past incidents with men, she does not trust them anymore. She is bound to Hades because of a deal she made with him some time ago, to save the life of her then-boyfriend who then proceeded to trade Megara for another woman.



Fig. 117 – Megara washing her hair.

She is cynical and snarky, and her voice is something we have never heard before in a heroine in or outside of Disney: it is rough and seductive. Of course that goes hand-in-hand with how she is used as a femme fatale for Hades to manipulate Hercules, but it is still unusual. She rejects Hercules at first because of her wounds. But as time goes by his heroism and bravery and the fact that Hercules really is a gentle soul and good man, he wins her heart. At the end of the movie Hercules has two options: either he gets his strength back but his deal with Hades that Megara would not get hurt goes out the window, or he continues to be a weak mortal and Megara is kept safe from injury. Megara does not give Hercules the chance to have to pick one of the two, when she sees him about to be crushed by a giant stone column she pushed him out of the way and is hit instead.



Fig. 118 – Megara crushed by a pillar after pushing Hercules out of the way.

That is when, when she is on the verge of death, she tells Hercules how the deal is now broken he can get his strength back.



Fig. 119 – Hades teasing Hercules over Megara's betrayal.

She is completely remorseful of having lied about who she was (or who she worked for) to Hercules for so long, and that he still would rather be fragile and keep her safe, than having his superhuman strength and risking her getting hurt, that without thinking the first thing she does when she sees him about to get really hurt is push him out of harm's way.

She actually risks her life to save his. Not many female heroines have done that, or better, it was rarely shown to us a heroine willing to die to do what is best, and Megara actually did die. Because it was a family film, and a Disney one at that, a love interest could never truly be killed permanently. But it took Hercules going down to the Underworld, taming Hades's three-headed dog, and diving into the sea of souls to fish out Megara's soul before she finally came back to life. Ultimately the most significant saving done in the film was him saving her.



Fig. 120 – Hades telling Megara to seduce Hercules.

Megara does not seem to have any particular goal, except getting rid of her link to Hades. Because being hurt before was so traumatizing, she does not want anything to do with men until she meets our hero who is unlike anyone she has seen before in terms of kindness and notion of good. She is a very flawed heroine who continuously shows us you can choose to do good deeds regardless of how damaged you think you are even if it means putting yourself at risk.

Anastasia (Bluth & Goldman, Anastasia, 1997) is an adaptation of the legend of Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia, which claims that she escaped the execution of her family. The story begins with the Russian royal family being cursed by a jealous man, Rasputin, who wanted their ruin.



Fig. 121 – Young Anastasia dancing with her father.

Of all the Tsar's children only the youngest, Anastasia, survives while trying to escape the revolution along with her grandmother, the Dowager Empress of Russia. She trips trying to get on the train that her grandmother was on and hits her head, losing her grandmother and her memory. Ten years pass and, now named Anya, she seeks a character called Dimitri to get a passport in order to go to Paris in search of her family. Meanwhile Dimitri and his friend Vlad are trying to find an Anastasia look-alike to fool the Dowager Empress in to giving them the reward for finding her beloved granddaughter.



Fig. 122 – Dimitri noticing Anya's eyes compared to those of the painting.

When they meet Anya, they agree to bring her along convincing her that she could be the Grand Duchess Anastasia without letting her in on the "con" so as not to split the reward three ways. Thinking there could be no harm no foul, she accepts and the three travel to Paris. After Rasputin's many attempts to kill Anya in their travels fail, the trio reach Sophie, the Empress's cousin, and convince her and she arranges a meeting with the Dowager Empress.



Fig. 123 – Anastasia hearing about Dimitri being a con artist.

Upon hearing her grandmother tell Dimitri she knows all about him and his schemes, Anastasia cuts ties with him and never wants to hear from him again. Now knowing that Anya truly is Anastasia, after she told a story about a kitchen boy (young Dimitri) saving them through a secret passage in the palace, Dimitri runs after the Empress and hijacks her in her own car in order to make himself be heard. He convinces her and she goes to visit Anya. Together Anastasia remembers her grandmother's smell and the two are finally reunited. The empress tells Anastasia that Dimitri did not accept the reward, and Anastasia goes after him with her grandmother's blessing. They battle Rasputin one last time, face-to-face, and win. They elope and live happily ever after.



Fig. 124 – Anastasia saving Dimitri on the train.



Fig. 125 – Dmitri saving Anastasia from sliding off the broken bridge.

Anastasia and Dimitri are a couple that are constantly saving each other throughout the movie. In every attempt Rasputin made at killing Anastasia, he would not care if he hurt others in the process, so Dimitri and Vlad were always in the middle of danger, too. Every time she was in a dangerous position Dimitri would save her, and every time Dimitri was in danger Anastasia would save him.



Fig. 126 – Anastasia asking Dimitri to stop talking because it is upsetting her.

Anastasia is headstrong, feisty, and sarcastic. She does not like to be bossed around, she is tough, and she does not cry over her misfortunes. She attracts Dimitri because of all these virtues. Even though he was constantly seeing possible Anastasia look-alikes, this one is not just pretty, she is brave and sassy, and all those things pull him towards her. She is also an archetype of the modern-day princess in that her main goal is not a soul mate, finding him is just the reward. Her true goal is to know who she is and to find a family.



Fig. 127 – Anastasia's body with the coat.

In her appearance, she is beautiful, but her body is hidden under an overlarge coat during the first half of the movie. The movie then subconsciously addresses Anastasia as tough and fearless during the time she is seen wearing that ill-fitting coat. But whenever she is seen being more feminine, she is suddenly more emotional and insecure, although not all the time, but a lot more than whenever she is seen in the coat. When she is seen in a dress, where she is considered most beautiful, her co-stars always remark on it one way or another: "Wonderful, marvellous!" (00:44:03) Vlad sees her in the blue dress.



Fig. 128 - Dimitri dumbfounded upon seeing Anastasia's look at the ballet.



Fig. 129 – Anastasia in her gala outfit while Dimitri tries to talk to her grandmother.

Dimitri's expression when seeing her in the midnight-blue one. She does not have as plucky an attitude as before. Not that she cannot be emotional, or that showing emotions are bad, but mostly seeing her that way whenever she is more "girly" gives the impression that being feminine is innately weak, instead of saying that you can be emotional and weak or strong and brave no matter what you want to wear.



Fig. 130 - Anastasia in her dream.

She is also usually seen as most vulnerable when she is seen more feminine; when she is dreaming of her siblings she has a more giggly personality, has a bow on her head and a summer dress.



Fig. 131 – Dimitri holding Anastasia as she cries.

After she is attacked, even though she was having a high-stress and trauma-inducing episode, she is seen crying and holding onto Dimitri instead of how she reacted when (for example) they almost died in a train crash, while she was wearing her usual coat.



Fig. 132 – Image sequence of Anastasia tackling Rasputin to the ground where they both struggle.



Fig. 133 – Anastasia destroying Rasputin's reliquary.

However by the end of the film, she fights off Rasputin, with the help of Dimitri, wearing a sparkly gown and is seen as no less heroic than him.

Her face and actions do not have that elasticity typical of animated characters, but it was not because they wanted to keep her pretty, although they probably did anyway, like with the other lead female characters studied in this dissertation, but her lack of elasticity was due to the fact that the whole movie was rotoscopied. Almost every character acts in relation to their reference actor[41], so they look stiffer than usual and less cartoon-y, precisely like Snow White did in Disney's 1937 adaptation.

Mulan (Cook & Bancroft, 1998), based on an actual ancient Chinese legend, tells the story of a young girl trying to find her true self, and in the meantime going to war in the place of her crippled father, disguised as a man named Ping. After training and developing friendships with her fellow soldiers, Mulan and the other recruits find another platoon that

[41] A reference actor is an actor whose acting is recorded, and then later the footage is used to give animators notion of movement, proportion, etc. in the animations.

was completely wiped out by Shan Yu and his legion of Huns[42]. As they are travelling away from the devastated site, they are attached by the Huns and barely escape.



Fig. 134 – Shang noticing her breasts.



Fig. 135 – Mulan (as Ping) uncovering her bandages.

After being exposed as a woman, because of a chest wound given to her by Shan Yu, Mulan is expelled from the army, but is not killed because her captain, Li Shang, owes her his life. After being abandoned in the middle of the mountains with nothing but a sword and a horse, she discovers that some of the Huns are still alive and goes to the palace to tell her former army.

Only after the Huns actually attack is she believed and joins the efforts to defeat them. With the help of the other soldiers, Mulan is able to save the emperor and the whole of China.



Fig. 136 – Mulan dressed on her way to the matchmaker.

This movie is especially important because the fact that Mulan is a woman and is actually a focal point of the movie. She is continuously shown what she should be and every time she shows the audience and her fellow characters that one does not need to follow every guideline that exists. She should be a good wife and demonstrate all of the attributes that compose one to the matchmaker, but Mulan is unable to fit that mould.

[42] The Huns are a warlike Asiatic nomadic people who invaded and ravaged Europe in the 4th–5th centuries.



Fig. 137 – Mulan winning the checkers game with one move.



Fig. 138 – The boys about to steal the little girl's doll.

On her way to the matchmaker, through an exposition song[43], we find out many traits of her personality that go beyond any stereotypical values attributed to women. We can see her interfering in a match of Chinese checkers and winning the game for one of the old men playing, showing us how she is astute and intelligent; she is also seen helping a little girl that is being teased by two other boys, showing us she is compassionate and just.

She should be quiet, but she is incapable of doing so. She wants to speak her mind, be heard and taken seriously. Her whole family wants her to be the perfect Chinese woman, but these "faults" of hers make it impossible.



Fig. 139 – Image sequence of Mulan approaching citizens to warn them of the danger, and they pull away indignantly.

There is a character that helps maintain the fact that women were not accepted as equals to men present throughout the whole movie: "Silence! You will do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man's presence." (00:15:26) Said Shi Fu, a member of the Emperor's council to Mulan's father when she intervened at his enlisting. "I know my place. It is time you learned yours" (00:17:15) says her father when she starts protesting his accepting the army's call, because she had embarrassed him earlier when they arrived to

[43] A musical exposition or an exposition song in a story (visual or audible) is a narrative tool used to provide background information to understand the characters or the action.

summon him to the army. And later still, when Mulan had just saved the palace from the Huns, Shang says to Chi Fu's accusations: "She's a Hero!" (01:15:35) To which Shi Fu replies, "She's a woman. She'll never be worth anything!" (01:15:37). Shi Fu exists in the movie to uphold the values that existed earlier in history. The audiences think of him as a bad guy because he keeps trying to put our heroine down, regardless of all the good she has done so far, but he serves as the stabilizer when everyone starts to accept Mulan, for whom she is. He is there to remind us that that is not supposed to happen, that that is not acceptable, and that it is a crime.



Fig. 140 – Mulan taking off her make-up at her ancestors' shrine.

In the beginning of the film, when Mulan fails at the matchmaker and disappoints her whole family, Mulan shows how deeply this affects her. She is devastated not because the matchmaker said she will never find a husband, but because her family wants her to be something she is not, and when she is unable to accomplish what they impose on her, they are heart-broken. As she sings in her song: "Look at me, I may never pass for a perfect bride, or a perfect daughter. Can it be, I'm not meant to play this part? Now I see, that if I were truly to be myself, I would break my family's heart." (00:11:58). An article about *Brave* (Andrews, Chapman, & Stanley, 2012) actually describes this scenario perfectly, "*When we do not fit easily into a traditional gender framework, into any gender framework of any tradition, we can easily become outsiders to both our families and ourselves."* (McFadden, 2012). Mulan thus represents those who experience the conflict between how they want to act, and how they are supposed to act in accordance to society's standards and expectations.



Fig. 141 – Mulan presenting the sword of Shan Yu and the crest of

the emperor to her father.

However as soon as she sees her crippled father being drafted into the war, she does not hesitate to help her family. Her fear of seeing him get more hurt (or worse) makes her steal the family's horse and her father's army gear and run in his place. Mulan also wanted in part to prove her worth. ("Maybe I didn't go for my father. Maybe what I really wanted was to prove I could do things right. So when I looked in the mirror I'd see someone worthwhile." 01:02:39). She is deliberately committing a crime (by disguising as a man) and risking humiliating even more to her family, in order to save her father and discover herself. Mulan represents the "modern woman" in a society where alternative gender roles were not acceptable and would result in death. She literally risked her life to spare her father's.

She is an excellent role-model. She was awkward, she did not fit in, and she was not special in anyway, except in how she did not fit in. When being drafted (in place of her father) she did not find that she was born to be there, she actually trained really hard to be able to do everything she did. She wanted to find herself, but that was not the reason she took her father's place. She first and foremost wanted to keep him safe and by doing so also keep her mother and grandmother safe.

Mulan's love was also progressive. It was not "at first sight". She found a love who wanted her for her personality and strength, because we can be one hundred per cent certain that Shang did not fall in love with Mulan because of her beauty, because he thought she was a man for a majority of the movie.



Fig. 142 - Ling, Chien-Pao, and Yao disguised as concubines.

Another interesting element of the movie is that even though women are deemed inferior to men, and although it seems to be illegal to cross-dress, Mulan's three comrades dress as women to distract the guards without it being looked down by the audience.

There is a movie from Warner Bros. Animation titled *Quest For Camelot* (Du Chau, 1998) and it tells the story of a peasant girl named Kayley who helps save the Kingdom of Camelot. Our heroine's story begins with a wish to leave her house in the country and be a Knight of the Round Table like her father was. When she was very young, Kayley's father was killed defending King Arthur against a man who had revolted. She mourned her father's death and spent the rest of her childhood and adolescence wishing to become a knight like her father.



Fig. 143 – Gruber and Juliana, Kayley's mother, as he is about to use her in his plan.

One day Ruber, who murdered her father, took Kayley's mother hostage to use her to get in the walls of Camelot and attack the king. Kayley was able to escape while Ruber transformed his henchmen into living weapons and went to warn King Arthur, but before she left she overheard them saying that Excalibur, the enchanted sword, had been dropped in the forbidden forest. So Kayley decides to pass through the forbidden forest before reaching Camelot and retrieve the sword. While there, she encounters a blind hermit named Garrett. With his assistance and that of a two-headed dragon, they find the sword and return to Camelot. Once there, a battle ensues between Ruber's evil posse and Camelot's knights. While facing off with Ruber, who had united his hand with Excalibur through the use of a potion, Kayley fights her way to get near the stone where the sword was once held. Kayley cleverly manages to make Ruber stick his sword-hand in it. The spells are all broken, Ruber is defeated, and Kayley and Garrett are both knighted.



Fig. 144 – Kayley as a child being patted by her father.

Kayley in this story is much like other heroines of her age. There is no intention of find love, only a superior honour that her father once held. The bond she has with her father's memory is not unique. It is actually very common for a hero to have a goal and to have their fathers be the ones that propel them to pursue or hold them back from said dreams. Pocahontas, Jasmine, and Ariel were all being held back from doing what they wanted because of their fathers. Mulan wanted to honour the whole family, but most importantly wanted to save her elderly father from having to go to war, and Belle traded places with her father, so he would not have to live with the beast. Tiana wanted to fulfil her father's wish of having a restaurant, now emulated in her, and even though her mother accompanies her in her quest to do so, all Tiana does is accredited to her father. "You are your Daddy's daughter, all right." (00.13.12) Everything she does in the beginning of her story is because of her father. She did not even have a social life because of all the jobs she had. "I got to make sure all Daddy's hard work means something." (00:13:17). It is as if these heroines need to have a man dictate what they should or should not do. In case of Pocahontas, and others who went against their fathers' wishes, it is a symbolic rebellion against the patriarchy. But in the cases of Kayley and Tiana, their whole lives are dedicated to honouring their fathers.



Fig. 145 – Kayley and Garrett meeting for the first time.

Kayley is also not the best reference to a strong and independent female figure. She needed the help of three male characters to reach the sword. When Garrett was severely injured, she says, "Please... don't die. I can't do this on my own. I'm sorry." (00:48:19).

There is also a part that is similar to Peter Pan quieting Wendy in *Peter Pan,* when Garrett shushes Kayley because he is trying to hear. He then is hurt by a flying arrow and Kayley verbalizes how it was her fault he got hit by the arrow. "It's all my fault you were hurt. I mean, I was rattling on when I should have been quiet. I'm no help to anyone." (00:48:34) This is telling girls that what they have to say, or their "babbling", can literally hurt people, which is not the best message to send.

2.3 21st Century

Between the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st there was no marked difference in style of stories or technique, but as the years went by studios leaned more towards Computer Generated Imagery (also known as 3D animation) and the stories themselves took a giant leap forward in western animation's female characters.

2.3.1 1st Decade

Shrek (Adamson & Jenson, Shrek, 2001) is a DreamWorks animation production. It is the story of an unsociable and content in his solitude ogre who one day discovers his swamp and home to be completely overtaken by fairy-tale characters. They tell him they have nowhere else to go because Lord Farquaad had exiled them there.



Fig. 146 – Shrek having put up the "Beware Ogre" sign.

Shrek and a talking donkey go to speak to Lord Farquaad and the Lord agrees to exile the characters elsewhere if Shrek rescues the princess he plans to marry in order to become king. Shrek agrees and sets off to rescue the Princess Fiona.



Fig. 147 – Fiona reacting to finding an ogre saved her instead of a prince.

After rescuing Fiona from the dragon that guarded the castle, Fiona seems clearly disappointed that Shrek is not the handsome prince she was waiting for. While travelling back

to Duloc, the three bond and Shrek develops feelings for Fiona, but Fiona hides a secret that she only reveals Donkey. After hearing Fiona talk about how no one could ever love a fat, disgusting ogre, a dejected Shrek goes to Duloc and brings Farquaad to the camping site where they were resting. A sad Fiona, who has also developed feelings for Shrek, leaves with Farquaad and is about to marry him when Shrek, convinced by Donkey, interrupts the ceremony and professes his love for her. Before she lets Shrek kiss her Fiona lets the sun go down and reveal that she is also an ogre, but only from sundown to sunrise. They kiss, and Fiona is stuck with her ogre form forever, for the curse stated "By night one way, by day another. This shall be the norm, until you find true love's first kiss and then take love's true form", and they lived happily ever after.

Shrek is a modern fairy-tale told with all of its clichés twisted: the hero is an ugly ogre, his sidekick is a talking donkey, the villain is a tiny Lord with a Napoleon complex, and a princess who upon kissing the love of her life remains happily as an ogre herself.



