



# Proměna hlavní dívčí postavy v produkci Walta Disneyho: od počátku po současnost

## Bakalářská práce

*Studijní program:* B7507 – Specializace v pedagogice  
*Studijní obory:* 6107R023 – Humanitní studia se zaměřením na vzdělávání  
7507R036 – Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

*Autor práce:* **Barbora Macháčová**  
*Vedoucí práce:* Sándor Klapcsik, Ph.D.





TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF LIBEREC  
Faculty of Science, Humanities  
and Education



# The Transformation of the Female Protagonist in Disney Production: From Beginnings to Contemporary Era

## Bachelor thesis

*Study programme:* B7507 – Specialization in Pedagogy  
*Study branches:* 6107R023 – Humanities for Education  
7507R036 – English for Education

*Author:* **Barbora Macháčová**  
*Supervisor:* Sándor Klapcsik, Ph.D.



## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Barbora Macháčová**  
Osobní číslo: **P12000281**  
Studijní program: **B7507 Specializace v pedagogice**  
Studijní obory: **Humanitní studia se zaměřením na vzdělávání**  
**Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání**  
Název tématu: **Proměna hlavní dívčí postavy v produkci Walta Disneyho: od počátku po současnost**  
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglického jazyka**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Cílem práce je analyzovat vývoj chování a jednání ženských postav ve vybraných filmech Walta Disneyho od počátků filmu po současnost.

Metody:

- 1) studium literatury
- 2) komparativní strukturální analýza vybraných filmů
- 3) vyvození vývoje základních charakteristik ženských postav.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Jazyk zpracování bakalářské práce: **Angličtina**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Bell, Elizabeth. 1995. From mouse to mermaid the politics of film, gender, and culture. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Byrne, Eleanor, and Martin McQuillan. 1999. Deconstructing Disney. London: Pluto Press.

Davis, Amy. 2007. Good girls and wicked witches: changing representations of women in Disney's feature animation, 1937 - 2001. Eastleigh: Johnny Libbey Publishing.

Maltin, Leonard. 1973. The Disney films. New York: Crown.

Wasko, Janet. 2001. Understanding Disney: the manufacture of fantasy. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

**Sándor Klapcsik, Ph.D.**

Katedra anglického jazyka

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2014**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **4. května 2015**



doc. RNDr. Miroslav Brzezina, CSc.  
děkan

L.S.



PhDr. Marcela Malá, M.A., Ph.D.  
vedoucí katedry

V Liberci dne 30. dubna 2014

## Prohlášení

Byla jsem seznámena s tím, že na mou bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, zejména § 60 – školní dílo.

Beru na vědomí, že Technická univerzita v Liberci (TUL) nezasahuje do mých autorských práv užitím mé bakalářské práce pro vnitřní potřebu TUL.

Užiji-li bakalářskou práci nebo poskytnu-li licenci k jejímu využití, jsem si vědoma povinnosti informovat o této skutečnosti TUL; v tomto případě má TUL právo ode mne požadovat úhradu nákladů, které vynaložila na vytvoření díla, až do jejich skutečné výše.

Bakalářskou práci jsem vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a na základě konzultací s vedoucím mé bakalářské práce a konzultantem.

Současně čestně prohlašuji, že tištěná verze práce se shoduje s elektronickou verzí, vloženou do IS STAG.

Datum:

Podpis:

## Acknowledgement

*I would like to thank my supervisor, Sándor Klapcsik, Ph.D.,*

*for his kind help and guidance.*

## **Anotace**

Práce se zabývá vývojem a pojetím postavy princezny ve filmech produkce Walta Disneyho od roku 1937 do současnosti. Základem je předpoklad, že postava princezny se s průběhem času vyvíjí. Princezny zahrnuté v Disney Princess Franchise mohou být rozděleny do třech skupin na základě jejich nejvýraznějších charakterových rysů a době kdy byl film uveden. První část práce se zabývá vysvětlením pojmu ‚Disney Princess‘ a rozdělením princezen do třech zmíněných skupin/„vln“. Následující kapitoly se zaměřují na analýzu čtyř zástupkyň Disney Princess Franchise: Sněhurku (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, 1937), Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991), Tianu (*Princess and the frog*, 2009) a Meridu (*Brave*, 2012). Hrdinky jsou porovnávány na základě jejich rodinného zázemí, zájmů a způsobu chování, jejich romantických zájmů, vzhledu a hudební části filmu.

## **Klíčová slova**

Disney, princezna, pohádka, vývoj

## **Annotation**

The research deals with the development and representation of the princess character in the movies of the Walt Disney Productions since 1937 to nowadays. It is based on a premise that the Disney Princess characters have evolved and that the princesses of the Disney Princess Franchise can be divided into three groups based on their characteristic features and the time the movie was produced. The first part of the project explains the term ‘Disney Princess’ and division of the Princesses into the “waves” of the production. The following chapters focus on the analysis of four representatives of the Disney Princess Franchise: Snow White (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, 1937), Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991), Tiana (*Princess and the frog*, 2009) and Merida (*Brave*, 2012). The heroines are compared based on their family situation, interests and behaviour, romantic interests, appearance and the musical part of the film.

## **Keywords**

Disney, princess, fairy-tale, development



## Contents

Introduction .....	9
1. Cultural Background .....	11
2. The Evolution of the Disney Princesses.....	15
2.1 Snow White .....	15
2.2 Belle.....	21
2.3 Tiana .....	28
2.3 Brave .....	35
3. Conclusion .....	41
4. References .....	43

## Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to give an introduction to Disney fairy-tale films, their history and cultural influence, and to show whether the representatives of the Disney Princess Franchise have evolved since the first Disney Princess (Snow White) in 1937 to the nowadays era.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part of my thesis deals with the history of story-telling. In brief it mentions the major changes that fairy-tales underwent over the centuries of human history – from the oral folk tales until nowadays animated fairy-tales of the Walt Disney Company. The fairy-tale genre has undergone many changes concerning both the media in which they were presented and their content. The form of the story-telling as well as the story itself has to alter to the current demands of the society. Fairy-tales are forced to adapt to the contemporary topics and themes that the culture is going through. The main source of this part of the thesis is Jack Zipes' *Breaking the Disney Spell* and Amy Davis' *Good Girls and Wicked Witches*, which together give a comprehensible cultural context of both storytelling and the "Disney magic".

The second chapter focuses on the main topic of this thesis – the Disney Princesses and their development from 1937 to nowadays era. I mention the importance and influence of these characters on children. As the term Disney Princess stands also for the official franchise of the Walt Disney Company, the included heroines are listed together with the criteria for becoming an official Disney Princess. These heroines are divided into three groups based on their characteristic features and the time when the film was produced. My main aim is also to foreshadow the expected development of the Disney Princess characters, which is

more precisely described on the representatives of the specific so called “Princess waves” in the following chapter.

