The Next
Disney Princess Movie

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Introduction

As Norman mentioned in his book, Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon," Animation as a form of historical memory has entered real space. After all, any space or film that uses manipulated, interactive imagery must be called a form of animation; and we are increasingly being submerged in life as if we were inside a video game, even while our political crises deepen, and our class differences widen……We slip in real and meaningful stories inside cartoons now." [1]

Since *Frozen* premiered at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood on November 19 2013 and went into general theatrical release on November 27, critics had declared the film, based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, a return to the glory days of the so-called Disney Renaissance that began with 1989's *The Little Mermaid* and continued through 1999 with such landmarks as *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. [2] The film was also a commercial success as it accumulated nearly $1.3 billion in worldwide box office revenue according to the data from Box Office Mojo. [3] By the end of 2015, the film has won more than 70 awards from all over the world, included two Oscars, one Golden Globes, two Grammy and so on. [4] It seems like it was the very first time in the Disney franchise history that two strong female characters (Princess Anna and Queen Elsa) occupied the leading roles in the movie. Following the adventures of Anna as she selflessly goes off in search of her sister, *Frozen* centers around the idea of family. Anna travels with 3 male companions but she does not depend on them and chooses in her last moment of life to protect her sister from Hans rather than kiss Kristoff and save herself. In the end, Anna's act of true love saves her rather than her love for a male lead, making her the enlightened hero that Disney had been progressing towards for nearly 80 years.

Comparing to the first several princess films such as *Snow White* or *Sleeping Beauty*, which portray the female lead characters as weak and dependent on the male figures, the princesses from *Frozen* have a much more independent personality and do not appear to fantasize about the prince charming. In this story, the prince is not just a supporting role but even a bad guy who wants to break the relationship between the sisters and get more power. Stephen Holden mentioned in the film review that, the characters "are significant departures from tradition in a film that shakes up the hyper-romantic "princess" formula that has stood Disney in good stead for decades and that has grown stale". [5]

1. Norman M. Klein, *Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon* (Verso,1993), p.253.
2. Susan Wloszczyna, *With Frozen, Director Jennifer Lee Breaks the Ice for Women Directors,* IndieWire (Nov, 2013), <http://www.indiewire.com/2013/11/with-frozen-director-jennifer-lee-breaks-the-ice-for-women-directors-207753/> (accessed 17 March 2017)
3. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=frozen2013.htm> (accessed 15 March 2017)
4. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/> (accessed 15 March 2017)
5. Stephen Holdennov. *From the Heat of Royal Passion, Poof! It's Permafrost Disney's 'Frozen,' a Makeover of 'The Snow Queen'*, NYT Critic's Pick (Nov, 2013), <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/movies/disneys-frozen-a-makeover-of-the-snow-queen.html> (accessed 17 March 2017)

The heated discussion about this film has attracted so many adults including me to get into the cinema and buy a ticket. As a 23-year-old woman, I hadn't watched a Disney Princess movie for a long time. When we were children, we enjoyed watching the movies with beautiful princesses and handsome princes falling in love, and often projecting these stories on our own lives. As a $178 billion [6] media and entertainment conglomerate which is renowned for its prowess as a fairy tale storyteller, Disney impacts many facets of society, including how the children would explore "morals and societal ideas of good and evil" and often ideas of femininity. [7] For the past 80 years, the younger generations from all over the world have taken social cues from their favorite animated movies, "locating themselves in a world that resonates with their desire and interests". [8] Over the past few decades, Disney has broken through the concept of the damsel in distress and transitioned to represent and even advance modern feminist ideals. From likable protagonists to prominent images and popular products, the movies influence the gender roles as the impressionable children tend to imitate their fiction heroes.

We can easily find out that Disney has shifted into a progressive period, "which is an opportunity to shatter the glass ceiling and push past traditional gender roles for women".[9] This means it is possible to see more characters with different gender identities in the next Disney Princess movie. However, if we do not just focus on Disney, we would find out that there have been already some animates that had some transgender elements, especially some of the popular Japanese cartoons.

The Japanese cartoons have started with the traditional princess-needs-prince pattern as well. Since the women artists had the opportunity to create their own stories, "the first wave of shōjo manga was heralded by the emergence of weekly magazine *Margaret* in 1963". [10] this kind of pattern started to be abandoned. There are two typical examples about how a girl gives up her feminine looking and tries to act like a boy (like *Mulan* from Disney): one is *The Rose of Versailles* by Riyoko Ikeda in 1972, and the other is *Revolutionary Girl Utena* by Chiho Saito in 1997. In 1991, Naoko Takeuchi created her famous shōjo manga *Sailor Moon*, which was adapted into an anime series in 1992. As a milestone of Japanese anime, it involved a lesbian couple into the story line and portrayed their interaction as normal as the other straight characters. Furthermore, the *Cardcaptor Sakura* by the manga group Clamp in 1996 has created an even more genderless world of love. Beside the lesbian and gay couples, there are several characters from the magical world who have even no gender.

