

Disney Romance Movies as an Escape for Audiences

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ABSTRACT

The objectives in conducting this research were (1) to study the history of the Walt Disney Company and the quality romance films that the company has been producing since 1923, (2) to demonstrate important and necessary elements which the audience thinks should be included in a romance movie, and features which the audience finds unacceptable and should never appear in a romance movie, (3) to illustrate several kinds of imagery, characters, and plots in popular Disney romance movies, and (4) to prove that Disney romance movies successfully provide an escape for the audience.

The findings showed that Disney romance movies usually manifest fantasized, optimistic and satisfying imagery, characters, and plots. The pictures that are traditionally perceived as harmful, inhumane, or boring are transformed and portrayed to the audience as beautiful and embracing. The characters representing the hero and heroine meet with success, achievement, freedom, and/or happiness in the end. The character representing the villain is punished in some way, for instance, by being shunned or killed. The three romance plot types of Love, Change, and Escape, allow the audience to take pleasure in the situation, the conflict, and the happy ending of the movie. Members of the audience can project themselves into the movie, enjoy the beautiful scenery and the satisfying characters, obtain optimistic and dreamlike feelings and sensations, have their expectations fully met, and thus flee from reality and troubles.

Keywords: Walt Disney, romance movies

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ในการวิจัยเพื่อ (1) ศึกษาความเป็นมาของบริษัทภาพยนตร์วอลท์ ดิสนีย์ ศึกษาภาพยนตร์และการ์ตูนคุณภาพที่เป็นผลงานการสร้างของบริษัทตั้งแต่ปี ค.ศ. 1923 (2) ศึกษาและวิเคราะห์คุณสมบัติและปัจจัยต่างๆที่ผู้ชมเห็นสมควรจะต้องมีในภาพยนตร์ประเภทโรแมนซ์ และคุณสมบัติและปัจจัยต่างๆ ที่ผู้ชมเห็นว่าไม่ควรปรากฏในภาพยนตร์ชนิดนี้ (3) วิเคราะห์และนำเสนอการใช้

มโนภาพ ประเภทของตัวละคร และพล็อตเรื่องที่พบบ่อยในภาพยนตร์โรแมนซ์ของวอลท์ ดิสนีย์ และ (4) สรุปได้ในท้ายที่สุดว่าภาพยนตร์ประเภทโรแมนซ์ของวอลท์ ดิสนีย์เปิดโอกาสให้ผู้ชมหลีกหนีความจริง ปัญหา หรือเหตุการณ์ที่ไม่น่าอภิรมย์ในชีวิตจริงได้

ผลจากการวิจัยพบว่า ภาพยนตร์วอลท์ ดิสนีย์หลายเรื่องนำเสนอตัวละครและภาพที่น่าชื่นชอบชื่นชม มีลักษณะเป็นจินตนาการมากกว่าจะเป็นความจริง และรวมอยู่ในพล็อตเรื่องที่ดีเกินจะพบทั่วไป ภาพหรือเหตุการณ์ต่างๆที่ปกติจะสื่อถึงภัยอันตรายหรือ

ไม่น่าชื่นชม ถูกปรับเปลี่ยนและนำเสนอให้ผู้ชมเห็นว่าเป็นภาพหรือเหตุการณ์ที่สวยงามและน่าปิติยินดี พระเอกและนางเอกของเรื่องประสบความสำเร็จ ได้รับอิสรภาพ และ/หรือมีความสุขในตอบจบของเรื่อง นางร้ายและผู้ร้ายถูกทำโทษหรือแก้แค้น เช่น อาจถูกจับไล่ไสส่งหรือประหารพล็อตเรื่องสามแบบอันได้แก่ ความรักดุจชีวิต การเปลี่ยนแปลงอันใหญ่หลวง และการหลีกหนีผู้อิสรภาพ เปิดโอกาสให้ผู้ชมรู้สึกสนุกสนานไปกับเหตุการณ์ ปัญหา และการคลี่คลายของปัญหาในตอนจบของเรื่อง ผู้ชมต่างสามารถจำลองตนเองเป็นตัวละคร อยู่ในเนื้อเรื่องที่กำลังดำเนินอยู่ เสพสุขกับภาพที่สวยงาม ตัวละครที่ได้ตั้งใจราวกับฝัน ความรู้สึกและความคิดที่ต่างไปอย่างสิ้นเชิงกับโลกความเป็นจริง ด้วยเหตุที่ความคาดหวังและความอยากของผู้ชมถูกตอบสนองด้วยภาพยนตร์โรแมนซ์ จึงทำให้เขาเหล่านั้นหลุดออกจากโลกความเป็นจริงและปัญหาหรือเหตุการณ์เลวร้ายที่เผชิญ