The third chapter deals with the analysis of four Disney Princesses of the Disney Princess Franchise representing the eras of Disney production. Firstly, I mention the historical context of the film – when and under what circumstances the story was produced. Furthermore, the princesses are analyzed and compared based on five common categories: family situation, dreams and interests, their behaviour and agency, romantic interests and the musical part of the film.

Storytelling and fairy-tales play an important role in children’s development and they accompany people throughout their whole life. They help in the process of becoming an adult by helping us distinguish between good and evil and understand important events in human life from birth, over falling in love and marriage, to death.

I personally was a princess as a child. More precisely, I was a Disney Princess concerning how fascinated I was with the Disney films. I am happy that I got a chance to, in a certain way, get back to childhood thanks to my bachelor thesis.

## 1. Cultural Background

“We just make the pictures and let the professors tell us what they mean.”

– Walt Disney

Walt Disney and his animation became an important part of the Western world culture in the twentieth century. Although he was not the first one to use fairy-tale plot in different ways in trick films and cartoons, “none of early animators ever matched the intensity with which Disney occupied himself with the fairy-tale” (Zipes 1995, 28). From the first endeavours of his production on which he cooperated with Ub Iwerks in Kansas City, Walt Disney had been taking inspiration in fairy-tale stories throughout his whole career and the company has been following his traces. As Amy M. Davis claims: “Walt Disney was certainly seen by some of his contemporaries as being a modern-day storyteller” (2006, 13). She adds that Disney variants of the fairy-tales have the same relevance and historical value as, for example, folk stories analyzed and interpreted by Vladimir Propp.

Animated fairy tales of contemporary era continue in the story-telling tradition. The only thing that has changed is the way in which they are told – the way that attracts contemporary audience. As the oral folk tales were made suitable for print, the printed versions were transformed to be suitable for filming. In the same time of the transformation to the new medium “each new storyteller has also reformed and re-shaped elements of the stories to fit both the medium they were using and the audience they were targeting” (Davis 2005, 13). In other words, both the form and content has changed, although the main ideas and themes have remained.

In a way similarly to other genres, in the film industry the success of a certain fairy tale film is expressed by means of the money it makes. Therefore, when writing and choosing the script of a film to be made, the creators decide based on the premise

that the film will be accepted by the audience. As Davis claims: “If a film is to make money, it must appeal to a mass audience. If it is to do this, it must contain ideas, themes, characters, stories, and perceptions to which it can relate” (2006, 17).

As well as every part of a culture, fairy-tales and their characters have to adapt to the changes in society. Princesses as role models for children and especially young girls are no longer presented as the innocent, helpless and domestic housekeepers who wait for prince charming to rescue them and give them the possibility to cook and clean for the rest of their lives.

Since 1937, when Snow White as the first feature length fairy tale was presented, Walt Disney Studios have produced about 50 animated films that have over the years become a part of childhood for many children all around the world. A significant number of these films are based on generally known stories that can be found, for example, in Grimm’s Fairy Tales. However, the Disney version of these fairy tales became more familiar to the public than the written version. As Zipes claims: “If children think of the great classical fairy-tales today, be it Snow White, Sleeping Beauty or Cinderella, they will think Walt Disney” (1995, 21). It can be said that Walt Disney changed our way of viewing fairy-tales by using the most up-to-date technology and reducing the space for fantasy into specific images. On the other hand, thanks to the technological progress and to the popularity of the cinematic medium, the tales are accessible to large public.

These stories are comprehensible both to the young and old with no distinction of social classes. Such a wide range of audience suggests also a wide range of influence. According to Wynns and Rosenfeld (2003, 91) mass media can function as an influential teacher of social norms, specifically to young people. Especially children can be persuaded to think and behave in a certain way based on the

programs they watch on television. The viewers are affected by the ideals as well as the racial and gender stereotypes portrayed in the films. Opinions on what behavior is appropriate for men and women evolve with the visual culture.

The Princess characters of the Disney films function not only as a role model but also as a label for a successful media franchise. It is comprised of 11 female protagonists of ten different Walt Disney Animation Studios films and one Pixar film. A character can become the official Disney Princess either by birth, by marriage with a prince or due to her heroism in the film. The princesses who do not participate in this franchise are either too young (like for example Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, 1951) or the marketing of the movie was not successful enough (Megara from *Hercules*, 1997).

So far this group consists of Snow White from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), Cinderella (1950), Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), Jasmine from *Aladdin* (1992), Pocahontas (1995), Mulan (1998), Tiana from *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Rapunzel from *Tangled* (2010) and Merida from *Brave* (2012). This group can be divided into three “waves” based on their common features and the time in which the films were produced.

Thirteen years after Snow White was released, Disney introduced the second animated heroine, Cinderella, followed by Sleeping Beauty. These three princesses exemplify the societal conventions regarding girls of that time. Disney links the “princesshood” with the ideal girlhood. Deborah O’Keefe claims it was desirable for girl-heroines “to have a sweet voice so low it could be hardly heard” and that it “was good for a girl-heroine to be misty, lisping, and inaudible, and even better for her to be dead” (2000, 164). These three princesses wait for the prince to be rescued – two

of them asleep or in coma, one in poverty and servitude. It seems that their dream is only to marry the “prince charming” and to live happily ever after. Although this motive eventually appears in most of the Disney Princess fairy-tales, it is the most obvious in the “first princess wave”.

*Beauty and the Beast* was presented in 1991 and together with *The Little Mermaid* (1989) it became part of the second princess wave in Disney animation. During the break between these two eras many things have changed for women in society. According to Marina Warner, Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast* "is more vividly aware of contemporary sexual politics than any made before" (1994, 313). Other princesses of this era do not stay behind: Ariel and Pocahontas both stand up to their fathers (the first one to find the love of her life and the second one to prevent a war) and Mulan even pretends to be a male soldier. The audience was no longer interested in the charming but sentimental and quiet heroine. Women left the households, started building careers and the relationships within the families radically changed. The wife in the 90's lives a different life than her grandmother in the 40's and 50's. Considering this, it is only natural that the characteristics of the female protagonists in Disney movies transformed.

The last wave consists of the “modern” princesses such as Tiana, Rapunzel and Merida. In contrast to the previous (especially the first wave) princesses, nor Tiana, Rapunzel or Merida are interested in finding the “prince charming”. They have various dreams, interests and hobbies and although two out of three eventually fall in love and get married, they are not waiting to be saved by their future husband. The first African American Disney Princess, Tiana, dreams of owning her own restaurant. Rapunzel, although she spends most of her life locked in a tower, never stops dreaming of the outside world and uses the main male protagonist to help her reach

her dream. Merida appears not to be interested in men and marriage at all and instead of that focuses on saving her mother and solving a conflict with her.