In this essay, I will discuss Disney Princess movies in chronological order at the beginning of the first chapter. Through the analysis of the representative films and their characters in

6. <https://www.forbes.com/companies/walt-disney/> (accessed 17 Oct 2017)
7. Mitchell, C. and Reid-Walsh J, Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008) ; Tanner, R.L., Haddock, Image of Couples and Families in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films, The American Journal of Family Therapy, 31 (5), (2003): 355-373
8. Eleanor Byrne, Deconstructing Disney, (Pluto Press,1999), P.91.
9. Juliana Garabedian, Animating Gender Roles: How Disney is Redefining the Modern Princess, James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal.2.1 (2014): 25
10. Kathryn Hemmann, The Female Gaze in Contemporary Japanese Literature, Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations. 762 (2013): 134

several periods, the paper studies the development and application of the gender roles in Disney movies in the past few decades. Next, I will focus on the representation of Asian cultural circles – the Japanese girl animation, especially the gender roles in the theme of "magic girl". In the same way, I will analyze the magic girl anime in different periods by historical order under the influence of the Japanese social background, and then sum up the evolution of gender roles.

In the last chapter, I will boldly create a new Disney Princess movie based on all previous research. Just imagining in the future of stronger cultural integration and gender equality, a new generation of children that will get more advanced values and gender awareness education through the new Disney Princess movies. Finally, to draw a conclusion, I would finish this dissertation with the evaluation of the character I created against what I discovered in the previous chapter, and what I have learnt through the whole process.

Part 1

Disney Princess movie:
Gender elements in European and American cultural circles

Between 1937 and May 2014 Disney released 684 theatrical features, 11 of which are labeled as part of the Disney Princess line. [11] These images of the princess, through film and television productions, the off-line Disney surrounding commodities, theme parks, video games and so on, were consistently bombarding the minds of their young audience. In the paper "Children's Culture and Disney's Animated Films", Martin McQuillan believes that "these films do more than entertain." [12] Disney continuously exported their values through films, providing children with a model for understanding the world and shaping their own cognition. When looking at the history of Disney Princess movies, there is a trend in the roles that female characters play within the movies. To some extent, we can regard Disney's princesses as representations of a female image that caters to the social background. When analyzing Disney movies through a timeline, it is easy to see how these roles progressed through time.

Figure 1. The Disney Princesses line up until 2012 (Disney Studio 2012).

In her thesis published in the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* in 2014, Juliana Garabedian divided the eleven Disney animated films into three periods in chronological order：Pre-Transition, Transition, and Progression. She mentioned that "these three waves moved along side with the feminist movement". As she stated, in the

11. <http://princess.disney.co.uk/> (accessed 17 May 2017)
12. Eleanor Byrne, *Deconstructing Disney,* (Pluto Press,1999), P.85.

first three Princess movies in the Pre-Transition period named *Snow White* (1937), *Cinderalla* (1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), the three princesses represented the stereotype of women destined to be housewives. With the advent of the second wave of feminism, the princess of the new age no longer fettered by traditional values was born. In the period of Transition, we can see the princesses break the secular view and bravely pursue their own lives and dreams. When Disney entered the period of Progression，we can clearly see the weakening of the male characters in the story. *Brave* (2012) and *Frozen* (2013) both broke away from the traditional Disney prince & princess stories, and turned into in-depth exploration of the relationship between female characters.

Figure 2 & 3. The Disney Princesses from Pre-Transition always need to be save by the prince's kiss (Disney Studio, 1937 & 1959).

In 1937, Disney produced the first princess series *Snow White*，and the fairy tale unfolded. After the great success of Snow White, Disney introduced similar stories with *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* in 1950 and 1959. Walt Disney "cast a spell on the fairy tale narrative"[13] and transformed it to suit a "Westernised culture of wholesome family entertainment". [14] The three early Disney princess films "are examined through existing literature to illustrate Disney's ideals of gender", [15] which were unable to break away from the values typically portrayed in traditional fairy tales, as the princess characters had neither obvious character traits nor any independent spirit. In the stories, Stone (1980) argued that by utilizing a more romantic humanized tale it creats a heroine that "lacks in ambition and who is willing to sing or clean through her troubles, while awaiting her prince". [16] At the end of the story, through their union with the prince, the princesses got a happy life. "The girls have no other options, and their agency is limited by their gender." comments. The early three Disney Princess movies were produced after the first and two world wars, when women's liberation expanded during wartime, embracing male roles in the public sphere. [17] But they had to give the working opportunities to men who returned from the wars. Women's social status was not fundamentally changed. Through the low employment rate of American women in this period, it is not difficult to see the design of

13. Zipes J., Breaking the Disney Spell. In: Tatar, M., ed. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), p.332

14. Zipes J., Fairy Tale As Myth/myth As Fairy Tale. (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p.333

15. Sarah Wilde, Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern Day Fairy Tales, *Journal of Promotional Communications*, 2 (1), (2014): 135

16. Stone K., Fairy tales for adults: Walt Disney's Americanization of the Marchen. In: Stone, K., 2008. Ed. *Some Day Your Witch Will Come*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), p.32

17. Hollows J., *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

these roles reflecting Disney's compliance with what was expected of a predominantly male centered society.