คำสำคัญ: วอลท์ ดิสนีย์ ภาพยนตร์โรแมนซ์

INTRODUCTION

Even before the official opening of The Walt Disney Company in 1923, the two Disney brothers, Walt and Roy, with their employees, had been creating short films and cartoon strips for the American people. Six years later, Walt Disney Productions established itself as a leading company in the American entertainment industry, moving on from films and cartoon strips to radio and cartoon books. *Mickey Mouse*, *Snow White*, and *Alice in Wonderland* were right away known to millions of American children and adults. In fact, since the 1950's, the popularity of Walt Disney cartoons and movies has spread across land and sea to be admired also in other countries on other continents (Disney, 1965; Smith & Clark, 2003).

Among all the Disney films that have been produced since the establishment of the company, 57.4 percent can be classified as romance (Thomas

& Johnston, 1990, p. 24). These romance movies and cartoons are watched and admired not only by American children and adults, but by people all over the world.

This study was conducted with the following objectives (1) to study the history of the Walt Disney Company and the quality romance films that the company has been producing since 1923, (2) to demonstrate important and necessary elements which the audience thinks should be included in a romance movie, and features which the audience finds unacceptable and should never appear in a romance movie, (3) to illustrate several kinds of imagery, characters, and plots in popular Disney romance movies, and (4) to prove that Disney romance movies successfully provide an escape from reality and its associated troubles for the audience.

In order to achieve the above objectives, this documentary research was conducted to gather information from Disney's related documents and films. The document and media used included books, magazines, websites, journals, videos, and DVDs. The selected documents were: (1) Deborah's "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination" (2004); (2) Down & Herndl's "Feminism: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism" (1997); (3) Green & Green's "Remembering Walt: Favorite Memories of Walt Disney" (1999); (4) Harris's "Beating Darcy Down" (2008); (5) Kermode's "Romantic Image" (2002); (6) Quick's "Plotting the Romance Novel" (2007); (7) Radway's "Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature" (1991); (8) Smith & Clark's "Disney: The First 100 Years" (2003); and (9) Thomas & Johnston's "Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life" (1990). In addition, some selected media as DVD *Cinderella* (1995), DVD *Pocahontas* (2000) and Film *Enchanted* (2007) were illustrated in this paper.

The study ended when the authors considered they found no other different meanings or examples and they were able to answer the research questions. All information was cross-checked in the documents

and media. In addition, a review of the important ingredients for a romance movie and elements that should never be in a romance movie was provided from a study conducted by Radway (1991).

DISNEY ROMANCE MOVIES

In the study of “Disney Romance Movies”, the authors elaborate the terms *romance* and *escape* by giving meanings and examples from related literature.

Romance

Traditionally, the term *romance* in the medieval period, starting from the early 13th Century, presents a story from a theme of courtly love and overcoming adversity through honor and loyalty. The stories of that period usually involved a chivalrous and heroic knight, a dragon or a supernatural beast, and a quest for success. Later in the Renaissance and Romantic periods, from approximately the 15th Century, *romance* moved from the grand and fantastic tales to Gothic and

ghostlike adventures, natural beauty and transcendentalism. The narratives of this period portrayed dark and gloomy characters and settings, and seduction and desire mixed with dread and fear. Finally, the modern romance genre, from the late 19th Century, deals with the themes of episodic development of a courtship or a loving relationship between a man and a woman. The middle of each modern romance movie must create some form of conflict or problem, which keeps the pair apart until the proper moment when they are reunited. The pair has to be tested in their love for each other. In the end, the audience is allowed to enjoy what Eileen Dreyer et al. call an “emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending”, such as a marriage or the success of the protagonist (Anonymous, 2004).