Fig. 148 – Fiona in her ogre form.

Fiona, although at first annoyed by Shrek and the fact that he is not the handsome Prince she was waiting for, falls in love with him after getting to know him on their way back to Duloc. She is very pretty in her daytime form, which is one of the reasons Farquaad chooses her. But after kissing Shrek and her night-form is revealed, Shrek (even though he is an ogre himself) falls even more in love with her. This is a great stepping-stone from other fairy-tales because this one does not end with the random-looking guy with the beautiful girl[44]. It actually ends up with the two unusual looking main characters together. Because of their personalities, we do not see overweight, green Fiona as ugly but as her own kind of beautiful.

[44] Continued on sub-chapter “I now Pronounce you Extraordinary and Plain” of this dissertation.

The Princess and the Frog (2009) tells the story of a poor girl in New Orleans circa 1926, who wishes and, most importantly, works hard to make her dream of owning and cooking in her own restaurant since she was a little girl come true. One day she kisses a frog and turns into one herself. The frog is actually the Prince of Maldonia (a fictional kingdom) named Naveen, who was tricked and transformed into a frog by an evil witch doctor.



Fig. 149 – Naveen and Tiana as frogs.

After many life-threatening encounters and subsequent escapes, they finally reach Tiana's best friend who is technically a princess for the night and should be able to break the spell. Unfortunately they do not kiss in time and both Naveen and Tiana are stuck as frogs forever. But because of their adventures, they have fallen in love and decide to marry nevertheless, unknowingly making Tiana a princess. Their first kiss as husband and wife actually breaks the spell and they return to New Orleans to fulfil Tiana's wish of having her own restaurant.



Fig. 150 – Tiana in her princess costume dress.

Tiana was the first black Disney princess, but her build is not unlike that of the others. She possesses all the same characteristics as previous heroines as such a small waist, big eyes, small nose, etc. Her personality, however, is a lot more mature than most other princesses or other female lead characters.



Fig. 151 – Tiana waitressing.

She is one of the first leads to have a job and to actually work hard for what she longs for. She is the one who is constantly saving her prince, and her ultimate goal never shifts from owning a restaurant to having a life dedicated to Naveen, but as the story evolves she wants to include Naveen in her dream.

2.3.2 2nd Decade

Brave (Andrews, Chapman, & Stanley, 2012) is set in the highlands of Scotland. This film tells the story of a redheaded girl called Merida who, after fighting with her mother about her arranged betrothal, finds a magical way to change her mother's views. Unfortunately Merida's solution ends up accidently turning her mother, Queen Elinor, into a bear.



Fig. 152 - Elinor, as a bear, and Merida hunting fish.

While trying to find a way to bring Elinor back to her human form, the bond between mother and daughter strengthens. They actually start to understand each other better, as Elinor notices Merida's outdoor skills learned from the men in her life prove to be useful and valuable. Later Merida uses womanly skills her mother taught her, which Merida had before deemed useless or boring, to bring about a peaceful agreement between the four quarrelling kingdoms.



Fig. 153 –A tapestry with an illustration of Merida and Elinor as a bear.

They had three days to complete their task before her mother's transformation became permanent. As the time was about to run out, Elinor defends her family against an enormous, deranged bear and Merida, thinking they were too late, apologizes for everything she had done and Elinor is transformed back to her human form. The whole family is together again. They have defeated the bear that had been plaguing the Highlands for years, and their bond has been renewed and strengthened by their adventure. Merida and Elinor become inseparable as a result of their adventure and understanding of each other's strengths.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge how this movie, in a world where males dominate media, is a film that features two female leads and whose story focuses on their relationship with each other. A realistic mother/daughter relationship, skilfully told, in which their relationship to the males in the movie is merely the catalyst and not the main issue. Most of Merida's traits are very typical of other heroines, and there is not much that sets her apart. However, the film does end without a love story developing (aside from familial love), and it was the females of the movie that resolved their own problems which has not been seen in previous films.

In this movie, the teenage protagonist's body type is closer to the average teenager rather than a fashion model. Even if Merida's form is thin, she looks more like the exaggeration of an adolescent's body rather than a sensualisation of it.



Fig. 154 – Merida peeking at one of the clans' first-born's strength.

In addition to that change, we find a movie that expresses societal views of what a princess should and should not be, but the Princess openly rebels against those traditions in order to become her own person[45]. We see a lot of struggle between her mother wanting her to be "proper" and a "lady", and Merida herself wanting to be free and an individual. It is really interesting to see the old world and the new being depicted like that, especially for Disney, with Elinor representing the conservative views of what a woman or princess should be and Merida representing the younger generations who want to break free of any labels and be happy before being what someone else think they should be. We see in *Brave*'s Merida a lot of what the characters in studio Ghibli have shown for decades.

Tangled (Greno & Howard, 2010) is the story of Rapunzel, based on the German fairy tale *Rapunzel* (1812) by the Brothers Grimm, a girl trapped in very high tower with no way in or out other than climbing her extremely long, blonde hair.

After receiving the healing powers from a magical flower, the baby Princess Rapunzel is kidnapped from the palace in the middle of the night by an old woman, Mother Gothel, desperate to maintain her youth. Mother Gothel, knows that the flower's magical powers are now growing within the golden hair of Rapunzel, and to stay young, she must lock Rapunzel in her hidden tower. Rapunzel is now a teenager and her hair has grown to a length of 70-feet. The beautiful Rapunzel has been in the tower her entire life, and she is curious of the outside world.



Fig. 155 – Flynn and Rapunzel singing their feelings.

One day, the bandit Flynn Ryder scales the tower and is taken captive by Rapunzel. Rapunzel strikes a deal with the charming thief to act as her guide to travel to the place where the floating lights come from that she has seen every year on her birthday. He agrees because he wants to recover the crown he had stolen and that she hid, and they fall in love.

[45] Mulan's situation was a bit different, since she was no princess and she did not actively revolt against any tradition, she just happen to not fit to into any mould and did what she did to save her father.



Fig. 156 – Rapunzel and her parents embracing each other.

After many adventures Rapunzel discovers Mother Gothel mas not her real mother and revolts. After saving Flynn from dying with her magic hair, they go together to the castle where her real parents take her in with all the joy in the world, and Flynn and her live happily ever after.

Rapunzel is a very decent character, and she demonstrates the development in female characters we saw during the middle/end of the Renaissance Era. She is spunky and rebels against her authority figure when she leaves the tower against Mother Gothel's orders. She rescues the male character several times during the movie and saves him with the healing power of her tear in the end, but it is he who saves her from Gothel when he cuts her hair in the end. Disney princesses have been doing that for the past twenty years to the point that their personalities are almost becoming formulaic. It becomes predictable, but it is better to feel predictability from proactive female characters than in passive ones.



Fig. 157 – Image Sequence of Rapunzel's daily activities.

Rapunzel is shown as good at everything she does. She has mastered many arts including culinary, fine arts, artisanal, performance, etc. She has even become a skilful fighter. She is one of those characters who have absolutely no faults. During the "Mother Knows Best" song sequence, we are shown how Gothel puts Rapunzel down and makes her think she is less than adequate. "Sloppy, under-dressed, immature, clumsy; please, they'll eat you up alive. Gullible, naïve, positively grubby, ditzy and a bit, well, hmm, vague. Plus, I believe, getting kind of chubby; I'm just saying *because I love you*…"(00:14:15) This abuse is to keep Rapunzel in a *double bind*[46]. When she says she is only saying all those insults because of the love she feels for Rapunzel, she makes Rapunzel feel locked and scared of leaving to go anywhere than beside her mother. As long as Mother Gothel controls her and manipulates her, she can guarantee she is the only one with access to the flower, and that no one will ever take it away. So those insults do not accurately reflect what Rapunzel is (except for maybe naïve) and the audience is aware of that. Rapunzel is basically a perfect human being who on top of it all is beautiful, thin, has a great singing voice, kind, well-intentioned, caring, and lovable. She is too perfect and that can be stressful for children to try and achieve.



Fig. 158 – Mother Gothel finishing reaping the flower's power onto her.

It is also unfortunate that once again a woman obsessed with her youthful appearance is centred as the evil character of the film. I think it is reflective of a culture that both pushes young women to strive for physical perfection, while simultaneously shaming/punishing them for desiring it. Examples of this are how people will rip apart a person who gets plastic surgery, or people will declare such pity for women who don't revel in their "natural beauty" or men declaring that they do not think women who wear makeup are pretty but then declare how disgusted they are when she shows her uncovered face (McCombs, 2011). It still feels incredible that Disney both props up the princesses as the epitome of beauty and then seems

[46] A double bind is an emotionally distressing dilemma in communication in which an individual (or group) receives two or more conflicting messages, and one message negates the other.

to wonder with wide-eyes why anyone would ever desire beauty and youth to the point of evil deeds.

Frozen (Buck & Lee, 2013), a film loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen *The Snow Queen* (1844), tells the story of two young sisters, Anna and Elsa, one of whom had the power of ice creation/manipulation.



Fig. 159 – The troll with Arendelle's Royal family.

One night while playing after dark, Elsa accidently hits her sister in the head with ice, knocking her unconscious. When their parents take them to the trolls to heal Anna, they are warned that fear is Elsa's greatest enemy, and that she could be very dangerous if she does not deal with her powers appropriately. During her childhood, her parents teach Elsa that she should bottle up every single feeling so as not to harm anyone else and seal the castle to any outsider so that no one knows Elsa's "curse".



Fig. 160 – Anna mourning her parents' death against Elsa's bedroom door.

Years pass and Anna and Elsa grow up apart, but not for lack of effort from Anna who misses her sister dearly. When their parents die in a storm in the middle of the sea, Elsa, now twenty-one years old, is to be crowned queen. Elsa and Anna talk for the first time in years after her coronation and somewhat bond. All through the coronation party Anna connects with Hans, the prince of a neighbouring kingdom, who she had met earlier and they claim to be in love and want to get married. Elsa disapproves and forbids it. Anna, during her quarrelling with her sister, causes Elsa to lose control and to create an icy spiked barrier. Everyone at the

party is immediately scared, and Elsa runs away leaving behind an eternal winter. Anna chases after her sister to try and help bring balance to her and the kingdom and leaves Hans in charge while she is away. As Hans helps the citizens with the cold, providing them with blankets and warm food, Anna meets Kristoff, an ice vendor who accompanies her to the mountains where Elsa sought refuge.



Fig. 161 – Anna and Kristoff about to be wedded by the trolls.

While at Elsa's ice castle, Anna cannot convince her sister to come back with her. Stressing her even more, Elsa shoots an ice ray directly into her sister's heart where the trolls had previously warned would kill anyone if hit. Anna, Kristoff and Olaf abandon the ice palace to meet the trolls, Kristoff's family, to help them cure Anna's heart. After singing a song on how Anna and Kristoff should be together romantically, the trolls tell them only an act of true love could heal a frozen heart.



Fig. 162 – Hans rejecting Anna.

They travel back to their kingdom of Arendelle to have Hans kiss Anna, which they think will cure her. In the meantime, Elsa had been captured and imprisoned in Arendelle by Hans, who later reveals himself to be a villain. Hans also does not kiss Anna and takes the kingdom for himself after telling everyone Elsa had killed Anna. When Olaf successfully frees Anna from the room she was locked in by Hans, they try to reach Kristoff to get him to kiss Anna. As Anna is about to reach Kristoff for her kiss, she sees Hans about to kill broken-hearted Elsa. Hans had convinced Elsa that she had killed her own sister. Anna rushes to put

herself between them. Anna's body freezes over exactly as the sword was about to hit Elsa causing the sword to break.



Fig. 163 – Elsa holding Anna's frozen body.

Elsa cries hugging her sister who defrosts healthy as ever because Anna's selfless act came of true love, breaking her own curse.

Hans is imprisoned, Elsa is back in her rightful place as ruler of Arendelle, and Anna has her sister back and has found love in Kristoff as well.

Firstly, we do well to notice that the relationship between the two sisters was the focus of the film. It was an interesting avenue to explore because, as stated before with *Brave*, it is a problem that on average, "*Males outnumber females 3 to 1 in family films*." (Smith S. , 2014). Having a movie that not only features two female leads, but also focuses on their relationship to each other, is notable. But, *Frozen* was inspired by *The Ice Queen* fairy tale where a girl rescues her male friend, but the film changed the story to make main character Anna need a man's help. Although it merely being inspired by the original story, the movie owes nothing to its original concept, which is something worth highlighting.



Fig. 164 – Elsa's ice blast hitting Anna in the heart.

One of the best parts of their sister relationship, and something not often seen in films, is when the ice shard pierced Anna's heart, and that she ended up saving both Elsa and herself is the definite pinnacle of the movie's action.

Kristoff's inclusion in the movie (although to obviously bring romance into the movie) takes it from a story of a courageous, competent girl who went after her sister to both help her and remove the kingdom from its eternal winter, to a girl who need a man's help to her reach her goal. Not that she was utterly helpless, however, the constant set-up of man-leader and clueless-girl is condescending to women. There is also a part that is similar to Peter Pan shushing Wendy in *Peter Pan* or Garrett asking Kayley to be quiet, when Kristoff tells her to stop talking because they have attracted wolves. It is off-putting how girls need to be quieted because their speech is literally endangering the people around them, a position men are never seen in.



Fig. 165 – Anna dancing with Hans.



Fig. 166 – Kristoff carrying dying Anna.

Anna's romances in the movie are also not really her choice, she only meets one man in the beginning of her "freedom" and because of her desperation to find love, sticks with him until he rejects her and leaves her to die. With Kristoff, it was Olaf who made her realize Kristoff's feelings for her, and she then realized she also liked him. How she could not have made the connection herself takes a bit of credibility from her feelings and her personality. It appears as though she will go from man to man depending on how *they* feel about her.



Fig. 167 – The Queen, Elsa, and Anna in comparison.



Fig. 168 – Anna and Elsa's profile.

Aside from very poor storytelling in the movie, mostly regarding Hans's character in particular (Hooks, 2014), the biggest backlash *Frozen* received was for its character designs, and for comments made by Disney's head of animation (Amidi, 2013). *Frozen* was a box-office hit (Konnikova, 2014) and because of that it has been subject to more scrutinizing eyes than any other animation films in a phenomenon called "hype backlash"[47].



Fig. 169 – Early concepts of Anna.



Fig. 170 – Early Concepts of Elsa.

Besides the fact that their faces seem to be carbon copies of their mother's, they have very baby-ish proportion. If we look closely at Anna's earlier concept art, we notice a longer face or a stronger jaw, something not usually seen in Disney's heroines, but interesting and

[47] Hype backlash is a form of negative response to a piece of media that up to the moment of said response enjoyed almost universal praise. It is despising a thing because it is otherwise adored. It is a form of criticism.

appealing nonetheless. Elsa was supposed to be the antagonist until almost the end of production (Acuna, 2014) so her earlier character concepts represent very pointy shapes and aggressive colours, not comparable to the Elsa we see in the cinema production, but still a much more noteworthy design than what was presented in the final cut of the movie. Again we reach body proportions amazingly distorted from reality (discussed later in this dissertation).

There is also the problem of the lack of female characters save for the two protagonists and how it disconnects from the original story in which inspired it.

The Snow Queen tells the story of two friends, Gerda and Kai, and how Gerda travelled to save him after a shard of troll-mirror pierced his heart and lodged in his eyes, making him only feel and see ugly things. The Snow Queen takes Kai and keeps him as her own. Gerda, advised by Kai's grandmother, goes to rescue him and not only bring him back but restore him to his usual happy and kind self. On her way to rescue him, she meets old witch woman, who kidnaps her and makes her forget about Kai, but Gerda is reminded by the sight of roses which always reminded her of her friendship with Kai; a female crow, who tells her it has seen Kai at the princess's castle; a helpful princess who, will only marry a prince as intelligent as her but unfortunately did not know the whereabouts of Kai, however clothed Gerda in warm clothes and gave her a sled to help her with her journey; a robber's daughter, who befriends Gerda after kidnapping her and lets her go with one of her reindeer after the Snow Queen after the robber's doves told her they had seen Kai with her; a Lapp woman who directs her to somebody who can help her; and lastly a Finn woman, who helps Gerda understand the inherent power she has always had within her, a power that will ultimately save her friend, her innocence and kindness as a child. She eventually reaches the Queen's castle, who was absent, and her warm tears melted the shard in Kai's heart. Gerda starts to sing a prayer and Kai starts crying, his own tears dislodged the shards in his eyes and he was back to normal. They return home a little different from when they left, but all was good.

This story is packed with female characters, different from one another and who help each in their own way to aid Gerda in her noble mission. Yet *Frozen* decided to cut every single one of them out. The story is almost completely different except for the ice-manipulating Queen and the girl who travels to meet her, but Disney had a lot of room to play with these characters before writing them completely off. From nine strong female characters Disney took out six, and added two male love interests and a pompous duke. Between their parents, their mother had two lines of dialog while their father held most conversations. Amongst their servants, it was a male one who spoke the most, and both comedic-relief

characters were a male snowman and a male reindeer. There is a balancing issue that must be taken into consideration that affects what genders appear in a movie. That is why most heroines are motherless when faced with a female villain, or supported by female characters (Snow White, Aurora, or Ariel), so to not overexpose the audience to an exclusively female cast. But that does not seem to be the issue with male-starring movies, like *Hercules,* in which the lead had both parents, a male mentor, a male sidekick, and a male antagonist; or *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007) in which the protagonists were both male, the two only speaking members of one of the protagonists' family were also male, the antagonist was male, the mentor was male, and every other important speaking character in the film, except for the other hero's love interest, was also male. There has hardly ever been a whole cast of female characters developed to counterbalance a male lead's story, yet it happens constantly to female leads to be surrounded by *male* counterparts. So it seems a bit unfair to have such a rich cast of female characters stripped from audiences filled with little girls in need of healthy representations of their gender.

By the end of 2014, we were given *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014), inspired by the Marvel Comics superhero team of the same name, which tells the story of a fourteen-year-old boy genius, Hiro, who lives with his aunt and older brother after losing both parents. Unfortunately his brother dies in the beginning of the movie trying to save his professor from a burning building after a robotics exhibit and spirals into a depression that he is only able to shake off with the help of a medical robot named Baymax, created by his big brother before his untimely death; a group of student scientists with whom he had developed a friendship; and the possibility of avenging his brother's death.