Along with the rise of American feminism, the shift in type of princess Disney portrayed appeared in 1989 when Disney reinvented their princesses with the release of *The Little Mermaid*. Juliana Garabedian believes that the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s to the early 1970s reveals a new step towards progression in the definition of gender roles in the United States, [18] which directly impacted the Disney princess of the Transition period. The primary concerns of "documenting sexism in private as well as public life and delivering a criticism of gendered patterns of socialization" [19] during the second wave, were mostly evident in the period's first three films. Disney princess movies started to demonstrate stronger personal identities through their resistance to arranged marriage and traditional etiquette. They finally had the ability to stand up to protect their families and even save the princes who were previously defined as their "saviors". In *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Ariel ventured in the land world and pursued her love bravely, regardless of her father's demands. Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) was set up as a wise woman who loved reading. She replaced her father to stay in the beast's castle and eventually helped him crack the curse. Although at the end of the story, as the female characters' happiness still depended on them returning to their expected role of a docile princess or subservient wife, we can still see that "each princess is becoming more proactive, making their own choices within tales". [20]
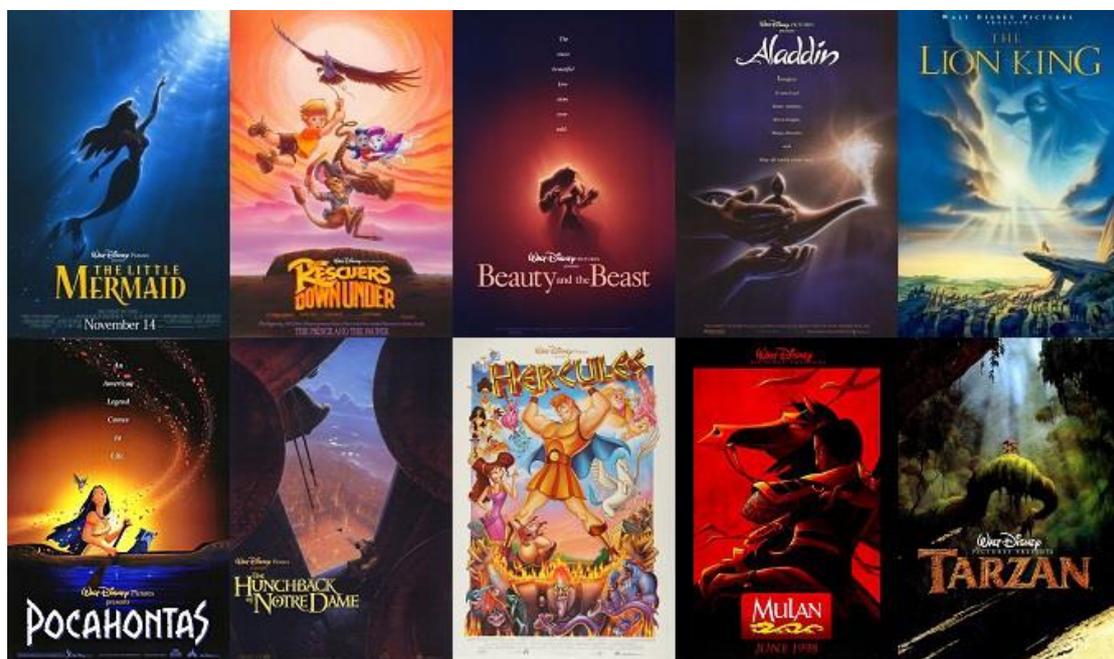
Figure 4. From a ten years period (1989-1999) Disney had unparalleled success. Box office records, critical acclaim, Academy Awards. This period was called the Disney Renaissance (Disney Studio).

18. Juliana Garabedian, p.23
19. Krolokke Charlotte, *Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Grrls*, Sage (June 2005), 11 < https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/6236_Chapter_1_Krolokke_2nd_Rev_Final_Pdf.pdf>
20. Do Rozario R. C., The Prince and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 27 (1), (2004): 34.

As post-feminism took ahold in the 1990a, Disney reviewed its narrative in the creation of Princesses from different races, who began to "disrupt patriarchy" [21] and rhetoric shifted from "any prince to the right prince", [22] and break the shackles of their original cultural background.

In *Aladdin* (1992), Princess Jasmine from Arabia, tired of her secluded life in the palace, sneaked into the streets, met a street boy named Aladdin and fell in love with him. *Pocahontas* (1995) describes a very assertive and rebellious Indian Princess Pocahontas who fell in love with a British adventurer and joined hands to guard the peace. She turned down her lover's request to go to England and decided to stay in the tribe because it was "the way she wanted to choose". A film adapted from an ancient Chinese legend, *Mulan*, was released in 1998. This time, the heroine who was not born in a royal family disguised as a man to join the army to prevent her old and sick father to be enlisted. Mulan performed better than her male companion and in the end, she led the army to defeat the invaders and saved the whole country. The love story in the story has been weakened and the movie focuses on the personal struggle and growth of the heroine. In 2009, Disney released *The Princess and the Frog* and creatively selected the scene of the fairy tale in New Orleans with the first African-American princess, who dreamed to have her own restaurant. Her role as a strong determined woman is a credit to Disney's interpretation of the modern woman, although her dream came true because she helped the prince break the curse and became a princess after marrying him.

A year later Disney launched the *Tangled* (2010) which is more like a story of a hero and a heroine striving to save each other, "a contemporary retelling of the Rapunzel story". [23] Princess Rapunzel could escape from the tower with the hero's help while the princess rescued the trapped hero. At the end of the story, the hero in order not to let the princess imprisoned forever, cut her long hair with magic and the princess finally saved the hero with her tears. The story of the princess escaping from the tower and the adventures of grand theft, though interesting, had at this point still not shaken off the tradition of fairy tales. The narrative embodies a more autonomous view of true love kiss and enforces the concept of "the right prince". [22]

