AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER. THE END? POSTFEMINISM AND THE REBRANDING OF THE DISNEY PRINCESSES

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the framework of postfeminist theory to critically examine the marketing materials and modern merchandise associated with the classic-era Disney Princesses, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White and the revisionist live-action films and/or merchandise in which these characters appear. Throughout my thesis, I argue that the Walt Disney Company is rebranding the Disney Princess franchise in an effort for these characters to remain current and relevant with audiences and consumers so that their profitability can be maintained. Analyzing the posters, trailers, and merchandise of the revisionist live-action films, I have found that Disney has utilized and commodified the neoliberalist rhetoric of girl power, female empowerment, and individualism in order to rebrand Disney’s most retrograde princess characters. Furthermore, I analyze the rhetoric of Disney’s “Dream Big, Princess” advertising campaign to understand the messages the company is promulgating to its broadly-aged female audience and how they are aligning such messages with their well-known princess characters.
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Introduction

The Walt Disney Company has greatly influenced the princess narrative within American popular culture. The majority of popular princess icons are affiliated with the company. Even Princess Leia of Star Wars is now a princess owned by Disney. Between 1937 and 2012, the company debuted eleven films whose princess characters would join the ranks of the Disney Princess franchise. But the company is comprised of more than just films. Just a few of the components of the Disney Company are their six theme park locations divided between three continents, the accompanying hotels to accommodate guests, a children’s television channel, and of course, all of the merchandise that provide tangible products themed to all of Disney’s other components. There are clothes for men, women, and children, character costumes for kids, kitchenware, collectible figurines, and plush toys all tailored to provide customers with a take-home memento of Disney’s other offerings such as the theme parks or film characters.

The Disney Princesses is a media franchise. Kristin Thompson writes of media franchises that this term just means that a movie spawn[ed] additional revenue streams beyond what it earns rom its various forms of distribution… These streams may come from sequels and series or from the production company licensing other firms to make ancillary products: action figures, idea games, coffee mugs, T-shirts, and the hundreds of other items licensees conceive of. In the ideal franchise, they come from both. (4)

Arguably, no other media entertainment corporation has the same outreach and brand name recognition as the Walt Disney Company. A good case in point is that in 2013, Disney held six of the top ten media franchises world wide with the Disney Princesses
taking first place. Their domination of the entertainment category included, “80% marketshare, generating $39.4 billion” (Graser). With such exposure also comes criticism. Sarah Rothschild writes of the Disney Princess franchise, “marketing the princess (first-wave and second, and now twenty-first century as well) en masse… This merchandizing creates an abiding immortality for the film, a viability and popularity long past their time of conception and lost past their time of cultural appropriateness” (89). Thus, Disney’s princess merchandise allows the princess characters to remain in the public eye for an indefinite amount of time. Whether one agrees with the final part of Rothschild’s statement or not, the first part is very much true. These princess characters are marketed and advertised to audiences usually before the related film even reaches the theatrical debut. And once it leaves theaters, the princess does not fade from public awareness. Disney stores and affiliates feature and sell the merchandise long after the film has moved on to home viewing options only. Audiences still wishing to buy the dress up costume associated with one princess along with the matching tiara and shoes can find the products in stores and online for years to come. The best example of this is the largest Disney store in the world, World of Disney located at Walt Disney World in Florida. World of Disney has an entire room dedicated to just the Disney Princesses and the associated merchandise. Within the room, sections dedicated to each princess display all of the character-associated merchandise. Merchandise featuring the oldest princesses, those of the classical era, Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty, is still readily available for purchase even though it has been nearly eighty years since the first princess film debuted in cinemas.¹

¹ The Disney Princesses of the classic era are classified this way because the films they are
The Disney Princess franchise was created by Andy Mooney in 2000, the chairman for Disney Consumer Products Worldwide. After Mooney took the job, he went to a Disney on Ice production and saw girls dressed up as their favorite Disney princess in homemade costumes. After this experience, Mooney realized the marketing potential of packaging the Princesses as a single brand and presenting them to the public. He worked with his staff to develop a line of Princess products that were likely to appeal to girls 3-6 consisting of dress-up costumes, tiaras, plastic jewelry, and the like. The response was almost immediate. In 2001, the Princess line had annual sales revenues of approximately $300 million. By 2003, that number had increased to $1.3 billion, and by 2009, it was estimated at $4 billion. (Stein 57)

No longer designated as all inclusive family-entertainment, the Disney Princess movies became about attracting young girls to the films and associated merchandise. Further evolving, the Disney Princess line is now marketed towards an even wider audience featuring products that include clothing, jewelry, and accessories, not only for younger girls, but also for adolescents and adults as evidenced by merchandise being sold in stores such as Kohl’s, Hot Topic, and Disney stores.

The classic-era princesses are the objects of scrutiny I explore within this thesis. The intention of this work is to understand through the specific case studies of each chapter how the Walt Disney Company is working to bring their three most outdated and regressive princess characters into the twenty first century through merchandising,

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featured in were overseen by Walt Disney.

2 While Disney films are still considered “family” entertainment, many of their films, such as the princess films, are aimed at a specific gender.
remade live action films, and revisionist story telling. My argument in these chapters intervenes into several areas of scholarship including marketing studies, media studies, film studies, literary and cultural studies, and women’s studies with a keen focus on girls’ studies. Within each of these studies, my work intercedes within the subfield of Disney studies- an area of inquiry that is within each of these studies’ orbits. Furthermore, my work engages with various scholars including feminist media scholars Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, Emilie Zaslow, Valerie Walkerdine, Ellen Riordan, Stephanie Génz, Benjamin A. Brabon, and Jess Butler. In regards to Disney scholars, my work engages with that of Andi Stein, Janet Wasko, Bridget Whelan, Annalee Ward, and Sarah Rothschild. Similar to my work in this thesis, many of these scholars’ work engage in topics that are interdisciplinary and contribute to several areas of knowledge at once. I aim for my analyses in the following chapters to contribute to these areas of knowledge by offering close readings and examinations of the advertising mediums and/or merchandise relating to these three princess characters that have been and continue to be so prevalent within American popular culture and argue how they are postfeminist.

Postfeminism is the conflation of feminism, consumerism, and neoliberalism that allows for messages and rhetoric of female empowerment and celebration of the individual to be dispersed within the mainstream media by corporations wishing to align their image and brand with such rhetoric. Thus, the use of such rhetoric being used by the mainstream media and corporate culture allow for these messages to become commodified and transformed into a product. Rather than feminism’s assertion for continued social activism in the fight for women’s right and gender equality, the individualistic aspect of postfeminism implies that these fights have been won- hence, the
“post” in postfeminism. As a consequence, girl power emerges from postfeminism as an easily sellable message that conveys feminist-friendly messages without the advocacy to fight for social justice. “Girl power” first began as a political statement used by young women “mainly white and middle-class” in the early 1990s who “called themselves Riot Grrrls” (Mitchell and Walsh 310). Creating a cultural phenomenon, Riot Grrrls worked to promote “self expression through fashion, new attitudes toward femininity, and a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach to culture” (Mitchell and Walsh 311). However, Riot Grrrls were strongly adverse to consumer culture and the mainstream media. Thus, buying a product that promoted one of their viewpoints was looked down upon because that product was mass produced and intended to make a profit- not encourage social change. As the messages and ideas associated with Riot Grrrls continued to attract intrigue, the mainstream media and consumer culture wished to capitalize on the cultural movement eventually diluting the meaning of the Riot Grrrls to something that no longer resembled the original movement. This act by corporations and the mainstream media to dilute political and social activist messages for capital gain in the form of commodities is postfeminist as it focuses on the individual, rather than the social and political.

My first chapter examines Disney’s reinvention of their Cinderella character and the rhetoric of the “Dream Big, Princess” marketing campaign. Through an analysis of the 1950 film’s marketing materials as compared to those of the 2015 film through the framework of postfeminism, I argue that Disney made the 2015 live action Cinderella as a means of revitalizing the character to prevent further antiquation. Simply, it was necessary for Disney to rebrand the character of Cinderella because the retrograde

3 The “Dream Big, Princess” campaign and the campaign for Cinderella (2015) are two different marketing campaigns.
character traits she exhibited in the 1950 film and continued to be defined by were becoming too outdated and irrelevant in the twenty-first century. Moreover, I maintain that Disney’s “Dream Big, Princess” campaign is part of a larger effort by the company to maintain the profitability of the Disney Princess franchise and to remain relevant with their intended audience. Through analysis of the campaign’s various videos, I argue that Disney is attempting to redefine their princess characters through the commodification of girl power rhetoric that advocates for freedom of choice and empowerment of the individual.

My second chapter analyzes the marketing materials and merchandise of the films *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *Maleficent* (2014) respectively through the lens of postfeminism to understand how Disney focuses on the redemption of former’s villain character while concurrently positioning the princess character out of the title role and into a supporting character. I argue that in doing so, Disney has commodified messages of feminist rhetoric such as female empowerment in both of these films’ marketing materials and related merchandise with the intent to attract audiences.

The third and final chapter focuses on Snow White of the 1937 film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Through the analysis and close reading of the depictions of the film’s eponymous character in current Disney Princess products aimed at the young girls, adolescents, and women, I argue that such products are postfeminist. Furthermore, I assert that Disney is knowingly placing an outdated character into current merchandise alongside other Disney Princesses is an effort to associate her with the character traits of those placed around her instead of the character traits she displays in the 1937 film.
Postfeminism requires us to examine and analyze commodities appropriating messages of girl power and female empowerment with a critical eye. According to Stephanie Génz and Benjamin A. Brabon, “postfeminism responds to and is emblematic of the paradoxes of modern-day politics and culture, seeking to reconcile feminist ideas of female emancipation and equality, consumerist demands of capitalist societies and media-friendly depictions of feminine/masculine empowerment” (41). In the Walt Disney Company’s use of girl power rhetoric that focuses its attention on individualized choice and female empowerment, the company is attempting to rebrand their classic-era princess characters to convey such messages in order for the characters to not fall out of favor with contemporary audiences and remain profitable.
Chapter 1
Reinventing a Classic;
Looking at Disney’s Remake of Cinderella and the Changing Rhetoric of the Disney Princess Franchise

Thirteen years after Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella was introduced as the company’s next princess film in 1950. The title character, Cinderella, is a beautiful, good-natured girl whose story came to define the rags to riches narrative. Loved by audiences and representative of American popular culture, Walt Disney continued to be the authoritative figure regarding what is the American notion of the princess figure. From this film, “the Cinderella story” was Americanized- a well-meaning girl in a difficult domestic situation who unknowingly meets and falls in love with a prince and lives happily ever after. Despite Cinderella’s story having its written roots dating back to seventeenth century France, American audiences, “are now raised on Disney fairy tales, and original story lines are forgotten or dismissed as not the real thing. Disney rewrites the original tales for its particular version of American values” (Ward 2). However, even Disney recognizes that their versions of these fairytale characters can have expiration dates and fall out of favor with audiences as new characters gain popularity.4

Through the reinvention of a foundational character, the Walt Disney Company provided themselves the opportunity to newly advertise the character to the contemporary younger members of their audience. This particular audience is familiar with, and even fans of, the 1950 film and the Cinderella character but newer princess figures such as Tiana (The Princess and the Frog 2009) and Rapunzel (Tangled 2010) have risen in

4 However in Disney’s case, existing fairytale characters that are newly reimagined as Disney princesses.
popularity simply because they are newer. The reinvention also allowed them to concomitantly attract viewers from previous generations who also appreciate the character and film, but no longer find the themes associated with the entity to be analogous to their own social values. Thus with the release of a live action film based on the animated classic and a character that is well known as a core part of the Disney canon, the company aimed to attract a large and generationally diverse audience. Much to the company’s financial benefit, this live action release is directly tied into the already longstanding and successful franchise of the Disney Princesses. The Disney Princess franchise features a line up of several female Disney characters who fit into the princess roster—whether by being born with the title, through marriage into royalty, or whose story can fit into the mold well enough—that makes each character’s related merchandise profitable when featured alongside that of their fellow franchise members.\(^5\) The Disney Princess line of merchandise has removed the princess characters from their respective films, allowing for them to exist independently from their story lines. Sequentially, this allows Disney to associate each princess with certain defining objects of the film that signify the plot. For Cinderella, Disney features her in the franchise’s merchandise with her glass slipper, along with her carriage, her mice friends, and her blue ballgown. Each of these things have become practically symbolic of the character. When reconstructing the character for new and old audiences, Disney must only use these objects and follow a skeleton of the original film’s plot in order to maintain the notion that they are redefining the character, not inventing an entirely new one.