In modern romance, people find some necessary and some unacceptable features to be included in the story. Tables 1 and 2 are excerpts from the study on romantic novels and films, and the reader’s attitudes and emotions conducted by Janice A. Radway (1991). Table 1 presents the responses of people from 20 to 50 years old on the important

Table 1 Responses by people from 20 to 50 years old on important ingredients for a romance movie

	%
1. A happy ending	32
2. A slowly but consistently developing love between the hero and heroine	23
3. Some detail about the heroine and hero after they get together	22
4. Lots of love scenes with some explicit sexual description	13

Source: Radway, 1991

Table 2 Responses by people from 20 to 50 years old on elements that should never be in a romance movie

	%
1. Bed-hopping	22
2. Sad ending	20
3. Rape	19
4. Physical torture	18

Source: Radway, 1991

ingredients for a romance movie. The two most important features people expect to find in a modern romance movie are “a happy ending” and “a slowly but consistently developing love between the hero and heroine”. Table 2 presents the responses on elements that should never be in a romance movie. Two scenes that most people find not suitable in a romance movie are “bed-hopping,” and “sad ending”. So it can be concluded from this that the audience prefers romance movies which provide only optimistic and satisfying sentiments, allowing them to enjoy only one side—the beautiful and dreamlike side—both in the film and in their lives too.

Escape

Apart from the term *romance*, the term *escape* is equally important in this research work. The word *escape* is referred to and dealt with in two distinct ways (Radway, 1991, p. 61). On the one hand, people use the term “literally to describe the act of denying the present”, which they believe they accomplish each time they watch a movie and are drawn into its story. On the other hand, people also use this word to describe “the vague but intense sense of relief they experience” by identifying with a character in the movie whose life does not resemble their own in certain aspects. Therefore, watching romantic movies is “a strategy with a double purpose” (Radway, 1991, p. 63); it can be either an activity that engages people’s attention and gives them simple relaxation or a figurative escape into a fairy tale. Furthermore, Kermode notes in his popular book *Romantic Image* that the better-than-reality images in romance movies provoke imagination. “They are expected to appeal to ‘human interest.’ They are all about imagination and have less to do with reality. Imagination is what makes an escape” (Kermode, 2002, p. 5).

Therefore, romance movies definitely have huge effects on the way people look at themselves and the issues concerning their lives. People’s romantic imagination, or what they think of as “typical and ideal in the romance,” is shaped by the

media, namely radio, television, and films, which add the idea of “luxury and leisure consumption” into people’s lives. So an audience who consumes this kind of media feels that the media “have promised” them something unlikely to be found in real life, and they have hope and longing for it (Baughen & Illouz, nd.).

Disney romance movies are widely admired because they successfully and effectively provide an escape to the audiences through the use of imagery, the construction of plots and characters.

Imagery

It is accepted almost without debate that the imagery in almost all Disney romance movies replaces the familiar images with more optimistic and dreamlike ones. These modified pictures offer a surreal and better version of existence to the audiences by making the audiences believe they are involved in the situation going on in the movie. The imagery presented in the movies can be separated into two groups: imagery that portrays ordinary and familiar pictures, and imagery that shows dreamlike and fantastic places and circumstances.