The third wave of feminism began in the mid-90s. However, the impact of the campaign on Disney wasn't shown until 2012 when Pixar's *Brave* came out, indicating the arrival of the Progression period of Disney Princess movies. The story follows the tale of a passionate and headstrong princess, who is "determined to make her own path in life", she makes a defiant escape because of an arranged marriage. "Granted one wish, Merida must rely on her bravery and her archery skills to undo a beastly curse." [24] In the whole story, we can't see the outstanding performance of male role. Instead, the main story line follows the Princess learning to get along with her mother　and her search for the meaning of courage

21. Do Rozario R. C., (2004): 47.
22. Stover C., Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess. Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University, 2 (1), (2013): 4
23. Dawn C. Chmielewski, Claudia Eller, Disney Animation is closing the book on fairy tales, Los Angeles Times (Nov 2010), < http://articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/21/entertainment/la-et-1121-tangled-20101121> (accessed 19 May 2017)
24. < http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1217209/> (accessed 25 May 2017)

and self-worth. The focus in the frame is not on her physical attractiveness as a princess, but on the action and the setting around her. She moves away from being an "object" [25] with a patriarchal culture. The end of the story is not that the princess has found her own lover and married him, but that she has grown into a more mature woman and attained the freedom she desires.

Figure 5. Pixar's anti-princess princess movie, the first Disney Princess movie focused on the family relationship (Pixzar, 2012).

The novelty of the concept was well extended in Frozen. Disney directly designed "not one but two resourceful heroines", [26] Princess Anna and Queen Elsa. In the movie, the male roles were weakened   and the prince even became the biggest villain in the story. This opposes the traditional ideology of the princess who waits to be saved from danger. [27] Princess Anna performed at the final rescue without the involvement of a prince, but sacrificed herself to protect her sister Elsa. And Elsa's great effort to rescue Anna also confirmed that true love does not have to happen between a pair of opposite sex. "Someday your prince may come, but you can do great things without one."[28] We probably shouldn't take this part of the story as a cross gender element because it's too radical for an organisation like Disney who has been representing the mainstream culture for a long time. But we can see it as an opening to a wider range of possibilities, leading children to understand that true love transcend genders. It is worth mentioning that in this year's release of the live action movie *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), Lefou (played by Josh Gad) in the episode "Gaston" was homosexual, the first gay role in Disney films. [29] Although the episode was cut off in several countries, its emergence still reveals the possibility of a more diverse sexual portrayal in Disney movies for the years to come.

25. De Lauretis T, *Alice Doesn't: Fminism Semiotics Cinema*. (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p 37
26. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/dec/08/frozen-film-review-disney-animation> (accessed 15 Oct 2017)
27. Whelan B, Power to The Princess: Disney and the 20th Century Princess Narrative. Interdisciplinary Humanities, 29 (1), (2012), 21-34.
28. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/brave/review/> (accessed 15 Oct 2017)
29. < https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2017/03/20/beauty-and-the-beast-gay-moment-audience-reaction/99407168/> (accessed 19 June 2017)

Figure 6. The first time that two princesses played as the most important roles together in a Disney Princess movie (Disney Studio, 2013).

For decades, Disney has been dedicated to shaping the image of the princess in line with the mainstream values and demonstrates the overtly gendered ideologies of beauty that Disney still enforces onto its princesses and the children who grow up with their cultural products. The princesses are no longer an object or a "heroine of life who has no story", [30] they have their own agenda, dreams or quests that differ from the traditional princess, [31] they may stay true to their hearts and stay true to their families. The modern Disney princess are humorous, opinionated, and headstrong individuals who can stand alongside their male counterparts. We can easily see that, Disney encourages the children to realize their values and self-worth through their own efforts in a world of diversity and gender equality.

30. Tatar M, The Classic Fairy Tales, (London: W.W. Nortom & Company, 1999),293
31. Bell E, Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies, *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 107-125

Japanese teenage girl animation：

gender elements in Asian cultural circles

When we talk about animation that have greatly influenced children, we should discuss Japanese anime. Over the last few decades, they have become so popular across the globe. Not only children born and raised in Asia, but also children from all parts of the world have been influenced by Japanese animation. Japanese animation began in the early twentieth century, when Japanese filmmakers experimented with the animation techniques also pioneered in some western countries. [32] The first popular animated series was the animated version of Osamu Tezuka's Astro Boy in 1963, this series would create the first successful model for animation production in Japan and would also be the first Japanese animation dubbed into English for an American audience. Osamu Tezuka, known as the father of Japanese comics, produced a great deal of comic work in his life. In addition to the high-quality works with wide appeal, he has also created many new genres of Japanese manga. In late 1952, Osamu Tezuka was invited to create a work aimed toward girls by an editor from a shōjo manga magazine. [33] The manga aimed at a teenage female readership which was defined as Shōjo manga (The name romanizes the Japanese 少女 (shōjo), literally "young woman"). Osamu Tezuka's first idea was to transpose the all-female musical theater group Takarazuka Revue into manga. Takarazuka's "aesthetic is on full display in Princess Knight", [34] argued Natsu Onoda Power, in her book God of Comics.

Figure 7. The manga was originally serialized in Kodansha's *Shōjo Club* from 1953 to 1956.