\(^5\) There are 11 characters featured in the franchise.
The significant change of the new film is not the plot, but the eponymous character’s personality. The defining features of the old plot remain the same in the new film—Cinderella is still forced into abusive circumstances by her stepmother after her father passes away, she has mice as friends, her fairy godmother helps her go to the ball where she meeting Prince Charming. The main update to the film is Cinderella’s disposition. Considering Disney’s audience for the film is the same as their audience for the Disney Princess franchise, there is no need for the plot of Cinderella to be altered to ensure the company will profit off the revised character and the related merchandise that will ensue. In terms of the entire Disney Princess franchise, despite the majority of products associated with each princess are for young girls, there is still a significant amount of items offered for adolescents and women, as well as jewelry, tech accessories, and objects for the home. And thus, Disney’s intended audience for the new live action film is all of the people, chiefly girls and women, who are already the intended audience of the Disney Princess franchise.

Viewing the marketing materials used to promote the 1950 animated film in juxtaposition with the 2015 film’s marketing materials of the same medium, one can note the exceptional efforts Disney underwent to align the new live action film with modern sensibilities. By doing so, Disney provides themselves the ability to not have to repudiate a film and character that has been a key aspect of their empire. For as time goes on and the values that were embedded into the company’s original film become more antiquated, such as being passive and waiting for a man/prince to rescue you from hardship, Disney is forced to realign the character that is an emblem of the company. As written in the preface of Mouse Morality, “the place of Disney in American culture- and increasingly,
world-wide culture- has grown to be both a dominant and a powerful figure on the contemporary landscape” (xiii). Particularly in regards to the character of Cinderella, her castle is the symbol and main feature of the Magic Kingdom theme park at Walt Disney World. It is easily as iconic as the silhouette of Mickey Mouse’s head and is featured at the beginning of nearly every Disney movie. In the 1950 film, Cinderella is a kind and caring damsels in distress who gives no reason or indication as to why she tolerates the abuse from her stepmother and stepsisters. However, it is not her kind or caring nature that the prince finds attractive. Rather, it is because Cinderella is considered to be beautiful that she catches the attention of the prince. In the 2015 film, Cinderella is still kind and caring, but she says that the reason she remains in her abusive household is because she refuses to give up the last remaining thing that belonged to her parents. She stands up for what she believes in and what she feels is right even when it is not in her advantage to do so. Furthermore, the prince is smitten with Cinderella before the ball due to their chance encounter in the forest rather than solely being drawn to her physically beauty at the ball. Disney is highlighting these new character traits in the film’s marketing materials and merchandise in an effort to rebrand and reintroduce their Cinderella character to their current intended audience in order for the character to remain relevant and most importantly, continue to be profitable.

In this chapter, I will use postfeminism to compare and contrast the disparities in the two films’ marketing materials and will examine the rhetoric of the 2016 “Dream Big, Princess” campaign by the Walt Disney Company. Furthermore, I will also be examining how the 2015 film and this marketing campaign are a part of what I argue to be a larger effort by the Walt Disney Company to continue to remain relevant to and profitable with
their intended audience. The company recognized the need for an updated rendering of their Cinderella character and used the new film’s marketing materials to appeal to their intended audience in order for the character to not depreciate in standing and to remain a profitable part of the Disney Princess franchise. Furthermore, postfeminism is functioning in the rhetoric of the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign as the campaign is part of a larger effort by Disney to reengage the Disney Princess franchise audience with the franchise’s already established characters whose stories can be manipulated in advertisements to embody notions of “Girl Power” and female empowerment.

The term “postfeminism” is useful in its application to analyze and understand the marketing materials used in the promotion of Cinderella and rhetoric of the Disney Princess franchise due to its focus on media, consumerism, and neoliberal politics. For as Stéphanie Génz and Benjamin A. Brabon write, “rather than being tied to a specific contextual and epistemological framework, postfeminism emerges in the intersections and hybridization of mainstream media, consumer culture, neo-liberal politics, postmodern theory and, significantly, feminism” (5). Postfeminism as applied to Disney’s marketing of Cinderella (2015) and the Disney Princess franchise allows for a more thorough understanding of how Disney is speaking directly to their audience through the ideas of girl power and individualism. The rootedness of postfeminism in neoliberalism allows “for the development of discourses that emphasize consumer citizenship, personal responsibility, and individual empowerment” (Butler 41). Butler goes on to write that, “propped up by the (imagined) success of the women’s movement,… and the ever-expanding neoliberal celebrations of autonomy, individualism, and consumer choice, postfeminism surfaces as a more attractive alternative to previous forms of gender
politics” (41). In the case of Disney’s targeted audience for the film and associated merchandise, the marketing materials used to advertise the film and the language of the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign videos echo the postfeminist ideals of individualism and consumer choice.

Predominantly because each princess film up until the film Frozen (2013) featured a male love interest and because it was either shown or implied that the princess figure married the male love interest, critics were concerned that the Disney Princesses, through their films and merchandise, advocated conventional female stereotypes—specifically the desire to marry and live happily ever after. Critics such as Peggy Orenstein in her book, Cinderella Ate My Daughter, writes that for her daughter to grow up, “healthy, happy, and confident, with a clear sense of her own potential… she lives in a world that tells her, whether she is three or thirty-three, that the surest way to get there is to look, well, like Cinderella” (10). Older women, particularly mothers like Orenstein, were not originally members of Disney’s targeted audience of the Disney Princess franchise. They only had to advertise to girls such as Orenstein’s daughter for the group of princess characters, no matter how retrograde some of them might be, to be profitable. Even though parents had the purchasing power to buy these products for their daughters, the scrutinization and skepticism from older women and mothers at the princess ideal Disney was profiting from was filled with concerns over the damaging effects such messages could have on their daughters’ and other girls’ self-esteem and development because it was conveyed in the 1950 film that Cinderella is only rescued by the prince because she is beautiful. In the book, The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence, the authors conclude that, “Disney has over forty thousand ready-made
Princess items available for young girls, along with the optimistic message that faith in commodities will solve their problems and help define who they want to be, namely, pretty enough to win a man on whom they can depend financially (Giroux and Pollack 123). It is only now that Disney in the form of *Cinderella* (2015) and the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign is showing evidence of taking these concerns more seriously and addressing them through their advertising of princess films and merchandise.

Disney has taken steps in their marketing strategies to change their princess characters to advocate more for “girl power” - or as Disney has rephrased the term, “princess power” as evidenced in a Disney Channel promotion titled “I am a Princess-Princess Power”- than for marrying Prince Charming. According to Pamela Bettis, Nicole C. Ferry, and Mary Roe “the US media, corporate America, social organizations, parents and girls themselves have taken up this new mantra of girlhood and celebrate the rise of the alpha girl, …and ‘girl power,’ all names that suggest the new popular standard of girlhood” (164). Other major companies such as Lego and Nerf are also adopting the mantra, eyeing either an untapped market or not wanting to be publicly viewed as socially regressive (or both). The Walt Disney Company is doing the same thing. However, instead of inventing a new product that promotes the “girl power” mantra, they are using what is already in their arsenal. Specifically, for the character of Cinderella, Disney can remake the film, albeit this time in live-action form, and market it with the rhetoric of “girl power” that has already proven successful for other major companies. “While individuals and subcultural groups are involved in creating new social movements and the visual styles associated with them,” Emilie Zaslow writes, “corporations have long appropriated these movements and styles in order to keep current
and make profits” (31). For the purposes of this chapter, the marketing materials I will be focusing on are the posters and trailers for the 1950 film and the 2015 film. These advertising mediums allow for a dissection of Disney’s rhetoric over time that is being promulgated to audiences. By analyzing the marketing materials of the 1950 Cinderella alongside those of the 2015 version through the lens of postfeminism, we can understand how Disney is aiming to associate themselves with the “Girl Power” mantra that is aligned with Disney’s reinterpretation of Cinderella’s character and harnessing it in a way that proves financially successful.

As film posters are one of the first means for a film’s promotion, the designers must successfully capture the message of the film to potential audiences. There are stark differences when analyzing the stylistic choices made by the designers of the posters for the original film and those made for the newer released version. The original film’s poster uses strategically placed blocks of text and provides more clues to the narrative to showcase the film. The film’s title in all capital bright pink letters is the first thing that attracts the viewer’s gaze to the poster. The color pink indicates the film’s romantic subject matter and allows for the title to stand out amongst the light yellow and beige background. Walt Disney’s name above the film title in slightly smaller black letters allows the audience to absorb the film title’s name before making the association with the film company. However, the black letters serve as a stark contrast to the light colored background and the bold pink letters right beneath it. Additionally, the text “It’s Fun! It’s Magic!” is in the same pink color, but the letters are not as large or bold.
Their placement at the top of the image above the large dancing mice offers more information about the film than just the romantic theme the pink color insinuates. While the poster does not feature a tagline or give specific hints to the plot, the featuring of so many characters provides potential audiences with enough information about what the film will comprise of that audiences can loosely understand what the plot may include. Further, the poster advertises featured songs and various characters in the film that would appeal to more audiences. In featuring these characters, the film allows itself to be advertised to a wide audience of various ages and both male and female. Overall, the 1950 poster conveys the lightheartedness of the film’s plot, welcoming various types of audiences while also alluding to its romantic theme.

In the 1950s, Disney promoted their films to the entire family and advocated for family bonding through viewship. When Cinderella was still in the beginning stages of development, Walt Disney used audience research methods to determine how the film would be received by particular demographics and specifically tested his films with adults working in his own company. With the help of the Audience Research Institute (ARI), Disney found that his employee population largely resembled American filmgoers and, “After learning this, the studio began to hold in-house reviews for audiences of forty employees at a time, employees who had been selected to represent the rest of the country in terms of age, gender and level of education” (Ohmer 209). Seven years before Cinderella would be released, ARI and Disney,

queried another cross-section of Americans about which of six subjects it would like to see as a Disney film: Cinderella, Peter Pan, Alice in Wonderland, Lady and the Tramp, Uncle Remus, or Hiawatha. The survey aimed to uncover both
positive and negative reactions, how different demographic groups responded, and whether people preferred to see each subject as a live-action or animated film. Though no subject reached 100 on the acceptance scale (the number ARI set as “average”), “Cinderella” ranked highest at 95. Younger audiences liked it, and even men were positive, while the subject was off the charts with women. Viewers at all income levels said they would enjoy seeing the tale on film, and as a Disney cartoon, rather than in live action. These responses offered a resounding affirmation of both Disney’s animation and the value of fantasy in a world emerging from war. (Ohmer 205)

Due to the level of interest from various populations, the supporting characters of the film are advertised to attract every member of the nuclear family. In turn, characters such as the Fairy Godmother, the mice, and castle employees are featured on the poster to illicit interest from men, women, boys, and girls.

It is not surprising that in 1943, when the survey was taken, a storyline such as Cinderella was popular amongst audiences, particularly women. Considering the world was nearing the end of World War II, the Cinderella story line proved popular. Valerie Walkerdine writes in her book, Daddy’s Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture,

[T]here is a whole post-war narrative about girls growing up into upward mobility… these narratives… build upon those pre-war narratives… Here the girls are poor and often orphaned and… they dream of a place where wishes are granted through the intervention of good fairy godmothers, thwarted by bad witches, to reach a place where men can grant ultimate wishes which are about turning poverty to wealth. (94-5)
The castle in a pink hue looking as if it is glowing against the dark background with little twinkling stars around it represented this fantasy to potential audiences. Interestingly, the poster features Cinderella and Prince Charming dancing together. By attaching the title character to another character, the illustration heralds that Cinderella’s happily ever after plot line is to be dependent on the prince. In the poster, she looks happy and content dancing with him. In contrast, the prince’s face is not shown and the character is only shown from the backside telling potential audiences that the prince’s personality does not matter to the film. His yellow and red attire make Cinderella’s blue ball gown standout even more against the background, leading the viewer to make more note of her than him. However, Cinderella’s happy and comfortable posture dancing with him indicates that he is not a character to be feared in the film. Further, her disposition towards him allows viewers to make the connection between their dancing and the romance alluded to in the pink coloring of the film’s title. This fantasy and fairytale narrative was not just something Walt Disney wanted to advocate to American audiences, it was a narrative that American audiences at the time were craving and Disney could capitalize on.