Fig. 171 – Hiro and Baymax training.

Hiro transforms Baymax into a super hero, and his friends decide they want to join his quest to find who set the building on fire in order to steal his microscopic robots. Go Go, Honey Lemon, Fred, and Wasabi are also transformed into superheroes. They find out the

truth of who was to blame for Hiro's brother's death, and also help save the villain's daughter who was trapped in another dimension. Hiro decides to forgive rather than hold a grudge, and they continue to use their abilities to help those in need.



Fig. 172 – Fred, Go Go, Baymax, Hiro (scanning them), Wasabi, and Honey Lemon.

This film has three female characters, two of which are scientists, and it is very interesting to see how they are characterized. Honey Lemon is very tall, skinny, and blonde. She is a typical "girly girl" who is very nice, loves fashion and the colour pink. That did not mean she was less intelligent than any of the other characters, she was only bubblier and had different tastes. While they all had different tastes from each other, Lemon's tastes just happened to be paralleled to stereotypically feminine behaviours and interests. An avid chemist, she loves to experiment and is a very quick thinker.

Go Go, on the other hand is short, curvy, and has really strong legs. She is quite the opposite of Lemon as she is quiet, sarcastic, and stoic. She has a passion for physics and most importantly speed. Go Go is not meant to be better nor worse than Lemon. They are just different from one another, and like the rest of the cast, it does not matter what you are, look like, or care about to be a scientist. The only thing that matters is your love for your area of science, and it is really an important message to pass on to little girls that whatever they are does not define what they can become.

In 2015 came a movie with Pixar's second female hero called *Inside Out* (Carmen & Docter, 2015). It was a success amongst children and adults[48] because of its heartfelt story and imaginative plot. *Inside Out* tells the story of an eleven-year-old girl named Riley and how she deals with moving to a new city with her family and starting a new life. The main

[48] Schaefer, S. (2015, May 18). 'Inside out' early reviews: Pixar's latest is imaginative and heartfelt. Retrieved July 21, 2015.

action is set inside her head where five main emotions (characters) live: Joy, Sadness, Fear, Disgust, and Anger. These are the emotions that control Riley's character.

The film tells the story of a girl named Riley who had a pretty good view on life. She is happy, she gets along with her parents, does well in school and hobbies, and much of that is thanks to the joy inside her. Literally, Joy is Riley's main emotion and she tries to make sure Riley has the most positive attitude when faced with difficulties. One day her family moves to a different city, and everything starts becoming a mess. Sadness, another major emotion, cannot seem to control herself and persists in making Riley gloomy, making Joy's job a little bit more difficult.



Fig. 173 – Riley and her parents eating dinner.

After a squabble between Joy and Sadness, they are sucked out of Headquarters and end up in long term memory which means they cannot influence Riley until they get back. This means Riley cannot feel any of these two emotions. Remaining in Headquarters is Disgust, Anger, and Fear, who do not do the best of jobs at keeping Riley to her old cheery self. After the two emotions travel for some time and bond, they finally return to headquarters where Joy appreciates Sadness a lot more, and realizes that if Riley did not feel any sadness, she could never enjoy true happiness. The film ends with Riley being balanced again, happier, and on the verge of adolescence.



Fig. 174 – Riley's parents cheering her on, and Riley looking embarrassed.

In pragmatic terms, the film is a lot closer to our society's reality. Riley is a girl, yes, but the film does not expose her with any kind of stereotypical characteristics. She is very

close to the heroines of Miyazaki. Aided by the movie's narrative, we have a more intensive look at this character's personality; she is more developed than many of the others when it comes to her psyche. She is fun-loving, upbeat, honest, cheerful but prone to outbursts of anger or anxiety. She is optimistic, sensitive, sentimental, and rough and goofy all rolled into one. She is emotional to say the least. She likes and plays a sport specific to where she was raised. She is silly but only seen making a fool of herself with the people who know her. She wears colourful clothes with no disregard for blue or pink, and she loves her family and her friends.



Fig. 175 – Riley, next to her mother, wearing a striped jumper.

None of her description is restricted to just boys or girls. She could have been a male character and the story would not have changed one bit (except anything romantic would always have to be portrayed by the opposite gender, it is still Disney). It was nice of Pixar to choose to make her a girl, because girls need more cartoon characters with which to identify without being limited to "girly" things.



Fig. 176 – Riley smiling.

It is also refreshing to see a look like Riley's on the big screen. Her face is also not as "pretty" (in the very limited way that Disney has defined prettiness). She has a wide, turned-up nose, a small gap between her front not perfectly straight teeth, her eyes are not as big as other heroines' have been lately, and her hair does not have any kind of specially cut or extravagant look. She is very simple, especially compared to how Disney usually makes its characters.



Fig. 192 – Anger, Joy, Fear, Disgust, and Sadness surrounding the console.

The characters in her head are a little bit closer to being one-dimensional. Disgust is very prissy, but her job is to keep Riley from being poisoned, or becoming a social pariah. Fear is usually nervous, and meant to keep her safe. His responsibilities include reflecting over any negative outcome from a situation, making her be careful of her surroundings so as not to hurt herself physically, etc.



Fig. 178 – Anger exploding at the thought of no dessert.

Anger, is the fiery emotion who steps in whenever he hears something he does not like which, since Riley is a kid, mainly consist of throwing tantrums. Joy causes her to be positive and enjoy the little things, and Sadness just makes her feel sad when the situation demands it.

This movie will hopefully serve as inspiration to other artists, who are intent on creating heroes with whom children can identify without perpetuating any stereotypes.

2.4 Conclusion

We can conclude that throughout history of mainstream animation there have been certain evolutions in the portrayal of female characters; unfortunately there have also been patterns that perpetuate certain stereotypes attributed to women. They also play more limited roles than males (Delgaudio, 1980), they are also reduced to being just “a girl” in a group of boys if they are not a protagonist, and they always have to be “beautiful” to be the heroines.

3. Character Portrayal

3.1 Physical Characterization

Leading characters are commonly the most realistic characters, and they need to be because it is crucial that the audience identifies with them (Bancroft, 2006). This is why they have very few exaggerated features.

The physical portrayal of the female leads or the male leads' love interest is, most of the times, defined by having a very small waist in comparison to breasts and thighs, a larger head, slim shoulders, and long legs. The face consists of big eyes, small mouth, tinier nose and ears, and some times bunny cheeks. The character is normally either an adolescent or a very young adult. Their expressions are usually not overly exaggerated, mostly simple, so as to remain pretty. Their movements are also typically graceful (even if they tend to be clumsy by nature). If a character strays too much from these traits, then they are probably neither the lead nor the love interest[49].

3.1.1 Heroines are Beautiful and Villains are Ugly

As previously mentioned, characters are divided into different roles, predominantly: the protagonist (in this case we will be mostly remarking on movies where the protagonist is a woman, but these same guidelines are applied to female characters who are the lead's love-interest), the love interest, the sidekick, the villain, and other secondary and background characters. We have already established some of the differences between the portrayals of each character, the beautiful face of the main character, with the ideal body type, goofy secondary faces, sharp or exaggerated villain faces, and anything in between for the background characters.

[49] A few exceptions include *Shrek* (Adamson & Jenson, 2001). More on *Shrek* on pages 72-73 and 93-94 of this dissertation.



Fig. 179 – Snow White (Disney, 1937)



Fig. 180 – Cinderella (Disney, 1950)



Fig. 181 – Aurora (Disney, 1959)



Fig. 182 – Ariel (Clements & Musker, 1989)



Fig. 183 – Pocahontas (Goldberg & Gabriel, 1995)

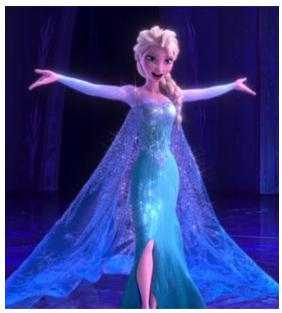


Fig. 184 – Elsa (Buck & Lee, Frozen, 2013)

The female lead usually represents the ideal woman of their time; they represent what is considered agreeable in a woman from their specific period.



Fig. 185 Jasmine (Clements & Musker, Aladdin, 1992)

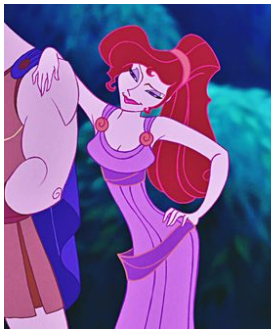


Fig. 186 Megara (Clements & Musker, Hercules, 1997)



Fig. 187 Jane (Buck & Lima, Tarzan, 1999).



Fig. 188 Esmeralda (Trousdale & Wise, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996)

In western culture, since the earlier stages of mainstream animation not much has varied: young, heart-shaped faces, somewhat curvy bodies, fair haired and skinned unless it is ethnically[50] improbable or if the original story stresses otherwise. But of course it is not just the primary female characters that get this treatment, the love interests are also prone to it.

[50] Mulan (1998): Chinese; Pocahontas (1995): Native American; Jasmine, *Aladdin* (1992): Arab; Tiana, *The Princess and the Frog* (2009): African American.



Fig. 189 –Evil Queen transformed into wicked witch (*Snow White)*.



Fig. 190 –Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty*).



Fig. 191 –Female red-skin (*Peter Pan*).



Fig. 192 – The Ugly Step-sisters *(Cinderella).*

From there it is automatically more difficult for someone, after continuous over-exposure to a type of beauty and body type that is constantly associated with importance, kindness, bravery, and any other type of characteristic linked to heroism, to find other types of beauty attractive; especially when ugliness is connected to wickedness. A study of 21 animated Disney films conducted in 2010 found that, "*Attractive characters displayed higher intelligence, lower aggressiveness, and greater moral virtue. Moreover, physically attractive characters were more likely to achieve positive life outcomes at the film's end."* (Bazzini, Curtin, Joslin, Regan, & Martz, 2010, p. 11)



Fig. 193 – Ruffnut and Astrid training catching dragons.

When designing a character the most agreed upon starting point is a basic shape. Everywhere from formal classes to books on the subject, character design derives from a plain shape first, details later. "*These basic shapes* [circles, squares, and triangles] *will give you the visual cues you need to describe your characters.*" (Bancroft, 2006, p. 32)

For example, circles convey friendliness, softness; squares convey sturdiness and dependability; while triangles convey dynamicity and hostility. Basically the pointier the shape the more aggressive it looks (Bancroft, 2006).

In *Peter Pan* we know what to think of the secondary character through their design, and their personalities match perfectly, where the ones caricatured the most are the characters

who are not meant to be predominantly pretty, and those more realistic are those who are meant to be pretty.



Fig. 194 – Mrs Darling in her children's nursery.

Mrs Darling: Sweet, gentle, beautiful.



Fig. 195 – Mr Darling yelling at his children.

Mr Darling: Loud, ungraceful, rash.



Fig. 196 – The mermaids waving at Peter Pan.

The mermaids: Beautiful, but naughty.



Fig. 197 – Tiger Lilly refusing to talk to Captain Hook.

Tiger Lily: Beautiful, dignified.



Fig. 198 – The Indians carrying the Lost Boys to camp.

Indians: Indigenous, wild, strong.



Fig. 199 – The Lost Boys saluting Peter Pan.

Lost Boys: Childish, silly, fun.



Fig. 200 – The pirates throwing knives.

Pirates: Violent, gawky, mad.

The trend here is very noticeable because, as said before, those who were supposed to be beautiful have very normal faces and proportions; those meant to have a broader (more comical) range of expressions have a more caricatured design. By doing so if there is not a lot of comedy to draw from them visually, This trend also appears in *Pinocchio*: where the only character who is not cartoonish but realistic is the Blue Fairy, who like many others of the time, was animated through the process of rotoscopy to give an even more realistic feel. This trend gives the feel that women who want to be pretty cannot be as funny looking (which also correlates with the trend of big guy and tiny woman discussed later in this dissertation).



Fig. 201 - Blue Fairy blessing Pinocchio.

Blue Fairy also suffers from the Smurfette principle, a trope coined in 1991 in a New York Times news article by Katha Pollitt[51] where it defines the personality of a girl just by being that: a girl. She also is the only female character amongst an all male ensemble.



Fig. 202 – Rita, on right, is the only female dog in Dodger's gang.

In media, male is the default, "normal" form of humanity, while female is a special subcategory reserved just for women. This phenomenon is found not only in fiction, but is ingrained into many human societies and cultures. The technical term for this is "androcentrism" (Fleras, 2011).

[51] *Hers; The Smurfette Principle* by Katha Pollitt; The New York Times. Published: April 7, 1991 article



Fig. 203 - Anastasia (Bluth & Goldman, Anastasia, 1997)



Fig. 204 - Marina (Johnson & Gilmore, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas,* 2003)



Fig. 205 - Thumbelina (Bluth & Goldman, 1994)



Fig. 206 - Odette (Rich, *The Swan Princess*, 1994)



Fig. 207 - Sam (Lord & Miller, *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*, 2009)

Disney's characters are not the only ones that sustain such unrealistic body proportions, it was Disney who started the trend of "realistic" animation, but any movie with a female character in a lead position will have the same body type.

In the year 2000 there was a movie called *The Emperor's new Groove* (Dindal) that featured one of the most comically ugly villains, Yzma. An old adviser to the Emperor Kuzco, Yzma had been longing to take the thrown from under him, unfortunately for her, though, her plans (Johnson & Gilmore, 2003)never succeeded.



Fig. 208 – Close-up of Yzma's face.

Yzma has the same anorexic body-type as Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmatians* (Geronimi, Reitherman, & Luske, 1961), and Kuzco's comments on her appearance let us know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Yzma is meant to be seen as old and ugly, "This is Yzma, the emperor's advisor... living proof that dinosaurs once roamed the Earth." (00:05:40)

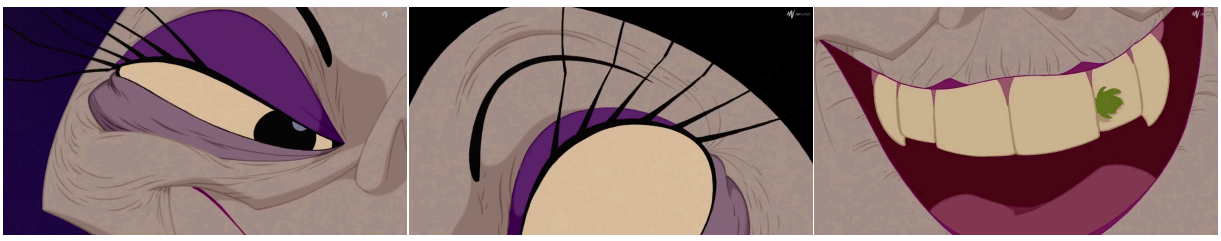


Fig. 209 – Image sequence of Kuzco analysing Yzma's face.

"Whoa. Look at these wrinkles. What is holding this woman together? What the... How long has that been there?" (00:06:54)



Fig. 210 – Yzma tugging on Kronk.

Her body is also very absurdly pointy, she is very thin, her breasts are located in the middle of her torso, near the end of her ribcage, and her hipbones are very sharp.

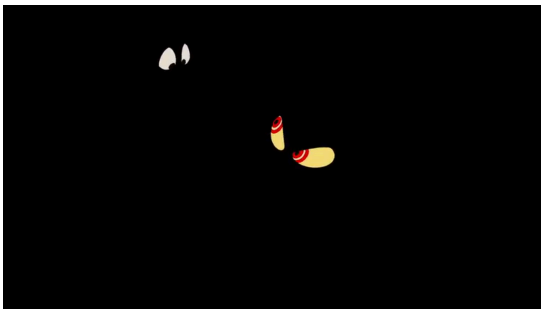


Fig. 211 – Kronk and Yzma's eyes in the dark.

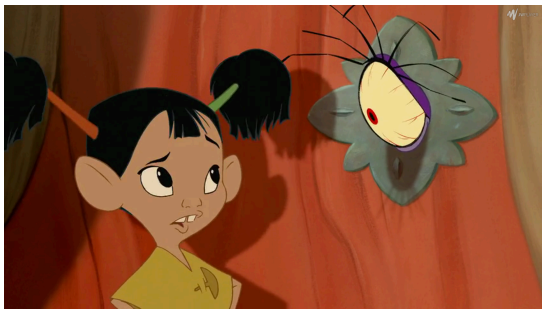


Fig. 212 – Yzma's eye poking out of the keyhole.

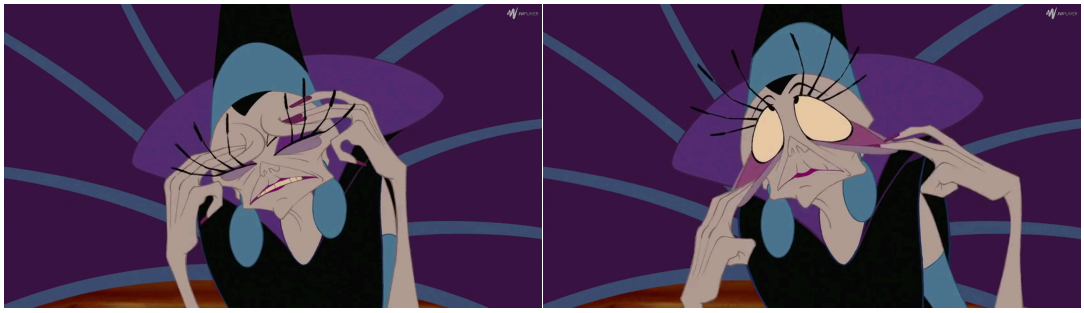


Fig. 213 – Sequence of two images of Yzma rubbing her eyes.

Every way in which she is drawn is so comically over-the-top and hilariously grotesque you cannot help but laugh.



Fig. 214 – Image sequence of Yzma raising her dress to show a dagger, and Kuzko and Pacha's reactions to it.

The one problem is that it reinforces the idea that beauty is reserved for youth, that old women cannot be beautiful, and if they try, it makes them hideous and they should just accept that no one wants to look at them anymore.

3.1.2 "Real" Bodies

Wendy (from *Peter Pan*) is a pretty, young girl, with light brown/dirty blonde hair and big blue eyes, looking a lot like Alice (*Alice in Wonderland* 1951), which allows for the subject of the perfect child/girl looking a certain way.