Prince Knight, produced by Mushi production and adapted by Osamu Tezuka's original manga, was broadcasted from April 1967 to April 1968. The story is about a little angel who

32. Schodt Frederik L, *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International, 1997)

33. Roberson James E.; Suzuki, Nobue. *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Dox,* Routledge, (2005), 72.

34. Drazen, Patrick, Anime Explosion! - *The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation*. (Stone Bridge Press, 2002), p. 90–92

playfully puts the man's heart into the soul of a girl. This girl is the Princess Sapphire of the silver country. To punish the angel, God exiled him to the secular world and requested him to take back the heart from Sapphire. At the same time, the silver country set the rule that women could not succeed to the throne, while the court minister Duke Duralumin attempted to capture the throne. The sapphire then had to disguise as a prince. When she grew up, the sapphire had to fight with Duke Duralumin and struggled with the neighboring prince Franz's unrequited love. From this earliest Japanese shōjo anime, we can see that even if the base was on the most traditional prince and princess template, the author still tried to put feminist positionings on it. Ed Sizemore of Manga Worth Reading says Tezuka's central idea critiques "the false dichotomy that society creates among male and female." As the princess "is acting as the people around her perceive her." [35] Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives's Toni Johnson-Woods summed up it as: "With its visualization of masculinity and femininity within one body it was able to depict conflicting selves within one sexed body under pressure for social conformity, hence literally emboding the quest for identity and subjective agency". [36] However, Drazen and Mautner stressed that the manga had broken with some gender expectations but did not abandon them, as Sapphire marries Franz in the end. Beside the discussion about gender ambiguity and androgyny, Mautner wrote that "if there's a central theme in Princess Knight, however, it's not that of sex roles but of parental expectations and filial duty", which was "another classically Japanese pair of opposites: duty and desire." [37] Overall, the broadcast of *Princess Knight* has caused a sensation and gained a huge success. With Osamu Tezuka's postwar revolution of Japanese anime, introducing intense drama and serious themes to children's manga, spread quickly to shōjo manga in the coming future.

From the 1960s to the 1970s, the oldest Japanese animation studio Toei launched an animation series works with the magic teenage girl as the hero. The series was very popular and had a profound impact on the subsequent similar themes of the animated works, which gradually developed into a subgenre of Japanese fantasy anime and manga. These embodied the first media-crossing outburst of shōjo manga for young women written by young women, through which girls pursued the new "self" within personal reflection on sexuality [38] in order to create "'my culture' that is timeless and deprived of historicity, dissociated from external restrictive frames such as nation and tradition". [39] The basic element of the magic girl anime is that the female characters uses unknown magical powers. According to the source, the power is roughly divided into the "inherent" and the "given". Depending on the circumstances, the power will also be upgraded. The age of magic girls is mostly between 10 and 14, that is, a period of secondary sexual characteristics. The magic girl's transfiguration is the symbol of a girl's maturity, which reflects the girl's vision of being a grown-up. Magic girls through transfiguration realize the

35. Sizemore, Ed, Princess Knight Book 1 — Recommended, *Manga Worth Reading*, Comics Worth Reading, (November 3, 2011).
36. Johnson-Woods, Toni, *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, (USA: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), p.139
37. Patrick Drazen, *Anime Explosion! - The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation*, (California: Stone Bridge Press, 2002)
38. Shinji Miyadai, The Deconstruction of subculture myths: shōjo, music, manga, thirty years of sexuality, and the present of communication culture, (Tokyo: Parco shuppan, 1993), p.38-40
39. Masuko Honda, Children's Society in Transformation: Light and Shadow of Child Power, (Tokyo: Chuokoronshinsha, 2004), p.168

change into an adult body. These works are often emphasized by the identity conflict before and after the transfiguration and the difficulty of dual life (such as confidentiality and time distribution). Magic girls are usually innocent and the most commonly used props are magic sticks or crystal products, which are the only medium bringing power. The real key to power lies in the heroine's own goodness, determination and "love".

Figure 8. We can see how the magic girls are getting mature (Toei Animation, 1981).

In an essay on magical anime and gender identity in Japan, through the analysis of magic girl animation through time, Kumiko Saito pointed out: "The magic girl, a popular genre of girls' television animation program in Japan, has closely reflected shifting ideas of gender roles in society". Due to the inherent physiological differences and unequal treatment in social life for a long time, it is difficult for Japanese women to gain the power to compete with men through normal life. So, in the magic girl animation, we can see that when the girls use their magical powers they accidently defeat the enemy. The age setting as shōjo "allows a girl to enjoy temporal freedom from future obligations as a woman". [40]

From 1983 to 1984, the cartoon Creamy Mami that appeared on Nippon Television told the story of an ordinary 10-year-old girl named Yū Morisawa who helps Pino Pino to find the Feather Star. Thanks for her assistance, he grants her a magical wand, which allows her to transform into a 16-year-old girl for one year. Through the use of magic, the heroine accidentally became the idol star Mami and received love from Toshio with whom she fell in love secretly. The series concludes when Yu loses her magical powers, which happens at the same time as Toshio realized that Yu was his real love and not the idol Mami. This classic story that was very popular and heavily imitated delivered more meaningful messages to the public than the magic girls' animation of the previous period: magic is not a panacea, rather it could become an obstacle for the appreciation of the truly magical period called shojo. The refusal to magic or female maturity, including romance and

40. Kumiko Saito, Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 73, Issue 1, (February 2014): 161-162

sexuality indicated that with the rapid development of the visual techniques of transformation，magic girls gradually changed to provide more visual enjoyment to the viewers by being cute and lovable. This cute trend, which Kinsella describes as "a kind of rebellion or refusal to cooperate with established social values and realities".[41] During this period, female animation began to attract a huge number of male viewers. This new emerging fandom culture "deconstructed the gender = genre formula of children's media".[42]

Figure 9. *Creamy Mami, the Magic Angel* (Studio Pierrot, 1983).