Replacement of the ordinary and familiar with the fantastic

First, the imagery that portrays ordinary and familiar pictures in a more pleasing environment not only allows the audience to enjoy but invites them to feel they could be there, too. To illustrate, *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) present pictures of forests that are not at all hostile to either the characters in the movies or the audience. Generally, a forest is considered a dangerous, dark, and gloomy territory, with big trees, shadows, and fierce beasts. It is not a place that people dream to be in, and it often produces a feeling of terror. No matter how scary the real forest might be, Disney movies depict them as a pleasant place with friendly trees and animals. The forest pictures in *Pocahontas* (0:07:40) show a land of abundant trees with a clear lake and waterfall. There are also “squirrels, owls and other forest animals” (Thomas

& Johnston, 1990: 41). When the wind blows, the audience gets to see leaves of various colors floating in the air (0:07:48). All human beings, animals, and trees live happily together in harmony. Likewise, the forest pictures in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* manifest a variety of species and colors of plants, surrounding a small, welcoming cottage in the middle of the forest. Over again, animals such as hummingbirds, rabbits, deer, squirrels, and raccoons, are involved in the scene. These plants and animals not only live in harmony with human beings but also mourn and show sad sentiments to match the character's emotion. Therefore, these movies present beautiful sights which sharply contrast with the sights one usually encounters in real life, and which the audience can enjoy.

Another example of the imagery in Disney romance movies which is made satisfying is the pictures of everyday household work—namely, cooking and cleaning the house. The pictures of household work, which women are conventionally familiar with, are regular and boring. However, when this kind of work appears in the movie, it is transformed into a happy moment in which the characters work with enjoyment while singing and dancing. For instance, in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950), the main characters both seem to be having fun as they handle the household work. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the title character sweeps the floor, arranges the water buckets and other household appliances while singing and expressing happiness in her smile. She takes care of the cleaning and arranging processes, while the birds, squirrels, and rabbits also help put flowers, shoes, and socks in their place. Similarly, in *Cinderella*, the title character makes her bed and cleans her bedroom and the kitchen with the help of tiny birds and mice. The animals also help her in sewing and making dresses. These happy work scenes suggest to the audience that working and handling household tasks are not tiresome duties, and not at all repetitive and boring. The audience can escape from the tiring household duties to see a more

positive and beautiful side of the cycle of work presented in the movies.

Showing dreamlike and fantastic places

Second, the imagery that shows dreamlike and fantastic places and circumstances are optimistic, beautiful, and tempting to the audience. These scenes are generally inaccessible or rare to the audience. The most commonly-used example of this kind of imagery is ballroom dancing. Such scenes appear in many Disney romance movies, such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *Enchanted* (Film, 2007). In each of these movies, the male and female protagonists dance with each other wearing attractive and charming costumes, in an exquisitely-decorated hall, along with a romantic song. In *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle and the Beast dance together, Belle wearing a yellowish-gold pannier dress and the Beast wearing a neat blue and white suit. The two perform beautiful waltz steps in a hall decorated with a chandelier and many candelabras, before moving out to dance on a balcony beneath the stars. Similarly, Princess Aurora and Prince Phillip in *Sleeping Beauty* and Giselle and Robert in *Enchanted* also demonstrate elegant and magical waltz movements on the dance floor, to the strains of romantic music and atmosphere.

The modification and imagination that Disney movies present, such as through the images of the forest and dancing, cause an impact on how the audience perceives these images in real life; that is, the traditional perception of dark forests with wild and dangerous animals is replaced by the more imaginative and pleasing images of the movie. Consequently, the audiences can enjoy a new and more beautiful version of things they are already familiar with. In addition, the scenes which are naturally rare to the audience, like the dancing, are transformed to carry idealistic and dreamy sentiments that the audience can feel. As a result, when members of the audience have the opportunity to project themselves into scenic and delightful settings, their “psychological needs and desires can be met fully” through pictures and activities within which

“the idealized characters move” (Radway, 1991, p. 71). Thus, it can be concluded that the pleasing scenes of the movie offer a new pathway in the minds of members of the audience for them to momentarily shut themselves off from reality and think of themselves as part of the romance.

Three main types of characters

Apart from the carefully selected and effective imagery, Disney romance movies also employ stereotypical constellations of characters. Basically, there are three main characters in each Disney movie: the hero, the heroine, and the villain. Each of these characters evinces certain standard traits.