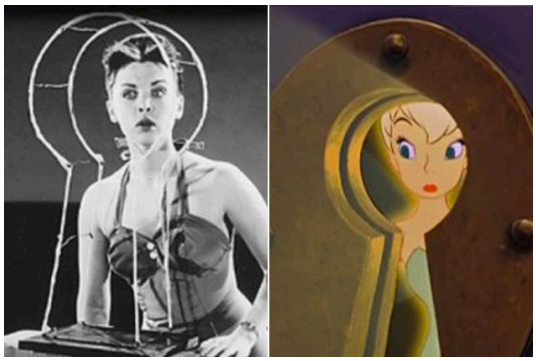


Fig. 215 - Margaret Kerry acting as Tinker Bell for the animators to reference.

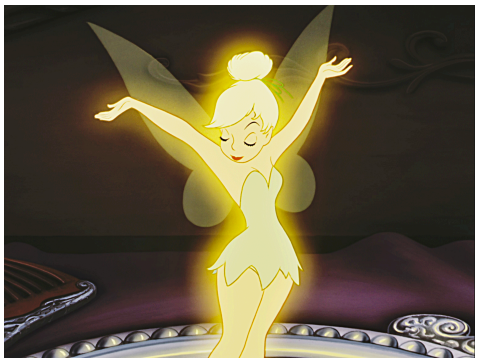


Fig. 216 - Tinker Bell's hourglass figure.

But, body-wise, the focus goes mainly to Tinkerbell, whose own design many believe was based off curvy Marilyn Monroe (Brode, 2005, pp. 132-133), even though her reference actor was dancer and choreographer Margaret Kerry. Tinkerbell is portrayed as a young, attractive, blonde haired, big blue eyed, white female, with an exaggerated hourglass figure. *"*(Margaret Kerry's) *constitution had obvious traces of the World War II American Pin Ups. She hence reflected the female beauty canon of late 40s and 50s."* (Barros, 2007).

She is clad in a short lime-green dress with a rigid trim, and green slippers with white puffs. Her bottom was perhaps a little too large for what was fashionable at the time; she even remarks it in a pantomime, but we still are made to acknowledge that Tinkerbell is gorgeous: "Well, I think she's lovely." (00:15:45)



Fig. 217 – Gaston flexing his biceps.



Fig. 218 – Johnny Bravo on a date taking pictures of himself.

It is worth noting that this is not meant to establish that it is inherently bad to draw women with tiny waists or baby-faced – it is a caricature - just like drawing a man with the same proportions of Gaston (*The Beauty and the Beast*) or Johnny Bravo (Partible, 1997-2004). But most times, when a male cartoon character looks like a bodybuilder, he is mostly either portrayed as lacking intelligence, made fun of, or viewed as shallow. For males the "optimum" male physique is not constantly seen as a goal to achieve, in fact it is rare for a male character to have that sort of body type – an exception to that rule being *Hercules,* where story stresses the fact that its hero's most important feature is his strength.

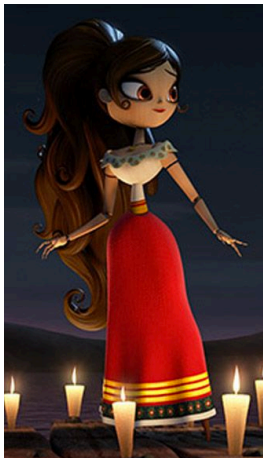


Fig. 219 – Maria from *The Book of Life* (Gutierrez, 2014).

It is harmful however, for studios to make these female characters' faces and bodies seem as though they are the only way a woman can be considered pretty.

Joanna Quinn shows us how one can portray women as extravagant, "unattractive", and a different kind of "real". Although she does not make mainstream films, her shorts are a

completely different approach to the female body and how women are also flawed people without being deemed villains.



Fig. 220 – Sequence of two images of character Beryl singing about how women should accept their bodies in the short film *Body Beautiful* (Quinn, 1990).

Joanna Quinn is an independent English animator whose interpretation of the female character is very different from what is seen in mainstream animation; they are mostly middle-aged, but they are not stereotypically beautiful, they are bigger, have more expression, and have fat rolls and folds in their body.



Fig. 221 – Beryl talking on the phone to one of her girlfriends.

Her style is original, quirky and exaggerated; her pencil work is very rough, expressive, and loose, she has a lot of movement throughout her stories yet uses repetitive/limited action. The colour is usually very soft or occasional, and her independent works are normally satirical, funny, and personal.

When speaking of animating women, "*It's not at all hard to draw women showing emotions. The only challenge is the notion of beauty. It's really hard to inject lots of emotion because you're always trying to keep them [as] this sort of shiny, lovely character. I am looking for strong female characters that are not always gorgeous."* (Mesure & Lewin, 2013) Referring to Disney's continuous effort at keeping its heroine's facial expressions small, so as to keep them at all times pretty.

Many of her films also offer a feminine perspective often unseen in male-driven projects. Her first film was *Girls Night Out* (1988), where a group of girls goes out to a strip club to celebrate the lead's birthday.



Fig. 222 - Two friends of the lead at the club.



Fig. 223 – The lead's big bottom as seen from behind.

The bodies, as described earlier, are very genuine in a very caricaturized way. The characters are very loud and obnoxious, and their prettiness is not as defined as mainstream female characters usually are. They are not smooth or soft-spoken, they are not perfect, and they are comfortable. Their size does not represent any kind of issue in this film.



Fig. 224 – The striper's underpants.

When at the strip club they objectify the male stripper. For one of very few times we are given the "Female Gaze" in a film. We are usually given the perspective of a male when it comes to appreciating other characters, and because a higher percentage of writers and directors are male (Kaufman & Simonton, 2014), the "Male Gaze" is given to us more often[52] and the Female Gaze is given to us whenever a show is mostly targeted towards women. Each "Gaze" consists of the opposite gender admiring certain parts of the character in scene, either fixating on a character's body part, or a pedestal shot[53] of the whole body.

[52] Two examples are in *Anastasia* there is a "male gaze" moment when Dimitri slowly admires Anya body in her ballet outfit; and in *Hercules* after Hercules saves Megara and she is washing her hair there is a moment where the audiences are made to focus solely on her appearance.

[53] A Pedestal Shot (or "pedding") is a type of camera movement where the camera moves vertically in relation to the subject. Not to be confused with a camera tilt, where the camera stays in place but the angle of view tilts up or down.

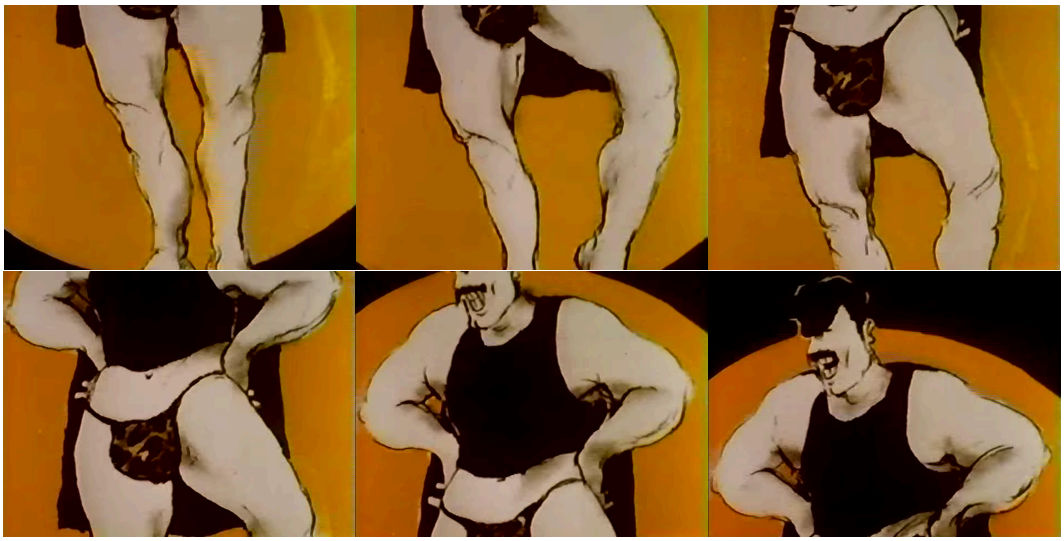


Fig. 225 – Sequence of images of a pedestal shot of the striper's body from legs to face.

This type of shot objectifies the subject because audiences are primed to sympathize with, or at least respect, characters if the camerawork concentrates on their face. If it shows another body part the audience is more likely to see the character as a threat, or an object of desire (Mulvey, 1975).

One of the most true-to-life bodies (Elder, 2002) seen in a mainstream animated movie is that of Nani in *Lilo and Stitch* (DeBlois & Sanders, 2002). *Lilo & Stitch* is the story of an orphaned little girl being raised by her barely adult sister, Lilo is considered "weird" by her schoolmates, and is often bullied by them, she has an eccentric imagination and an unconventional way of seeing the world, one day her sister Nani takes her to adopt a dog and Lilo happens to choose an escape frantic alien experiment wanted by the intergalactic police. After Stitch learns the meaning of family, friendship, and home he saves Lilo and when about to be imprisoned again is released due to his newfound sense of loyalty and goodness.



Fig. 226 – Nani's full body.



Fig. 227 – Nani's face in disbelief.

"We have a lot of female characters in the film, predominantly [big sister] Nani, and we just wanted to make her look like a girl," (Elder, 2002) said writer and co-director Chris

Sanders. "*We gave her more substantial legs and a real pelvis, sort of a more comfortable body. More ample.*" (Elder, 2002) Although they are very caricatured, with pug noses, round eyes, big mouths, the characters in these movies are a lot easier to identify as representing a real body, than other heroines'.



Fig. 228 – Nani, angry, grabbing Lilo.

Nani has folds in her skin, thick legs, small breasts, her waist is not impossibly thin, and everything about her personality feels "real". She struggles to maintain a job while raising a child that is constantly in need of attention, after having lost her parents. She also she likes a boy who likes her back, but they remain only friends until Nani can feel ready for a relationship. Nani can lose her tamper, but never actually hurt Lilo or put Lilo down, she truly does her best, and is devastated when, even after every fight, every headache, every heartache, the social worker comes to take Lilo away.



Fig. 229 – Nani and David building a sandcastle over Lilo.

Nani is truly the best female character in terms of realism, body positivity, and role model any mainstream animation studio has developed.

3.1.3 The Sexualisation of Chel

There are many animated movies that have characters scantily clad (Ariel, Pocahontas, Nani, Kida (Trousdale & Wise, Atlantis: The Lost Empire, 2001), but they don't tend to be

overtly sexualized[54]; however in DreamWorks's *The Road to El Dorado* (Paul & Bergeron, 2000), we are introduced to a character that seems to serve only as eye-candy for the male audience.

The Road to El Dorado tells the story of two Spanish conmen, Miguel and Tulio, who get their hands on a map to the fabled city of gold, El Dorado. After they are shipwrecked in the New World with a horse, the pair follows a map to the secret city where they are mistaken for gods and decide to let the locals continue to believe this. They meet a girl, Chel, who discovers that they are just normal people and gets in on the con to rob enough gold to "buy Spain" (00:17:02), to whom they both are attracted. After conquering some obstacles, including not letting the feelings for one girl get in the way of their friendship, in the end they discover that gold is not everything, and leave with a renewed sense of adventure.

This story, which is also severely criticized for its racist undertones (Tezcatlipoca, 2000), is very sexist when it comes to its only speaking female character (only woman besides background characters), Chel. Firstly, she is the only female character and as such the film does not pass the Bechdel test; not uncommon in mainstream media which helps reinforce the idea that women are merely tokens and that audiences will not find narratives interesting unless their focus is men's issues or lives. Secondly, she is characterized in many demeaning ways.

We first see her running away from guards with a golden idol wrapped in cloth, later she is introduced to us as being cunning, since, while hiding in the gods' temple, she overhears our heroes brag about how clever they are and she decides she want to join their deception.



Fig. 230 – Chel after running into Altivo, the horse.

[54] Except in cases like Jessica Rabbit where she is made to represent the classic femme fatales and satirize the exaggerated hourglass figure of animated female characters in historical western mainstream animation, or Holli Would, but she is a character from an adult movie (Bakshi, *Cool World,* 1992).

But ever since her first moment on screen with every single angle it is impossible to ignore how "sexy" she is supposed to be. This is emphasised in every scene she is in: the only way to perceive her is as an ambitious thief with a lust for gold, wanting to leave El Dorado in her search for "better things" (00:32:01) and "adventure" (00:32:04). Her character actually finds these two men attractive and eventually starts to really like one of them, though the audience is never given a sense of developed "love".



Fig. 231 – Tulio, Miguel, and Chel reacting to the gold being thrown into an abyss.

Besides eye-candy for the male gaze, Chel's duty for the time Miguel and Tulio are in El Dorado is to provide them with information on the city's customs and rituals, and she gets really frustrated when they make a decision without consulting with her first, because it usually leads to them agreeing to something awful (like the sacrifice of a person; or a lot of gold being thrown into a whirlpool).



Fig. 232 – Chel's body in different positions.

Chel's body goes beyond the characterization we have seen in mainstream animation's heroines: She is overtly sexual, and confident in her sexuality, she has large breasts and hips, a very thin waist, and wears a very revealing outfit. She is not an inherently nice person, only when she starts to like the men does she change her attitude. She is also remarkably expressive.



Fig. 233 – Miguel doing a growling sound as describing what he thinks of Chel.



Fig. 234 – Chel giving Tulio a massage.



Fig. 235 – Tulio giving Chel a massage.



Fig. 236 – Sequence of images of Chel being nowhere near Tulio's mouth during an intimate moment.



Fig. 237 – Chel saying goodbye to Miguel with a kiss on the lips.

She is also actually employed in the film as a sexual being. She is meant to be sexualized; so much so that it drives the two leads apart. Although refreshing to see her personality mixed with her body-type in a movie, it also becomes very discomforting when realizing she is the only female character and the only one put into such suggestive situations.



Fig. 238 – The most plasticity seen in either Tulio or Miguel.



Fig. 255 – Collection of some of Chel's reactions.

Remarkably though, in this film while all three main characters, Miguel, Tulio and Chel, are meant to be extremely good-looking the only one who actually has more over-the-top expressions is Chel. Although none of them come across as too cartoony, maintaining a very slightly stiff appearance, Miguel and Tulio are lot more constraint than their love interest; she is allowed to be funny and exaggerated with her expressions, and yet there is no mistaking her for unattractive at any point.

3.1.4 Expressions

Some studios (like Disney or DreamWorks) guarantee the female lead's attractiveness by giving them very soft expressions, so as to not have any exaggerated feature or unappealing goofiness to them, *"Historically speaking, animating female characters are*

really, really difficult, 'cause they have to go through these range of emotions, but they're very, very — you have to keep them pretty and they're very sensitive to — you can get them off a model very quickly. So, having a film with two hero female characters was really tough (…)" (Stampler, 2013) said Lino DiSalvo, head animator for Disney's *Frozen* (Buck & Lee, Frozen, 2013), although a Disney spokesperson did say that the quotes were taken out of context. They still announced, *"Animation is an intricate and complex art form.* (…) *As part of a roundtable discussion, the animator was describing some technical aspects of CG animation and not making a general comment on animating females versus males or other characters."* (Stampler, 2013) While Christine Panushka, a professor of animation at the USC School of Cinematic Art answered when asked if it was technically harder to animate a woman, *"In terms of skeletons and muscles and how we move, they're the same,"* (Stampler, 2013) the problem really is that the studios want to keep their characters pretty, apparently Disney's Golden Age animators used to complain about being assigned princesses and other female leads because they were expected to keep these characters within a predictable range of acting by their producers or directors (Amidi, 2013).



Fig. 240 – Sam Sparks and Flint expressing shock.

This demonstrates how these characters are meant to be pretty first, expressive later; which then goes against one of the basic principles of animation of exaggeration and "Squash and Stretch[55]", that is present in other characters.

In The Princess and the Frog there is a secondary character named Charlotte LaBouff, the daughter of a wealthy man in New Orleans, who is supposed to caricaturize the pretty, spoiled, rich girl; she is blonde, very preoccupied with her looks, and her goal in life is to become an actual princess.

[55] Squash and stretch is the phrase used to describe "by far the most important" of the 12 basic principles of animation, described in the book *The Illusion of Life* (1995) by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston.



Fig. 241 – Charlotte trying to charm the Prince.



Fig. 242 – Charlotte Expressing fear.



Fig. 243 – Charlotte wishing upon a star.

She is designed to be typically pretty, but she is absolutely free to be exaggerated or make unflattering expressions, without being constrained to unreasonable ideals of beauty because she is not meant to be neither the heroine nor anyone's love interest.



Fig. 244– Tiana smiling.

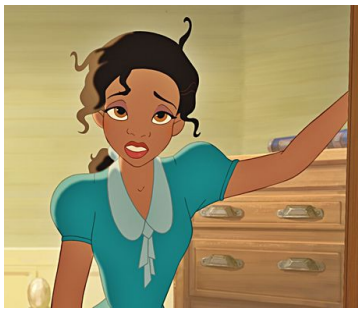


Fig. 245 – Tiana tired.



Fig. 246 – Tiana irritated.

While protagonist Tiana is left with expressions that only slightly differ from her neutral face. Much like her princess counterparts, Tiana has the predictable physical appearance of a female lead: slender, tall, full bosom and waist, big eyes, small nose, and heart-shaped face that must be kept, at all times, pretty. Charlotte is also one of the few female characters that are meant to be pretty and is allowed not to be for comical reasons.



Fig. 247 – Ariel.



Fig. 248 – Vanessa.

A good example of this is Ariel and Vanessa (Ursula in disguise). They both have the same basic design, but because Ariel is the princess protagonist she is always kept pretty within a limited small range of expressions, whereas Vanessa is allowed to have a much wider variety which on occasion even makes her look ugly.


Fig. 249 – Scowling.


Fig. 250 – Shouting.


Fig. 251 – Cackling.

Merida, from *Brave* (2012), is an example of artists trying to have creative freedom, but studios seeking to keep the image of the perfect princesses. She is probably one of the few female leads (and princesses) whose body manages to look a bit more realistic, and whose face, although caricatured, is allowed to be "unattractive".