Towards the late 1980s, Japan got into a post-war bubble economy period, the social environment worsened and marriage rates and birth rates continued to decline. Women were increasingly choosing to enter the workforce after graduation rather than becoming a housewife. This directly led to the increase in women's rejection of marriage and childbearing. [43] In the unstable social and economic climate of post-bubble Japan, "the iconic figure of a vulnerable young girl, either fighting back of internalizing various dark psychological problems, may have had particular cultural resonance." [44] In parallel, based on this social background, 1990s magic girls emerged and explored genre-crossing and self-parodies, often featuring gender bending or same-gender romance. In *Sailor Moon* (1992), the most representative animation of this period and popular worldwide, there are quite a few battle action and important characters who were homosexual. Following the success of *Sailor Moon*, lesbian and gay romantic interests are openly addressed in CLAMP's *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1998-2000). The protagonist Sakura was born and grew in a motherless family. In their daily life all the housework is shared amongst herself, her father, and her brother. This is very different from the relatively fixed gender roles in the family of most female cartoons. The main story follows Sakura trying to complete her Tarot collection. There are a few genre-crossing interactions amongst the main roles and there are also some roles who are like human appearance but without gender. The central theme

41. Kinsella Sharon, "Cuties in Japan." In *Women, Media, and Consumption in Japan*, eds. Skov Lisa and Moeran Brian, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), p.243
42. Kumiko Saito, p.152
43. < http://www.ipss.go.jp/index-e.asp> (accessed 10 June 2017)
44. Napier Jolliffe, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.297

of Cardcaptor Sakura is love and human relationships. Throughout the series, many forms of love are displayed, including "sibling love, childhood crushes, unrequited love, [and] true love." Kumiko Saito comment: "with these genre-crossing diversifications and gender confusion tendencies, the magical girl from this period is far less a genre than a code that binds certain ideological values and advantages attributed to the shōjo identity in contemporary Japan." [45]

Figure 10. The lesbian couple Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune from *Sailor Moon* (Naoko Takeuchi, 1992)

Like the tendency of the Disney Princess towards realizing value, self-exploration and growth, the magic girl is gradually getting rid of the traditional framework. Produced by the Japanese animation company SHAF, *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* was shown on the MBS TV from January 2011. By its "daring approach to a dated genre" [46] and special effects of exquisite pictures, it shows the new possibilities brought by this new type of animation. The stage is a fictional city of futuristic style. From the perspective of a student Madoka, the story tells a brutal tragedy starting with trade between the girls and the devil. In this animation, almost without any male roles, the sweet-looking alien creature Kewpie is the character with whom the girls have the most interaction. With the promise of realizing their dreams, it lures the girls to surrender their souls to become a magical girl and fight with the Witch. In fact, it collects the powerful force released from the girls in the process of transitioning from hope to desperation. Hidden behind the lovely and beautiful style lies a cruel cycle of young girls been consumed by the magical force, losing their original souls and turning into witches. Kewpie told Madoka directly that many glorious women in history had been magical girls. In the patriarchal society, they were regarded as a disposable tool, and eventually turned into despair and became witches. As more and more of the main characters in the story die（they each represent the type of characters in previous magical girl animations）, Madoka realizes that the fate of becoming 'desperation' is inevitable. At

45. Kumiko Saito, p.157
46. Ohanesian Liz, How Puella Magi Madoka Magica Shatters Anime Stereotypes, *LA Weekly*, (October 22, 2012)

the end of the story, she chooses to become a magical girl but with the strong desire to assist all the young girls in history to escape despair. At this point, the girl replaces the concept of patriarchy and completes the mission of saving all the oppressed women.

Figure 11. The character designing looks cute as the other magic girl anime, but the content just overturned the genre (Shaft, 2011).

It's a thought-provoking animation in terms of visual effects and in terms of story ideas as well. It does not use the cross-gender elements to challenge traditional social values, just like the magic girls animation of the previous period. Rather, it boldly deconstructed this type of magic girl animation itself. Magic girls, the strong female characters in anime prove a certain renewal of women's empowerment in Japanese society，"the process [of a heroine's transformation] is more a 'makeover' than a 'power-up'". [47] The reincarnation of the magical world which Kewpie mentioned in the *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* reveals the essence of the social environment. The battle of the magic girl is just a struggle against the demonized ego, which will not make a radical change to the patriarchal society. Eventually leaving the magic and the girlhood, they will return to their fixed gender roles functioning in actual society. At the end of the story, the young girl realizes that she must stand up and break the status quo and save herself through her own power. In the future, women should not continue to live in fantasy worlds where illusory magic can fulfill their desires. They may realize their self-worth and value through their own power and efforts.

To draw a conclusion, the magic girl, a popular genre of girls' animation program in Japan, has closely reflected shifting ideas of gender roles in society. The 2009 Gender Gap Index shows Japan ranked only 101st among 134 countries in the level of women's empowerment. [48] Although the issue of gender equality in Japan is still very serious, we can still be optimistic to believe that "these magical girls are exploring new gender ideas and demonstrating meaningful alternatives to predetermined gender norms in Japan". The

47. Allison Anne, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p.138
48. Hausmann Ricardo, Tyson Laura D, and Zahidi Saadia, The Global Gender Gap Report 2009, *Economic Forum*, (2009), <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2009.pdf>

gender models in the new era promoted by pop media will certainly be able to challenge the existing social system, so that the gender roles in Japanese and even the world's film and television industry become more diverse and complete. The magic girls of the future, or maybe the magic boys, will be able to rely more on their own intrinsical abilities to create 'magical power' to grow and then enter into a more free and equal adult world that they no longer need to escape.