The characters of the hero and the heroine, the protagonists, are so ultimately optimistic and idealistic that they are not likely to be found in reality. The five most preferred qualities of Disney heroes are given by Radway (1991) as follows:

1. Intelligence that makes the heroes smarter than the villains and other figures, and makes each hero able to win his heroine's heart;
2. Tenderness that is appealing to the heroine and the audience;
3. Strength or bravery which enables the heroes to fight against the bad figures and survive to the end of the story;
4. Protectiveness the heroes offer to other inferior figures including the heroines; and
5. Attractiveness that makes the heroes pleasing and charming to look at.

Though the heroine is shown to be completely perfect, from the beginning of the story, she has some enchanting qualities of her own. For example, in some stories the heroine is beautiful in her physical appearance but lacks some mental or emotional fulfillment. In other stories, the heroine is not socially accepted in the beginning but develops a loving and princess-like personality which attracts the hero and helps place the heroine herself in a higher position than other characters. In all cases, the heroine is presented to the audience as incomplete and dependent, so she must necessarily be united

with the hero at the end in order to satisfy both the heroine herself and the audience.

On the other hand, the villains are immoral, wicked, deficient, or troublesome. The villain usually provokes one or more problems, which become the central conflict of the story. In many cases, the villain plans to perform bad actions or to cause a great catastrophe to the entire kingdom, and in so doing disturbs the normality of the living conditions of other characters including the main protagonists. “A true villain” is “inevitably ugly [and] morally corrupt” (Radway, 1991, p.133). Nonetheless, at the end of every Disney movie, the villain is exposed to the audience as being cruel, unreasonable, imperfect, and rude. The villain eventually gets the punishment the movie shows s/he deserves, either from the handsome and brave hero, from other friendly normal-looking characters, or from natural forces. And it is satisfying for the audiences to see the ‘bad guy’ being hunted down, punished, and cast away.

There are a large number of Disney movies whose characters illustrate the typical patterns of the hero, the heroine, and the villain, such as *Tangled* (2010), *Enchanted* (2007), *The Princess Diaries* (2001), *Toy Story* (1995), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) provide particularly instructive examples. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the leading female character, Snow White, initially appears as an ordinary middle-class person who has no social connection with the outside world. She does not have any power so she is made into a maid by a jealous Queen. Snow White's life and condition are made better by her prince, who is brave enough to travel a long way in the forest to kiss and restore her to life after she has been poisoned. He also treats her gently and tenderly in every scene of the movie. So the heroine is shown as unable either to protect or to help herself and is in need of a brave and gentle hero, who finally comes to her rescue. Unsurprisingly, the Witch who gives Snow White the poisoned apple

is at the end chased to the edge of a cliff, and she falls down to her death, a classic punishment for a villain. Similarly, the same types of characters appear in *Sleeping Beauty*, in which Princess Aurora is, from the beginning, cursed by the evil witch, Maleficent. Princess Aurora is saved from her hundred years of sleep by Prince Philip, who not only looks pleasant and charming, but also has much courage that drives him deep into the forest to find her. So the hero is totally protective and attractive, and the heroine is dependent solely on the hero. Again the villain Maleficent is punished for her bad deeds as she desperately throws herself into a tub with vipers and noxious creatures, killing herself. At first glance, having female characters being thoroughly dependent on men might seem like an insult to the female members of the audience, but study has shown that actually the author of ideal romances make some female characters seem inferior to men only in order to “teach the heroine the true worth of the hero” (Radway, 1991, p. 133). In addition, generally women feel “an admittedly intense need” to indulge in romantic fantasy more than men do. Women, more than men, have a more complicated feeling towards romance. For the female audience, watching female characters being met and rescued by charming male characters is “a relaxing release from the tension produced by daily problems and responsibilities” (Radway, 1991, p. 106).