Fig. 252 – Merida concept art by Daniel Lopez Muñoz

Co-director Brenda Chapman stated: *"For Merida when we were designing her, I wanted her to have the mouth that gets really wide, and a grimace,"* And: "*I wanted to let her have an ugly expression or real expression … even beautiful women will have a sour look on their face when they're upset."* (Stampler, 2013) But Chapman had more difficulties besides facial expressiveness, she had many problems with film executives who did not want their female leads exaggerated: *"At one point they thought I was making the mom too big, her bum too big,"* and also: *"And that was frustrating for me because I wanted her to feel like a real middle aged woman."* Chapman was eventually taken off *Brave* in 2011[56], when Pixar handed the reign over to Mark Andrews. *"To have it taken away and given to someone else, and a man at that, was truly distressing on so many levels"* (Chapman, 2012).

[56] Talking about how it felt to be taken off "*This was a story that I created, which came from a very personal place, as a woman and a mother. To have it taken away and given to someone else, and a man at that, was truly distressing on so many levels*." (Chapman, 2012)



Fig. 253 – Merida's design in the movie (left)
and Merida's merchandise design (right).

Merida was still made to keep her design for the movie, but preparing her for the promotional material her image was distorted and made "prettier". In the merchandise design her dress is sparkly and has intricate golden details, her hair is bigger, her waist smaller, her eyes are more almond shaped than before, her lashes are darker and longer, her skin lighter, and her neckline shows more shoulders; she is also now seen without her faithful bow and arrows, which makes her seem less aggressive. This design makes her look older and more mature, which cuts into the fiery and childish personality we see in the movie, but demonstrates perfectly the image Disney at all times is trying to sell.

3.1.5 Face Proportions

In Disney we find a motif developing in the heroines' faces, over time they are becoming more and more child-like to guarantee they are deemed cute. In a 1947 book by an artist who had designed characters for both Disney and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Preston Blair documented a few archetypes existent in animation.

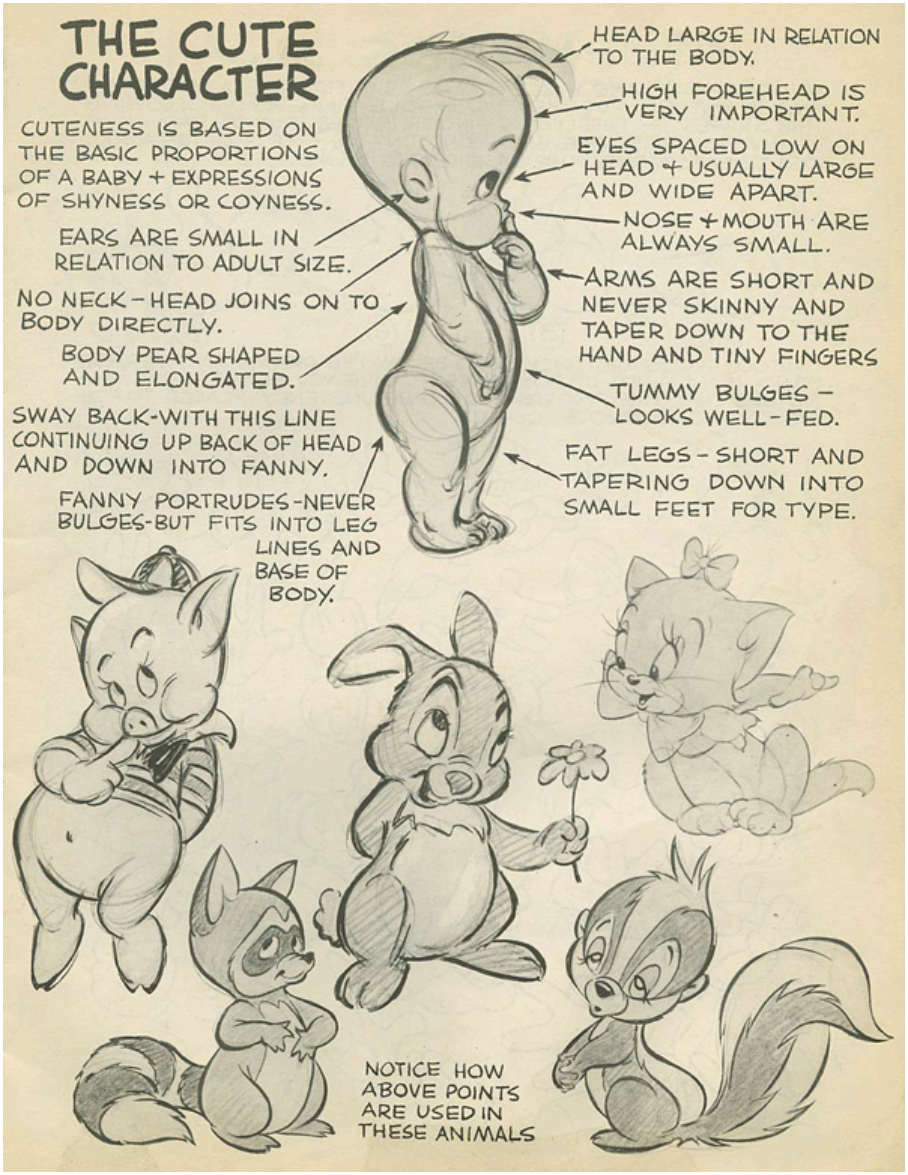


Fig. 254 – The description of the archetypical cute character.

Among them is “The Cute Character”, and some of the characteristics described can be directly found in any female lead of mainstream animation.

For a long time we found them to be more grown-up, like in Aurora or Cinderella, but now the proportions are getting exceedingly more toddler-ish.

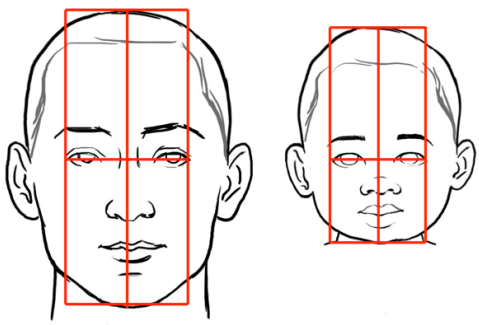


Fig. 255 – Face proportions in adults and babies.



Fix. 256 – 16-year-old Aurora's face.

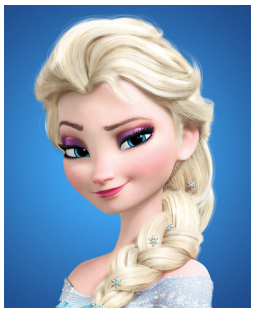


Fig. 257 – 21-year-old Elsa's face.

Until puberty the proportions of a person are that of big eyes, very small nose, and small mouth and ears. It all keeps growing throughout our lives, but the eyes actually only grow a little more until puberty before stopping, so compared to other features and the size of their heads, the eyes will always look bigger. The proportions in a baby's face usually consist of a large forehead and the eyes, nose, and mouth very close at the bottom of the face, unlike in adults where it is more evenly distributed. The nose in babies is also tiny and has a very concave bridge, which gives the impression that the nose only comes out where the point of the nose and nostrils are.

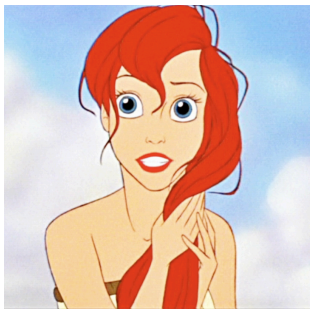


Fig. 258 – Ariel's 16-year-old face.



Fig. 259 – Rapunzel's 18 year-old face.

Even though in these comparisons we must take artistic styles into account, there is no denying the increasing trend. Even the comically large-eyed Ariel has still more adult proportions than the millennial characters. This style could easily be called "cutefying", because it takes the characteristics proven to be what makes something cute, and adds them to the design indifferently. "*We all know that big eyes are cute – just look at Puss in Boots*[57]*. But in human females, they're also an animator's shorthand for attractiveness – and a major feature of adult anime,* hentai[58]*. To use these big doe eyes as standard in supposedly realistic human females reduces the characters' individuality and sends out a message: to be a princess, you must not only be brave but have a specific, unattainable brand of beauty. No*

[57] Puss in Boots is a secondary character in *Shrek 2* (Adamson, Asbury, & Vernon, 2004) notably marked by his use of his comically huge eyes to his advantage.
[58] *Hentai* is a subgenre of the Japanese genres of manga and anime, characterized by overtly sexualized characters and sexually explicit images and plots.

deviation from the formula is permitted. From Sleeping Beauty's Aurora to Aladdin's Jasmine, you'll see a similar look in Disney princesses past." (Smith A. , 2013)



Fig. 260 – Lucille from *A Monster in Paris* (Bergeron, 2011).

This trend evokes a real world problematic that is the infantilization of adult women and the sexualisation of young girls, where women are desired to look like girls and girls are subjected to predatory eyes and coveted by older people; "[this issue] *tell us that we should find youth, inexperience, and naïveté sexy in women, but not in men. This reinforces a power and status difference between men and women, where vulnerability, weakness, and dependency and their opposites are gendered traits: desirable in one sex but not the other."* (Wade, 2013) It also damages a young girls psychological and physical development: "*Not only does this sexualisation of girls have negative influence on their ability to develop healthy sexual self-images and self-protective sexual behaviours, but it also has been linked to increased rates of eating disorders, depression, anxiety, poor body image, and low self-esteem*" (Paludi, 2007, p. 494).



Fig. 261 – Rapunzel's mother compared to Anna and Elsa's mother.

This is a lazy and easy character design shortcut that helps establish the female character as cute and pretty without spending too much time on her design, which then makes for instances like Rapunzel's mother who looks stylize and still very beautiful, but is clearly an older woman, compared to the Queen of Arendelle who looks like an infant.

Old age in women is not well accepted in western society (Weisstub, Thomasma, Gauthier, & Tomossy, 2001), while men are not subjected to such standards, people are taught

that true feminine beauty comes from youth, and thusly women try to look as youthful as possible by any means possible through cosmetics. There is a sexist adage that states: "Men age like a fine wine, while women age like a glass of milk." Meaning men are considered to get better with age while women get damaged.



Fig. 262 – Rapunzel looking at their reflection, as Mother Gothel laughs at her own joke.

Mother Gothel (Greno & Howard, *Tangled,* 2010) displays this at a fantastical level. Her main goal as the villain is eternal youth; although she could have some other agenda not disclosed to the audience, it simply seems to be because she is vain. At 00:10:45 Mother Gothel says to Rapunzel while looking in the mirror: "Rapunzel, look in that mirror. You know what I see? I see a strong, confident, beautiful young lady. Oh look, you're here too. Hahahah, I'm just teasing." She really glorifies her own looks.



Fig. 263 – Image Sequence from Mother Gothel's aging scene.

By the end of the movie when Rapunzel's hair is cut off, thus removing all its powers, Gothel turns into an old, decrepit woman in a matter of seconds; while she is aging she is seen reaching for the mirror and after seeing her old reflection, she starts squirming and hiding her

face with the hood, screaming "No, no!" (01:24:52) Repeatedly, until she stumbles and falls out of the window, vanishing to dust once she had hit the ground.

3.1.6 All Women are the Same

"The Hero with a Thousand Faces. The Heroine with, like, three."[59]

When observing most animation studios' animations there is something eerie about how the different genders are characterized: the similarity between female characters in films (be it as a lead or as a main love interest) is unnerving, especially when compared to the great variety among male characters. The latest Disney/Pixar movie to come out treated us with teasers of the characters and a blogger, named Alex Scott, could not understand why it felt like the two male characters looked so alien in comparison to the female characters, until she traced the picture.



Fig. 264 – From left to right, Fear, Sadness, Joy, Disgust, and Anger.

The two male characters have extremely distinctive face shapes, while the three female characters basically have the exact same shape: round with a small nose (Scott A. , 2015). The "cutefying" phenomenon, that has already been mentioned, that boils down female character's looks to one common template.

[59] Eyes, A. (2014, March 25). Same face syndrome. Retrieved from http://schmod.com/mobilefilter/comments/http%253A%252F%252Fwww.metafilter.com%252F137752%252FSame-Face-Syndrome%252Frss/ August 23, 2015.



Fig. 265 – *Inside Out*'s characters in a minimalistic style.

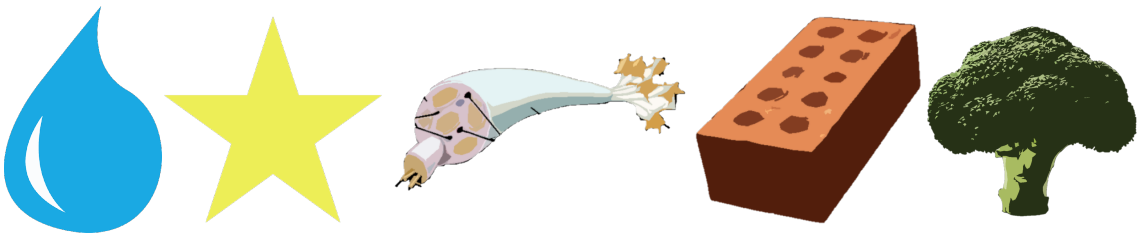


Fig. 266 – A teardrop, a star, a raw nerve, a brick, and a broccoli.

According to Pete Docter, *Inside Out*'s director, each emotion was based on an existing shape, "*Sadness: teardrop, Joy: star, Fear: raw nerve, Anger: fire brick, Disgust: broccoli.*"[60] (PixarInsideOut, 2015) When designing their characters they only had to keep those basic forms in mind, yet the only ones that kept that basic shape in in general were the male characters, while the female ones get round heads.



Fig. 267 – Male characters and their traced jaws.

[60] #InsideOut. [PixarInsideOut]. (2014, Dec 10). @MicheleDNC Each is based on a shape. Sadness: teardrop Joy: star Fear: raw nerve Anger: fire brick Disgust: broccoli #AskInsideOut [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/PixarInsideOut/status/542752452701724672

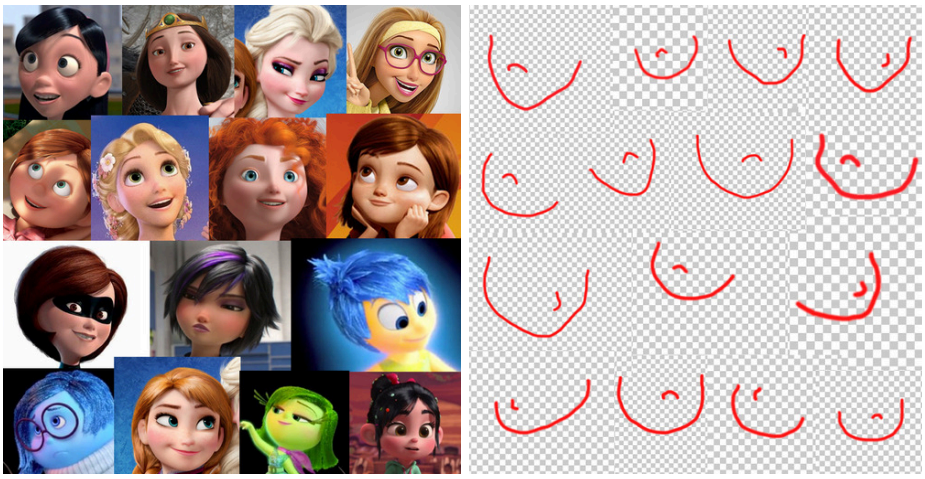


Fig. 268 – Female characters and their chin lines.

When Alex Scott then traced some of the characters from Pixar and Disney movies from the last decade she found the exact same phenomenon: all male characters had distinct faces, while female characters were kept the same as each other.

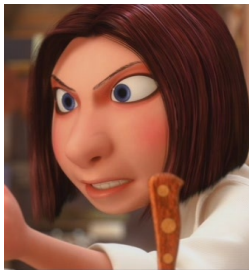


Fig. 269 – Collete (*Ratatouille*).



Fig. 270 – Nakoma (*Pocahontas*).



Fig. 271 – Clio the Muse (*Hercules*).

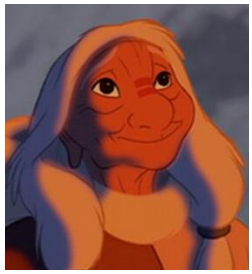


Fig. 272 – Tanana (*Brother Bear, 2003*).



Fig. 273 –Chaca (*The Emperor's New Groove*).



Fig. 274 – Audrey (Atlantis: The Lost Empire).



Fig. 275 – Grandmother Fa (*Mulan*).



Fig. 293 – The Witch (*Brave*).

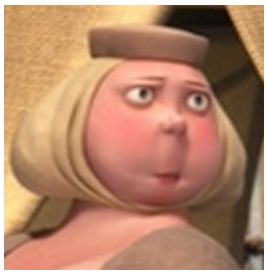


Fig. 294 – Maudie (*Brave*).

Only rarely are leading women given more individual features, and categorically only secondary or background characters get a more varied collection of attributes. Especially accentuated if they are old.

3.1.7 Men are the Norm, Women the Exception

There is almost always (save some rare exceptions) a way of distinguishing a male character from a female due to the use of traits commonly associated with masculinity or femininity. These traits are abundant throughout animation's history, but it is usually the

female cartoon character that is defined through assumed traits of femininity, and she is also very often designed in relation to the primary representation of the male character. A common "rule" in feminine design is: non-human plain characters are boys, but non-human female characters must have something (a typically feminine attribute or colour) to distinguish them.



Fig. 278 – The Chipmunks and the "Chipettes" watching Alvin and Brittany duel in a video game in *Chipmunk Adventure* (Karman, 1987)

Sybil Delgaudio had summarized the dominant traditions of representing masculinity and femininity in animated cartoons: male characters are defined by what they are, and how they behave, while female characters are essentially understood by what they look like and through stereotypical mannerisms (Wells, 2013).

The dragon in *Shrek* herself exposes her femininity by having lips and long lashes, and besides understanding and accepting compliments given to her by Donkey, those are the only anthropological traits she has. While there could have been other ways to show us she was female, the artists chose to show it through typically assigned feminine attributes (even though boys also have lips and many have long eyelashes).



Fig. 279 - Dragon with her eyelashes and red lips.