CHAPTER 2

It is the year of 2026 now. It has passed more than one year since I read a report about the new Disney Princess film in the media. Now, I learned increasingly about this animated cartoon and watched the trailer of the movie. These made me be optimistic for this film. Many of my transgender friends and parents with children show the willingness to watch this film in the cinema. It is said that in some relatively conservative countries and regions, this animated film will be subjected to censorship. However, it was not completely banned. All this proves that societies in which we live are ready to welcome the genderless utopia.

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HEADLINES

A GENDERLESS PRINCESS?!

The newest Disney Anime Film of the 20th princess will be released on 2030. Even though the name and figure are still unclear, but the Disney Studio said that it would be the very first genderless "Princess" of Disney.

This 'Princess' who would come from a genderless utopia would depart radically from people's usual understanding of a traditional princess character. It would not be called a "he" or a "she" and its dressing would neither be limited by the traditional physical gender framework, nor would it have traditional romantic or sexual relations.

THE PRINCESS FROM GENDERLESS UTOPIA

WALT DISNEY PICTURES

The newest Disney Anime Film of the 20th princess will be released on 2030.

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Since the first Princess Films Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, Disney has devoted itself to create princesses who could represent the corresponding cultural era. At the very beginning, the Disney Princess was identified as the girl who was kind and pretty and who grew up in the palace. The princesses were always waiting for the princes to save them and once they got married, they would live together happily ever after.

After that, along with the feminist movement, we could see more and more new types of princesses having with their own strong identity. Some of them refused to accept the traditions of marriage and some of them were born as normal people and fought for their family like men.

In 2013, the Disney studio first tried to create a story about the relation between two princesses in Frozen. Through the interaction of these two princesses, Disney showed a totally new understanding of 'true love'. After that, following the rise of LGBT rights, Disney kept on showing the characters with different gender identities in their Princess films.

For commemorating the growth of same-sex marriage legalization around the world, Disney decides to make another unprecedented try. It hopes that with this brand new character, the individual could be brought to an imaginary world of absolute gender-equality.

At the same time, after canceling the selling of physical discs, Disney would continue to work with their successful 3D printing business and find some new possibilities with their Virtual Reality (VR) business. This time, the audience will be able to enjoy the story by downloading the characters' clothing to their movable VR equipment and dressing up like the characters with the accessories or garments printed with the domestic 3D printer.

Scan the QR code and get more information about Disney studio and download the newest VR films!
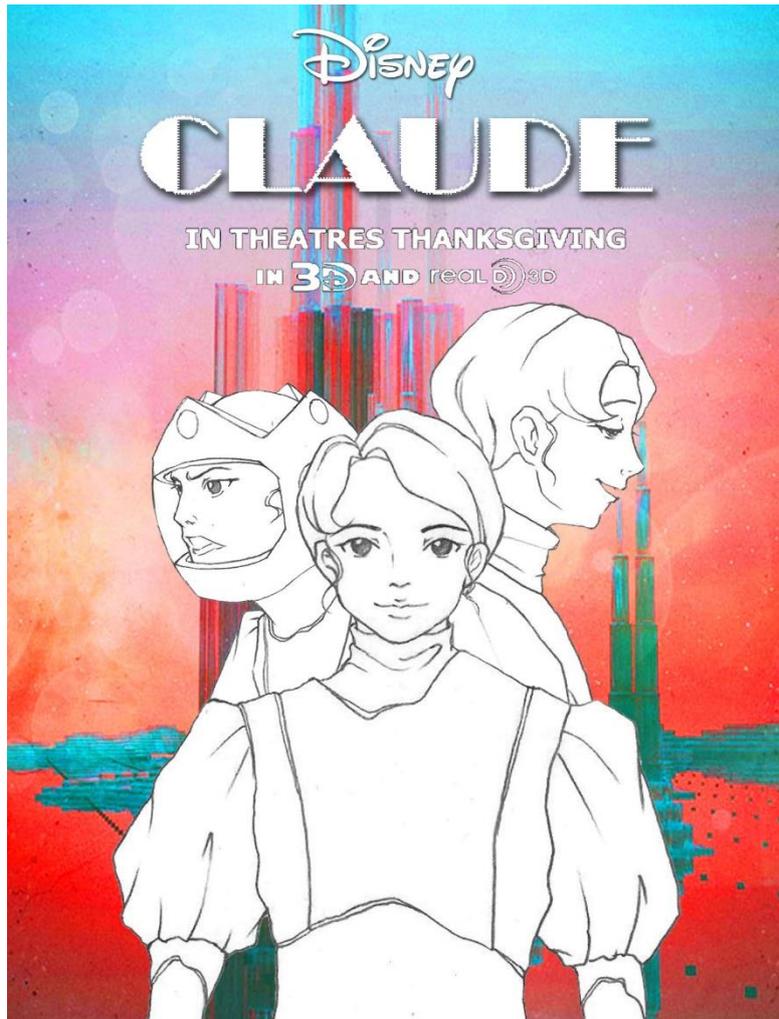
Figure 12. The poster of Disney newest Princess movie <Claude>, designed by author.