Dissimilarly, the poster of the 2015 film (see figure on left) uses a color palette heavily consisting of hues of blue rather than the bright whites, yellows, and pinks used in the original. This not only indicates a more dramatic take on the fairytale, but also highlights the transformation of this new film from its 1950 counterpart. Blue being the color of Cinderella’s ballgown in both films is a color that symbolizes change and growth in the film. The shades of blue that color the new poster symbolize the change and growth the 2015 film has experienced from its 1950
counterpart. The poster only showcases the title character and the redesign of her ballgown and the glass slipper. Different from the 1950 version, Cinderella is shown in the poster free from any other character in the film. In fact, no other characters are shown and her blue dress and glass slipper, while revisionist takes on the originals, alludes to the original film’s overall story arc. As discussed previously, the main update to the 2015 film is Cinderella’s persona. This modernization is visible when jointly viewing both the 1950 poster and the 2015 poster. Viewers can note the change in the character’s persona from the one in which she is attached to the prince to the 2015 poster where she is featured alone. The 2015 poster in featuring Cinderella alone is making the statement that she is independent and going to be the leader of her own story. Even though in both posters she looks serene, there is a difference between her exuding contentment when dancing with the prince and when she is by herself. Her joyful expression in the 1950 poster is caused by the prince, whereas her peaceful demeanor in the 2015 poster seems to come from within due to her closed eyes.

While her dress and shoe are representative of the original plot, the depictions of each in the poster are the first step by Disney marketing to use the poster as a means of advertising both the film and the film-based products that will follow. This mechanism of advertising a film and merchandise through the same medium goes back to the early days of the Disney film company. Roy Disney, Walt Disney’s brother, wrote in a letter, “‘[t]he sale of a doll to any member of a household is a daily advertisement in that household of our cartoons and keeps them all ‘Mickey Mouse Minded’” (de Cordova 205). When concern was expressed that merchandise might hurt the company’s film revenue, he replied, “‘we feel that we should publicize our character from every angle and accept
“every opportunity”” (de Cordova 205). Even in the early days of the Walt Disney Company, Disney and his associates were aware of the relationship between children and consumerism and marketed their products, whether those be toys or films, accordingly. During the 1930s, it was common knowledge amongst film companies that,

First, the child was a consumer of films, someone who paid a certain amount to see a show. Second, the child was a consumer of products displayed through films. The system of merchandising and promotion employed by Disney and the other studios in the early 1930s worked by creating elaborate networks of mutual reference between these two registers of consumption” (de Cordova 204).

Now with the Disney Princess franchise, Disney’s penchant for selling copies of their princess’ ballgowns and the audience’s awareness of these products that always accompany such films, Cinderella’s ballgown in the poster is immediately an advertisement for a reiteration of the dress to be sold in Disney stores. This awareness is shared by both producer and consumer. Asked if Disney gets involved in the costume design process because, “it’s going to be toys, it’s going to be lunch boxes, it’s going to be figurines” Cinderella (2015) costume designer Sandy Powell answered, “I knew that these things would then have to be made smaller and work just as well on a smaller scale for kids or adult dressing up clothes or dolls. So with that in mind, I kind of designed something that I hoped wouldn’t get ruined when it was made smaller” (“Sandy Powell and the Costumes of Cinderella”). Disney advertising a physical product through an advertisement for a film is sending the message to audiences that the dress is representative of the character. The freedom and independence that the character of Cinderella is expressing in the poster is transferred onto the physical product that is the
dress. By choosing to purchase the dress, audiences and consumers are expressing their individualistic choice. Jess Butler writes, “mirroring the logic of neoliberalism, postfeminism constructs women as both subjects and consumers, elevating consumption as an individualistic mechanism of empowerment commodifying feminist activism” (46). Due to the connotations of individualism and independence that the dress symbolizes, the product commodifies those associations.

Similar to the posters for the 2015 film, there is no need to explicitly explain the plot in the film’s promotional trailers considering that audiences are already familiar with the story. Instead, Disney provides the audience with glimpses of the changes made to modernize the title character. On May 15, 2014, Disney debuted the teaser trailer for their upcoming live action remake of the 1950 animated film. This one minute video shows the iconic glass slipper, a product of computer generated imagery, or CGI, against a plain black background. The video begins with the camera just slightly zooming out from the glass shoe as it begins to rotate, showing viewers each facet as multitudes of color shine through. Once the shoe stops rotating, a computer-generated blue butterfly circles around it, flapping its wings, before settling on the front of the shoe and turning into gold-colored glass. The image than fades out to show the black background again, but this time with an unseen light source shining down illuminating the top part of the screen into a dark teal color displaying the film’s title along with Disney’s name just above it in smaller letters. The bright metallic gold letters, the same color as the glass butterfly, stand in stark contrast against the dark background, while also alluding to possible themes of

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6 The irony of having such a heavy reliance on computer generated imagery for a live-action film is that in order to recreate many of the scenes from the 1950 film in live-action form, such technology is required to accomplish such feats.
extravagance and wealth. However, because of the audience’s foreknowledge of the rags to riches plot, these allusions could be signifying just a more aesthetically grandeur take on the film. For the first announcement of an upcoming live action film, this trailer did not include any live actors nor did it indicate the remake of the old classic would not be animated. However, the message of reinvention was clear. The butterfly that flies around the glass slipper symbolizes both the metamorphosis Cinderella herself experiences, but also the metamorphosis that Disney’s work of Cinderella has sustained. The butterfly signifies this new film, specifically the character of Cinderella, has undergone specific changes. However, because the trailer does not feature scenes from the film, audiences are not privy to know what those changes are.

The next trailer revealed the film to be live-action and also allowed Disney to advertise specific themes of the film. On November 19, 2014, almost exactly four months after the release of the teaser trailer, the second official trailer premiered on Good Morning America, on ABC- notably a basic cable station owned by Disney.7 Aside from trailers of the Marvel franchise films, the video had garnered the most views of any trailer released by the studio, with more than 4.2 million views on YouTube in just 24 hours.8 The trailer is themed around the advice given to a young Cinderella by her dying mother who tells her to “have courage and be kind” (Trailer #1). After showing various scenes from the film that all loosely adhere to the 1950 plot, the trailer once again shows Cinderella’s mother telling her, “where this is kindness, there is goodness. And where there is goodness, there is magic” (Trailer #1). These statements are a contrast from the

7 Good Morning America is the number one rated morning show amongst adults ages 18-49 and the number one rated morning show in the country.
8 Disney owns Marvel Studios as well.
1950 film in which Cinderella’s birth mother is never shown and the implicit message is that only a man can save you from your domestic hardships. Positioning the young Cinderella at around the age of the youngest members of the Disney Princess audience enables these viewers to see themselves in the character and to aspire to embody the values Cinderella is shown to live by. This type of behavior known as “identificatory attachment” is “the desire to be like or become” a fictional character (Hoffner and Buchanan 327). Furthermore, “the modeling process goes far beyond simple imitation of behavior, to include the changing of attitudes, values, aspirations, and other characteristics to match those of a model” (Hoffner and Buchanan 327). While Hoffner and Buchanan are referring to television show characters in their research, their analysis can be applied to other forms of media such as the original animated Disney princess films. This imitating behavior by young girls was the reason the Disney Princess franchise was started in the first place. They were identifying with the princesses and working to emulate them through dress and personality traits. Identificatory attachment was also the reason critics like Orenstein were vocal about the attitudes, values, and aspirations (or lack thereof) the Disney princesses originally represented. The product that is Cinderella character is a point where identificatory attachment and postfeminism conflate in the form of “girl power media.” As Emilie Zaslow writes,

Girl power media culture, as a neoliberal commodity cannot address many of the real social concerns of… girls… because it is a personal tool, not a tool of social change. Feminism made popular through girl power media becomes a part of the feminine identity constructed… for the girls as well as a key feature in the construction of their dreams for the future. Rooted in individuality and a politics
of choice, girl power feminism does not encourage girls to consider the structural forces that contribute to the need for change, the ongoing oppression of girls and women, or the collective nature of social change movements. Girl power celebrates girls, independence, and feminism performed by bodies of a corporate media culture but does not celebrate a feminist movement for social change at structural levels. (159-60)

Postfeminism is operative in this particular trailer, as Disney is presenting a commodity promoting individualism in the form of the trailer’s “have courage and be kind” theme.

The next trailer highlights Cinderella’s courage. The beginning shows her coming upon a hunted stag and urging it to run as the hunt party comes closer- a display of courage and the aforementioned kindness portrayed in the first trailer. Then unknowingly meeting the prince, she defiantly tells him in regards to hunting, “just because it’s what’s done, doesn’t mean it’s what should be done.” After showing more scenes from the film that again loosely adhere to the original plot, the screen goes black with words in gold letters (the same gold lettering from the teaser trailer) saying “There’s more to the legend” before cutting to a clip of the transformation scene in which the fairy godmother dresses Cinderella for the ball. The screen then goes black for a moment once more with the saying, “than you ever dreamed” before cutting to a scene in which Cinderella defiantly tells her stepmother, “I will protect the prince from you. No matter what becomes of me.” These instances in which Cinderella is shown having the courage to speak out against specific actions even when they are societal norms is being displayed as a positive character trait to the audience. Seeing how Cinderella’s courage and kindness enables her to go to the ball, meet the prince again, and eventually escape her stepmother
advocates such behavior in the audience, specifically the younger members. Disney here is encouraging identificatory attachment, as Buchanan and Hoffner write that research has, “shown that identification with media character affects adoption or rejection of specific behaviors or life goals” (327). Considering the trailer is a dual advertisement for the film and the related merchandise, girls who want to identify with Cinderella and are eager to emulate her character traits can do so through the products that have commodified these attributes. Through these actions, Disney is adhering to “the consumer-based logic of postfeminism” that “conflates feminism and femininity, individualism and liberation, and consumption and activism” (Butler 46). The feelings of female agency that are cultivated from the trailers that lead to purchasing movie tickets to see the film or buying the merchandise continue to encourage the commodification of feminist messages, rather than encourage activism for social change.

Many aspects of the advertising campaign for Cinderella (2015) can be found in Disney’s “Dream Big, Princess” campaign. It is clear from the overall timeline of their respective debuts that Disney’s “Dream Big, Princess” campaign was not intended to help promote Cinderella (2015). However, the messages displayed by both support a larger argument that Disney is actively working to change the rhetoric that surrounds the Disney Princess franchise. The “Dream Big, Princess” campaign was debuted by the Walt Disney Company in February 2016, to “inspire(s) girls and kids of all ages to realize their ambitions” (Epstein). The blog post on the The Walt Disney Company’s official blog features the campaign’s main music video and a written post from Jeffery Epstein, Disney’s director of corporate communications. In the blog post he writes that the goal of

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9 Interestingly, in spite of Disney saying that they want to inspire “girls and kids,” the only kids featured in the videos are girls- there are no boys seen aspiring to be a like a Disney princess.
the campaign is to bring the “great stories” of the Disney Princesses, “front and center to inspire girls and kids around the world to realize their full potential and dream big” (Epstein). However, the chance for Disney to advertise their products is not lost amongst the campaign’s stated desire to inspire. Epstein goes on to write,

Some of our favorite things about Disney Princesses are their incredible stories and qualities that help them achieve their dreams, like Tiana’s entrepreneurial spirit to build a business, or Merida’s courage to break tradition. Guests can experience this first-hand when they meet and share a special moment with their favorite princess at our Disney Parks and Resorts around the world.

In this sense, postfeminism is operative through the Disney Princesses in that the audience is told that they can only experience and share these qualities by buying into the product that Disney is advertising. Citing Sarah Banet-Weiser, Jess Butler writes that by way of postfeminism, the rhetoric of feminism has been rewritten so that it may be easily integrated into commercial literature and that “Unchained from political activism, postfeminism constructs gender as a consumer product that women can try on–and take off– as they choose” (46). Disney is linking the princess figure with the encouraging mantra of “dream big.” However, the implication is that this can only be accomplished when buying their product.

The Disney Princess official website is designed entirely to embrace and reflect the statements and missions of the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign. The home page features one of the campaign’s music videos, links to princess-dedicated webpages, featured videos, blog posts, quizzes, recipes for princess-inspired snacks and desserts,
For the purposes of analyzing the rhetoric of the campaign, I will be focusing on the videos where this rhetoric is most pronounced. In all, there are sixteen “Dream Big, Princess” videos which fit into the following four categories. The first are the four inspirational “dream” music videos that feature the song “Hall of Fame” performed either by the original artists in the background or it is implied by the girls being featured in the video. These three videos depict various scenes from the Disney Princess films sometimes intermixed with footage of girls doing similar activities or just specific scenes from the films. The lyrics of the song heard in the background highlight the girls’ determination to succeed with such lyrics as,

You can be a master

Don’t wait for luck

Dedicate yourself and you gon’ find yourself

Standing in the Hall of Fame (“Hall of Fame” 11-14).