There is a contemporary trope labelled by Anita Sarkeesian, based on Delgaudio's, as "Ms Male Character", which applies to that of the Dragon. The term was inspired by Ms Pac-

Man who was one of the first female videogame characters ever created; she is the bow wearing, beauty mark having, makeup sporting version of the yellow circle that is Pac-Man.[61]

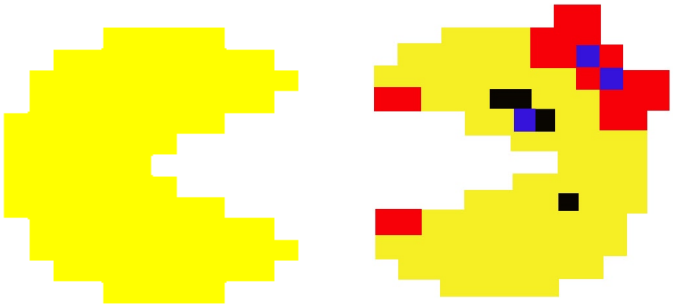


Fig. 280 - Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man

Anita Sarkeesian is the creator of a YouTube channel called "Feminist Frequency", and she explores the issue of male game developers creating a female version of their male characters in order to appeal to a female public.

The Ms Male Character trope is described by the creation of the female version of an already established or default male character, Ms Male Characters are defined primarily by their relationship to their male counterparts via visual properties, narrative connection or occasionally through promotional materials. Although Dragon does not actually have a male counterpart of whom she is a direct copy since *Shrek* is mainly a parody movie of fairy-tales Dragon is a feminine twist on the usual dragons that arrive on the scenes. It is also worthy to note that before it is revealed to us in a close-up that she is actually a girl dragon, Dragon appears coloured with a more reddish tone, eyes with no visible lashes, and to be sure we would not be able to spot any big transition from dragon to Ms dragon, the camera movements were more rapid, Dragon was always more distant from the camera, and mostly shadowed.



Fig. 281 – Sequence of images of Dragon and Donkey's chase scene.

[61] Sarkeesian, A. (feministfrequency). (2013, November 18). *Ms. male character - Tropes vs women in video games* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYqYLfm1rWA&feature=youtu.be

Even Donkey is surprised when she bats her eyelashes at him, “You’re, you’re… A girl dragon, oh sure, I mean uh, of course you’re a girl dragon.” (00:34:44), and continues on about how she “reeks of feminine beauty” (00:34:47), it is worth noting how he repeats “girl dragon” as if up until then it was just simply a “dragon” and, therefore, male.

3.1.8 “I now pronounce you Extraordinary and Plain”

When an animation is not exceptionally caricaturized there is only so much you can do in creating extravagant character designs, they are usually simpler. In movies like *Tarzan* (Buck & Lima, 1999) or *Frozen* (Buck & Lee, 2013) both parents are not very different in style from each other.



Fig. 282 – Tarzan as a baby with his parents.

Tarzan’s parents have hard lines, thick hair, same eye shape, about the same size, etc. The only difference really is the gender binary details each display, such as long hair and thin waist on the mother, moustache, broad shoulders and smaller hips on the father.



Fig. 283 – Mulan’s parents, Fa Zhou and Fa Li.

In *Mulan,* Mulan’s parents are also different sizes, Li is short and stocky while Zhou is tall and lean, but their style of design is the same, they are just portrayed as two different body-types, unlike many of the other couples seen in films.

However, what is essentially troubling is how in very caricatured animation films or series that feature a romantic couple, the man is always caricaturizes to full extent, while the woman is usually much smaller and simpler than him. A couple that truly illustrates this is Elinor and Fergus from *Brave* (Andrews, Chapman, & Stanley, 2012).



Fig. 284 – Elinor and Fergus at the archery contest.

Elinor is visibly smaller than Fergus, both in height (as usual, the woman in a heterosexual relationship is normally depicted as being shorter than the man) and girth. She seems to be approximately one sixth of Fergus's width, and if you compare their hands and heads they seem made of completely different styles. Her hand is the size of his thumb. Her face is averagely round, her nose and mouth are small, and her shoulders are unbelievably narrow. All the while Fergus is very square, his head is small compared to the rest of him, his neck is so thick there would be no telling when it ends and the head begins if it were not for the beard. His nose is wide and big, his smile is enormous and his eyes are tiny.



Fig. 285 – Elinor reacting to the disgusting cake.

Yet we do not think of him as ugly, it would never even come up as a question he is just big. On the other hand Elinor is not even given the chance to be slightly less "perfect", and only while transforming into and as a bear is she slightly comical.

More couples that demonstrate this are, for example, Pacha and Chicha (Dindal, *The Emperor's New Groove*, 2000), Bob and Helen Parr (Bird, *The Incredibles,* 2004), Zeus and Hera (Clements & Musker, Hercules, 1997), Ellie and Carl (Docter, *Up*, 2009), and Jack and

Maddie Fenton (Hartman, *Danny Phantom*, 2004-2007). Where the small wife enormous husband trope also occurs.



Fig. 286 – Kuzco, and Pacha and Chicha with their children.



Fig. 287 – Helen and Bob drying books.



Fig. 288 – Zeus and Hera with baby Hercules.



Fig. 289 – Carl and Ellie reading in their nook.



Fig. 290 – Jack and Maddie Fenton in their ghost catching gear.

This brings back the predicament that exists in the problematic of the infantilization of women, where a hierarchy of dominance is established where the man is strong and bigger, and women are meant to be frailer and under their protection.



Fig. 291 – Ellie and Carl lying on their picnic blanket.

In the case of Ellie and Carl, although there is a difference in size, the issue is really how Carl's design is so much interesting than Ellie's; he is square all around, Ellie is just another girl, much like many other female characters before her.



Fig. 292 – Images of volcanoes Lele and Uku compared to each other from the short *Lava* (Murphy J. F., 2014).

Also, it ascertains that women have to be beautiful while the men can look however they want to, because what truly matters is what is on the inside. It almost makes it seem as if women without good looks have no character value, while men are free to be and look however they want without consequences.

Character's designs are and should be exaggerated by nature, there is even a consensus that realism feels awkward in animation (Morgan, 2015), and how Snow White was stiff and inexpressive compared to her fully animated seven sidekicks (Andrews M. , 2014). There should not be any problems if a character is as thin as a toothpick, or their eyes are larger than their hands[62], the problem lies when people continuously employ these traits as the epitome of beauty.

3.2 Personality

Female heroines have had a tremendous evolution especially since the 80s when is comes to their personalities, but it is also important to notice how they have developed and how the views of the outside world damaged or elevated their characterization.

However, one of the main definitions of female characters when it comes to their description is: they are cute. There is an informal trope called "Men are Strong and Women are Pretty"[63], it expresses the ideals expected from each gender, for them to be deemed attractive by the opposite sex. Female characters are made sensual and pretty while male

[62] On *Frozen* (Buck & Lee, 2013) the two protagonists have wrists smaller than their eyes.
[63] Men are strong, women are pretty. (2014, July, 16). Retrieved from http://televisiontropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/MenAreStrongWomenArePretty

characters are strong and active. Noting on the description of this trope, one of the things that makes men attractive is how they are dynamic as well as strong, while women only have to be sexy and pretty, which are two fairly passive qualities. But it is applied to many female characters regardless of their male counterparts, Dot (*Animaniacs*, 1993-1998), for example, in their opening song the lyrics say: *"We're Animaniacs Dot is cute and Yakko yaks, Wakko packs away the snacks, While Bill Clinton plays the sax, We're Animaniacs*" (Stone, 1993), here we note that while Yakko liked to laugh or joke and Wakko liked to eat, Dot's main characteristic is being cute. While in the series all three are equally entertaining and each get into very peculiar antics, Dot's main attribute is still her physical appearance. Again damaging girls into believing that before any other trait they appearance is the most important, otherwise they will not be considered as feminine.

The Swan Princess (Rich, 1994), based on Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's 1876 ballet *Swan Lake*, tells the story of a vengeful wizard, Rothbart, that curses princess Odette to become a swan by day (to be broken if her prince declares his undying love). He does this because he wishes to marry her and rule her father's kingdom. But every day she refuses. So he decides to have one of his disguised subordinates replace her and marry the prince instead, so that Rothbart can claim the prince's throne for himself. But eventually he is discovered, the prince defeats him, and him and Odette get married and live happily ever after.

In the beginning of the movie there is an exposition song where our main characters are introduced to each other (and to the audience) and we see them as children, through their adolescence, and as adults. The song (called "This is not my Idea") is about how Odette and Derek do not want anything to do with each other, but are forced by their parents (Derek's mother and Odette's father, Queen and King of their own respective Kingdoms) to spend every summer together until they are old enough to wed, so they can join their Kingdoms.



Fig. 293 – Odette challenging Derek.



Fig. 294 – Derek startled from the sudden attitude.

Odette is the protagonist, she is the Swan Princess, as a young child she is short, very blonde, and wears a pink dress; she likes to wrestle, hunt, and box, and she thinks Prince Derek looks conceited, which shows she does not like arrogant people.



Fig. 295 – Derek and Odette being separated by their parents.

They then spend the rest of the sequence where they are children either roughhousing or wood-sword fighting with each other. It is a very typical thing for children to do and to have a betrothed (human[64]) princess and prince playing with each other like that is very refreshing



Fig. 296 – Odette furious at just being hit with a tomato.



Fig. 297 – Derek and his friend putting up a "No Girls" sign.

Subsequently they are seen in their preadolescence phase, Derek does not want to play with girls, and Odette now dirty blonde, freckled, wears less feminine clothes, and generally dorkier than before, does not want to be alone the entire summer, so keeps following them despite how the boys (Derek and his friend) treat her.

[64] In *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994) Simba and Nala had a similar type of relationship, but they were actually friends.



Fig. 298 – Derek reading by the fireplace.



Fig. 299 – Odette reading lying across an armchair.

By the time they are fully into their teen years we are shown that Odette and Derek have more in common than what previously thought in two simple shots. Even though the lyrics state that the only think they had in common was that they both dreaded summer, they are both seen reading, showing us they have more in common than they are aware of.



Fig. 300 – Odette flirting with a guard as Derek watches from afar irked.

Odette has grown into her looks, she has long, golden blonde hair, and she wears more feminine clothes and is constantly flirting with the guards according to Derek, who seems annoyed by the fact.



Fig. 301 – Odette finishing beating Derek at cards.

She is also shown as very clever, beating them consecutively at cards even though Derek and his friend cheat.

While Odette and Derek are seen growing up, their activities are full of anachronisms[65], but that is what makes them so relatable to the public, and we actually feel like their relationship is completely real and believable (even though Odette is made to like playing dress up during her adolescence which is not very typical of older girls), their bickering, the fact that they "do not like each other" but at the same time wanting to spend time or play together - them developing some feelings towards each other but not being able to understand, it is all completely captivating and authentic. Odette even shows multiple layers to her personality: she is playful, flirty, clever, strong, a bookworm, a little vain during her adolescence, but all builds up to a perfectly rounded character as far away from a one-dimensional personality than many other characters in other films. Yet, as adults, they are put in the same room, after years of spending every summer together, and they "fall in love" with each other based on their looks, how Derek's smile makes Odette's knees weak and how Derek thinks she has turned from an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan.



Fig. 302 – Odette and Derek meeting for what is seems like the first time.

That is it. As if all those years playing and getting to know each other even, if they did think of one another as immature or as if not good enough for them, were non-existent. There is even a part where after Derek says he wants to get married immediately because Odette is so beautiful, she asks him what else makes him want to marry her, to which he replies: "What else is there?" (00:10:56). It reduces both characters to standard characters where later the prince is the one who saves Odette (who had been self-sufficient until recently) and learns that beauty is not everything and Odette is reduced to a delicate damsel in distress who became sad yet passive after a boy, whom she had known most of her life, says he only likes her because of her looks. It seems that after they are an adult prince and princess and have the look they will maintain for the rest of the movie, they must become stereotypes. It is almost as if the song scene and the rest of the movie were written by different people.

[65] Anachronism is the action of attributing something to a period to which it does not belong.

In the *Little Mermaid,* Ariel has a personality that seems like the former princesses, but unlike the others before her, who did little to nothing for their situations, she actually disobeys her father's wishes and goes out to explore and know more about the human life above. She eventually does fall in love with Prince Eric, and everything after that becomes about being together with him, but a difference is marked where she saves him from drowning once, and then again at the end of the movie when she makes Ursula fall back away from him, Ariel is sweet, curious, defiant, and brave, she would do anything to save those she loves.

In *The Princess and the Frog,* Tiana is a clear advancement as it comes to a Disney princess' personality, she works hard for what she wants, instead of just wishing for it. Her main objective is not to find a man, but to own her own restaurant. She is proud, persistent, a little bit condescending when it comes to her spoilt rich best friend. Which is a fault that has been seen before amongst other princesses, but this time it is more relatable, not just a smile at her fairy-aunts' silly mannerisms (*Sleeping Beauty*), nor a headshake towards her seven child-like housemates (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*), but a sincere "you do not know how it is to live in the real world" attitude whenever Charlotte starts to flutter about something superficial or that Tiana felt was not that important in perspective. Yet, she still showed immense love toward her friends and family, whilst leading her own independent life. In *Brave,* Merida is another example of emancipation of female characters in the second decade of the 21st century when compared to the traditional earlier characters. Her whole design is much different than all her other counterpart princesses as is her personality: much like Ariel she really wishes to live life as she pleases without the constant badgering of one of her parents, she wants to be free to explore; in Merida's case she does not feel right to have her freedom ripped out from under her by tradition, so she acts like a normal teenager and rebels against her parents, it is not until she is facing the consequences of her acts that she ponders and decides to do what is best for her kingdom.

Fiona, in *Shrek* mocks the typical cartoon princess, she shrills her singing voice to point where she blows up a bird and fries its eggs for breakfast; she does martial arts and defeats a whole gang of (merry) men; she sucks on her fingers after catching flies on a spider web and rolling it on a stick; she continuously shows great feats of strength; and she gets loud and visibly angry the more annoyed people make her.



Fig. 303 – Sequence of two images of Fiona transforming into human.

But it is very interesting to see how unconfident she becomes whenever the sun sets and she transforms into an ogre. She hides from everyone whenever she is about to transform, even if Shrek is also an ogre, she believes no one will like her if they see how "hideous" she looks.



Fig. 304 – Fiona and Shrek getting married.

And Shrek really does not mind her appearance one way or the other; but when she shows her insecurity after transforming for the last time into an ogre, "I don't understand, I'm supposed to be beautiful…" (01:20:50) Shrek responds: "But you are beautiful." (01:20:50) Sure, he likes disgusting things (like snot, or bugs, or taking a bath in mud), and maybe he is saying he finds Fiona beautiful because her ugliness is attractive to him, but it is more likely that he is calling her beautiful for her soul, because earlier he had practiced to himself: "I saw this flower and thought of you because it's pretty and – well, I don't really like it, but I thought you might like it 'cause you're pretty. But I like you anyway." (01:04:09), that last part of the quote really conveys Shrek's feelings towards Fiona, and how he loves her regardless of her looks.

3.2.1 Real Characters come from Real People

When Miyazaki was about to retire in 1997 he took some of his co-workers and their children on a retreat, when he saw the children on the verge of puberty look so apathetic he felt that that retreat was not what the kids wanted, it was not dear to their hearts, so he sought to make a movie where they could be the heroines (Toyama, 2001). He wanted a movie with a

regular girl, a regular ten-year-old, so when he was making *Spirited Away,* Chihiro has no special abilities, she is ordinary, and in the beginning of the film just like those girls, bored. He said he wanted girls to have someone to relate to and to show them that they could be heroines, too. *"Every time I wrote or drew something concerning the character of Chihiro and her actions, I asked myself the question whether my friend's daughter or her friends would be capable of doing it,"* (Mes, 2002).

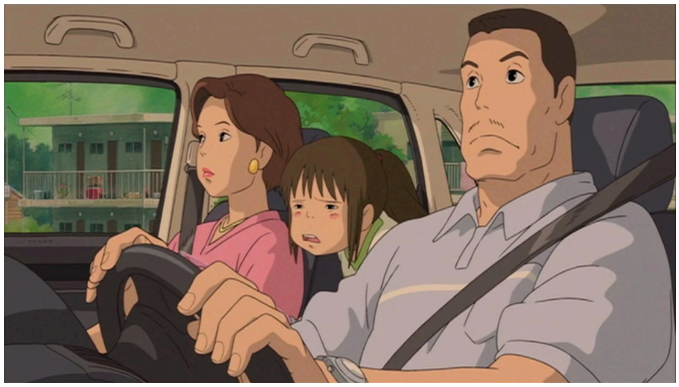


Fig. 305 – Chihiro in the car with her parents.

So Chihiro was conceived by an older man, a person who had virtually nothing in common with what she was – a little girl. Yet Miyazaki made the effort to make her real and relatable to her real-life peers. One of the greatest contemporary storytellers, and probably one who will transcend time, Miyazaki made someone with whom little girls, like the ones he had met, could identify with and pull them out of that prepubescent mood they were in. She is disobedient, but not in that special way other teenage heroes before and after her are: she is disobedient in a way every child that is growing up starts to be; she is stubborn and uninterested because she is starting to want to find out who she is and starting to shed her childish ways. After she finds enormous pigs sitting where her parents were, she is scared out of her mind and starts running calling out to her parents, her reaction is authentic and not like a special, handpicked hero who was born to do that; she is panicked and alone. Even after she meets Haku much of how she acts or reacts is based on how the most ordinary child would; her bravery, kindness, and cleverness, are nothing absolutely absent from any child. Chihiro ends up being one of the most well rounded female heroines as well as a great role model for young children, especially girls, everywhere (Matter, 2014).

3.2.2 Goals and Drives

In Western culture the evolution of the Princess can be witnessed on their initial goal in the films. After originally only having love as main objective, later the goals become a lot

more personal and self-dependent: Ariel (before seeing Eric) wanted to learn about the land above, Pocahontas wanted to choose her own destiny, Jasmine wanted to choose who to marry, Anastasia wanted to know who she was and finally get a family, Mulan wanted to honour her family, Jane wanted to study gorillas and other African animals' behaviour, Kayley, wanted to have adventures and protect the King like her father, Chel wanted to leave El Dorado and be rich, Tiana wanted to run her own restaurant, Rapunzel wanted to know the meaning of the lights, Tip wanted to find her mother, etc. each film farther from the need to find a man. Even though most still end up finding one anyway, it is as a reward for their Hero's Journey and not their ultimate goal.

