

More than the Renaissance: The Reclassification of the Disney Animated Films of the Classics Period

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Over the past ten years, more than 200 peer-reviewed articles with Disney in their titles have been published across disciplines, especially in the humanities and social sciences. Beginning in the 1930s with Disney's first motion picture, the company, its venues, acquisitions, movies, and other products have become a robust research topic for academics, constantly refreshed with new ideas and perspectives. As Disney celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2023, researchers and readers examining the movies could benefit from some consistency in how the passage of time is described, and yet the methods of classification of these movies are not robust or universally implemented. In this era of culture wars, how Disney has changed over time has become a political litmus test. A common vocabulary supports the claims made by defenders and detractors. This article will provide a foundation for future Disney research across disciplines on a variety of topics through a categorization and organizing system to define a context, an essence – what the movies are – and an impression – what the movies “feel like.” This structure could also be used to create consistent categories of time to measure cultural changes in other popular media longitudinally.

A survey of Disney articles shows inconsistency, at best, in the “lumping” of Disney movies into specific clusters and then the “splitting” of them into different moments in time, but their periodization can be examined in two general methods – what Kollmann refers to as “grand scale” periodizing – attempting to explain the entirety of a historical trajectory – and “micro-periods” – the “small scale changes” that occur within a larger era (440). These both have important functions in periodization.

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In Disney movies, grand-scale periodization is often found in the popular and fan presses. An article on the blog, *Odyssey*, includes clusters such as The Golden Age, The Wartime Era, and the Post-Renaissance Period (Jones), which are created through a combination of internal and external factors. World War II and financial hardship for the company provide the foundation for the structure of periodization in the early years, sometimes including movies created into the late 1980s, while later years are defined by its competition with, and acquisition of, Pixar and the success of Disney's Princess movies. The characteristics uniting these clusters include new art styles, musical collaborations, and/or a change in perceived quality (Jones; Astell). This periodization style primarily examines changes at a macro, and generally external, level but also includes characteristics from some of the movies contained within.

Academic scholars in humanities and social sciences seem to focus on micro periods. These clusters of movies vary in name, time, and boundaries, which lead to clusters of different sizes across articles. In reviewing 16 different articles that examine Disney movies as a chronology, the topics varied as did the lumping and splitting structures. In an article about the evolution of gender over time, for example, Abdulqadr et al. aligned certain Disney movies with the stages of feminism (Abdulqadr et al.); Azmi et al. connected models of female speech with heroic characteristics (Azmi et al.); and Davis examined how the world outside of these movies helped to shape the characters within (Davis). Benhamou similarly places Disney animated movies in historical and cultural contexts using his understanding of multiculturalism while Condis examined race through how the relationships with – and use of – animals differ for characters of different backgrounds (Benhamou). Faustino, Rowe, and Coats also examined feminism, manhood, and motherhood, and how these are manifested in both the animated movies and the True Life Adventures (Faustino, Rowe, and Coats). Two studies examine parenting and family types, focusing specifically on parenting approaches, single and nuclear families, and their interactions with each other (Zurcher, Webb, and Robinson; Zurcher et al.). Other research focused on age, villains, and Walt Disney himself (Towbin, Duffy, Croce).

Despite the disparate approaches of these and many other articles on Disney movies, those that share a longitudinal examination used distinct periodization methods that divide the time into as few as two and as many as nine distinct clusters.

Many employed the term “classics” or “classical,” referring to the time before *The Little Mermaid* (Duffy 4; Fraustino and Coats 128; Hefner et al. 511; Towbin et al. 25) or even incorporating *The Little Mermaid* into a classic period (Abdulqadr et al. 833). Hine, Ivanovic, and England additionally used “old” (1959) and “new” (2016) (1). Other articles referred specifically to well-known clusters such as the Disney Renaissance or the Disney Princesses (England et al. 555; Heatwole 2; Hine et al. 4).