The next category of videos are the princess-specific “I Dream” videos. Each of these features a girl describing her dreams and ambitions for the future and relating those to the actions of a specific princess. For example, the video, “I Dream (Ariel)” showcases a girl who describes herself as a “traveler” who wants to go on many journeys just like Ariel (The Little Mermaid) as they both want to explore new worlds and have a

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10 Each character’s dedicated webpage features a specific message tailored to that character, along with activities, games, more videos, and picture-links to buy character-specific products.
11 “Hall of Fame” was originally performed by The Script featuring will.i.am.
12 These videos are titled, “Live Your Dream”, “Be A Champion”, “Dream It, Be It”, and “Live Your Dream” which is the only video to feature the title princess character from the Disney Channel television show, Elena of Avalor.
13 While there are nine of these videos, they only feature four princess characters.
“wandering spirit.” Similar to the inspirational “dream” videos, the “I Dream” videos features footage of the girl performing activities that resemble those of the princess that they claim inspires them. Next, there are two “I’ve Got a Dream” music videos takes the song of the same title and features girls singing the lyrics to the song as they perform various activities such as building rockets, practicing karate, and playing volleyball. Between such scenes, clips from the scene in Tangled when the song is performed are shown. All of these videos either begin with or end with the voiceover speaking the name of the campaign or the campaign’s slogan, “For every girl who dreams big, there’s a princess to show her it’s possible” (“Dream Big, Princess”). Postfeminism is evident through each of these videos as the ability to choose and the individual as a self-governing person is being commodified into the product that is the Disney Princess franchise. According to scholar Stephanie Génz, “The central tenet of Girl Power is that femininity is powerful and empowering, endowing the female subject with the agency to create her self and negotiate the possibilities of her gender role. Women can use their femininity to compliment and even further the qualities of subject hood and independence endorsed by the feminist movement” (Génz 94). The girls in these videos are shown embracing their femininity and making choices for themselves based on their life ambitions. The campaign slogan is rhetoric that Disney is using, similar in fashion to their use of the “have courage and be kind” mantra from Cinderella (2015), that transforms a female empowerment message into a product.

The final category of videos are unique from the others in that they speak directly to parents, and in one case, specifically to fathers. These specific-adult audience videos each feature voiceovers that ask rhetorical questions of the viewer about what the viewer
wants for his or her daughter. Each video features images from various Disney Princess films in which the princesses are children and later, transitioning into young adults. The voiceover in the video titled “Daughters” asks of the viewer,

What do you want for your little girl? Do you want her to believe in herself? To know she can? Even when it’s hard? Even when it seems impossible? How do you want her to see the world? Would you give her the strength to run against the tide? To be her own knight in shining armor? To be fearless? To be determined and bold? Do you want her dreams to have no bounds?

As the voiceover comes to an end, the steady instrumental music in the background becomes louder, transitioning into the same “Hall of Fame” lyrics that are featured in the other videos. Parents of the youngest members of the Disney Princess audience are included in the franchise’s adult audience as they have the buying power to purchase Disney Princess products. Therefore, these parents must approve of the Disney Princesses in order for their daughters to engage with the product. Using the theory of postfeminism, it can be understood that Disney’s encouragement of individualism and self-empowerment is being used to sell a product much more than advocating the messages of the videos. Zaslow writes, “girl power continues to be ubiquitous in mainstream media addressed to… girls…the cultural moment that is girl power—a cultural moment in which the promise of feminism has been incorporated into hegemonic cultural production—continues to be diffused through the whole media landscape” (159). For the top grossing media franchise in the country, the Disney princesses dominate the media landscape.  

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14 The Walt Disney Company as of 2013 has 80% marketshare of the entertainment licensing industry, owning six of the top 10 entertainment franchises for a generated $39.4 billion in
Media scholars Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra write, “within popular media culture itself, some of the highest-profile postfeminist franchises have centralized girls and girlhood, fusing empowerment rhetoric with traditionalist identity paradigms” (18). The Walt Disney Company cannot disavow its use of the term “princess”– a traditional figure they helped popularize in American culture, but they can rebrand the term using new rhetoric. The “Dream Big, Princess” campaign is proof they are doing just that.

Luckily for Disney, the lack of a defined time period on their princess films affords them the flexibility to update and redefine their characters rather than only introducing new ones. The 2015 film is the first of the princess films to receive a live action remake and Cinderella is the first princess in the Disney Princess franchise whose persona is changed through new thematic messages.15 Through the posters and trailers that articulate the mantra, “have courage and be kind”, the mantra ultimately finds itself emblazoned on Cinderella-related products for girls, teens, and women. When viewing the promotional materials of the 2015 film with the videos of the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign, it is clear that Disney is actively working to change the rhetoric that surrounds their most popular and valuable franchise. New films and new campaigns allow for Disney to produce more products that encourage audiences to buy into Disney’s other ventures such as visiting the theme parks. As Andi Stein writes in, Why We Love Disney: The Power of the Disney Brand, “In building its brand, the Disney Company has perfected the art of synergy, the integration of individual parts to form something greater than the whole. This has been a key element of the organization’s success in building revenue. The Disney Princess franchise is the highest grossing entertainment franchise in the world (Graser).

15 As will be discussed in the next chapter, Maleficent (2014) is not a remade princess film in the same sense that Cinderella (2015) is.
global awareness of and appreciation for Disney products” (6). In this sense, the Disney Princess franchise is a product that is a cultural force and a cultural force that is a product. Now, Disney’s character of Cinderella will proceed as the princess who promotes kindness and courage, despite the fact that the plot of the live action remake is the same as the original 1950 film. The Disney Princess franchise influences the lives of the franchise’s consumers through the messages cultivated in the films and related merchandise while at the same time the profit from these endeavors allows for the continuation of such shaping to occur.
Chapter 2
Changing the Story;
From Sleeping Beauty to Maleficent

In 2014, Disney debuted a revisionist take on their 1959 animated film, Sleeping Beauty with the film, Maleficent starring Angelina Jolie and Elle Fanning. In contrast to their updated live action Cinderella in 2015, Maleficent only follows a silhouette of the Sleeping Beauty plot placing the original villain in the role of the protagonist and reducing the princess figure, Aurora, to a supporting character. Arguably, Aurora in the 1959 film is already a supporting character despite her being the subject of the film’s title, as she spends the majority of the film sleeping and not contributing to the overall narrative arc. However, Maleficent vastly reduces her story line while strengthening, adding upon, and expanding the story of one of Disney’s villain.

The role of Maleficent in the Disney’s 1959 Sleeping Beauty is that of the villain and antagonist who places a curse on the new born Princess Aurora detailing that on her sixteenth birthday, she will fall into a “sleep-like death” that can only be undone by “true love’s kiss” (Sleeping Beauty). In 1959, this comes in the form of Prince Phillip who gallantly defeats Maleficent and kisses the cursed Aurora, successfully waking her. Maleficent in the 1959 film is the standard prototype of the Disney villain. She is an older woman, at least older than the adolescent/young adult Aurora, and is “tall, powerful looking, sexual… dominat[ing] the screen with every move; [her] gestures are grand” and “the use of shadow and light in [her] scenes renders [her] even more sinister” (Rothschild 81). Maleficent in a word is terrifying, invoking no sympathy from the audience as she curses the innocent Aurora and shape-shifts into a dragon in her fight against Prince Phillip towards the end of the film. From 1959 on, Maleficent was a member of Disney’s
villains who represented the dark and sinister side of the company’s otherwise happy and lighthearted animated films. It was not until the 2014 film, *Maleficent*, that audiences were offered a backstory of the character and an answer for what led her to her villainy. Using postfeminism to analyze the marketing materials and merchandise for *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent* shows that Disney has enabled the redemption of a villain character while simultaneously positioning the princess character from being the protagonist and into a supporting role. In doing so, Disney has commodified feminist messages of female empowerment and girl power in the marketing materials with the intent of attracting audiences to the film and related merchandise.

As stated in the previous chapter, postfeminism has become a common term to describe corporate strategies who shun the social activism aspect of third wave feminism and instead embrace notions of individualization, empowerment, and choice. Believing that gender equality has been achieved, “postfeminism is seen to be driven by representational concerns for a more attractive and easily sellable image and is no longer on the defensive, as its individualistic credo domesticates feminism’s critical stance” (Génz and Brabon 38). As a result, girl power rhetoric becomes a part of popular culture emphasizing individualism, choice, and empowerment. Specifically,

> Girl power focuses on style as a mark of one’s autonomy,… on independence from men rather than from patriarchal systems and relations of power, and on the individual as independent resister rather than as member of collective social change movement. In this sense, girl power has a home in neoliberalism, which places an emphasis on self-improvement, self-correction, and individual empowerment over social change or state support. (Zaslow 158-9)
In the case of the Walt Disney Company, the company embeds this rhetoric into the advertisements of their products as a means of attracting consumers. Through close readings and analysis of the posters and trailers for Maleficent, we can understand how Disney articulated the shift in character focus to potential audiences.

The posters for Maleficent showcase Disney’s desire to attract audiences based on audiences’ prior knowledge of Sleeping Beauty. “Though rarely as densely packed with meaning as are their video cousins, trailers,” Jonathan Gray writes, “posters can still play a key role in outlining a show’s genre, its star intertexts, and the type of world a would-be audience member is entering” (52). Comparing one of the several posters for Sleeping Beauty at the time of its release in 1959 to a poster for Maleficent, Disney’s shift in focus is clearly to feature more complex female characters and female relationships. In this 1959 Sleeping Beauty poster (see left), Aurora is the main focus of the image, a depiction of purity and docility as she is laying there peacefully asleep holding a single red rose. In this sense however, she is a passive character and Disney is displaying her as such. Of all of her actions throughout the film, Disney felt it right to represent her sleeping- the most passive action possible. Her closed eyes indicate that she cannot do anything but react to change.16 In contrast, Maleficent is seen behind Aurora in the midst of action and is clearly the villain of the film. Disney here is contrasting a passive female character and an active female character. The reddish pink dress Aurora wears is the color that fills the top border of the

16 As Aurora is not capable of performing any actions in her state of sleep, the only action she can even react to is true love’s kiss that is eventually delivered by Prince Phillip.
poster, while Maleficent is featured in contrasting colors of black, gray, and purple signifying her position as the film’s antagonist. She is looking outside of the poster’s image, and while audiences are not aware of what is causing her to look away. Even though the fairies are also shown against a purple backdrop, it is Maleficent’s image against the flames that capture the viewer’s eye after Aurora. The contrast is deeper though between the two characters. The passive Aurora as the protagonist and the eponymous character is subtly portrayed as not only “good” but also as a characterization of the ideal girl or woman, and is offered as a guide for achieving “princesshood” (Whelan 24). The poster encourages the viewer to identify with Aurora by positioning her as the “good” character and naming the film after her. For as Bridget Whelan writes that Disney’s portrayal of the princess narrative, “linking ‘princesshood’ to contemporary concepts of ideal girlhood, and presenting it to the public on the big screen and in vivid color at a time when such a thing was uncommon, and hence [was] utterly captivating to its audience” (24). She goes on to write that, “for generations, Disney has used the princess narrative to instill in its viewers an understanding of the position of girls and women in American society” (Whelan 27). In contrast, Maleficent in her dark garb and active nature is distinguished as “bad” and the opposite of what girls and women should aspire to be. Rather, the poster promotes that being an active character is villainous and thus the opposite of what a girl, woman, and princess should act like.

Each of the three Maleficent posters (not including the teaser poster) features Jolie in her Maleficent garb front and center in the same position with her gaze fixed on the viewer, cheekbones digitally altered for maximum definition, and horns filling in the
unused space above her.\textsuperscript{17} Her horns resemble curved arrows, pointing to Angelina Jolie’s name at the top of the poster. The viewer is meant to be struck by the power of her gaze and the direct eye contact she is making, as if she is specifically staring right at them. As one’s eyes move to her horns, the gaze naturally follows the horns up to their tips where the actress’ name is prominently displayed, almost as if they are holding up her name in its position. And with that name, comes a wide range of messages for the viewer to interpret. According to Richard Dyer, “The film may, through its deployment of the other signs of character and the rhetoric of film, bring out certain features of the star’s image and ignore others. In other words, from the structured polysemy of the star’s image certain meanings are selected in accord with the overriding conception of the character in the film” (127). Throughout Maleficent’s marketing materials, both trailers and posters, there is a distinct use of Angelina Jolie’s name advertising her in the part of the film’s title character.\textsuperscript{18} Jolie is known not only as an actress but also as a humanitarian and activist for her work with refugees, particularly with women and children in war-torn countries. The poster for the film is postfeminist because it is commodifying Jolie’s name that signifies her humanitarian reputation as a means of promoting and selling the film. The poster is postfeminist because Jolie’s stardom is being utilized as a means of intriguing potential audiences. Génz and Brabon write that, feminism’s conjunction with the media has hardly ever been interpreted as a beneficial exchange of ideas, values and theories, and instead, it has been conceptualized as a takeover or subsumption whereby feminism is seen to lose its autonomous status by becoming incorporated into the popular mainstream. (27)

\textsuperscript{17} Her horns are shown in only two of the three posters, but her body position is the same each. \textsuperscript{18} Notably, this is quite different from other Disney film posters.
Hence, when Jolie appears in a film and her name is attached to the work, her distinction as a feminist humanitarian also becomes attached to the role. While another actress could have played the part of Maleficent, it is Jolie’s activism that makes her playing the role significant and what brings a greater feminist theme to the marketing items of the film, making them postfeminist.