Because it is mainly a male dominated profession, the animated female characters' psyche is constantly reduced to recognizable "feminine" attributes: jealousy, seductiveness, nurturing, shallowness, etc. The public is left with two-dimensional characters that are not directly relatable, but are easily recognizable as feminine because of the existing physical, emotional, and cultural stereotypes. Meanwhile the men can have infinite roles to perform (Delgaudio, 1980)

Unfortunately this oversimplification is exactly one of the reasons men are viewed as human while women are seen as something apart.

One of the best things about all of these heroines however, west or east, is that no matter what, they always maintain certain qualities, common to all, which rarely ever shift: they are good, just, and always care for others. No matter how big or many our heroines' flaws that has and hopefully always will be a good influence on the morals of anybody who watches said films.

3.3 Gender Binary

The gender binary is the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine. An artificial social construct that divides people regarding their sex, and classifies some things as inherently for the female or male gender instead on depending on the tastes of the individuals in question; one example of this is the association of pink with girls and blue with boys, something comparatively recent

origin and is purely a (pervasive) fashion. Most individuals of any gender have a mix of traits and preferences that may be associated with both sides of the gender binary or neither; and because we live in primarily patriarchal societies one of the most common binary dynamic is the acceptance that activities and disciplines that are assigned a masculine identification are frequently considered most prestigious than feminine ones (Foss, Domenico, & Foss, 2012).

There is a television series called *Steven Universe* (Sugar, 2013 - present) is set in our world, in present times, but in an alternate reality where ageless alien warriors, the Crystal Gems, live protecting the Earth from evil. The Crystal Gems are Garnet, Amethyst, Pearl, and Steven, a young half-human, half-Gem boy who inherited his gemstone from his mother, the Gems' former leader. As Steven tries to figure out his powers, he spends his days with his human father Greg, his friend Connie, other people in his city by the sea, or the other Gems, whether to help them save the world or just to hang out.



Fig. 306 – Garnet, Amethyst, Steven, and Pearl in the kitchen.

Steven Universe is the first female created show on Cartoon Network and it explores everything from gender to non-nuclear families, it is a kid-oriented story, and a lot of episodes truly show a very cute and sweet side, but it is also very emotional and complex, and tackles the darkest parts of human nature and condition. It is also considered a very feminist[66] show (Carey, 2015). One of the main characters, Steven, is a young boy being raised by three "women", who are powerful, lovable, and multifaceted female role-models and who Steven absolutely adores and admires. The Gems are non-binary and technically sexless, but they identify themselves as female and use she/her pronouns.

[66] Feminism is the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.



Fig. 307 - Rose Quartz (Steven's mother) and Greg

No character has just one layer of personality; they are very realistic and can they to conflicting feelings, characteristics, or emotions, just like real people. Also their body shapes are all-inclusive no one has a "bad" body; it is not even an issue.

4. The All-Nighter

4.1. Development

One of the greatest challenges I faced during my time in university was to develop an idea for a short film. After spending so many years having ideas, jotting down notes, and being inspired I found myself paralyzed. I wanted to do something with great meaning, something that would reach people everywhere, something serious, a magnificent masterpiece – but all those desires were actually holding me back. After pressure added by my professors I finally decided to just have a brainstorm based on everything and anything, and eventually, after making a joke about one of my professors' last name, the perfect premise just came to me: The sandman wants to put everyone to sleep, but he reaches a student who has an exam the day after.

I was instantly in love with the idea because I related to that setting so much. All my life I have been incredibly prone to drowsiness, I fall easily asleep, it is just who I am. So during my years as a university student, where projects were due almost each week, I had to start working into the long hours of the night, and during those times I felt myself fighting against an invisible force to stay awake, and that is exactly what my film demonstrates.



Fig. 308 – Sara (the student) studying as the Sandman panics from the window.

A student surrounded by books, struggling to stay awake as the sandman struggles and uses every gimmick in the book to get her to fall asleep.

Before I had come up with this idea I was very focused on the type of style I wanted to use, and that also conflicted with my having ideas. Said style was very delicate, minimalist, but it also was very romantic and complex, and it would not accompany just any narrative, so when I landed a story I liked I could not use that style because it would have made no sense to mix such a light-hearted and comedic tale with such a look. So I started to think what styles would best suit this plot and my story somewhat reminded me of comic strips and their light

prompt humour, so I figured I could base my look on that simplistic design, and it matched effortlessly.



Fig. 309 – Hobbes and Calvin sliding down a slope.



Fig. 310 – Jeremy (*Zits*'s protagonist) late for school.

Especially based on Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* (1985-1995) and Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman's *Zits* (1997 - present) styles for the characters, and UPA's for the backgrounds, I managed to conjure up a story that really spoke to me (and I knew would be relatable to many others) as well as a simple style that I would be able to do by myself and in the schedule given to me.

The next step was developing the whole story, which was a little more difficult, because I had to be careful with what was relatable and what was comical, the timing of the gags, the pacing of the story, and what would be accessible to most people, what would be most relatable. The final pitch arose during the middle of production, but it was very satisfactory: The sandman would be seen flying through the neighbourhood putting anyone awake to bed, until he noticed one person in particular did not give in to his magic sand (which usually puts every one asleep instantly). He reached that person and realized it would not be an easy job, yet he gave the sand one more shot. Alas, it was in vain, so he had to put his hands to work. He went into her room and started fixing anything that was keeping her from sleeping: from arranging her books to making her coffee disappear, from making her listen to a lullaby to tricking her into drinking tea, he was relentless. Unfortunately Sara was also keen on studying the night away, so she came up with ways to make sure she was not going to sleep before finishing her revisions.

Their struggle continued for a long while until we finally see the girl sleeping peacefully as the Sandman brushes the sweat off his brow with a feeling of accomplishment. Finally he had finished his job. Unfortunately for Sara, Sandman had actually been successful at the worst of times, and she was found sleeping during her exam.

4.2 Why a Woman

When I started to imagine my story I had envisioned its human lead a boy, because that what I was trained to see as a default character whose story did not give importance or was not influenced by their gender. But after the first researches made for this dissertation I started questioning myself why I deemed "male was the default human" and why, even though I myself am a woman, I wanted to portray the character that I had developed in my image and to suffer my experience in all-nighters as a man. I immediately changed my character's gender and the story did not change one bit.



Fig. 311 – Sara yawning.

I made my character to be as just a student who happened to be female. She had no stereotypical traits of either gender, nothing about her except her physical appearance would have told the audience her gender, she was just a girl, and not what the media tells us a girl is. My character gets exaggerated expressions and demonstrates bodily functions, she is not necessarily pretty nor is she ugly: she just exists. And I am very proud of having created her the way I have, because it shows that anyone can identify with anyone, and no one thought odd of any behaviour my character had.



Fig. 312 – The sandman looking at Sara.

The Sandman, on the other hand, was not put in my film, as many male characters are put in female led films, to counterbalance Sara. In fact, the only reason why we should

assume the Sandman as male is only because his name ends in “man” (and in Portuguese his name is “João Pestana” which translates to “John Eyelash”), because my design of him is very gender-neutral. As are his behaviours, there is no reason to believe anything he does is to be attributed to any gender in specific, so even though I do use male pronouns to categorize him and his name is Sand*man,* he is completely genderless.

As I moved deeper through my dissertation’s theme I found what mistakes to avoid in my next films and how to better make a difference with my own creations in regards to my gender. I am very happy with how my first complete movie turned out, and how I was able to incorporate some of what I had learned from my research into it.

5. Conclusion

There are some topics that would have been interesting to explore further, however due to either time restrictions or irrelevancy to this title in particular they were not included in this dissertation. For example, to explore how East Asia mainstream animation deals with its depiction of female characters and how they are treated; to explore femininity in cases of minorities, such as the disabled or women of colour, how representation (or lack thereof) influences their lives, and how it is a constant battle for them to be on screen. And it would also be very interesting to see a similar analysis to this dissertation, but of independent films made by both female and male directors, to see how their autonomy compares to the restrictive limits imposed by marketing schemes of big companies.

We can learn from this dissertation that the messages we get not just from advertisement but also from the entertainment industry powerfully shape how we see our reality. Our feelings about everything – our bodies, beauty, worth, potential, etc. – are formed as our media choices whisper what we should believe about ourselves and what is shown to us over and over that is normal or aspired to achieve to be a "better human". Those voices usually tell women that they are valued for their sexual appeal and thinness, they should spend their lives striving for those ideals, and they cannot be loved and desired without reaching those goals (which are unattainable) (Davis G. , 2011).

In the largest study of its kind, the Institute on Gender in Media found the more hours of television a girl watches, the fewer options she believes she has in her life. And the more hours a boy watches, the more sexist his views become. In G-rated movies, for every one female character, there are three male characters. If it is a group scene, it changes to five to one, male to female. Of the female characters that exist, the majority are highly stereotyped and/or hyper-sexualized. The only aspiration for female characters in nearly every instance is finding romance, whereas there is practically no male character whose ultimate goal is finding romance (Davis G. , 2011).

The vast majority of female characters in animated movies have an "ideal" body type that cannot exist in real life. When the millions of images of women and girls seen in media reflect a distorted reality where females are valued solely for their (unattainable) thinness and sexual appeal, and their only goal in life is to find Prince Charming, it becomes a problem.

There is no problem with being beautiful or thin, there is no problem in wanting true love or being dependent on someone else, the only problem lies in perpetuating that those are the only things women want to be or have. A woman should be able to stay at home with her

children and not be called a stereotype, just like a man should do the same without feeling like "less of a man", it should not be a woman's job to do anything unless that is what she wants to do, and nothing considered conventionally feminine should feel emasculating or weak to men.

Aesthetic relativism exists, so television and cinema should avoid funnelling beauty to just one type of face or body, because when doing so any woman who is not naturally like that or physically cannot achieve those looks will think of herself as less pretty, and will always be unsatisfied with her body, which, because of those already ridiculous beauty standards, most every woman, and even models, already are. Every girl and boy should aspire to become and be whatever he or she wants, and not be made to feel bad about it.

Paraphrasing Anita Sarkeesian (Shapiro, 2013), the pattern of presenting women as fundamentally weak, ineffective, or ultimately incapable, has larger ramifications beyond the characters themselves and the specific plots in which they exist. We must remember these films or series do not exist in a vacuum, they are an increasingly important and influential part of our larger social and cultural environment. The reality is these tropes are being used in real world contexts where they perpetuate backwards sexist attitudes that already exist. A large percentage of the world's population still hangs on to the belief that women are inherently weaker than men, and therefore must be sheltered, protected and taken care of by them. The belief that women are the naturally weaker gender is a deeply ingrained, socially constructed myth, which is completely false, and the idealization that men need to be muscled and strong, and women smooth and smaller does nothing to help it. The notion is reinforced and perpetuated when women are portrayed as delicate, fragile, and helpless creatures. This is not to say that films that use tropes are intrinsically bad, but artists should be very carefully when employing them and make sure they give every gender a fair chance at being a complex character.

I now personally believe that the research made for this dissertation has helped me better understand and improved my knowledge of the inequality still present in films concerning the depiction of women and men. And I know that I can continue to make my projects according to these findings without ever restricting my artistic views, and therefore portray as well as possible any character of any gender upon creating them.

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Annex: Synopses of the Mentioned Films

The Cameraman's Revenge (Starewicz, 1912)

A story of a grasshopper, who is also a cameraman, takes his revenge by filming a beetle with his wife, a dragonfly, and then shows the results at the local cinema where the beetle's wife is in the audience. This was one of Starewicz's first animated films, and stars very realistic animated bugs.

Dizzy Dishes (Fleischer, 1930)

Betty Boop (with dog ears) is entertainer in a restaurant for dogs; a waiter joins the floorshow and gets in trouble for neglecting its patrons.

Popeye the Sailor (Fleischer, 1933)

Each episode has a very basic plot: A villain, usually Brutus, makes a move on Popeye's girlfriend, Olive Oyl, when Popeye protests the villain clobbers him until he eats spinach, giving him superhuman strength. Once empowered, the sailor defeats the villain.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves (Disney, 1937)

The action of the story advances when the Evil Queen asks her magic mirror who the fairest one of all is, to which he replies that she is to be surpassed in beauty by her own stepdaughter.

Enraged with jealousy of Snow White she sends her huntsman to kill her, who, captivated by Snow White's beauty and vulnerability though, urges her to run away into the woods and never return; she does what he says and ventures into the heart of the forest where she finds a small cottage filled with tiny furniture.

Tired from running all night she decides to take a nap across three little beds. Soon the dwarves return from their mining job and find her sleeping on their beds, scared of what she might be they grab their hatchets and go in to kill her, but as she turns in her sleep they see her face and fall instantly in love with her (much like the huntsman). They then agree to let her stay and promise her protection and in return she is to take care of them and their home.

Not long after, the Queen discovers that Snow White is still alive, and goes out to kill her herself while disguised as an old, decrepit woman. Snow White, falling for the Witch's ruse, takes a bite out of the (unknown to her) poisoned apple, and falls to her apparent death. The dwarves return to her lying dead body on the floor, maddened with grief they kill the Witch, after which they hold a wake for Snow White.

Pinocchio (Disney, 1940)

When a woodworker, Geppetto sees a falling star, he wishes that the puppet he just finished, Pinocchio, could become a real boy. During the night, the Blue Fairy grants Geppetto his wish and asks Jiminy Cricket to serve as the wooden boy's conscience. But the naive and trusting Pinocchio falls into the clutches of the wicked Honest John, who leads him astray to the sinful Pleasure Island. Geppetto goes to save Pinocchio and after being able do so Pinocchio turns into a real boy for showing compassion and love.

Cinderella (Disney, 1950)

The story of a young girl of the same name, whose aristocratic father married a woman named lady Tremaine before dying, in an effort to not leave Cinderella without a parent. She had two other daughters from a previous marriage, Anastasia and Drizella. As the years went by after her husband's death, Lady Tremaine would to treat Cinderella worse and worse, until she was treated no better than a maid. This went on routinely until one day a ball at the palace is announced to help find a suitable maiden for the Prince to wed. Cinderella asks her stepmother if she could go, to which she replies that she can attend the ball only if Cinderella is able to finish her chores and find a proper dress. She manages to do so, but when she goes to show her family what she has accomplished both her stepsisters and Lady Tremaine sabotage her and forbid her to go.

Cinderella is heartbroken by these events, and is found crying in her torn (by her stepsisters) dress by her fairy Godmother. She proceeds to fix her up through magic and arrange a car to take her to the ball (by transforming the mice into horses, a pumpkin into a coach, and the horse into a chauffeur*)*. Upon arriving at the ball she is admired by everyone, and catches the eye of the Prince, who immediately asks her to dance; after a while she and the Prince begin to talk, but are interrupted by the sound of the clock striking midnight (the hour on which every one of the Fairy Godmother's spells begins to fade). She flees the castle leaving behind a single shoe. After skimming the town in search of the lovely girl, the Prince

finds Cinderella and slips on her perfectly fitted shoe. Happy to find his true love, the Prince takes her to the palace, they get married, and live happily ever after.

Seeping Beauty (Disney, 1959)

It begins when a new princess is born to King Stefan and his wife. The entire kingdom rejoices and is invited to the christening party. At a ceremony, the king shows Aurora to a young Prince Philip, son of another king, and tells him she is to be his betrothed; soon after that, three good fairies - Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather - bestow gifts of beauty and song upon the small princess. But before Merryweather can bless Aurora with her gift, Maleficent, an evil sorceress crashes the party and curses the young princess, proclaiming that Aurora will grow up in grace and beauty, but before the sun sets on her sixteenth birthday, she will prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning rod and die. After the witch leaves, Merryweather, who had yet to bless Aurora, uses her gift to alter the curse so that instead of dying, Aurora would fall into a deathlike sleep from which she could only be awoken by true love's first kiss. King Stefan, still fearful for his daughter's life, orders all spinning wheels in the kingdom to be burned. The fairies do not believe that will be enough to keep Aurora safe, and so with consent of their majesties they take baby Aurora away to a cottage in the forest until the day of her sixteenth birthday. Almost sixteen years later, her aunts, the fairies in disguise, send right before her birthday, Aurora, known now as Briar Rose, to fetch berries in the woods while they prepare her a surprise. As they try to make a birthday cake and present without the use of magic (and failing absurdly), Rose sings and dances with woodland creatures until a nearby prince, none other than Philip himself, hears her and joins her, they fall in love instantly.

Before Briar Rose left him with the invitation to come by her home that evening. The fairies at the cottage began using magic to speed along the gifts' process which led to a colour fight. Jets of sparkling blue and pink smoke burst out of every open hole in the cottage and ended in a conflict between Rose and fairies over her true heritage and why she cannot meet the prince. The arguments drew the attention of Maleficent's pet raven who promptly flies to tell her of Rose's whereabouts. Meanwhile, Prince Philip also has an argument with his father, King Hubert, which results in Philip leaving to meet Rose.

In the meantime the fairies take Aurora to her castle, where Maleficent then appears and magically lures Aurora away from the fairies and makes the Princess touch an enchanted

spinning wheel. Aurora pricks her finger, completing the curse. The good fairies place Aurora on a bed in the highest tower and place a powerful spell on all the people in the kingdom, causing them to fall in a deep sleep until the spell on their princess is broken. From this point on, none of Aurora's future is in her hands. From King Hubert's conversation with King Stefan, the fairies realize that Prince Phillip is the man with whom Aurora had fallen in love. However, he is ambushed and kidnapped by Maleficent and her minions at the cottage. She shows Phillip the peasant girl he fell in love with is the now-sleeping princess, she tells him she plans to keep him locked away until he is an old man on the verge of death, only then release him to meet his love, who will not have aged a single day.

The fairies arrive at Maleficent's castle, where they find and release the Prince, arming him with the magical Sword of Truth and the magical Shield of Virtue. After Phillip and the fairies escape the castle, Maleficent tries to stop him with a forest of thorns, but fails as the Prince cuts his way through. She then transforms into a gigantic dragon to battle the Prince herself, they fight until Phillip hurls the sword, blessed by the fairies' magic, directly into Maleficent's heart, causing her to fall to her death.

Phillip awakens Aurora with a kiss, breaking the spell that wakes everyone in the kingdom up. The royal couple descends to the ballroom, where Aurora is happily reunited with King Stefan and Queen. Flora and Merryweather resume their argument over the colour of Aurora's Dress, even changing its colour as she wears it while dancing with Phillip. Princess Aurora and Prince Phillip live happily ever after.