## 2. The Evolution of the Disney Princesses

### 2.1 Snow White

In 1937 when “*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*” was released, the critics were skeptical about the audience being interested in an animated feature film. On the other hand, as Davis notes:

When, in, 1934, the Disney studio began work on what was to be its first animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Walt felt that his studio was ready, both financially and commercially, to undertake such a challenge, and that his animators were by now more than capable of meeting the technical and artistic demands such a project would involve (2006, 88).

Although previous short Disney films were successful among the viewers, it was not certain that the audience would appreciate or even be prepared to sit during a feature length film. Despite the uncertainty Disney took the risk and the company was rewarded by a huge financial success. Yet even after that, no one could predict that the movie would still be popular 70 years later.

Despite the presence of female characters in the short films, *Snow White* was the first real female heroine in the Disney production. Some critiques even claim that if a female heroine was present in a film, she represented evil. *Snow White* can be, on the other hand, seen as the complete opposite. She is the good innocent girl from the beginning. Together with *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, she represents the “first princess wave”. Kay Stone in “*Things Walt Disney Never Told Us*” points out that these three heroines are not only passive and pretty “but also unusually patient,



obedient, industrious and quiet. A woman who failed to be any of these could not become a heroine” (2009, 44).

Snow White’s family is represented only by the evil Queen who openly hates the princess. As the film begins, the audience learns that Snow White is an orphan child living in a castle with her step-mother. Without the lead in of the storyteller the audience could not tell that the pretty girl sweeping the stairs is a princess. Although she is a legitimate heiress of a throne she is forced to act like a servant. She accepts the role with no complaints and it seems that she is happy to have a home and an illusion of a family – at least there is no hint of a revolt presented. Amy Davis claims that “particularly in the cases of Snow White and Cinderella, what is left for the main character is a ‘maternal’ figure in the form of a step-mother who is openly against the young girl in her care; doing everything she can to oppress the girl and keep her from finding love” (2006, 103). Not only the evil queen forces the young girl to labour but even attempts to kill the princess. It is the huntsman who decides to save Snow White’s life, otherwise the queen would achieve in murdering her. On the second try she practically succeeds in her intention and it is the love of the prince that brings the princess back to life. The only kind of protest that Snow White expresses is the escape to the scary forest. It seems that it never crosses her mind to fight her stepmother.

It seems that the only dream of Snow White is to become the perfect wife by marrying the charming but otherwise featureless prince and to live happily ever after. There is no hint of any future plans, hobbies or special interests. We cannot tell what her talent or potential is. In fact, Snow White acts like a professional maid throughout the movie. Firstly, she cleans her stepmother’s castle with no complaints. Then, after she rushes through the scary forest to save her life, instead of sitting

down and waiting for the owners of the house that she found shelter in, she cleans, washes, scrubs and dusts until the cottage is neat and shiny. Seen from a feminist perspective, apart from singing and playing with the animals while she cleans the house, we cannot tell what she likes or dislikes. Although she never stops working, she seems quite passive in her behaviour to contemporary viewers.



Image 1: Snow White cleaning with the animals  
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2009. Bluray.

On the other hand, Snow White does the best she can, considering the circumstances. Taking care of the household seems “natural” to her and while doing so she really seems happy. She represents the ideal woman of the 30’s, the domestic goddess who rules the household. After seeing the untidy cottage she immediately assumes that it lacks a woman’s touch – that the children living there must have lost their mother. She teaches the animals to clean (Image 1) and later on she organizes even the dwarfs, for example, by forcing them to wash their hands before dinner. We can even say that she has a “motherly attitude” both to the animals and the dwarfs from the way she takes care and speaks to them. On finding that the woman in household is missing, she decides to step in her place. She obviously feels safe in the household and it can be even said that she has certain power and control there. It is

the outside world with all the evil forces that puts her in danger and so out of the household Snow White is quiet and submissive again.

Snow White's behaviour and agency does not resemble the typically brave and adventurous heroine we are used to nowadays. As critics observe, the princess acts more like a victim than a heroine throughout the film. Jack Zipes argues that it is the prince who frames the narrative. "He announces his great love at the beginning of the film, and Snow White cannot be fulfilled until he arrives to kiss her" (1995, 349). From the beginning of the movie it seems that he has been waiting for his moment to "steal the show". After he saves the princess, he takes all the credit as a champion. Although it was the dwarfs who killed the wicked queen, it is the prince who takes Snow White to his castle while the dwarfs are left behind. Future relationship of Snow White and Prince Charming is not indicated in any way in the film. Would the princess still be cleaning after the wedding? Was it really true love?

When Snow White sees the prince for the first time, she runs away to hide in the castle. A similar episode happens in the dark scary forest when the gamekeeper reveals to her that the wicked stepmother intends to kill her. She is horrified by the forest but seven strange men living alone in the same forest are not considered as a problem or danger to her. In fact, she seems relieved because she has somebody to care about and a house to clean. Referring to this part of story, Zipes argues that "The house for the Grimms and Disney was the place where good girls remained" (1995, 348). Snow White is with no doubt a good girl in the sense of being a good housewife.

There is a questioning lurking in the background, whether the princess is really the main character of the film as it is the prince who both introduces the story and provides the happy ending. Also the main part of the story is in a way saved by the

activity of the dwarfs. The narrative immediately gets more cheerful, active and lively after their arrival on the screen. Although it is the princess who is officially the hero of the film, the men in the fairy-tale keep the story going and provide both action and humour.



Image 2: The Prince saving Snow White  
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2009. Bluray.

Snow White dreams about romance and it seems it is just enough to marry the man of her dreams. She is saved by the prince and all she has to do is to wait patiently and hope that he will take care of the rest (Image 2). She directly expresses that in her famous anti-feminist song “Some Day My Prince Will Come”. It was probably love at first sight because the prince is willing to look for this beautiful girl for a long time. This romantic idea is strengthened by the fact that the prince actually does not know that Snow White is a princess. When he meets her for the first time, she seems to be just a servant in the castle. She wears rugged clothes, washes the stairs and sings while she works. The prince is actually one of the reasons why Snow White is forced to leave the castle. As Zipes claims: “The queen is not only jealous that Snow White is more beautiful than she is, but she also sees the prince singing to

Snow White and she is envious because her stepdaughter has such a handsome suitor” (1995, 36).