Only previously touched upon, Maleficent’s gaze in the poster is meant to be striking to the viewer. Her gaze is reminiscent of the gaze of Medusa.¹⁹ Mainly only known as being a monster, “Medusa was a powerful goddess at a time when female authority was dominant and the power to be feared was feminine. As the serpent-goddess of the Libyan Amazons,…Medusa represented women’s wisdom. A female face surrounded by serpent-hair was an ancient, widely-recognized symbol of divine, female wisdom” (Bowers 5). Compared to the Sleeping Beauty poster pictured previously in which Aurora is displayed as an object to be viewed, Maleficent in the Maleficent poster dares viewers to gaze back at her. Aurora is presented within the conventional displays of women in film in which, “women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact” (Mulvey 12). In contrast, Maleficent in the Maleficent film poster does not have the same coding of “erotic impact” that Mulvey describes as her gaze to the spectator is coded to be more uncomfortable than visually stimulating. Maleficent looks powerful and determined in the poster, daring the viewer to look at her. Similarly, “the gaze upon Medusa [is] into the face of anger, darkness, and power… Medusa becomes… what she was once for women, an electrifying force representing the dynamic power of the female gaze” (Bowers 19-20). Channeling a

¹⁹ Medusa is the mythical Greek woman-like monster who had living snakes as hair. It is said that those who looked upon her face were turned to stone (Medusa).
feminist mythical icon, Maleficent’s gaze resembling the gaze of Medusa makes the poster postfeminist. Disney is aligning their character, a known villain in popular culture, with a symbol of female wisdom. Just as the character of Maleficent was mainly thought of as villain rather than a possible antihero, Medusa is known more for being a monster than a feminist icon. In their marketing of their film, Disney is commodifying the dichotomous notions Medusa represents in order to attract audiences to a film about a similar character.

In the only poster to feature both Maleficent and Aurora, a tag line for the film is provided saying “Don’t Believe the Fairy Tale.” According to FilmSite.org, film taglines are, “catchy, enticing short phrases used by marketers and film studios to advertise and sell a movie, and to sum up the plot tone or themes of a film.” In contrast, the taglines for Sleeping Beauty in 1959 were “See It With Someone You Love” and “Awaken To A World of Wonders.” The latter pertains to the Sleeping Beauty theme of true love being capable of conquering all. While not necessarily unfavorable, in the context of Sleeping Beauty, the tagline implies that a world of wonders is equivalent to waking to a relatively unknown man kissing you. By Disney referring to Sleeping Beauty in the tagline for Maleficent, the tagline becomes postfeminist in that it implies that Disney is rejecting their previous film. This serves as a method of them promoting the new film and profiting from that message of rejection. Disney’s story of Sleeping Beauty has been an aspect of popular culture since its debut in 1959, and by Disney suggesting that they are stepping away from the 1959 film in favor
of the 2014 film, they are continuing to shape popular culture. Disney’s rejection of the 1959 film in the Maleficent poster as a method of advertisement is postfeminist in that it is being used to capitalize on feminist ideals. For as Génz and Brabon write, “A particular point of contention has been postfeminism’s commercial appeal and its consumerist implications, which are viewed by many as a ‘selling out’ of feminist principles and their co-option as a marketing device” (5). Knowing that their advertising is reaching out to audiences that may not approve of the 1959 film, Disney is conveying the message that as a company, they do not approve either. In order to relay that message, Disney is embedding that message into the earliest mediums of advertising for Maleficent in order to attract those audiences to theaters.

In the subsequent DVD and Blu-Ray releases of Maleficent, consumers are offered another depiction of Maleficent and Aurora. The DVD cover-art for the film features Maleficent once again directly gazing at the viewer, but now Aurora is not confined to her bed. Rather, she is placed behind and off to the left of Maleficent and looking inquisitively over her shoulder with a crown on her head. This is far from what audiences have been conditioned to associate her character with in the form of her sleep-induced passivity as evidenced in the 1959 poster. Her position as an autonomous character is an improvement not only for the character in the Disney canon, but also for Disney who has long regulated the character to completely embody the sleeping in “sleeping beauty” on posters and home video artwork. For even the VHS releases of Sleeping Beauty in 1986 and 1997 respectively both feature Aurora sleeping. On the Blu-Ray/DVD combination pack, Aurora is again featured behind Maleficent near what looks to be the edge of a forest on the right side of the image but without a crown. Again, she is
standing, awake, and has a curious expression on her face. Her depiction in the home video artwork is in sharp contrast to the 1959 Sleeping Beauty poster. The 1959 poster in featuring a sleeping and passive Aurora, codes her as an object meant to be looked upon. The home video artwork, by displaying Aurora as a more active character than the passive one of the 1959 film can be read as postfeminist as the images use Aurora’s newfound lack of passivity as a means of conveying her empowerment. For the 1959 audience that is encouraged to identify with Aurora (and even the audiences of the 1986 and 1997 VHS releases), her state of being an object is conveyed as desirable and ideal. John Berger writes that, “Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines …

the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight” (47). For female audiences who were being promoted notions of “ideal girlhood” and “princesshood” through Disney princess films such as Sleeping Beauty as Whelan describes, this state of being an object to be looked at is suggested as part of achieving it. However, as Berger describes, Aurora is no longer just a “sight” to be looked at as she now has the capability to look back at the viewer rather than have her eyes closed.

Similar to the posters for the 2014 film, the trailers for the promotion of Maleficent are postfeminist in their portrayal of Maleficent and Aurora’s relationship. As with all major films, trailers are an important aspect of the marketing materials used to advertise and promote a film. According to Jonathan Gray, “precisely because trailers, previews, and ads introduce us to a text and its many proposed and supposed meanings, the promotional material that we consume sets up, begins, and frames many of the
interactions that we have with texts” (48). Maleficent’s trailers included a teaser trailer and two full length official trailers released between January and March of 2014. On January 26, 2014, a sneak-peek 90-second teaser trailer for Maleficent aired during the Grammy Awards featuring a cover sung by Lana Del Rey of the classic Sleeping Beauty song, “Once Upon a Dream,” along with an advertisement for a limited time free download of the song on Google Play. Teaser trailers are meant to “create awareness, convey a sense of genre to position a film in the minds of moviegoers, and pique interest so that audiences will want more information later… The teaser arrives too early to attempt a hard sell, because a film needs to be introduced first as a new product” (Marich 24). It is clear from the start of the trailer that the film will have a decidedly darker tone compared to the 1959 version. The frame that Gray writes of in regards to this specific trailer is meant to convey the evil and dark overtones that characterize the film. Mitchell Leib, the president of music at Disney, says of the song that it is, “‘a twisted children’s nursery rhyme– like a horror film’” (Grieving). Specifically Del Rey’s voice is distinct in its quality and elegiac tone, suggesting the film is not going to end in happily ever after for Aurora and Prince Phillip. Pairing Del Ray’s haunting voice with the actions of Maleficent, such as her cursing Aurora and then watching over her in the trailer created an even more eerie interpretation of the film than expected. Tim Greiving writes, “[t]he fact that Del Rey’s vocals seem to emanate from Maleficent herself is completely unintentional serendipity.” However unintentional, the song takes on a new and darker meaning as specific scenes from the film are edited to convey the lyrics allowing the viewer to begin to interpret the filmmaker’s revisionist intentions with the film.
Whereas in the original version of the song in Sleeping Beauty, it is Aurora and Prince Phillip singing the duet to each other, the new solo version touches on the complex female homosocial relationship that Maleficent and Aurora develop as Maleficent watches over Aurora throughout her childhood and into adulthood. Featuring Aurora in specific stages of her life, Aurora is shown as a young child followed immediately by a scene in which she is a young adult. She is running in a sunny field as a child and is then inquisitively approaching the edge of a forest when she is grown up, where Maleficent blows something into the air that causes Aurora to go into a floating trance. As these scenes are shown, Del Rey sings, “I know you, that gleam in your eyes is so familiar a gleam/ And I know it’s true” (Lana Del Rey). Disney is using this part of the song to convey a possible relationship between the two characters that is more complex than the one in the 1959 film. This emphasis is even more pronounced when one takes into account that Prince Phillip is not even featured in the sneak-peak trailer, highlighting the notion that Aurora’s relationship with him is not as important to the filmmakers and that it is the relationship between Maleficent and Aurora that will take precedence. Disney showcasing this possible relationship as a key aspect of the sneak-peak trailer and pairing it with a rendition of “Once Upon a Dream” (that then becomes available for purchase) is not an effort on their part to convey their desire to rewrite the relationship between two characters because they no longer agree with the original depiction, but because by redefining their relationship in a more feminist friendly manner (or at least alluding to it), they can make a profit. In the context of Disney princess films, (Maleficent is still a princess narrative), Maleficent and Aurora’s complicated relationship is building upon previous female relationships featured in the past. For instance, the relationship between
Rapunzel and Mother Gothel in *Tangled* is complex in the sense that Mother Gothel pretends to be Rapunzel’s mother simply so she can take advantage of the powers of Rapunzel’s hair. Moreover, Anna and Elsa’s sisterly relationship in Frozen is complex because it is about two sisters who love each other but do not necessarily know each other well as the death of their parents does not bring them closer together. Just as other complex female relationships were commodified in the past, Del Rey’s version of the song in the sneak-peek trailer makes the trailer and the song postfeminist because it is turning the allusion to a female homosocial relationship into a commodity intended for purchase.

The beginning of the teaser trailer shows a live action version of the famous christening scene from the 1959 film. The scene in the trailer adheres to its 1959 counterpart, showing the king in distress over Maleficent’s presence and Maleficent cursing the newborn Aurora. For audiences familiar with the original film, this beginning part of the trailer is meant to remind them of the context of the story line. However, the reiteration of the original content ceases there as the screen switches between moments from the film and a black background with capitalized silver-colored words and green smoke spreading throughout the screen saying, “You know the tale… Now find out the truth” (*Maleficent* Sneak-peek). Their contrast between a reiteration of the original content and a statement of its falsity is part of Disney’s efforts to rebrand the story of *Sleeping Beauty* as less sexist and socially-retrograde than what the original film depicts, informing audiences that it is only now they are offering the full story that led to one woman cursing another. In this sense, the teaser trailer for *Maleficent* is postfeminist in that Disney is using it to communicate a feminist message of the rebranding of *Sleeping
Beauty with the intent and goal that audiences will buy into the product that is the film. It is here that the teaser trailer embodies postfeminist rhetoric as, “Postfeminism’s frame of reference opens out to include not just— as the term suggests— a conceptual and semantic bond with feminism but also relations with other social, cultural, theoretical and political areas— such as consumer culture, popular media and neoliberal rhetoric— that might be in conflict with feminism” (Génz and Brabon 6). The teaser trailer’s message of “You know the tale… Now find out the truth” suggests the original film’s endurance in popular culture and assumes audiences’ familiarity with a product from nearly fifty years ago, while also advocating to audiences that the buying of the future product will provide them with the information they may want to learn.

Following the teaser trailer, the first official trailer (second trailer in total) was released. Full length trailers, unlike teasers, “tend to emphasize fuller scenes from the film… which builds on a general awareness moviegoers already should have with the film” (Marich 30). In following with this tradition and not packing the video with plot points and characters, the trailer focuses on Aurora meeting Maleficent for the first time and images of Maleficent using her powers to raise treacherous branches from the ground. These images from the film do not provide audiences with any reason to suspect that Maleficent is not the Manichean villain audiences know from the 1959 film. Actually, the trailer uses audiences’ awareness of the 1959 film to engage them further and promote the film. As Marich writes, “In creating trailers, no one is shy about being derivative. A trailer that reminds moviegoers of hit films from the past is considered effective in selling the new film” (31). The creators of the trailer are using people’s awareness of the 1959 film and new elements of the 2014 film to encourage the interest
of potential audiences. Images reminiscent of the 1959 film such as Maleficent’s silhouette, her pet crow, Aurora about to prick her finger on a spinning wheel, and Aurora in her “sleep like death” are used to remind audiences of the 1959 animated film. However, as these images are shown on screen, Aurora’s dialogue hints at a possible deeper relationship between Maleficent and Aurora. In an exchange between the two characters, Aurora begins by saying,

AURORA. I know who you are. You’ve been watching over me my whole life. I know you’re there. Your shadow has been following me ever since I was small. Don’t be afraid.