101 Dalmatians (Geronimi, Reitherman, & Luske, 1961)

This film tells the story of a couple who each own a Dalmatian. After getting married their dogs have puppies. Unfortunately an old colleague of Anita's (the female lead), Cruella de Vil, wants to make a coat out of the puppies' fur, so she kidnaps as many as she can. After Pongo and Perdita, the two main Dalmatians, go to rescue their puppies they save all the other ones as well. All of the puppies add up to 99, and Anita and Roger end up adopting all of them.

The Black Cauldron (Berman & Rich, 1985)

This is the story of a young man named Taran, who is an assistant pig keeper with boyish dreams of becoming a great warrior. An evil lord, known as the Horned King, to help him with his plan kidnaps hen Wen, a magical oracular pig at the care of Taran. The villain hopes Hen will show him the way to The Black Cauldron, which has the power to create a giant army of unstoppable soldiers. With the aid of a princess, named Princess Eilonwy, an exaggerating bard, and a pestering creature called Gurgi, Taran will try to save the world of Prydain from the Horned King. Taran and his new friends embarks on a quest to find the dark magic Black Cauldron the item of ultimate power before a diabolical tyrant The Horned King can.

The Chipmunk Adventure (Karman, 1987)

Three male chipmunks, Simon, Theodore, and Alvin, become involved in a jewel-smuggling operation with three female chipmunks, Brittany, Jeanette, and Eleanor, while their guardian is away.

Oliver & Company (Scribner, 1988)

In this animated update of the classic "Oliver Twist" tale, Oliver is an orphaned kitten taken in by a gang of thieving dogs, led by cavalier canine Dodger (Billy Joel) and owned by down-and-out pickpocket Fagin. While pulling a job in the streets of New York City, Oliver winds up being adopted by a rich girl, Jenny, and landing on easy street. But through a series of events, a loan shark threatens the peaceful new arrangement.

The Little Mermaid (Clements & Musker, 1989)

The Little Mermaid tells the story of a young mermaid who is obsessed with knowing the land above her. She openly disobeys her father, Triton, king of the seven seas, and continuously goes to the surface to watch the people. One day while looking inside a boat she notices a young prince, Eric, dancing and laughing, she immediately falls in love with him.

After she saves him from the shipwreck, he falls in love with the voice that he heard singing while unconscious. When he wakes up Ariel had already left, afraid of being discovered. She then goes to the witch of the sea, Ursula, and begs her to help her meet Ariel's prince. Ursula agrees to do so in exchange for Ariel's voice and tells her Ariel has three days to get the Prince to kiss her, and if she does not succeed her soul will belong to the

witch. Using her voice as payment, Ariel signs the contract and receives her human legs, rushed to the surface before drowning by her friends Sebastian and Flounder, a crab and fish respectively. She is mute and naked, and thankfully is rescued and brought to the castle to be taken care of. While there, she and the Prince fall deeply in love, but neither kiss each other.

Soon Ursula, using Ariel's voice and transformed into a young, dark-haired beautiful human woman, mesmerizes Eric and he almost marries her before Ariel is able to stop it with the help of her animal friends. Ariel regains her voice and as the sun goes down without any true love's kiss, Ursula reveals herself and drags Ariel down to the ocean with her. King Triton finds them and switches with Ariel so that his soul is the one that belongs to the evil Ursula. Ariel is furious and tries to fight Ursula but she shoves Ariel easily to the side. Eric then comes to the rescue, and he and Ariel together try to fight the witch. Eric is eventually able to stab the now giant witch with the broken mast of an ex-wrecked ship. When she dies, every evil spell she cast is undone.

Triton, recognizing Ariel and Eric's true love for each other, gives Ariel legs and she marries her prince. They all live happily ever after.

Kiki's Delivery Service (Miyazaki, 1989)

Kiki, a young witch-in-training, has reached the age of 13. According to tradition, all witches of that age must leave home for one year, so that they can learn how to live on their own. Kiki, along with her talking cat Gigi, fly away to live in the seaside town of Korico. After starting her own delivery service (using her broom as the delivery vehicle), Kiki must learn how to deal with her new life, especially after she loses the power to fly.

Body Beautiful (Quinn, 1990)

In this film Beryl is the factory union rep and she had to deal with a macho workmate Vince, as she struggles with her own weight issues, before accepting her body completely.

Cool World (Bakshi, 1992)

After a bizarre incident, Frank Harris is transported into the cartoon realm named Cool World, where he remains the only human among various animated characters for years. Eventually, artist Jack Deebs also enters Cool World and sets his lustful sights on his own creation, a blonde and extremely sexualized cartoon named Holli Would. However, excessive

intermingling between cartoons and humans makes both worlds start to fall apart, and after being able to stop that from happening Deeps is stuck in the cartoon world forever, and Harris dying and is reborn as a cartoon.

Saved by the Bell (Bobrick, 1989 - 1993)

The show follows a group of friends and their principal. Primarily focusing on light-hearted comedic situations, it occasionally touches on serious social issues, such as drug use, driving under the influence, homelessness, remarriage, death, women's rights, and environmental issues.

Animaniacs (Ruegger, 1993 – 1998)

The comedy of Animaniacs was a broad mix of old-fashioned wit, slapstick, pop culture references, and cartoon violence. The show featured a number of comedic educational segments that covered subjects such as history, mathematics, geography, astronomy, science, and social studies, often in musical form. Animaniacs itself was a variety show, with short skits featuring a large cast of characters. While the show had no set format, the majority of episodes were composed of three short mini-episodes, each starring a different set of characters, and bridging segments.

Princess Mononoke (Miyazaki, 1997)

While protecting his village from rampaging boar-god/demon, a young warrior, Ashitaka, is stricken by a deadly curse. To save his life, he must journey to the forests of the west, once there, he is embroiled in a fierce campaign that humans were waging on the forest. The ambitious Lady Eboshi and her loyal clan use their guns against the gods of the forest and a brave young woman, Princess Mononoke, who was raised by a wolf-god. Ashitaka sees the good in both sides and tries to stem the flood of blood. This is met with animosity by both sides as they each see him as supporting the enemy.

Anastasia (Bluth & Goldman, Anastasia, 1997)

The story begins with the Russian royal family being cursed by a jealous man, Rasputin, who wanted their ruin.

Of all the Tsar's children only the youngest, Anastasia, survives while trying to escape the revolution along with her grandmother, the Dowager Empress of Russia. She trips trying to get on the train that her grandmother was on and hits her head, losing her grandmother and her memory. Ten years pass and, receiving what she thought was a sign from above, she decides to go to Paris in hopes of discovering her family. She had a necklace that said: "Together in Paris" and figured that is where her family was. Now named Anya, she seeks a character called Dimitri to get a passport in order to leave the country. Meanwhile Dimitri and his friend Vlad are trying to find an Anastasia look-alike to fool the Dowager Empress in to giving them the reward for finding her beloved granddaughter.

When they meet Anya, Vlad notices her eyes and how she looks like the painting of Anastasia as a child. They bring her along convincing her that she could be the Grand Duchess Anastasia without letting her in on the "con" so as not to split the reward three ways. Thinking there could be no harm no foul, she accepts and the three travel to Paris. After Rasputin's many attempts to kill Anya in their travels fail, the trio reach Sophie, the Empress's cousin, in Paris who has to be convinced of Anya's verisimilitude before letting them meet her supposed grandmother. They convince Sophie and she arranges a meeting with the Dowager Empress.

Upon hearing her grandmother tell Dimitri she knows all about him and his schemes, Anastasia cuts ties with him and never wants to hear from him again. Now knowing that Anya truly is Anastasia, after she told a story about a kitchen boy (young Dimitri) saving them through a secret passage in the palace, Dimitri runs after the Empress and hijacks her in her own car in order to make himself be heard. He convinces her and she goes to visit Anya. Together Anastasia remembers her grandmother's smell and the two are finally reunited. The empress tells Anastasia that Dimitri did not accept the reward, and Anastasia goes after him with her grandmother's blessing. They battle Rasputin one last time, face-to-face, and win. They elope and live happily ever after.

Johnny Bravo (Partible, 1997-2004)

is a series centred on a character of the same name, who is a very muscular, rude, and dim-witted womanizer. The episodes typically revolve around him trying to get a woman to go on a date with him, though his advances are usually rejected due to his chauvinistic approach.

Daria (Eichler, 1997 - 2002)

Daria is a smart and cynical girl going through teenage life as a proud outsider in a world of mainly idiotic teens and condescending adults.

Johnny Bravo (Partible, 1997 - 2004)

The series centres on the titular character Johnny Bravo, a muscular and boorish man who tries to get women to date him, though he is usually unsuccessful. He ends up in bizarre situations and predicaments.

The Powerpuff Girls (McCracken, 1998 - 2005)

The Powerpuff Girls tells the story of three chemically created super-heroines, who are of kindergarten age and fight crime and save the city of Townsville from monsters and evil beings.

Tarzan (Buck & Lima 1999)

In this Disney animated tale, the orphaned Tarzan grows up in the remote African wilderness, raised by the gentle gorilla Kala. When a British expedition enters the jungle, Tarzan encounters the beautiful Jane and recognizes that, like her, he is human. Falling in love with Jane, Tarzan is torn between embracing civilization and staying with his gorilla family, which becomes threatened by the ruthless hunter Clayton.

Pepper Ann (Rose, 1997 - 2000)

Pepper Ann is a comedy series that follows an awkward thirteen year-old, Pepper Ann, and her two only friends, as she deals with the social and academic struggles of school.

Spirited Away (Miyazaki, 2001)

The film starts with Chihiro, a young 10-year-old girl, and her parents moving to a small Japanese town in the countryside, much to Chihiro's dismay. On the way to their new home, Chihiro's father makes a wrong turn and drives down a lonely one-lane road that dead-

ends in front of a tunnel. Her parents decide to stop the car and explore the area. They go through the tunnel and find an abandoned amusement park on the other side, with its own little town. When her parents see a restaurant with great-smelling food but no staff, they decide to eat and pay later. However, Chihiro refuses to eat and decides to explore the theme park a bit more. She meets a boy named Haku who tells her that Chihiro and her parents are in danger, and they must leave immediately. She runs to the restaurant and finds that her parents have turned into pigs. In addition, the theme park turns out to be a town inhabited by spirits. At the centre of the town is a bathhouse; he owner of the bathhouse is the evil witch Yubaba, who is intent on keeping all trespassers as captive workers. Haku convinces Chihiro to get a job there, and Yubaba hires her, but renames her Sen. While visiting her parents' pigpen, Sen finds a goodbye card addressed to Chihiro and realizes that she has already forgotten her name. Haku warns her that Yubaba controls people by taking their names and that if she forgets she will not be able to leave the spirit world, much like him. While working, Sen invites a silent masked creature named No-Face inside, believing him to be a customer.

A 'stink spirit' arrives as Sen's first customer, after cleaning him, she discovers he is the spirit of a polluted river, in gratitude for cleaning him; he gives Sen a magic dumpling. Meanwhile No-Face tempts workers with gold, and swallows them. Before she leaves the bathhouse, Sen confronts No-Face, who is now massive and feeds him the rest of the dumpling she had previously given Haku when he was ill. Enraged at the damage caused by No-Face, Yubaba blames Sen for inviting him in and orders that her parents be slaughtered. After Haku reveals that Yubaba’s son, Boh, was missing, he promises to retrieve him in exchange for Yubaba freeing Sen and her parents. They are successful and take Boh back to the bathhouse. On the way back, Sen recalls a memory from her youth in which she had fallen into the Kohaku River but was washed safely ashore.

After correctly guessing that Haku is the spirit of the Kohaku River (and thus revealing his real name), Haku is completely freed from Yubaba's control. When they arrive at the bathhouse, Yubaba tells Sen that in order to break the curse on her parents, she must identify them from among a group of pigs. After Sen correctly states that none of the pigs are her parents, she is given back her real name Chihiro. Haku takes her to the now dry riverbed and vows to meet her again. Chihiro crosses the river and reunites with her restored parents, who do not remember what happened. The film ends with them walking back to their car and drive away.

Atlantis: The Lost Empire (Trousdale & Wise, 2001)

An inexperienced young scholar, Milo Thatch, becomes the key to unravelling an ancient mystery when he joins up with a group of daredevil explorers to find the legendary lost empire of Atlantis. While he meets Kida, the princess of Atlantis, and falls in love with her, one of his fellow explorers turns out he wanted to steal Atlantis's precious gems, together with Kida, and the other explorers they are able to stop him and restore Atlantis to its status quo. Milo decides to stay with Kida, while the rest return

Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas (Johnson & Gilmore, 2003)

A Persian sailor named Sinbad is on a quest to find the magical legendary Book of Peace, a mysterious artefact that Eris, the Greek wicked goddess of chaos, has ultimately framed him for stealing! If he fails on this quest, his childhood friend Prince Proteus of Syracuse will take Sinbad's death penalty, while Eris gains a desired foothold of power in the world of mortals.

The Incredibles (Bird, 2004)

Married superheroes Mr Incredible and Elastigirl are forced to assume mundane lives as Bob and Helen Parr; after the government banned all super-powered activities. While Mr Incredible loves his wife and kids, he longs to return to a life of adventure, and he gets a chance when summoned to an island to battle an out-of-control robot. Soon, Mr Incredible is in trouble, and it is up to his family to save him.

Danny Phantom (Hartman, 2004 - 2007)

Danny Fenton was once your typical kid until he accidentally blew up his parents' laboratory and became ghost-hunting superhero Danny Phantom. Now half-ghost, Danny's picked up paranormal powers, but only his sister, Jazz, and best friends, Samantha and Tucker, know his secret. Danny's busy fighting ghosts, saving Casper High and hiding his new identity all while trying to graduate.

Ratatouille (Bird & Pinkava, 2007)

Remy, a resident of Paris, appreciates good food and has quite a sophisticated palate. He would love to become a chef so he can create and enjoy culinary masterpieces to his heart's delight. The only problem is, Remy is a rat. When he winds up in the sewer beneath

one of Paris' finest restaurants, the rodent gourmet finds himself ideally placed to realize his dream.

Ponyo (Hayao Miyazaki, 2008)

Tells the story about a little fish girl who wishes to be human. Thinking it is just a trapped fish, Ponyo was found in a bottle and saved by a five-year-old boy, son of a sailor, who lives by the seaside with his mother. But she is no ordinary fish, she is the daughter of the ocean wizard who was once human and now does not trust them; but because Ponyo and Sosuke have now developed feelings for each other Ponyo wants to become human. Her father is very against it but, with the help of her sisters, Ponyo manages to do so anyway.

Because it took so much magic though, Earth became off balance, as the moon steadily draws nearer to the earth, Ponyo's mother asks if Sosuke would love Ponyo regardless of what she was, he answers that he loves all the Ponyos, then she asks Ponyo if she is willing to give up her magical powers to be human, to which she agrees. Sosuke kisses Ponyo, which transforms her into a human forever, and balance is restored to the world.

Ponyo is a lot like *The Little Mermaid* but she is less dependent of other character, her father is adamant that she cannot become human, but with strength, attitude, and cleverness she outsmarts her father and becomes human. She audaciously takes on nature itself with the help of hundreds of her sisters. In this story a boy, like in so many other fairy tales, saves the heroine, but it is clear from beginning to end that they are equal partners and that Ponyo is absolutely not helpless. She is strong, self-sufficient and bright; once again the exact type of role model children need.

Up (Docter, 2009)

Carl, a 78-year-old balloon salesman, is about to fulfil a lifelong dream. Tying thousands of balloons to his house, he flies away to the South American wilderness. But curmudgeonly Carl's worst nightmare comes true when he discovers a little boy named Russell is a stowaway aboard the balloon-powered house.

How to Train Your Dragon (DeBlois & Sanders, 2010)

Hiccup is a Norse teenager from the island of Berk, where fighting dragons is a way of life. His progressive views and weird sense of humour make him a misfit, despite the fact that

his father (Gerard Butler) is chief of the clan. Tossed into dragon-fighting school, he endeavours to prove himself as a true Viking, but when he befriends an injured dragon he names Toothless, he has the chance to plot a new course for his people's future.

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs (Lord & Miller, 2010)

On the small island of Swallow Falls, the outcast boy Flint Lockwood is a clumsy inventor encouraged by his mother. However the island is not capable of exporting their sardine stocks, and the locals end up having to eat it all the time. Years later, Flint's mother dies and his sceptical father Tim Lockwood, an old fisherman who has a sardine store, gives Flint a partnership in his store and invites him to work there with him. But Flint, being the inventor that he is, has just invented a food processor that converts water into food. And He decides to test it out... but things don't go according to plan and he manages to launch it into the atmosphere. It begins to rain hamburgers and other food in the island. A television station sends a weather reporter trainee (Sam Sparks) to cover the phenomenon and Flint becomes famous. However, the greedy and glutton Mayor Shelbourne overworks the machine and the food becomes a menace to the human race.

A Monster in Paris (Bergeron, 2012)

Raoul and Emile accidentally release a flea turned giant (a monster) from an eccentric scientist's greenhouse and vow to track it down. They soon realize the beast may not be as menacing as it appears and try to save it from a corrupt police chief.

The Book of Life (Gutierrez, 2014)

In the Mexican town of San Angel, Manolo, Maria and Joaquin have been friends ever since childhood. Although their lives have taken different paths – Maria was sent to Europe, Joaquin joined the military, and Manolo studied to become a bullfighter – one thing remains the same: Manolo and Joaquin both want to marry Maria. Little does the trio know that battling husband-and-wife deities have made a high-stakes wager on the love triangle's outcome.

Lava (Murphy, 2014)

On a tropical island in the Pacific, a lonely volcano named Uku watches the wildlife creatures frolic with their mates and hopes to find a love of his own one day. He sings a song to the ocean each day for thousands of years, gradually venting his lava and sinking into the water, but does not realize that an undersea volcano named Lele has heard him every day and has fallen in love with him. She emerges on the day that Uku becomes extinct, but her face is turned away and she cannot see him. Uku sinks fully into the ocean, heartbroken, but revives when he hears Lele singing his song to him. His fires re-ignited, he erupts back to the surface, this time face to face with Lele, and the two form a single island where they can be happy together.