Moreover, the Disney heroes and heroines are created perfect and desirable not only to children but to all people in general as well. Because of the beautiful appearance and the good qualities these characters are equipped with, they hold “a life of [their] own” and “suppl[y] [their] own energy,” which makes them “easier and less dangerous to talk about and fancy about” (Kermode, 2002, p. 53). The audience is therefore assured that they can throw themselves into the movie and imagine having the same problems, passions, and happiness as the character there. “They can observe and indulge in desires they would never fulfill in the real world. These characters offer a chance to take ‘time off’

from law and consequences” (Anonymous, 2009).

The most essential element: Plot construction

Finally, the most essential element in Disney romance movies that makes them escapist is the construction of the plot. According to Quick (2007), the three most common plot structures are Forbidden Love, Change, and Escape.

Forbidden Love

The plot of *Forbidden Love* deals with a story in which the hero and heroine defy social conventions and pursue their hearts, with either dangerous results or big changes in their lives. Examples of this type of plot are found in two Disney movies, *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Enchanted* (2007). In the film *Pocahontas*, Pocahontas is a native American and the daughter of a tribal chief. She is expected to be loyal to her tribe and practice every custom held compulsory in her land. However, she throws herself in front of John Smith, an English colonist who has invaded her land, just at the moment when her father is about to kill him. As a result, John Smith is not murdered. But by doing so, Pocahontas also betrays her tribe and fails to meet the expectation that her tribesmen put on her as she risks her life to save the life of an enemy of her tribe. It is evidently shown to the audiences that Pocahontas and John Smith are in love with each other, overlooking each other's culture and social regulations. Similarly, in *Enchanted*, Giselle from the animated world of Andalasia ends up in the real New York City with a well-known lawyer Robert Philip. Giselle is, of course, expected to marry a charming Prince Edward, and Robert Philip his fiancée, Nancy. Nevertheless, Giselle and Robert Philip go through some scenes and life lessons together, and fall in love. Giselle finally denies her throne as the princess of Andalasia and is willing to be no more than a common woman in New York City with her hero, Robert Philip.

This type of plot best handles people who are restricted by family and peer pressure, and by traditions and cultures. They seek a more positive side of a loving or marriage relationship, and would

like to escape from their perhaps miserable connections with other people. By watching *Pocahontas*, the audiences are assured that romantic love can occur with anyone, whether it is someone our family and society prefer or someone who is completely our enemy. *Enchanted* also implies that when in love, a person can forsake wealth, position, and dignity just to follow the desires of the heart and live happily with a chosen spouse. So both these movies and other movies having a plot of Forbidden Love show audiences that there is no real, rigid boundary between two people who are in love with each other, and that any restriction can collapse when it comes to love.

Change

The Change plot presents a story in which the change from a bad to a good condition can be accomplished only through love—that is, love is portrayed as the only powerful force which can alter anyone's life and lift the person to a better state of living. Two Disney movies which perfectly illustrate this type of plot are *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). After seeing Prince Eric from a distance, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* suddenly falls in love with him. She loves him so much that she dares to meet Ursula, the big and powerful monster of the sea, to exchange her voice for human legs, but under the condition that she will lose her legs once the sun sets. Here the power of love causes the first significant change in the movie. Ariel surrenders herself to the wicked beast, to be under Ursula's control, just to get a pair of legs and be able to follow the guy she has fallen in love with. Love still works for every Disney couple as in the end, Ariel's father, King Triton, notices the sacrificing and intense love between the two and uses his magic to give Ariel a pair of human legs for keeps. Then the second notable change occurs when Ariel with real legs is able to live off shore with her Prince Eric, after he swims a long way in storms and dives deep, going through one struggle after another, in the sea to find Ariel in her underwater kingdom. The power of love is also presented as extremely great and

intense in the other movie, *Sleeping Beauty*. Prince Philip, travels far through the forest and risks his life in search of Princess Aurora, with only his kiss being able to wake her up from her destined hundred years of sleep as a result of a curse by the story's villain. He restores her to life, which no other character in the story is capable of, and so breaks the spell and changes her destiny miraculously.