Davis, in her book on women in Disney animated movies, divided the movies into three eras: the classic years (1937-1967), the middle era (1967-1988), and the Eisner era (1989-2005) (Davis). Similar models have been embraced by others who have used three or fewer clusters to follow the treatment of gender (Johnson 2-3; England, et al. 555; Azmi 235), villains (Kjeldgaard-Christiansen and Schmidt 3; Duffy 4), race (Benhamou 154; Condis et al. 44), or romance (Hefner 511) over time. These articles have focused on the “early,” “classic,” or “old” movies and the “late,” “contemporary,” or “modern” movies. They have also used names such as “not-yet classics”; “earlier,” “middle” and “recent”; “first,” “second,” and “third.” Some of these scholars also mixed the language used to describe time using “classic years,” “Eisner era” and “modern princess movies” in the same article (Hefner 511), or “earliest movies” and “second wave” (Condis 44). Finally, there are other groups of movies that stick to a date-based time organization with groups of one or two decades in length (Zurcher, Webb, and Robinson 9; Zurcher et al. 140). These methods work for the individual papers, but a unifying method would prove helpful as the collection of research continues to grow and as the time period that can reasonably be called “classic,” and scholars’ understanding of what that means, changes. A periodizing model will support the maintenance of this field.

Periodization. These articles on Disney demonstrate that though Zerubavel has argued that “standard time is among the most essential coordinates of intersubjective reality and one of the major parameters of the social world” (2), how time is measured is not always consistent across groups. How collectives organize history and develop periodizing models relies on common understandings of time and how people move through it and without a standard time, comparisons at different moments are difficult and relationships between elements are hard to engage. The process of historical periodization is the creation of time clusters that allow researchers to make meaning of the social facts that they observe, and to draw more significant comparisons among them. The changes that act as signposts for periodization can be specific to the topic of research – the structure of the plots of

the movies, for example – or they can have an external source – often an event occurring in the larger world outside of the direct focus of the research (Diner and Templer).

Constructionism and Essentialism. External periodization supposes that a change in the world influences how the topic of interest proceeds. Internal periodization refers to a change within the topic which, in turn, may change the way it is perceived from the outside. The process of periodization often occurs through a combination of these perspectives (Diner and Templer) and the conflicted relationship between constructionism and essentialism provides a useful foundation for revising a periodic structure. As constructionism argues that “knowledge is essentially ‘situated’ and thus should not be detached from the situations in which it is constructed and actualized” (Ackerman 5), it is a useful framework to connect with periodization and to social institutions (Fujimura 254-6).

Creating the boundaries of a particular cluster (Vergne and Wry 58-61) and placing it within a particular context also calls for understanding the essential characteristics of the cluster which are often presented in contrast to constructionism. Essentialism focuses on the belief in some “invisible essence that is shared by all members of a particular group or social category” (Morton and Postmes 656). Although some speak of essentialism as enhancing constructionism (O’Mahoney 723), essentialist perspectives have also been used to stereotype groups of people and as a justification for the belief behind their stereotypes (Bastian and Haslam 229) and, in this way, essentialism can be closely tied with reductionism. The explanation of a person’s behavior, for example, by reducing it to its parts, is, at least, problematic (O’Mahoney 723). Despite this, there has been research that has found some value to essentialism as, for instance, viewing something like sexuality as an essential biological element has been shown to reduce prejudice (Morton and Postmes), and examining the essential educational competencies of a school can assist in maintaining its innovative educational model (Tyner-Mullings (a)).

This research takes a perspective on periodization that I am calling constructivist essentialism. While an essentialist perspective posits that a social fact has an essence that exists in all iterations (Rothbart and Taylor 16-9), constructivism provides a context and places the determination of the essence of a social fact within its time and place, providing space for change, variation, and evolution. Constructivist essentialism understands that social facts can have an essence that is context-based and therefore may change over time. The use of this

perspective requires the description of an essence, the setting of the boundaries of that essence's existence, and an acknowledgment of the characteristics of the impressions within.

Research Question

As described above, there are several different ways that current Disney periodization is problematic – how the movies are selected or lumped, the way those groups are categorized through splitting and naming, and finally, how time is described – and, additionally, the years, ages, eras, and periods used denote different magnitudes of time with different levels of specificity. The examples described above have also used distinct elements and methods of periodization to determine how the movies should be organized. This research will apply the theories of periodization to enhance the creation of a chronology of Disney movies to ease future social science research into these films and their impact while also providing the space for change and adjustment as the company continues to grow and change its catalog.

I will create a foundation for other research projects by redefining the canon of movies – the essence – from which the Disney periodization should occur while suggesting other “salient features that dominated, or at least animated, a particular segment of time” (Herubel 145). It will also outline the strategy for creating boundaries for clusters to examine distinct points of time in the structure of Disney's animated and hybrid movies, including discovering the deliberate characteristics – the impression – of that era. Defining an essence and an impression through constructivist essentialism will also allow for expansion as additional movies are created and analyzed.