Beauty is probably the most significant feature of this princess. The evil step-mother is obsessed with the idea of being the most beautiful woman in the kingdom and asks the magical mirror every day: “Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?” As long as the mirror answers that she is the fairest one, Snow White is safe. The step-mother even dresses the princess into rags so that her beauty is hidden. Apparently the clothes do not work because it is the beauty of Snow White that attracts the prince riding his horse around the castle. The princess never looks dirty. Moreover, most of the time her hair is perfect – the only moment there is a change in her hairstyle is when she falls to water during the scary episode in the forest. Seconds after that Snow White looks neat, clean and elegant.

As most of the Disney Princesses, Snow White sings repeatedly throughout the movie. It seems that the songs help her overcome difficult moments and get the household duties done. Most of her ideas and feelings are actually expressed in songs. However, singing never slows her down from work. While sweeping the stairs at the beginning of the film, she sings “I’m Wishing”, telling the pigeons about her desire to find somebody who would love her. When she is lost in the forest, she asks the birds what they do when things go wrong and surprisingly they sing: “With a Smile and a Song”. After this she believes that she is no longer in danger and the animals lead her to the cottage of the dwarfs. Snow White really seems happier in the dwarves’ house and while cleaning there she performs another song: “Whistle While You Work”. Songs not only help her do the house-chores but also accompany more important matters such as overcoming fear and finding love.

The representation of the Disney princesses included in the “first wave” is problematic from the present day perspective. As feminist critiques such as Kay Stone claim, the heroines are judged only by their appearance and inherent sweet nature. It is the heroes who “...overcome obstacles, even if these obstacles are defects in their own characters” (2009, 45). As the heroines are already perfect, there is no space for personal development or defects. This brings them closer to mythological figures, especially to an antique goddess, than to nowadays audience. I do not think that it was Walt Disney’s intention to oppress women by creating passive heroines but the princesses reflect the values and stereotypes of their time. After the loud criticism especially from the feminist writers in the 70’s, the Disney Productions altered the way in which the heroines were presented.

## 2.2 Belle

In 1991 the Disney Productions took inspiration in a French story from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The tale “*Beauty and the Beast*” was originally written by two artists – firstly by Gabrielle Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and 16 years later by Marie de Beaumont, whose version of the story is shorter, more popular and often considered superior. Both the story and the characters attracted the contemporary audience and provided success of the film, which was confirmed in 1992 by six nominations at the 64<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards.

After the criticism of the representation of women in the Disney films in the 70’s and 80’s and the rise of feminism, the portrayal of heroines changed. The strong active characters were no longer identified with evil witches; instead, the second wave of the Disney Princess Franchise is characterized by the active and relatively strong heroines representing good. In the years of Micheal Eisner’s leadership of the company, “The images of the happy home-maker and the contended wife did not

disappear, but neither did they remain the only acceptable alternative to be shown to be available to ‘respectable’ women” (Davis 2006, 169). It was no longer necessary for women to be defined by her family status. Getting married did not mean giving up career and interests – the relationships within the family became more equal in the sense of the wife trying to “have it all” from getting married, having children and taking care of the household to going to work and keeping the career.

In this period Disney presents an active, intelligent and outspoken heroine who struggles with the surrounding society that is not able to accept her true-self. As Amy M. David claims: “Unlike the earlier films, in which the heroines’ honor was depicted and proven simply through her goodness and acquiescence, the heroines of Disney’s animated films of this period show their integrity through their actions, rather than through their inaction” (2006, 171).

Similarly as “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”, the story begins with an introduction. The narrator explains the curse of the Prince/Beast and clearly highlights the importance of his finding and learning to love. If the curse is not broken by his twenty first birthday, not only he will stay a beast forever, but all servants in the castle cannot turn human as well. After this lead in, the real hero of the story, Belle, comes on the screen.

Belle is a young girl living with her father in a small French town. Amy M. Davis refers to her as a ‘good daughter’ “who, out of loyalty to her good but naive father, finds herself in a potentially threatening situation and must use all her personal resources to survive, an exercise which usually ends in personal triumph for the heroine” (2006, 190). Neither Belle nor her father Maurice fit in the town they live in, the father for his odd inventions and Belle for being different than the rest of the girls in town. It can be said that they only have each other – they understand and

support each other although it is the daughter whose actions are successful. When the father does not come back from a business trip, Belle does not hesitate and goes to save him. She agrees to be imprisoned by the Beast for the rest of her life for exchange of her father's freedom. She revolts against him to save his life. Later on, even-though she is eventually happy in the castle with the Beast, she wishes to see her father and again saves him when she discovers that he becomes sick. The father, on the other hand, despite his good intentions causes more damage than good.

Belle's interests make her different from the rest of the town she lives in. As Susan Jeffords writes in her article "The Curse of Masculinity: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*":

She is, as the audience's introduction to her reveals, an exception in her town. In fact, in one of the longest production numbers of the film – requiring a cast of voices, elaborate animation, and complex movement – the townspeople call her 'strange' and not 'normal', principally because she spends all of her time reading. While the earlier Beautys were also avid readers, the Disney film marks Belle's interest as more of a social than a character feature, using it to distinguish Belle from the rest of the townspeople, marking her as better and less provincial than they (1995, 170).

Earlier Disney films indicated that it is not 'normal' for a woman to read. She was expected to take care of the household, to dream about having a perfect husband and family. Belle, however, dreams about adventure and having somebody who would understand her. Although she realizes that she is not like the others, she does not settle for the traditional model typical for the previous Disney princesses.

Belle's behaviour and actions differ from the 'first wave princesses'. Compared to them she is active, adventurous and smart but she still keeps the typical



features of all the princesses – she is generous, loving and kind. Being practical and outspoken brings her closer to the contemporary audience. The script-writer of the film, Linda Woolverton said: “Belle is a feminist. I'm not critical of Snow White, Cinderella . . . they reflected the values of their time. But it just wasn't in me to write a throwback. I wanted a woman of the '90s, someone who wanted to do something other than wait for her prince to come” (Dutka, N.p. 1992).

In contrast to the previous princesses, Belle is not looking for her prince charming. She refuses a marriage proposal from Gaston, although marrying a rich man would be beneficial both for her and for her father. Jeffords even claims that “Belle is, for all intents and purposes, a Disney Feminist” (1995, 170). She refuses the ideal macho hero and chooses to be imprisoned by the Beast rather than going down the aisle with the man which all village girls dream of. “Can you imagine? He asked me to marry him! Me, the wife of that boorish, brainless...” she sings (*Beauty and the Beast*). She does not want to be “his little wife” who cooks and cleans while her husband is enjoying himself outdoors hunting. However, she never expresses that she would be disgusted with the household chores. She wears an apron, goes shopping and probably takes care of the house while her father pays attention to his inventions.