Love that is depicted as so powerful and great that it can cause an impact is an issue most audiences are delighted and satisfied to perceive. The Change plot, which forms the basis for many Disney romance movies, sophisticatedly portrays that love can have a positive transformative effect on people, converting what is generally impossible into what the audiences finally find permissible. Though there is no chance of the storyline happening in reality, since there are no real mermaids, *The Little Mermaid* makes believe that Ariel is successful in getting a pair of legs, which allows her to be united with her lover Prince Eric. In this way, the movie responds to the wishes and hopes of members in the audience who anticipate that the pair could be together. The ideal of love satisfies those members of the audience whose love life is falling apart or those who lack confidence in their loving relationship, since this kind of plot creates “a means of transportation or escape to the exotic or to that which is different” from everyday reality (Down & Herndl, 1997, p. 584).

Escape

The last typical plot among various Disney romance movies is the Escape plot. This kind of plot begins with the imprisonment of a person, or of a person's mind. Then, the story shows plans for escape, which usually are not successful at first, and have to be reconsidered and reattempted. Beautifully, the story ends with the liberation of the protagonist's heart. *Tangled* (2010), and *Cinderella* (1950) are two obvious representatives of this type of plot. In *Tangled*, originally titled *Rapunzel*. Rapunzel was a young and innocent girl, kidnapped and imprisoned by an enchantress, Mother Gothel, in the only room on the top of a very high tower with neither door

nor stairs. Rapunzel lives alone in the tower room with no one able to visit her except the witch, Mother Gothel. So Rapunzel is imprisoned not only physically but also spiritually. In the middle of the story Flynn Rider appears, later known as Eugene Fitzherbert, who is to help Rapunzel escape. However, the pair meet with several problems, one of which separates them from each other and puts Rapunzel into the hands of Mother Gothel. So the first attempt of the hero to rescue the heroine is interrupted by the villain. At the end, though sick, Flynn finally makes his way to the top of the tower where Rapunzel is isolated, the couple then face a dilemma and they to make a life-or-death decision. If Rapunzel cures Flynn's sickness, she will be imprisoned forever, but if she does not cure him, he will soon die. At last, the pair does not have to make that decision as Mother Gothel trips over Rapunzel's hair and falls down from the tower. Thus, Flynn succeeds in being reunited with Rapunzel and they achieve a happy life together. *Cinderella*, in addition, manifests similarities of the Escape plot. Cinderella is not strictly imprisoned, but is controlled in every aspect of her life by her stepmother and stepsisters. She is made to work hard with little benefit gained in return. So her life is void of freedom. It would have continued so, if she hadn't met a prince who afterwards comes looking for her to be his wife. The prince provides an escape for Cinderella from her usual tiring housework and from her cruel stepmother and stepsisters.

The Escape plot captures the audience and assures them that there is always an escape from any problem or bad situation and at times people encounter unpleasant and unwanted aspects in their life. So having another "unreal way-out" offered by a character's break away in the movie would be "a very attractive alternate universe to tempt" anyone's mind (Anonymous, 2009). Just like a desperate character in a Disney movie seeking a better place for the body and mind, a person who is in a very depressed or unhappy state can possibly come up with a solution, either alone or with the help of other

people. Thus, as the plot suggests, the imprisonment of body, mind, or spirit can eventually in some form be terminated, either by the person's imagination or freedom provoked by the movie.

CONCLUSION

The romance portrayed in Disney movies and the romantic sensation that the audience feels function best as relaxation and as a time for self-indulgence. These Disney fantasy movies offer "a movement from something distasteful in the real present to a more satisfying universe". In other words, these dreamlike movies work "as a therapeutic release and as a provider of vicarious pleasure", which the audience finds enjoyable and in need of from time to time (Radway, 1991, p. 84). Moreover, with the help of romance and imagination gained from movies, each member of the audience generally has an opportunity to be projected into the movie as a character; they allow themselves to even become the hero or the heroine and thus to share their surprise and slowly awakening pleasure at being watched, treated tenderly, and to either take care of or be taken care of by someone who finds them worthy to love and to live with. Then escape is made available and easy for the audience because of the use of imagery that is sophisticatedly presented, and the complex construction of plots and characters.

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