The following research question will be addressed: How can Disney animated movies be organized into consistent clusters of time to represent the types of stories they tell and to measure change over time?

Methods

Disney movies hold an important place in American – and global – culture. In 2001, the researchers of the Global Disney Audiences Project (GDAP) found that the average age of first exposure to Disney movies worldwide was just under five years old (40). In the United States, it was only three (Wasko et al. 40). Exposure to these

movies was found to be consistent throughout childhood as nearly 98% of respondents had seen a Disney film by the time they turned 12 (Wasko et al. 42). It is important to note that GDAP's research was completed prior to the company's acquisition of the Muppets, Pixar, Marvel, Lucasfilm, and 21st Century Fox as well as the launching of Disney+. The company and its movies are even more pervasive now as the expansive catalog and Disney+ means a larger audience has access to more movies at their fingertips.

The Walt Disney Company itself is a huge part of our cultural landscape. According to Brand Finance, Disney is in the top 25 of the world's most valuable brands at 23 in 2023 (Brand Finance "Brand Finance Global"), and it was number 8 in the United States the previous year (Brand Finance "Brand Finance 2022"). Including the returns from *Avatar 2: The Way of Water*, movies from Disney, or companies it has acquired, are seven of the ten highest-grossing movies worldwide of all time (IMDBPro Staff (a)). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) remains on the list at number ten worldwide, once inflation is accounted for (IMDBPro Staff (b)).

Determining the Essence and Uncovering the Impression. These movies come in a wide variety of topics and genres and employ different production methods. Nowhere is this more visible than on Disney+ which includes movies, television shows, and shorts (some made for TV, some for the movie theater, and others, specifically for Disney+) arranged in a variety of ways. As of January 2023, Disney+ contained more than 500 movies (Disney+) yet the Walt Disney Company is best known for their animated movies, especially their princesses. The Princess line has continued to be a valuable property which was valued at \$5.5 billion in 2015 when the doll segment of the Disney Princess line changed hands to Hasbro from Mattel (Suddath) and then led to an 8% jump in share value for Mattel once it was announced that the rights to the dolls had returned (Ziobro).

Though Disney Princesses may feel inescapable in Disney movie research, Princess movies are only a small part of Disney's collection. However, there is a particular essentialist quality – a princess essence – within many Disney movies that leads viewers to see the company as producing mostly princess movies. That princess essence holds these distinct movies together and can be used to create a framework for these and other movies. This essence is important even for non-princess research (see Tyner-Mullings (b) for a more in-depth analysis of the difference between princess and non-princess movies). This essence is determined by four characteristics found in these movies.

The typical Disney Princess film is animated, building on the 1923 foundation when Walt and Roy first began the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio and produced the Alice Comedies (History.com Editors) and continued with *Snow White*, their first feature film. Although some periodization focuses singularly on the animated movies, the hybrid movies – where animated characters interact with live-action characters – also fit much of this pattern and a conscious choice was made to include them in this essence.

The origin of the stories found in Princess movies is another element of the princess essence, and although Disney animated movies are not always based on fairy tales, they have historically been from, or inspired by, another source. The sources of these movies come from picture and other children's books, adult literature, fairy tales, myths, legends, fables, and comic books rather than television. These movies also often create a type of "Distory" – the version of history (and in this case literature) created by The Walt Disney Company focused on nostalgia (Fjellman) and American values (Croce 5; McReynolds 788-9) – that maintains parts of the original source while discarding or changing others.

Almost every Princess movie is from an original Walt Disney studio, rather than Pixar, Marvel, 20th Century Studios, or Lucasfilm. Over time, Disney has had different levels of partnering with, separating from, and owning Pixar, which complicates this relationship and how connected Pixar's work is to Disney over time which, if included, would affect the consistency of the model. Pixar has maintained some independence, which allows them to draw from different sources in their inspiration. Marvel and Lucasfilm have so far not had any fully animated or hybrid movies but similarly maintain some independence. The acquisition of 20th Century Fox complicates the hypothesis but does not disprove it. At the time of this writing, 20th Century Studios has not produced a Princess movie under Disney's ownership. It is highly unlikely, but *Anastasia* would be an example of a character from 20th Century Studios who could be added to the Disney Princesses.

Finally, Princess movies are distributed in theaters, which means there are two types of movies that are not part of this essence: sequels and non-feature films. *Frozen II* is the first non-Pixar sequel to be released as a feature film. The others have been home movies in digital or hard media form. Animated shorts follow a similar distribution as sequels, although they may sometimes be shown before a full-length movie but not as the main draw.