MALEFICENT. I’m not afraid.

AURORA. Then come out.

MALEFICENT. Then you’ll be afraid (Maleficent Trailer #1).

A look of fear passes over Aurora’s face before Maleficent steps out from the shadow she was concealing herself in. Suggesting from the teaser trailer that a homosocial relationship exists between these two characters, Disney is featuring this exchange not only to attract audiences, but to also rewrite the relationship (or lack thereof) between these two characters in the 1959 film.20

Aurora, unlike the character in 1959, is being inquisitive and has agency. Despite her brief look of fear, she is being advertised as a character that does have some control over her own volitional actions such as seeking out the unknown presence that has always

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20 Further suggestive of a deeper homosocial relationship between these two characters as evidenced in the trailer, are the fact that there are no male characters featured and the focus is placed on the interaction between two women.
shadowed her life. Such conduct suggests that Aurora embodies the characteristics of a “progressive princess.” This term refers to,

[A] princess who “rejects stereotypical behavior” from the past, behavior that was perpetuated by the first and second wave Disney princesses. Such behavior includes characteristics considered to be unpalatable to contemporary feminists, such as passivity, dutifulness, and subservience to male characters. But the progressive princess moves beyond simple rejection; she must ‘balance assertiveness’- a new assertiveness not previously seen in the traditional Disney princess narrative, and one that might initially be more traditionally associated with male character- with ‘compassion.’ In other words, progressive princesses exchange negative traditional feminine characteristics (i.e. passivity) for more positive, traditionally masculine traits, such as assertiveness and rebelliousness. However, they retain those traditionally feminine characteristics which are still considered positive by contemporary feminists (i.e. compassion). The resulting character is not a ‘hero in drag’ but a new kind of heroine, and for the princess narrative specifically, a new kind of princess: the progressive princess (Whelan 29).

It is postfeminist because by showcasing Aurora as asserting herself in the exchange between her and Maleficent, Disney is using a known character and portraying her in a more feminist manner. But in doing so, Disney is commodifying elements of “girl power media culture” by portraying an active and assertive character in order to attract people to the film. According to Emile Zaslow,
Girl power media culture is both a point of production and a mode of expression that shifts the ways in which we conceptualize femininity. In this new model, some elements of traditional femininity (beauty, care, and sexiness) are retained while others (passivity, weakness, and dependence) are met with a feminist reimagining so that girls are repositioned as active, choice-making agents. In this discourse, even acts of traditional femininity are recoded as empowered. (158)

Using a character that is already part of popular culture and conveying her in the trailer as possessing conventional feminine attributes, Disney is still portraying Aurora to be similar in those respects to her 1959 counterpart. However because the “Maleficent #1” trailer presents her to not be a passive character (like the 1959 Aurora), her feminine qualities such as showing kindness towards Maleficent is indicative of her individual choice to possess such qualities and thus, is an empowered choice.

The third and final trailer for Maleficent continues to emphasize a homosocial relationship between Maleficent and Aurora. The trailer begins once again by showing scenes that adhere to the original plot of the 1959 film just like in the teaser trailer but does provide an extended look at Maleficent cursing Aurora. Her tone of voice in this scene is powerful and demanding as the trailer flashes the words “You know the tale… Now find out the truth” in these beginning moments of the video. In a following scene, Aurora is shown approaching a forest as Maleficent looks on. Maleficent comments to a man (whom she then turns into her crow) that Aurora is a “curious little beastie”. Maleficent knows Aurora is the baby she cursed, but they have not interacted with each other yet in the trailer. Aurora is a human, whereas the trailer tells us that Maleficent is a
fairy. Because audiences are not provided a specific reason for Maleficent cursing Aurora, audiences are left to wonder if her reason for cursing her is nothing more than a human versus fairy contention. In calling Aurora a beast, she is calling her an animal and a dangerous one. However by adding the suffix “ie” to the word, Maleficent softens the insult. When a diminutive suffix such as “ie” is added to the end of a name, the name becomes a hypocorism- a pet name. In the following scene of the trailer, audiences are shown a shorter version of the scene in which Aurora tries to coax Maleficent from out of the shadows. As in Trailer #1, when Maleficent responds, “Then you’ll be afraid,” audiences are presented again with the same line spoken here. However because Maleficent just called Aurora by a pet-name, the line can now be interpreted to convey that Maleficent cares for Aurora. While Maleficent is still shown walking out of the shadows right after this moment, her first reaction was to tell Aurora that Aurora will be scared of her appearance- an act that can now be interpreted as kindness. In the context of postfeminism, the trailer continuing the emphasize Maleficent and Aurora’s homosocial relationship is an effort to continue commodifying complex female relationships. For Disney, portraying complex female characters and complex female relationships had already proven to do well at the box office as evidenced by Frozen in 2013. Domestically grossing over a billion dollars in sales, Frozen conveys that the truest form of love does not have to be romantic but can be between two sisters. As Justin Chang writes, “As in ‘Frozen’… the key relationship in ‘Maleficent’ is not a romance, but rather a thorny, emotionally complex bond between two…women.” This bond is put on display in this Maleficent trailer and is being used as a marketing device to attract audiences, with the knowledge that such feminist relationships in the company’s films have been profitable in
the recent past. Thus, the trailer is postfeminist as it uses “feminist rhetoric [and is] being packaged and sold by media industries” (Riordan 295).

Another exchange between Maleficent and Aurora is highlighted in the third trailer in which Maleficent is telling Aurora about herself is indicative of Disney’s transition of focus from the princess to the villain. Over scenes of Maleficent flying, Aurora continues to demonstrate her curiosity when she asks, “All the other fairies fly, why don’t you?” (Maleficent Trailer #3). Maleficent responds saying, “I had wings once. They were strong, but they were stolen from me” as a brief shot of the king appears on screen. Their exchange is the first acknowledgement in the film’s marketing materials of Maleficent’s wings and alludes to the “You know the tale, now find out the truth” statement. Their exchange also further emphasizes Maleficent’s role as the antihero and Aurora, the princess, becoming a supporting character because the exchange works to offer audiences information about Maleficent rather than Aurora. Maleficent is an antihero because she does not exude qualities of heroism throughout the trailer, and yet she is the central and eponymous character of the film. Maleficent’s response that her wings were stolen begins to complicate her role as the central villain of the Sleeping Beauty plot because it allows audiences to infer that she was the victim of a wrongdoing before she cursed Aurora. This idea is further implied when Maleficent goes on to tell Aurora, “There is evil in this world… hatred and revenge” (Maleficent Trailer #3). During this statement, the trailer features shots of fire being hurled towards the forest that has been established as Maleficent’s home (it is where she is seen hiding during her initial meeting with Aurora) and images of the angry king waging battle. These scenes work with the voiceover between Maleficent and Aurora to imply that the lines of good
and evil in the film might not be as black and white as they were in the 1959 film. It also works to further rebrand the original 1959 plot in which the point of contention was between two women. The trailer rather shows that the point of contention might not be between Aurora and Maleficent but between Maleficent and the king. This idea can be supported by the king’s only spoken line in the trailer (also his only speaking moment in all of the film’s trailers) when he says, “Bring me her [Maleficent’s] head” in a tone that could be interpreted as sinister, or simply infuriated considering that she did curse his newborn daughter. The larger point to the analysis of these exchanges is that Disney is advertising to audiences that the premise of their 1959 film is false and the reason Maleficent curses Aurora is not as simple as the original woman-hating-another-woman storyline. Scenes from the trailer indicating their relationship to be more complex than it was in the 1959 film work to convey notions of female empowerment that entice audiences to purchase the future product. Ellen Riordan writes that “A significant contribution to conceptualizing the commodification process in communication comes from Dallas Smythe (1978) who suggested that the audience is the primary commodity of media… The notion of the audience as a commodity helps clarify how the rhetoric of empowerment can be used to draw in and claim an audience” (285). Hence, the trailer is hence postfeminist in that it uses depictions of female empowerment and complex female relationships to draw the audience into purchasing the product that is the film.

For Disney, the film is not the only product they are trying to sell to audiences though the posters and trailers as marketing materials. There is also film-related merchandise that gets implicitly promoted through these advertisements. As discussed

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21 In the 1959 film, Maleficent curses Aurora because she was not invited to Aurora’s christening.
previously in the chapter on *Cinderella*, audiences of Disney films are aware that defining items of the film that are found in the posters and trailers are an advertisement for mass-produced copies of those items to be found in stores for purchase. For audiences who identify with the characters of the film, items representing those characters and the empowered choices they make are available for purchase allowing the consumer to feel empowered by association. The merchandise for *Maleficent* illustrates both Maleficent’s role as the film’s protagonist and the princess figure’s role as a supporting character. While the princess being the supporting character does not easily appear to be empowering, in the context of *Maleficent*, it is. Despite Aurora being the eponymous character of the 1959 film, she does not have a major role in the action of the film. While the role of the character has been downgraded in the 2014 film, her role within the film and the agency she is given is significantly expanded upon from the animated film. The majority of merchandise offered by Disney in conjunction with the film features the eponymous character, while the Aurora-related merchandise in the context of the 2014 film consists of two dolls and a few dress-up items targeted to girls. Meanwhile, Maleficent is featured on t-shirts, mugs, pins, dolls, collectible figurines, including wearable horns like her own. The pink ballgown (top picture) Aurora wears in the 1959 film and in the Disney Princess franchise is not amongst the *Maleficent* merchandise. Instead, there is a pale pink gown (bottom picture), a matching tiara, and pair of shoes for sale that are meant to be representations of an outfit Aurora wears in the film. The Aurora character who wears the pale pink gown in *Maleficent* is not the same Aurora character that is
featured in the Disney Princess franchise. The character of Aurora as seen in Sleeping Beauty is a member of the Disney Princess franchise, while the merchandise that pertains to Aurora in Maleficent does not become part of the Disney Princess Aurora merchandise of the franchise. While this distinction between gown colors may seem insignificant to the casual consumer, it is nevertheless important in Disney’s depiction of their princess characters. One of the main purposes of Maleficent is to vindicate Maleficent and redeem her as a character. This allows Disney to advertise and promote the Aurora character in Maleficent while still financially benefitting from the 1959 Aurora-related merchandise that is being sold under the Disney Princess label. While Disney disavows Sleeping Beauty (1959) in the marketing materials for Maleficent, the products pertaining to the 1959 film and its eponymous character are still prevalent in stores.

At the time of writing this thesis, the majority of Maleficent merchandise is no longer available through the online Disney store.²² Currently the Maleficent (character) related merchandise available for purchase through the Disney Store all depict Maleficent in the 1959 animated form. Disney characters continue to be presented to audiences by the company through merchandise after the film leaves theaters and becomes available for home viewership. In the case of Maleficent, Disney has allowed their redeemed antihero to return to being characterized as a Disney Villain and allowing for the Aurora in Maleficent to practically disappear from merchandise. As for the Aurora featured in the

²² The only items still available for purchase is the DVD and the Blu-Ray Combo pack.
1959 animated film, she is still a prominent member of the Disney Princess franchise.\textsuperscript{23} She appears on franchise merchandise echoing girl power rhetoric such as on a women’s shirt with the statement “My Castle My Rules” and on a backpack looking in charge with her hands on her hips alongside Jasmine (\textit{Aladdin} 1992) and Rapunzel (\textit{Tangled}) with the statement, “Let Courage Lead the Way.” The irony of the women’s shirt is that Aurora does not technically have a castle. She is born in one and ends up living in one, but the castle is not hers.\textsuperscript{24} Rather, the castle belongs to her father when she is born and she only occupies it again when she marries. Furthermore, the irony of the statement on the backpack alongside a depiction of the 1959 Aurora is that courage never factors into her personality. And for that matter, nor does she ever lead anything. As a passive character who is asleep for the greater part of the movie, all of the events in Aurora’s life are determined by others. According to Riordan, while the idea of girl power in theory is commendable, it “unfortunately bec[omes] reified into tangible commodities bought and sold most notably by entertainment corporations…point[ing] to how a use value, the idea of valuing girls, is changed into an exchange value, commodities [that are] intended to ‘empower’ girls” (289-90). Even though the \textit{Maleficent} related items can be read as postfeminist because they represent the feminist messages being displayed in the film’s marketing materials that reject the

\textsuperscript{23} The Disney Villains is another one of Disney’s franchises that includes several well known villain characters from several Disney films including Maleficent.