Although Belle expresses what she wants, or in case of Gaston what she does not want, she still remains kind and unselfish. Davis even claims that: “...the woman who is selfless, giving, and uses her wisdom only to support others is the good woman deserving a reward, rather than showing that it is okay for woman to think first of themselves and secondly of others, at least sometimes” (2006, 194). The men in the film usually think of themselves first – be it her father and his inventions, Gaston and his need to marry a beautiful girl or the Beast trying to be human again.

Although the Beast eventually learns to act selfless, it is not enough to break the curse. It is Belle who realizes that she loves him despite his looks and brings the prince back to his humanity. It is her selfless behaviour and her kindness that eventually provide her with what she has been dreaming about.

Belle dreams about love and romance. Her most favourite book is about a princess meeting her prince charming. Despite that, her idea of finding love goes deeper than for example in Snow White's case. She dreams about someone who would understand her and with whom she could act herself. She eventually finds the love of her life but it is really not a love at first sight. As she sings in one of the songs: "...true that he (the Beast) is no prince charming but there is something in him that I simply didn't see." (*Beauty and the Beast*).



Image 3: Belle arguing with the Beast  
*Beauty and the Beast*. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2010. Bluray.

The Beast, as well as Gaston, at first tries to impose his will on her, for example, by forcing her to come to dinner. He soon finds out that this girl does not obey. Although she is scared of him, she tries to remain calm and maintain dignity. She treats him as equal and, more importantly, she treats him as human. It is her

strength of character that stands against the scary monster and even argues with him (Image 3).

Unlike Gaston, the Beast is willing to change and more importantly, he is willing to learn. Belle teaches him how to act human again – from eating dinner, over reading to dancing and playing with birds. As Belle actually lives with her future husband, it is easier to imagine how her life would be after the wedding. She still needs the strong man to protect her but the relationship is more equal.

While the most important feature of Snow White’s character was her beauty, it is not so in Belle’s case. Although she is said to be the most beautiful girl in town, she herself does not consider it important. In fact, her looks cause her unpleasant situations as the men in town are attracted to her despite her interest. Gaston wants to marry her because, as he says, “No one else in town but she is as beautiful as me.” (*Beauty and the Beast*) All he sees is a pretty face and he does not care about the actual personality of this girl.



Image 4: Belle shopping in her hometown  
*Beauty and the Beast*. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2010. Bluray.

According to James Randal Garcia, Belle differs not only in her beauty but also in the colour of her clothes: “Through the choice of colours, the town represents grounded people who go out of their way to be like everyone else in their village. Their choice of colours makes them bland and unoriginal” (2008, 60). While the rest of the town is dressed in beige, brown and grey, Belle wears bright blue dress with bright white sleeves, which distinguishes her from the other girls and also probably symbolizes her freedom (Image 4). Compared to Snow White’s always perfect hairstyle, Belle’s hair looks more natural adapting to the surrounding conditions. It blows in the wind and becomes messy in the rain; we can see her wearing a pony tail in her town while for the dancing scene she wears more complex fancy hairstyle.

As well as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Beauty and the Beast* is a musical fairy-tale. Belle also expresses her ideas via songs but these ideas differ from Snow White. The first song in the film called “Belle” basically summarizes Belle’s opinion about her hometown and her character. She refers to the town as “little” and “quiet” where every day is the same. The citizens of the town, who also take part in the song, confirm the idea that Belle does not fit in, not only because of her beauty but also because she is “strange” and different than them. Belle assures the audience that she does not want to take part in the “planned” life in the town: “I want adventure in the great wide somewhere; I want it more than I can tell.” The songs illustrate her development throughout the movie. While the previous princesses were not allowed any defects in her character, Belle in one of the songs admits that she was wrong – that there is something about the Beast that she simply did not see before because she was scared of him.

From the psychological point of view, the story of *Beauty and the Beast* is usually analyzed as the process of maturation of a child that leaves its parent and

starts to concentrate on the lover, which might seem scary at first sight. As Zipes claims in his *The Dark Side of Beauty and the Beast*: “Beauty matures. She accepts the sexual reality of the beast with lucidity. Thereby she gets rid of her taboos and infantile fears” (1981, 120). Although this description was not directly meant for the Disney version of the story, Belle as the Beauty really becomes an adult throughout the film. She grows from a peculiar dreaming child into a mature woman who fights for her loved ones.

### 2.3 Tiana

In 2009 the Walt Disney Productions decided to transform another classic fairy-tale by Grimm Brothers – *The Frog Prince*. The basic plot of the tale about a frog searching for a princess to kiss it in order to break the spell and turn him into human remained but the hero of the story changed. The title, *The Princess and the Frog*, clearly states that the princess is the main character in this story. The critiques had been pointing out the missing part in the Disney Princess Franchise – the African American heroine. Although there had been princesses of other ethnicities, for example Mulan or Pocahontas, the dark skinned heroine had not been presented before. By this film the company attempted to answer its critiques using the classical vintage look of the previous princess films and creating a ‘modern day princess’.

The creation of the first African-American Disney princess correlates with the election of the first African-American president of the United States. Some writers even compare princess Tiana to the president’s wife, Michelle Obama, or the Obama daughters Malia and Sasha. As Neal A. Lester says that “some likened First Lady Michelle Obama, especially as she entered the various celebratory galas on January 2009 inauguration night, to the political and historic embodiment of the first African-American princess” (2010, 298). Although the Obama family is not officially royal,

it is understandable that in the eyes of the little girls the First Lady or her daughters wearing beautiful dresses are princesses. Together with the Disney princess Tiana, they can be the role models that had been expected by the African-American community for a long time.

Tiana can be classified as the ‘third wave princess’ both due to the time the film was presented and her active behaviour. She is the hero of the story as she directly follows her dream and overcomes the obstacles on the way. She is the first Disney princess who is not interested in princesshood at all – the reason to kiss a frog and turn him into a prince is getting her own restaurant. As Jenna Stephens claims: “While the majority of Disney princess fables begin with a female lead who is either already a princess or wanting to be a princess (...), Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* is not a princess nor does she possess that desire” (2014, 95).

Tiana is the first princess with an intact family. While the previous princesses were either orphan or had only one parent, Tiana grows up with loving parents and seems to have a healthy relationship with both of them. According to Lester: “Tiana is her parents’ hope for familial and racial uplift as evidenced by her dreams of entrepreneurship and of economic independence” (2010, 302). The mother is a seamstress and the father works as a labourer. They both work hard and pass the habits to their daughter. Tiana is especially influenced by her father who teaches her how to cook and who she plans owning the restaurant with. After the father dies in the “war to end all wars”, Tiana focuses on their dream even more tightly.