These characteristics provide a sample of 45 movies with the princess movie essence which will be used to define the essential movies of Disney's Classic

Period, which I have named for the early clamshell VHS tapes produced by the company's home movie division (also referred to as the Black Diamond collection). Following geologic measurements of time, each period will be broken into epochs, each of which has a common impression. This is followed by the defining of the ages and the impressions within.

In order to begin this analysis, the 45 movies were viewed at least twice, and notes were taken during the first viewing and confirmed in later viewings. After reviewing the notes from these movies, several larger patterns emerged that were extracted from the data using a grounded research approach and became the impression of each cluster. The characteristics used in the epochs and ages are not essentialist, as they are not present in every movie – but are being defined as an impression and representing important elements of each epoch.

Disney Time Results

Princess Epoch. Much of the work of lumping Disney time is through the setting of a boundary which asserts that there is a particular moment – in this case, a movie – that creates separation or builds a bridge between two clusters. Of these 45 movies, *The Little Mermaid* (dirs. John Musker and Ron Clements, 1989) is the clearest and most consistent boundary. Often referred to as the beginning of the Disney Renaissance (one of the few Disney historical clusters that the company acknowledges in their own materials), the late 1980s and the 90s is the time most associated with princesses. Although *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (dirs. David Hand, Perce Pearce, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Wilfred Jackson, and Ben Sharpsteen, 1937) was the girl who started it all in 1937, Ariel started it all again and both Disney scholars and the Walt Disney Company agree that *The Little Mermaid* started the Disney Renaissance and that it represented the company's reemergence as an animated studio. This is the beginning of the “boundary work” (Nippert-Eng 564) in the division of Disney time into epochs: before Ariel (the Before Princess Epoch) and after Ariel (the Princess Epoch).

A distinct signpost of the upcoming start of this epoch was the change in Disney's production logo or “vanity card.” Prior to *The Great Mouse Detective* (dirs. Dave Michener, John Musker, Ron Clements, and Burny Mattinson), in 1986, The Walt Disney Company used a specific vanity card at the beginning of their movies to symbolize itself. This was generally Walt Disney Pictures written out in cursive on a background formatted to integrate with the opening credits of the

movie. Just shortly before the transition into the Princess Epoch, the vanity card switched and became the logo that is now the symbol for Disney's animated films, Cinderella's Castle – the central hub of Walt Disney World. This logo has changed over the years – with iterations that included *Pinocchio's* (dirs, Wilfred Jackson, Bill Roberts, T. Hee, Norman Ferguson, Ben Sharpsteen, Jack Kinney, and Hamilton Luske, 1940) “When You Wish Upon a Star” and *Peter Pan's* (dirs. Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, and Clyde Geronimi, 1953) Tinkerbell flying overhead – but it has remained a Disney staple for more than 30 years. The most recent cards are also in 3D and some call back to previous vanity cards with the visuals, music, and sound effects related to the movie they introduce, rather than the *Pinocchio* theme.

As one of the boundaries of the Princess Epoch, *The Little Mermaid* divides the Classics period into two fairly equal slices with 24 movies produced before and 21 after. Disney has spent more of its time in the period focusing on non-Princess movies with more than 50 years prior to the Princess Epoch and only the last 30 in this period that seemed to be dominated by princesses (see Tyner-Mullings).

Within the Princess Epoch, there exists a smaller age of princesses (PE1) which claims the Renaissance title. The end of this age is generally agreed to be at *Tarzan* (dirs, Kevin Lima and Chris Buck 1999). Most of the movies in PE1 are musicals so *Tarzan* is distinct from the others in PE1 because of its lack of musical elements. None of the characters sing and though some of them play instruments, it is in a scene that is not important to the progress of the story. As one of the main thrusts of a musical is that the characters produce the music to move the story along, this would put *Tarzan* into a different cluster. However, most of the movies in PE1 are about an often-naïve woman being rescued or kidnapped from her existence as a mermaid, an intellectual, or a princess, by a man, and Jane seems to fit in well with the Princesses. There are even suggestions in the movie that she might be a descendant of Belle as she wears a similar yellow dress and has a Mrs. Potts tea set. Given this, *Tarzan* represents the end of PE1. As a movie that represents a transition between ages in its representation of both eras, *Tarzan* has strong boundary-setting elements.