\textsuperscript{24} It should be noted that the flagship castle at DisneyLand is referred to as Sleeping Beauty’s castle. Even in this setting however, she “inhabits” it with her husband, Prince Phillip.
1959 animated counterpart, Disney is not going so far as to rid themselves of the 1959 film related merchandise as it is still a valuable aspect of their most profitable franchise. Simply, Disney is representing the 1959 Aurora as a “progressive princess” while ignoring her role in *Sleeping Beauty*.

When *Maleficent* reached theaters nationwide on May 30, 2014, the film went on to gross over two-hundred million dollars in ticket sales (Box Office Mojo). By doing a revisionist take on their 1959 animated film, *Sleeping Beauty*, Disney removed the princess character from the main role and made her as a supporting character while upgrading the villain to the role of the protagonist. By analyzing the film’s marketing materials and merchandise of the 2014 film through the lens of postfeminism, we can understand how Disney’s changing of these characters’ roles allows a complex homosocial relationship to convey notions of female empowerment and agency to prospective future consumers of the film. In addition, a heavy reliance on the promotion of Angelina Jolie’s name as the title character allows Disney to associate Jolie’s humanitarian work with the character she portrays building the association between character and performer. This is the opposite of the casting decision Disney made in casting Elle Fanning as Aurora. While she is not a newcomer to Hollywood, Fanning does not possess the same star power as Jolie allowing for Disney to place a relatively unknown actress in the role of Aurora. While her youth represents and emerging sexuality that aides her in her portrayal of the character, Fanning’s life outside her role as an actress does not conflate with her playing a revisionist take on a Disney princess.\(^\text{25}\)

Thus at the time of *Maleficent*’s promotion, using such marketing methods allowed

\(^{25}\) The same argument can also be made for Lily James in her role of Cinderella in the 2015 film discussed in chapter one.
Disney to temporarily place their 1959 animated film on the margins of the franchise and promote the 2014 live-action revisionist depiction’s commodified feministic messages to potential audiences.
Chapter 3
Leaving the Story Behind:
The Character of Snow White in Disney’s Modern Merchandising

In 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* became the first full length animated film to debut in cinemas across the country. Produced by Walt Disney Productions and overseen by Walt Disney himself, *Snow White* went on to take in nearly $8.5 million dollars at the box office within the first three months of release. Improving upon former practices of animation, “*Snow White* was an immediate hit, setting attendance records around the USA” (Wasko 14). In preparation for the film’s release, Walt Disney wanted to market the film on a larger scale than any other Disney film before. In turn,

As early as 1936, the company granted over 70 licenses to various companies to produce a wide range of items, including clothing, food, toys, books, phonograph records, and sheet music… In fact, the merchandising campaign was noted as a ‘dramatic example of a new force in merchandising.’ The multitude of products not only brought in revenues but importantly helped to publicize the film and build the Disney reputation. (Wasko 14)

Merchandise for the film included clothes, toys, and painting and coloring books. With the success of the film and the marketing campaign and merchandise that accompanied it, the Walt Disney brand began the process of slowly growing into the billion-dollar entertainment company audience know today.

Disney’s version of *Snow White* has not continued to resonate with audiences over time. Understood to be wholesome family entertainment in its day, the film is now largely regarded as regressive in its depiction of women. Sarah Rothschild writes of

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26 This figure is not adjusted for inflation.
Disney’s earliest princess, “Despite being created after the first wave of feminism, th[is] Disney princess present[s] a retrograde image of femininity, undermining the first-wave feminist agenda and ignoring the progress women had made before and during the time of the film[’s] creation” (53). Known for being fair, kind, and gentle, Snow White attracts the attention of a prince before being forced into exile by an evil queen. She finds refuge in a cottage home belonging to seven dwarfs in a forest inhabited with animals who come to adore her. Snow White, in return for the safe haven of the dwarfs’ cottage, promise to cook and clean for them while they are out working in the mines. When the evil queen finds Snow White and feeds her a poisoned apple that causes her to fall into a sleep-spell, the dwarfs place her body in a glass coffin. The prince comes to mourn her body and upon kissing her, wakes Snow White from the curse and they live happily ever after.

Walt Disney adaptation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is a film Walt Disney “combine[d] elements of traditional fairy tales with mid-twentieth century American mores to valorize his conservative agenda” (Rothschild 54). Nearly seventy years after the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Snow White was one of the original princess characters to be featured in the Disney Princess franchise when the franchise was started at the beginning of the millennium.

Due to the historical nature of Snow White as the first Disney princess for the Walt Disney Company, it would be more conspicuous to not feature her in the princess lineup than it is to attempt to manipulate the depictions of the character in an effort to align her with the other princesses (included the other retrograde princesses as well) and raise her profile with consumers. Leaving her off of the princess roster when she meets the requirements to be in the franchise would raise more questions than Disney just
placing her in various products, both alone and alongside other princesses. In attempts to associate her in with the others, Disney places Snow White only interacting with the forest animals and in a reduced role compared to the others. Unlike other Disney Princesses, such depictions do not allow for varied images of the character to appear on merchandise. In the context of postfeminism, the constraints associated with portraying the character is important because as the rhetoric of Disney Princess franchise reflect notions of female empowerment and girl power, Disney cannot discard their oldest princess simply because her character does not adapt as well to such changes as do the others. When Disney is commodifying these notions in their merchandise, they must figure out ways of rebranding Snow White in order to maintain her applicability to the franchise amongst the other princesses. By placing Snow White in current merchandise alongside other Disney Princess characters, Disney is aiming to associate the character with the attributes of the characters placed around her rather than with the character traits such as domesticity and impressionableness that she displays in the 1937 film.

As previously stated, Snow White is portrayed in Disney Princess merchandise interacting with the forest animals. While the poisoned apple is an identifier of the Snow White plot line, similar to Cinderella’s glass slipper or Belle’s rose, the apple is only featured in merchandise usually in the scenery around Snow White instead of her holding it ready to eat. Alternatively, by presenting Snow White interacting with the forest animals, Disney is alluding to her inherent kindness and goodness. However, all of the Disney Princesses can be described as kind and good. These character traits do not set her apart from any of the other princesses in any significant manner. For instance, the inspirational message associated with Belle (Beautying and the Beast 1991) is “don’t judge a
book by its cover” and the message associated with Ariel (*The Little Mermaid* 1989) is “explore new worlds” (Dream Big, Princess). Both of these messages are highly descriptive of the characters they pertain to.\(^\text{27}\) In contrast, the inspirational message attributed to Snow White is “be a friend to all” (Dream Big, Princess). Yes, it describes Snow White. But it could also pertain to the other Disney Princesses such as Jasmine (*Aladdin* 1992) and Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty* 1959) and as well. In effect, the forest animals that Snow White is situated with in merchandise do not symbolize anything significant to the character or the film.

A prime example of featuring Snow White amongst other Disney Princesses and reducing her role amongst the other featured characters is a pink nightshirt for girls featuring Snow White, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Ariel, Jasmine, and Tiana. Out of all six princess characters featured on this item, Snow White is placed the furthest back and is the smallest. She is also the only one not looking straight ahead or out of the frame of the item, and is instead occupied by an interaction with a bluebird. Furthermore, the item description is,“She’ll be compelled to sleep for a spell in our enchanting Disney Princess Nightshirt” (Disney Princess Nightshirt). Snow White is the only character featured that actually suffers from a spell-induced sleep, as the item’s description emphasizes, but she is still featured as a minor character amongst the others as evidenced by her placement and relative size. The

\(^{27}\) For Ariel, she wants to become a part of the human world. For Belle, she works to see the good naturedness of the beast.
item is postfeminist in that it is communicating messages of female agency and empowerment through the other princess characters. While all of them except for Rapunzel are simply standing there, they are making eye contact with the viewer rather than being shown engaging in an activity like Snow White. Stephanie Génz and Benjamin A. Brabon write,

Postfeminism appears at the centre of the discussions on the state of twenty-first century feminisms and politics as it has been defined as an inherently individualistic and consumer-oriented stance that works to incorporate commodities and disperse feminism’s fight for female emancipation and equal opportunities. Postfeminism is said to effect a recollectivisation of the feminist movement as it translates feminist social goals and political ideas into matters of individual choice or lifestyle (36-7).

The other five princess characters are looking out towards the viewer and their body language suggests they are active, free, and emboldened to make their own decisions because they are actively looking at the viewer. In contrast, Snow White is looking at the bird she is holding and her body language suggests she is passive and demure in disposition. However, by Snow White being grouped with the characters presented on the item allows for these characters’ expressions of empowerment to be transferred onto Snow White. The result is that the image of her character on the item is not as seemingly retrograde as it would be if the item only featured her in that position. The nightshirt does still conform to notions of femininity with the floral pattern on the sleeves and ruffles and a bow in the middle of the neckline. While Disney is portraying their princess characters
in active and empowered states in accordance with the rhetoric of the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign, they are still presenting their garments with feminine designs.

Animal sidekicks are a common facet of Disney Princess films. In modern merchandising, Disney features several of the princess characters next to their animal companions to highlight the princess’ good-naturedness and to position the princess next to a character from the film that is not the prince or male love interest. This is important because Disney Princess films no longer exclusively feature male love interests and there are no male characters featured in the “Dream Big, Princess” campaign videos, Disney cannot then feature the princesses on a product with the male characters. Therefore, their animal sidekicks become a better-suited companion for the princesses than the male characters. Beginning with Snow White in 1937, “animals provided the perfect foil for the princess. They were a class of peasantry whose simplicity and devotion proved the princess's worthiness as a ruler and a role model. The princesses proved they were exemplary (human) women by demonstrating their benevolent superiority over their animal subjects” (Condis 1). The forest animals Snow White interacts with consist of deer, birds, and rabbits who aid her in the various chores she promises to do. However unlike other Disney Princess films with animal companions, these animals do not help drive the plot forward. In Cinderella, Cinderella’s mice friends have names and are later turned into horses by the fairy godmother to take her to the ball. Similarly in Tangled, Rapunzel’s animal friend and companion is a chameleon named Pascal who at the film’s climax trips Mother Gothel (the film’s antagonist) out of the tower where she has kept Rapunzel imprisoned. Unlike the animals in Snow White, these animal characters help drive the storyline and are the princesses’ main source of interaction aside from their love
interest. While the animals in *Snow White* do help the dwarfs save Snow White, they are still not her main companion in the same way the princesses have their animal companions. Snow White’s loyal companions are the seven dwarfs she shares a cottage with. Similar to the animal companion(s) to Cinderella and Rapunzel, the dwarfs have names and are crucial to the plot of the film. In fact, they defeat the Evil Queen by trapping her on a cliff that leads to her falling to her death. Like Pascal and the mice in *Tangled* and *Cinderella* respectively, the dwarfs are Snow White’s companions in every regard except that they are not animals and are human. Thus when animal companions are featured alongside their princess counterpart in Disney Princess merchandise, it is not the dwarfs but the forest animals that the are featured with Snow White who have no true significance to the plot of the film she is featured in.  

When Snow White is featured alongside the forest animals, it is not equivalent to another princess character being placed on a product next to her animal companion. The image of a Disney Princess product on the next page exhibits Disney’s featuring of Snow White with the forest animals alongside other princesses accompanied by their animal companions. If Disney were to place Snow White along side her actual companions from the film, we would see her interacting with the dwarfs rather than with a bluebird. However, the dwarfs are a problem for Disney Princess merchandise as they are male.