The mother-figure in the previous princess films was usually missing; as Sarita McCoy Gregory points out: “Usually Disney princess movies do not include a mother, so having Eudora as a presence and a voice of encouragement for Tiana is unique” (2010, 445). However, the mother does not interfere with Tiana’s everyday

life. Although they have a good relationship, Eudora is not a part of her daughter's work or adventures. She supports her daughter's dream although she seems rather worried about Tiana's future. She even says that she wants to have some grandchildren and that maybe there are more important things in live than chasing the dream, but all that Tiana cares about at that moment is her restaurant.

She is different from the rest of the people around her. Apart from her best friend Charlotte, she does not dream about marrying a prince. While Charlotte would kiss "a hundred frogs" to get her prince charming, Tiana seems rather disgusted by that idea ( Image 5). Her only dream is to own a restaurant, 'Tiana's Place', where all the people from New Orleans could meet and she works very hard to have enough money for it. While Charlotte, a girl from a rich white family gets what she wants and all she has to do is "wish upon a star", Tiana's is taught that pursuing a dream means hard work on the first place. "Black girls and white girls might wish on the same star, but they come to expect different outcomes" (Gregory 2010, 445).



Image 5: Tiana dressed like a princess meets Prince Naveen for the first time  
The Princess and the Frog. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2009. Bluray.

Tiana's dream of economical independence makes her different even from her young African-American friends. When they invite her to dance she refuses and

takes an extra shift to get the money for her restaurant. “All you ever do is work.” they complain but Tiana does not get distracted by either their, nor her boss’s comments about the impossibility of her dream.

The behaviour of the heroine assures the audience that she really is the main character of the story. There is nobody to save her and she obviously does not expect that. In fact, it is the princess who saves the prince. Firstly she agrees to kiss him in exchange for the money for her restaurant. Later on, when the kiss turns her into a frog, she focuses on finding a way to turn both her and prince Naveen back human. As Stephens mentions: “The characterization of Tiana departs from the archetype of the stereotypically submissive female in Disney films” (2014, 97). Although she (in a way similar to Belle) helps the prince to develop his character and become a better person, Tiana does not need the man to protect her. She follows her own life plan while prince Naveen seems to be only lucky to be part of her journey to turn back human.

This drastically differs from the days of Cinderella, who does everything she is told without complaint and ‘falls in love’ with a prince after one dance. Characterizing Tiana as an independent and confident woman with her own agenda is one way Disney has drastically changed the princess archetype from the weak female characteristics it once held (Stephens 2010, 97).

Tiana is the first princess that is not interested in romance and does not dream about her prince charming. In fact she is more interested in her restaurant than in getting married. As she sings: “That’s just gonna have to wait a while, Ain’t got time for messing around, And it’s not my style” (Princess and the Frog, 2009). She does not fall in love at first sight – especially because the prince is turned into a frog, the animal that she detests. Furthermore, she does not like Prince Naveen at first as he



acts like a spoiled lazy child. Stephen says that “love ends up finding her, thus giving the audience the happy ending it is always seeking, it is not the drive force within her” (2014, 97). In contrast to the previous princesses, Tiana does not fall in love with a man she barely knows. She develops feelings for him after she sees his character develop and discover what he is really like.

Beauty as such is not important to Tiana but her look still plays important role in the story although it is not directly mentioned. The story is set in New Orleans in 1920’s, in the time of racial segregation and being African-American brings obstacles in Tiana’s life. Stephen claims: “The fact that Tiana is of African-American descent and is portrayed as a hero demonstrates the progression of the characterization of the Disney princess” (2014, 99). The preceding princesses had been either white or had lighter skin than it is typical for their ethnicity.

Although Tiana brings a new ethnicity into the Disney Princess Franchise, she keeps the features typical for a Disney Princess. “Defining Tiana as a first also means that Disney costumes her in what is already familiar to Disney audiences” (Lester 2010, 298). She keeps the young appearance, wide eyes, she is thin and her hair is straightened. It can be said that she represents a compromise between ethnical and white skinned princess. Lester explains why the first African-American princess has straight hair: “For both Michelle Obama and Tiana, having straightened or processed hair as an African-American female is certainly more acceptable both to persons of colour and to white in mainstream America where straight hair is still part of an American female ideal of beauty” (2010, 298).

While some of the critics are satisfied with having African-American representative, others complain that we cannot tell what the colour of the princess’ skin is as she spends 75 percent of the film as a frog. Ajay Gehlawat connects the

transformation of a character into an animal in fairy-tales with a character flaw of the person – for example Prince Adam in *Beauty and the Beast* is turned into the beast-man, i.e. bestial. “To make first African-American princess a frog, then seems to literally conflate her with animality but also, as Tiana, her dreams of success with a lack of intelligence and reason, a black girl who must hop around like a frog in the way early twentieth century black actors had to don blackface and hop around like dogs” (Gehlawat 2010, 418).

On the other hand being turned into a frog is partly beneficial for Tiana as she finds the love of her life (Image 6). She would probably never officially meet prince Naveen as a black working girl and even if she did, there is a high chance that she would be focused on work and never fell in love with him. “By transforming the couple into frogs and shifting the story back (from the city) to the bayou, Disney creates a ‘safe space’ in which the couple can develop their amorous relationship” (Gehlawat 2010, 425). Gehlawat adds that Tiana as a frog can express her individuality and draw Naveen’s attention in a way that would not be possible in segregated New Orleans.



Image 6: Princess Tiana and Prince Naveen at their bayou wedding  
The Princess and the Frog. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2009. Bluray.

Similarly as the preceding Disney princess films, *The Princess and the Frog* is a musical fairy tale. Although Tiana repeatedly sings throughout the film, none of her songs have a romantic theme as it used to be in the earlier princess films. Most of the time she sings about how hard work will help her achieve her dream and it seems she encourages herself in continuing. As she sings in her song “Almost there”:

I remember Daddy told me fairy-tales do come true. You gotta make them happen, it all depends on you. So I work hard each and every day, thing for sure are going my way...

As Stephen comments on this part of the song: “The words that Tiana sings about the necessary hard work it will take for her to reach her dream stand out as a message to young viewers – one that doesn’t convey that love is the only thing that will make girls happy” (2014, 97). Apart from that, it teaches the young girls and boys that wishing upon a star is not enough to pursue what you wish for. Tiana expresses her independence and persistence in her songs.