The next age within the Princess Epoch (PE2) is also easy to define. With the agreement that PE1 ends with *Tarzan*, PE2 begins with *Atlantis* (dirs. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 2001). Like PE 1 before it, the end boundary of the age is a little more complicated. *The Princess and the Frog* (dirs, John Musker and Ron Clements, 2009) is known for ushering in a new Disney Princess age, but as the Jim

Carey-animated *A Christmas Carol* (dir. Robert Zemeckis, 2009) came out the same year as *The Princess and the Frog*, it would make sense to put it into the last age with *The Princess and the Frog* rather than splitting the year. The boundary built by the two movies together transitions well from PE2 with its male main character and to *The Princess and the Frog* as an introduction to the adventure princesses in the next age.

Before Princess Epoch. The Before Princess Epoch (BE) begins with *Snow White* and ends with *The Little Mermaid*. Near the middle of the epoch, a clear pattern emerges – movies with animals as their main characters. As *Sleeping Beauty* (dir. Clyde Geronimi, 1959) is both most often associated with the classical princesses (Snow White and Cinderella) and includes animals in important roles, it makes a strong boundary to divide BE into BE1 and BE2. *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (dirs. Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, and Wolfgang Reitherman, 1961) similarly includes animals as main characters with humans as strong secondary characters, so it serves the role of a boundary element of the next age. Splitting the eras between *Sleeping Beauty* and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* strengthens that boundary and with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, representing a girl who is part human and part fish, they are the perfect boundary between an age populated with animals and one populated with human princesses.

The movies of BP 1 include a few princesses, but they are primarily populated by other fantastical characters: animals who can talk across species (*Bambi* (dirs. Samuel Armstrong, Bill Roberts, Paul Satterfield, Norman Wright, David Hand, James Algar, and Graham Heid, 1942), children who never grow up (*Peter Pan*), and wooden puppets who turn into boys (*Pinocchio*). This is the age with the least cohesion and the weakest impression as many of the movies, if they were situated differently chronologically, could fit into other ages. One could also think of these as setting the foundation for the different clusters of movies to come.

Providing descriptive names for each of these ages allows ease of communication and comparison. Although the Disney Renaissance will always have a place in any research or discussion on the movies, a suggestion might be to use Disney World-related terms to reclassify the ages, Given the importance of Disney World's Cinderella's Castle to Disney movies, these could become Magic Kingdom (MK), Animal Kingdom (AK), Fantasyland (FyL), Adventureland (AL), and Frontierland (FtL), respectively.

Discussion

Impressions of the Eras. Each era has been built around an impression that helped to define that era's boundaries. However, the eras also have other elements in their impression that allow these lumps to cohere. The patterns that became visible while examining these movies as a cluster focus primarily on the gender and species of the main character and how they affect certain characteristics of the movie and the idea of magic. Actual and perceived Disney Princesses also led to the categorization of a movies in three ways. The official Disney Princess movies include one of the 11 Official Disney princesses in this research. Movies with a character who is actually a princess by their society's definition, regardless of how Disney defines them, are categorized as an actual princess movie. Finally Damsel movies include a female character who is rescued, generally by a male character. The presence of magic as a solution to, or cause of, problems was also examined. It is important to note that many of these variables are subjective but can still provide a framework for the work of Disney researchers. The characters in the Magic Kingdom age, for example, struggle with problems that are created by magic as this age has the second highest number of movies with problems solved by magic.

Beginning in 1961 with *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, eight out of the twelve movies featured an animal as a main character. The movies of AK have more than twice the number of animal main characters than the next highest age, as 58% of the movies in the age have animal main characters. This does not even include movies like *The Jungle Book* (dir. Wolfgang Reitherman, 1967), where the main character is human but the story takes place in an animal world.

Although the number of dark or sad scenes in Animal Kingdom is not necessarily distinct from other ages, the movies in this age often feel darker as some movies end with, or include multiple, dark, and sad moments, often indicated by death or another kind of loss of innocence. *The Fox and the Hound* (dirs. Ted Berman, Richard Rich, and Art Stevens, 1981) teaches children a sobering lesson about friendship and growing up and is an example of this type of darkness. It is rarer, but also within this variable, are moments with a scary character, scene, or storyline. This darkness is especially apparent in *The Black Cauldron* (dirs. Richard Rich and Ted Berman, 1985) which was Disney's first PG-rated animated feature. There are no Official Disney Princesses in AK and the age has the smallest percentage of female characters.