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28 The dwarfs are nonetheless memorable for the role they collectively play in the film because of the famous song they sing, “Whistle While You Work.” Hence this is why their popularity has allowed them to be independent characters in Disney merchandizing from the eponymous character of the film they appear in. For Disney, they are more profitable in their own merchandise than as companions to Snow White.
characters (not even a love interest) in a female character dominated franchise. Moreover, they are male characters that are presented as a retrograde depiction of dwarfism and as less than human.29 By placing Snow White next to the dwarfs in a similar fashion as to how Cinderella and Rapunzel are placed next to their animal companions, the portrayal of the princesses as the ultimate embodiment of good naturedness and kindness would be lost. For not only are the dwarfs human, but Snow White’s relationship to the dwarfs is essentially to be their house maid. She cooks and cleans for them and that is why they love her. She is kind to them, however the iconography of Snow White next to the dwarfs that would be alongside those of the other princess characters and their animal companions are not in alignment with each other and not in alignment with the current intentions of the Disney Princess franchise. Therefore, Snow White’s image must be manipulated to a depiction that is less like the character found in the 1937 film and more akin to the princesses in the franchise that are pictured on the merchandise beside her. Similar to a redesign of Cinderella and Aurora audiences see in the live-action films they appear in, Snow White is redesigned for the merchandise she is featured on. Karen E. Wohlwend writes of the Disney Princess products that such merchandise,

29 By not placing them next to an able-bodied human character, Disney has the opportunity to use them in other merchandise that does not characterize their retrograde physical features.
Identity messages circulate through merchandise that surrounds young consumers as they dress in, sleep in, bathe in, eat from, and play with commercial goods decorated with popular culture images… immersing children in products that invite identification with familiar media characters and communicate gendered expectations about what children should buy… and who they should be. (57)

Thus while the bird does not represent anything specific of Snow White, it is a way for the character to still be presented in the Disney Princess franchise amongst other princesses instead of fading into oblivion.

Further depictions of Snow White alongside other princesses, specifically others considered to be retrograde in various products emphasizes the manipulation of such characters to fit the image of the “progressive princess” as previously described by Bridget Whelan. In another item in which Snow White is featured holding and interacting with a bird is on a Disney Princess towel. Again she is placed with Rapunzel and Cinderella, however in this product, Snow White is the only character featured interacting with an animal. Rather, both Rapunzel and Cinderella are portrayed looking forward and smirking. Rapunzel looks fearless and determined, while Cinderella looks to be independent and sassy. Snow White in comparison is featured doing the same thing as she was doing on the bag discussed previously. The princesses as featured on the towel are clearly feminine, however the body language and facial expressions of Cinderella and Rapunzel are indicative of girl
Emilie Zaslow writes that, “girl power has represented an expansive media culture that encourages girls and women to identify both as traditionally feminine objects and as power feminist agents” (3). Rather, Disney as a component of the mainstream media is adhering to neoliberalist dogma by encouraging girls and women to be their own source of empowerment. Consumers experiencing “identificatory attachment” as discussed in chapter one with the princess characters are being fed a message that deems it acceptable to be both feminine and powerful. And while Snow White’s image on the towel does not fit the latter part of that description, her placement amongst characters who do allows her to be associated with the girl power message by default.

By not manipulating images of Snow White in the same manner as images of Cinderella and Aurora are manipulated, Disney is demonstrating that even they are not capable of disassociating all of the retrograde qualities Snow White embodies and is representative of when presenting her in products. However, because she is Walt Disney’s first princess and an original member of the franchise, she cannot be removed from the Disney Princess lineup. Therefore in order to continue featuring her, Disney must distance her character from the film plot she’s associated with so that the context of her character in modern merchandising is barely recognizable. Snow White’s domesticity is a larger problem than Cinderella’s domesticity because Cinderella is forced into the situation by an abusive stepmother. Snow White is on the run from the Evil Queen, but

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30 It should be noted that Cinderella, Aurora, and Belle are also the only three Disney princesses to currently be featured in live-action films based on the films they appear in. Also, this is the only Disney Princess product to feature the “classic era” princesses together without a princess character from a more recent film.

31 Snow White was one of the eight initial princess characters to be featured in the Disney Princess Franchise in its inception in 2000.
she willingly does housework as opposed to Cinderella being forced to do so.

Manipulated images of Cinderella and Aurora on the franchise’s merchandise stand in stark contrast to the image of Snow White when these characters are placed on a product together. Similar to Cinderella’s image on the towel, Cinderella once again has her body facing towards the viewer. With one hand on her hip and the other dangling her glass slipper with her finger, she once again looks sassy and independent. Aurora in the center has both of her hands on her hips and is also facing the viewer. Her body language and facial expression make her seem powerful and in charge— a far different depiction of her than what is featured in the 1959 film. The product is postfeminist in that the two characters exhibit “Certain themes associated with postfeminism [which] have acquired common currency in the mainstream, such as personal empowerment...[and] entitlement to pleasure and emancipation” (Lazar 38). Aside from her being portrayed interacting with the bird again, Snow White is much smaller than Aurora and Cinderella. While they are featured to be “progressive princesses”, there is nothing “progressive” about Snow White when solely viewing her image on the product. However, once again the other princesses’ character traits are transferred onto Snow White in an effort by Disney to raise the profile of the character and to keep her relevant in the eyes of the consumer.

Presenting Snow White alongside messages that are conflict with her character can still have the desired effect by the producer to align the character with other princess figures. In one specific product designed for adolescents, Snow White is featured
alongside other princess characters such as Pocahontas and Rapunzel- two princess characters known for their headstrong personalities. With the images repeated throughout the shirt, the short snippets of text that also get repeated come to be identified with each princess character, not just the character the text is placed next to. Even though she is surrounded by the forest animals again, messages of self-empowerment such as “together we are strong,” “listen with your heart,” and “open your heart to dreams” adorn the shirt. These messages are being used as a means of attracting consumers who will feel individually empowered by the product, thus making it postfeminist. Michelle S. Bae writes in her essay, “Interrogating Girl Power: Girlhood, Popular Culture, and Postfeminism” that, “One much scrutinized issue of the postfeminist conceptualization of girl power is the aesthetically oriented consumerism that structures it, a consumerism created through mainstream commodification for economic purposes” (3).

Thus as these messages are being commodified, the character of Snow White is being strategically placed on the item in order for these messages to become linked to her otherwise regressive persona.

Other characters from the princess films tend to be excluded almost entirely from the princess-related merchandise. However in the case of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, the dwarfs are prominently featured in merchandise for both men and women, on kitchenware, and as part of the runDisney merchandise- a line of products designed for

32 The non-princess character, Tinker Bell is also featured on this item. While it is considered to be a part of the “Disney’s Animators Collection,” it is still advertised on the Disney Store website under the Disney Princess franchise merchandise.
the Disney marathon races. Furthermore, the evil queen has also been moved to the Disney Villains franchise. Effectively the characters from *Snow White* have all been separated and situated within different lines of merchandise within Disney Consumer Products unlike other Disney Princess films. Therefore, while the forest animals do not have great significance to Snow White, they are the only characters left from the film that are deemed appropriate to be associated with Snow White as she is featured in the Disney Princess franchise and who cannot be featured in merchandise alone similar to the Evil Queen and the dwarfs. In these portrayals, the youth, innocence, and child-like qualities of Snow White and the animals are instead communicated to consumers. According to Janet Wasko, the forest animals typify “childlike behavior [and] innocence is represented overtly through Snow White’s name, but also by her character” (131). On such products where Snow White is pictured alone from any other princess character and only with the forest animals, the character is no longer featured as trying to reflect the other princess character’s attributes. Rather, the images of her invoke similar notions of innocence and child-like behaviors that are found in the 1937 film. Despite the forest animals not being significant to the story line of the film, their placement next to Snow White brings the princess character to resemble the character featured in the film as closely as possible.
There is also an effort to appeal to the adolescent audience of the Disney Princess franchise and to maintain the visibility of the Snow White character with this particular demographic. One product called “Snow White’s Book of Secrets” is an example of Disney attempting to make Snow White seem less child-like, as she does in the previously mentioned merchandise, and look for like a teenager in order to appeal to adolescents who have outgrown the character-specific merchandise for young girls. On the cover of the item, Snow White is holding a red rose rather than interacting with the forest animals. Notably, the rose is not a signifying item of the Snow White storyline. Rather, a red rose is most commonly attributed to Belle of Beauty and the Beast. Her face looks more grown up compared to other products she is featured in, both alone and alongside other princesses and her body language is more inviting than when she is interacting with the forest animals. No longer are there the notions of childhood innocence and child-like behaviors. And while this portrayal of Snow White does not resemble the character of the film, her depiction in such a product is meant to continue to appeal to adolescent consumers.

Snow White is and will remain an important character to the Walt Disney Company. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs gave the company (and the country) its first full length animated film and became the first Disney Princess. Adapting the tale, “Disney manipulated a somewhat fluid, traditional, and existing narrative and shaped it into their own. From that point onward, Disney staked a clam on the princess narrative. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs became a formative film in the psyche of the American public” (Whelan 23). As the Disney Princesses are now featured together in a multi-billion dollar franchise, the retrograde qualities of Snow White, even in comparison
to the other classic era princesses, are readily apparent. Whether the product be a towel, beach bag, or dance-leotard, the images of Snow White that are used in the merchandise of the Disney Princesses take the character and position her further away from the plot line she is associated with. While these products are commodifying girl power and female empowerment rhetoric, the placement of Snow White is meant to prevent the character from becoming unusable in the franchise and an unprofitable character for the company.
Conclusion

The Disney Princesses are a media entertainment franchise that since its inception just seventeen years ago has been disseminated through the United States and the rest of the world. It is aligned with family entertainment and as it has grown into the brand audiences know today, we can see how the company has evolved as it has increased in size and expanded into different endeavors. Andi Stein writes that after Walt Disney died in 1966, “the Disney Company continued to grow and change with the times. New leadership brought new ideas. Since then, the company has stretched itself far beyond the parameters of films, television programs, and theme parks into arenas such as travel, sports, radio, and online media. At the same time, the foundation of its business- the art of family-friendly storytelling-remains at its core” (3). As more live action remakes of Disney’s princess films continue to be made and debuted (several are scheduled for distribution in the next few years), each princess seems likely to be aligned with a lesson that promotes something other than winning the heart of a man and living happily ever. And with each film, audiences can expect there to be film-related merchandise that will be available for purchase, thereby continuing the Disney tradition of marketing certain values and ideas through their products.

The Disney Princess franchise reflects postfeminism in that commodified feminist messages have become blazoned on princess-themed products including clothes, backpacks, and chapstick. The audience of the Disney princesses is comprised of several generations, including girls as young as three years old and teenagers and adults who grew up with many of the princess characters long before they became grouped together as one distinct product. According to Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker, “To some extent,
girlhood is imagined within postfeminism culture as being for everyone; that is, girlhood offers a fantasy of transcendence and evasion, a respite from other areas of experience” (18). As postfeminism is for everyone, Walt Disney advertised to everyone- young and old. A key marketing philosophy of his that became a mantra for the company at large is, “You’re dead if you aim only at kids. Adults are only kids grown up, anyway” (D23: The Official Disney Fan Club).

The broader implications of my thesis beyond the three specific case studies are aimed at both scholars and the general population to recognize the inclusion and commodification of feminist messages in a particular popular culture brand. For scholars, the broader implications of my thesis are that my case studies can be used as a foundation in further inquiry into the commodification of feminist rhetoric in other products of the Disney Princess franchise such as the films. Moreover, my case studies can be used to study and understand similar franchises such as Disney Fairies- another one of the company’s many franchises- and other brand’s franchises such as Barbie. While the Disney Princess franchise might continue to claim the top spot in terms of revenue, applying my analysis to similar brands can be useful is analyzing media marketed towards girls and what each franchise does similarly and how they differ in regards to their advertising strategies and marketing materials.33 Girls’ studies continues to be an emerging field and my case studies can be helpful to scholars who are interested in the Disney’s recent emergence of turning their animated films into live-actions versions

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33 This is in reference to footnote 14.
(albeit a heavy reliance on CGI).\textsuperscript{34} In terms of audience, many of these films, including non-princess films, have the potential to attract an audience of millennials who were exposed to the animated films during childhood and are eager not only for the company’s revisionist takes on these films but also for the experience of childhood nostalgia. Such research opportunities can explore the desire of millennials who are now in adulthood to see films from their childhood on the big screen and how these films are being viewed by the generation who saw the original in theaters compared to contemporary children seeing the updated version as their first exposure to the Disney story. For scholars interested in the study of audiences and film, my case studies can be used to understand how Disney is advertising to a much larger and broadly aged audience and the methods and messages they are using to attract those demographics.

While the case studies that compose my thesis were born in an academic setting, I do not wish for them to solely remain there. The language of my work here can be adapted to various forms, such as a blog that has the ability to speak to a wider audience. The main broader implication of my thesis is that various groups of people, including academics and members of the general population, can use my insights as a way of embarking on new scholarly research or as a way of educating oneself about girl power rhetoric, postfeminism, and how Disney is advertising their princess characters in new ways.

\textsuperscript{34} Disney has not only been revisiting their princess films into live-action updates. The company debuted a live-action version of \textit{Alice in Wonderland} in 2010, while live action versions of \textit{The Lion King} and \textit{Dumbo} are set for release in the next few years.
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