*The Princess and the Frog* created a discussion even before its release. The Disney Company was careful about creating the first African-American princess and in order to avoid racial stereotyping, significant changes were made during the making process of filmmaking. “After early meetings with Oprah Winfrey and focus groups with African American viewers, Disney agreed to change the protagonist’s name from Maddy to Tiana and cast her as a waitress instead of a chambermaid for Ms. Charlotte” (Gregory 2010, 442). Although the company could not manage to answer all of its critiques about the film, it managed to create a decent heroine suitable for both black and white audience in the western world. Tiana as an elegant, independent and hardworking young woman is the modern princess the audience had been waiting for a long time.

## 2.3 Brave

The Disney/Pixar film *Brave* was released in 2012 and it has been the first Princess narrative produced by this cooperation since 2004 when Disney purchased Pixar. Princess Merida is the first Pixar princess and also at present the latest princess of the Disney Princess Franchise. *Brave*, unlike other Disney princess films, is not inspired by a well known fairy tale or historical event. It was written by Brenda Chapman who took inspiration of her relationship with her teenage daughter.

To match the other Disney princesses in the franchise, Disney radically changed Merida's look from 3D to 2D. "*Brave* was Disney Pixar collaboration, thus in terms of animation she physically resembled something different from previous princesses. (...) However, during Merida's transition into the princess line, Disney moulded Merida's image to resemble the other princess in the franchise, regressing her to glossy hair and slimmer waist" (Wilde 2014, 143). The audience that was satisfied with the original realistic proportions of the teenage princess protested. This resulted in petition signed over 100 000 of fans, who were insulted by the sexualisation of this independent girly heroine – she looks older and adult-like. It is a different princess than the one presented in the movie. This girl has wide Disney-like eyes, her hair is falling down in combed curls and she wears a dress that the "real" Merida would not want to put on. After the loud criticism from the audience, Merida was given her original Pixar look back.

Princess Merida is a representative of the third wave of the Disney Princesses. These princesses manage to break the stereotypes set by the preceding generations of the female heroines in Disney Princess Franchise. As Stephen claims: "in contrast to the first generation of Disney females, who all manage to get themselves captured or to stay in terrible situations, only to be rescued by and then marry princes they have

never met or have scarcely conversed with, the three princesses in *The princess and the Frog*, *Tangled* and *Brave* are another breed of woman” (2014, 104). Merida differs from all the previous princesses in one more important feature – she is the only princess that does not meet her prince charming throughout the film. Even empowered heroines from the third princess wave, Tiana and Rapunzel, eventually find the man of their life in contrast to Merida.

Merida is the first princess to have an intact family throughout the whole movie. The importance of a family and especially mother-daughter relationship is the main topic of the film. As Amy M. Davis claims, this is unusual for the Disney Princess movie: “Whether parents in a Disney film are alive or dead, they are powerless to protect their children. Granted, it is the parent’s lack of aid to the children that allows the child the opportunity to live out the adventure of his or her story” (2006, 104). Furthermore, while the stereotypical idea of the family puts the father into the leading position, in this case it is obvious that the mother is the stronger character. She not only raises her children and organizes the castle household, but also deals with the official correspondence of the castle and educates her children. While the father is more focused on hunting, playing with dogs and dealing with the diplomatic relationships with the other leader of the tribes, the mother worries about the future of her daughter.

Queen Elinor is the first mother who actively saves her children. Although she is turned into a bear (Image 7) and in some moments forgets her human essence, when her family is threatened by the legendary ancient bear Mor’du she fights to protect her children. Brenda Chapman says: “The overarching theme in *Brave* is a battle between mother and daughter, not between a princess and her prince” (*Huffington Post*, N.p., 2013). The mother, Queen Elinor, forces Merida to behave

like a proper princess, which her wild daughter does not fancy in any way. She hates needlework, playing musical instruments, studying geography, speaking in public – basically most of her duties. Although they spend much time together, they both complain that the other one does not really listen. They even practice what they want to tell to the other one but never find the courage or the right time to do that until Queen Ellinor is turned by a spell into a bear.



Image 7: Princess Merida teaching her mother how to fish as a bear  
Brave. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2012. Bluray.

Merida’s interests and her favorite activities do not suit the duties of a princess. She envies her younger brothers that they can “get away with anything,” meaning breaking the rules in the castle and enjoying their time the way they choose. “Merida does not partake in the ‘womanly’ domestic activities championed by patriarchy and often performed by past Disney princesses. Princesses like Snow White and Cinderella are often shown cleaning, cooking or sewing, but Merida enjoys physical activities such as horseback riding, rock climbing, and archery” (Morrison 2014, 12). Every time she has a moment when she does not have to act like a princess, she takes her horse and bow and rushes from the castle to the wild.

As Wilde claims: “while Queen Elinor’s actions are enforcing the traditional traits of a princess and therefore stereotypical view of women in society, Merida’s actions resemble a more post-feminist princess; further illustrating that femininity is no longer a core value for women today“ (2014, 143). Merida does not care whether her behavior is appropriate; she has her own opinions and ideas. Moreover, in a similar way to Belle in the *Beauty and the Beast*, she wishes for understanding.

Merida’s behavior assures the audience that the princess does not need a man to save her. As Stephen notes: “Considering Disney’s original princess archetype lacked the ability to perform even simplest tasks, such as not letting strangers into their cottage (*Snow White*), Merida is proof that female characters in the Disney films have drastically progressed” (2014, 102). The princess is the hero of her story in a different way than the previous Disney females. She actively tries to control her situation and is able to accept the responsibility for her actions. As Danielle Morrison claims: “*Brave’s* portrayal of a woman as the rescuer also goes directly against the stereotype that women are weak and require men’s help in order to survive and succeed” (2014, 17). While Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* was fighting the obstacles on her way to gain economical freedom, Merida fights literally – both with a sword and a bow.

Some of the critics describe Merida as embodied representation of the feminist values. For example Morrison says that “Viewing *Brave* from a feminist critical perspective reveals that it is not filled with instances of patriarchy, as past princess movies have been” (2014,7). Morrison furthermore compares Merida to another female fighter from the Disney Princess Franchise – Mulan: “Unlike Mulan, Merida, the princess in *Brave*, did not want to become less feminine and more masculine, she wanted to be respected as a feminine being and have the right to

choose whatever path she desired” (2014, 8). While Mulan was forced to hide her femininity, Merida does not pretend to be a man. She wants to change her fate but it does not mean she needs to act men-like – instead, she dreams to find her own way.



Image 8: Merida 'shooting for her own hand'  
Brave. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2012. Bluray.