The New Princess from Genderless Utopia

300 years later, the human world has become a global village with cultural integration. The boundaries of nation, culture and even ethnicities have become increasingly blurred. The rapid development of science and technology has brought endless possibilities for human beings self-development, including gender and physical function. Once, humans indulged in consistent aesthetic standards and attempted to change themselves through cosmetic surgery into the most beautiful models. At one moment, excessive transformation caused humans to find themselves not that much different from a highly intelligent robot in appearance and AI developments has created an advanced civilization that can almost replace human beings to control the world. Out of fear of AI, humans stopped the development of AI for robots, and instead began to study how to transform themselves into perfect species like AI. Thereupon, the first asexual human species of the world was born. They only retain the most important organ of the human body - the brain, while the physiological characteristics of the primitive body are all abandoned and replaced by more

powerful and functional artificial organs whose lifespan can continue until the brain stops functioning. They can survive significantly longer by wearing helmets that protect the brain and maintain brain function. They completely got rid of the human innate animal instincts, they need neither a sexual life nor sexual reproduction. Because of the high cost of sex removal surgery, the asexual population comes from the highest class of society. After becoming an asexual human species, they utilize more intelligent brains to create more social value, which cause the increasing polarization of wealth between them and original human beings. Gradually, the asexual human species becomes the nobility of the new world and the helmets they wear become a symbol of identity and status, while sexual human species can only participate in physical labor at the bottom of society. In order to maintain a certain social labor force, the asexual human species as the ruling class re-advocates heterosexuality as being 'mainstream', gradually marginalizes the transgender species and promulgates a number of regulations to encourage fertility.

Claude from the asexual human species was once a Royal Princess before her transformation. The remaining pictures with her family in her memory make her miss the former happy times so much. Claude is still coping from her transformation during childhood, which was not decided out of her own free will. Although the asexual human species could become a partner through brain communication, even by using mature cloning techniques to produce offspring, Claude still wanted to experience a different life. Claude tried to take off her helmet and disguised herself as an ordinary human to get along with her peers, even though it was forbidden in the asexual human species. Claude gradually enjoyed the life of disguising as a human being. Benefiting from her own asexual body, Claude could change back and forth freely between male and female appearances, contact different humans and even have physical relationships with them.

Figure 13. Character design for <Claude>, designed by author.

During this period, Claude met a boy named Einar who wanted to save money for gender removal surgery. Einar was a very talented artist and could produce very beautiful paintings. But he could only participate in physical labor because of the inherent social position of his human species and the need for money to make a living. Claude didn't understand Einar's ideas at first until Einar explained that he was not satisfied with his present body and believed that his personality was more suitable to a woman's body. Moreover, his secret love was a famous asexual writer and if he wanted to be a partner with it, the only way was through gender removal surgery. Claude told Einar that no matter what feelings are, they should not be restricted by gender or human species and he should not change himself to be obedient to the restrictions. So, Claude confessed her identity and helped Einar to disguise as a member of the asexual human species to carry on the artistic creation that he yearned for.

With the help of Claude, Einar's paintings were well received and very popular. He became an artist as famous as the writer he had secretly admired. However, when he faced the opportunity of gender removal surgery, he accepted Claude's suggestion and decided to give up and disclosed his gender identity. The writer had discovered the real identity of Einar early on in its exchange with Claude and was attracted by Einar's talent and courage. He proposed to Einar when he made public his identity, which later caused widespread social controversy.

Finally, at the wedding ceremony planned by Claude, Einar was happy to wear the wedding dress designed by Claude. Einar and the writer became the first couple of the cross-gender race in human history. Their friends from different human species were all invited. They sent their blessings to the new couple in an enjoyable atmosphere. The picture in front of Claude gradually overlapped with the memory of her childhood. Claude smiled happily when she saw Einar and the new couple kissed warmly.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a fashion design student with interest in children's gender identity and genderless fashion. My own childhood's experience of gender identity confusion and my design background with childrenswear drives me to do this researching about the gender elements in the animation I enjoyed watching when I was a child. After reading some academic reviews and analyzing all the animations critically, I have a much deeper understanding about how the media is shifting along with the whole social background. No matter which kind of cultural circle the animation is made in, the character designing would always reflect the general gender role in that era.

We can easily see that, during the era when women were defined as a weak, domestic, and emotional subordinate role in the family and society. Getting married with a "prince-like" husband and becoming a housewife would be the best end-result, which could directly relate to the animation's princess-meet-prince happy-ending. The girlhood before marriage would be the only period of freedom for women to explore themselves. Once the girls have passed the adolescent stage, they must accept the "envision marriage and domestic life as a desirable goal." However, following the increasing women's employment rate and the influence of the feminism movements all around the world, the common stereotype of women has been destroyed. We can see how the Disney Princess and the Japanese magic girl start to build up their independent self-identity through their adventure without any association with the male characters.

During the third term of my first academic year, I took part into a digital character designing project, which gave me a chance to use the digital software to create a character who would live in London 300 years later. Base on my dissertation researching, I tried to image the storyline for a new princess who would live in a genderless utopia. By researching about some popular works in science fiction genre, for example Brave New World (1932) and Ghost in the Shell (1989), I had much more particular ideas about the environment and the figure. The developing AI technology offers us the possibility to reform ourselves into a physically genderless body. However, without any of the gender issue, would our world become entirely fair or it would be any other emerging problems? And what kind of personality should the character have to become a better role model for the new generation? Finally, I put all my answers into my fiction above as the conclusion of my study.

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