Surprisingly, Fantasyland does not have the highest percentage of Official Princesses, Actual Princesses, or female main characters. This is likely because

several movies, while associated with a more general idea of princesses, do not actually include princesses and/or are not about the females but are about the male lead. *Hercules* (dirs. John Musker and Ron Clements, 1997), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (dirs. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1996), *Tarzan* (1999), and *Aladdin* (dirs. Ron Clements and John Musker, 1992) are all included in this category. FyL does have the highest percentage of damsels. This age also has the highest percentage of movies with a focus on romantic love.

While one of FyL's impressions is the musical princesses, AL is distinct because of the proportion of movies that include an adventure. Though many Disney stories can be categorized as adventures, capturing aspects of Joseph Campbell's (1949) Hero's Journey – the idea of leaving home, accomplishing a task, and returning – gives AL the second-highest adventure score.

Many consider Adventureland to be a dark age for the company as these movies represented a transition away from the traditional cell-shaded, musical fairytales the company had become known for. AL's movies seem to be very focused on males and may have been an attempt to reconnect with that demographic following FyL's focus on princesses. This age is the shortest with the fewest number of movies and has the second smallest percentage of female main characters, just behind MK, with only one movie with a female lead, who is a cow. Many members of Disney's audience are unfamiliar with this age's *Treasure Planet* (dirs. John Musker and Ron Clements, 2002), *Atlantis* (2001), and *Meet the Robinsons* (dir. Stephen Anderson, 2007). The first movie is a science fiction take on *Treasure Island* (1882); the second is based on the legend of Atlantis; and the third is based on a children's book about a boy trying to find his family.

Frontierland begins in 2009, and with the official Disney Princess product line created in 2000 after Mulan, Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* was the first Princess to be added to the line after its creation. For many, she is also considered the first Princess to be created specifically to be a part of the line and to rectify the lack of an African American member. The story of *The Princess and the Frog* has generated controversy, both because of what it was initially and what it became. The main character in the first draft of the story was Maddie, the chambermaid, who was offensive to many African Americans because it harkened back to racist caricatures with similar names (Misick; Akbar). For others, the movie's decision to have Tiana remain a frog for most of the movie, only turning back into a woman in the last few minutes was a point of contention (Barnes; Stephey; Hebert-Leiter 969). Rapunzel in *Tangled* (dirs. Nathan Greno and Byron Howard, 2010) is the

other Official Disney Princess in this age. She was reintroduced to many families in 2020 as a girl trapped in her home after being kidnapped from the kingdom of Corona and became a reflection of children's experiences during that time's global pandemic.

Frontierland has a smaller proportion of Official Disney Princesses than MK and FyL but is between the two on Actual Princesses. *Frozen* (dirs. Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2013), *Moana* (dir. John Musker, 2016), and *Big Hero 6* (dirs. Chris Williams, and Don Hall, 2014) represent a move away from the more traditional fairy tale love story to a more adventurous storyline, literally and figuratively, and in the case of *Moana* and *Frozen*, a female main character who goes on an adventure.

Future Research

The End of the Sentence. As is the problem in much of periodization, it is difficult to define the essence, impression, or boundaries of a cluster while it is still being formed. For the foreseeable future, Frontierland seems to be the final frontier of the Classics Period as the essential elements of movies after *Moana* appear to move in a different direction. While these movies have an important place on Disney+, and in marketing, Disney's plan glancing into the future seems to be to enter a period of live-action remakes, sequels of animated movies, and a focus on original scripts. The first few movies in the new period also seem to have an impression that highlights cultural elements and characters which cements the role of Moana as a boundary of this period and age. Until a new constructivist essentialism periodization can begin once the period has matured, I will refer to this new period as the Revival period, beginning with the age of the Character, leaving the Classics Period behind (Tyner-Mullings).

Conclusion

Refining the formulations used by many Disney scholars, the five ages defined here provide a clear and informative framework to organize the movies in the Disney Classics Period. They provide a foundation for any researcher analyzing Disney movies over time and can be used to examine the similar or distinct interactions the audience has with them as well as how included movies work in concert with or in opposition to the impressions of their age. This can help Disney scholars develop

their work and raise questions as we embark on this new period in Disney Animation. The use of constructivist essentialism also provides both flexibility and structure for the creation of time clusters when examining cultural phenomenon over time. The lack of consistency across Disney studies in the past will hopefully inspire other popular culture scholars to consider the challenges in their own disciplines and provide them a framework to address them.

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