Merida is the only Disney Princess whose story has no romantic part of the plot. As she clearly states, she is not interested in romance in any way. Although possible husbands are present in the movie, they only have a minor role in the story and function rather for comic purposes. Brenda Chapman said: “Merida was created ... to give young girls a better, stronger role model, a more attainable role model, something of substance, not just a pretty face that waits around for romance”. Merida’s parents think that she is old enough to get married and invite the allied chieftains with their first born sons to compete for the hand of the princess. As Wilde indicates: “Merida ... will rebel against anything she does not believe in, including to participate in an arranged marriage as a result of a competition” (2014, 141). She tries to tell her mother that she “is just not ready,” but the queen does not listen. The young “lady” is forced to wear a proper dress and hide her wild hair, which accurately illustrates how she feels about the forced duties. We can see that she is



torn between making her mother happy and being herself. To escape the conventions Merida decides to “shoot for her own hand” (Image 8) and beats all of the possible husbands in the archery competition.

Merida is from the first sight not a typical Disney princess. She differs not only in her behaviour but also in her appearance. Stephen notes: “She (Merida) is not even conventionally pretty, which is an attribute that was once required of a Disney princess” (2014, 103). Merida’s round freckled face does not resemble the elegant “airbrushed” princesses. Compared to other Disney Princesses she seems younger and less mature as her body proportions better suit a teenage girl than the standard of the thin-waist princess. Her wild curly ginger hair differs from the perfectly styled hairstyles from the previous fairy-tales. While Snow White’s hair rarely changes its form and Belle seems to take care of her hair, Merida’s curls freely blow in the wind in its messy un-brushed form.

Although Merida wears a dress, she chooses her clothing to be comfortable and suitable for her adventures such as climbing and horse riding. When her mother forces her to put on the proper elegant dress, she can barely move and complains on how tight the dress is. She clearly expresses her attitude about traditional clothing by tearing the dress at the archery competition. Merida’s favorite color seems to be blue considering the color of both the everyday and the proper dresses that appear in the film. As Wilde notes: “... in terms of gendered ideologies blue is resembled to be more masculine” (2014, 142).

Apart from the other Disney Princess films, *Brave* is not a musical fairy-tale. Except for a short song in Gaelic, Merida is the first princess that does not sing throughout the movie. Although she has a singing voice, she does not take part in the Disney tradition of the singing scenes performed by the previous female heroines.

There is no main song which would characterize her in the movie nor is she expressing her feelings through songs like the other Disney Princesses.

Merida as the first Disney/Pixar princess was highly expected by both the general audience and the critics. The unusual princess breaks the settled stereotypes of the Disney princess portrayal, which was already foreshadowed in the previous films of the third princess wave. It can be said that Merida is the bravest and most outspoken of these three princesses. According to Sarah Wilde: “Merida is a positive role model for children; she represents different attributes that have never occurred in previous princess films. She has a voice and she uses it to gain her freedom” (2014, 143). Merida is not the princess the audience would be used to throughout the almost 80 years of the Disney production. However, it is the princess that nowadays children can easily relate to as the main theme of the story, a parent-child conflict, is an everyday reality in most families around the world.

### **3. Conclusion**

Over the past almost 80 years the Disney Company has repeatedly received harsh criticism. Most of the critiques focus on the representation of women in the Disney fairy-tales. It is only fair to admit that the questioning of such aspects as gender roles, appearance or behavior of the heroines in the first Disney movies was more than reasonable. However, the Disney Production is one of a few Hollywood companies that actively try to develop an accurate image of the contemporary female heroine and that “create an important reflection of American society’s rapidly changing attitudes and beliefs about women, gender, and femininity” (Davis 2006, 222). Thus it is clear that the characters created in the 1930’s, 1990’s and 2012 display different values and attitudes. The demure and coy Snow White can be

viewed as passive to the contemporary audience. Belle, however, proves to be more active and shows that there are other options than being a housewife and that there is nothing wrong with being different. Tiana introduces the idea that there are other ways in woman's life to be happy than marriage. Finally, Merida once again reminds the importance of the family and breaks the romance and marriage stereotype in the Disney fairy-tales.

## 4. References

- “Brenda Chapman, ‘Brave’ Creator, Calls Merida’s Makeover ‘Atrocious.’”  
*Huffington Post*, N.p. Web. 16 May 2013.
- Byrne, Eleanor, and Martin McQuillan. *Deconstructing Disney*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Davis, Amy M. *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*. Eastleigh, U.K.: John Libbey Pub. ., 2006.
- Deborah J. O’Keefe, *Good Girl Messages* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2000), 12.
- Dutka, Elaine. MOVIES : Ms. Beauty and the Beast : Writer of Disney Hit Explains Her ‘Woman of the ‘90s’. *Los Angeles Times*. [online]. 19.1.1992 [cit. 2015-02-11]. Available at: [http://articles.latimes.com/1992-01-19/entertainment/ca-544\\_1\\_disney-film](http://articles.latimes.com/1992-01-19/entertainment/ca-544_1_disney-film)
- Garcia, J. (2014). *The princess evolution from Snow White to Rapunzel in Disney animation*. M.H. University of Colorado at Denver.
- Gehlawat, Ajay. "The Strange Case of The Princess and the Frog: Passing and the Elision of Race." *Journal Of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 2010): 417-431. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 29, 2015).
- Gregory, Sarita. "Disney's Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in The Princess and the Frog." *Journal Of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 2010): 432-449. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 29, 2015).
- Jeffords, Susan. "The Curse of Masculinity: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana UP 1995. 161-175.
- Lester, Neal A. "Disney's The Princess and the Frog: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First." *Journal Of American Culture* 33, no. 4 (December 2010): 294 -308. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 29, 2015).

- Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 210.
- Maltin, Leonard. *The Disney films*. New York: Crown, 1973.
- Morrison Danielle, "Brave: A Feminist Perspective on the Disney Princess Movie (Bachelor Thesis, California Polytechnic State University, 2014).
- Sheldon Cashdan, *The Witch Must Die* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 1.
- Stephens, Jena. "Disney's Darlings: An Analysis of The Princess and the Frog, Tangled, Brave and The Changing Characterization of the Princess Archetype." *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 95-107. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 29, 2015).
- Stone, Kay. "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us." *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 88, No. 347. (Women and Folklore Jan-March 1975): pp. 42-50.
- Wasko, Janet. *Understanding Disney: the manufacture of fantasy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity ;, 2001.
- Wilde, S. 2014. Advertising in Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern Day Fairy Tales, *Journal of Promotional Communications*, 2 (1): 132-153
- Wynns, Scarlet L. and Rosenfeld, Lawrence B.(2003) 'Father-daughter relationships in Disney's animated films', *Southern Communication Journal*, 68: 2, 91 — 106
- Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UR 1995.
- Zipes, Jack. "The Dark Side of Beauty and the Beast: The Origins of the Literary Fairy Tale for Children." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 1981, 119-25.