



and naturally remembered the last scenes in which the prince held his princess lovingly and walked toward the horizon on a horseback. To me, “They lived happily ever after” was a magic word, so that I was able to fall asleep safely when my mother finished reading bed time stories with the sentence in the end. Without any doubt, I innocently believed that any couple could live happily ever after, until I broke up with my first girlfriend and started realizing my friends’ parents getting divorced. I, thus, gradually came to my senses that this idea of “They lived happily ever after” would never work.

As a matter of fact, it has been criticized that Disney’s “They lived happily ever after” stories fail to represent our real world. In our contemporary society such as that of the U.S. where more than five out of ten couples end up divorcing, a message like “Once you get married, you will be happy forever” does not accurately reflect how our marriage life is really like and thus gives misconception about marriage to children. That is why Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* may have to provide Lily with a footnote on “They lived happily ever after,” after reading fairy tales.

In order to satisfy those who concern about the ill effect of “They lived happily ever after” stories, Walt Disney Pictures released *Enchanted* in November, 2007 in the U.S. and in March, 2008 in Japan respectively. The movie depicts that Giselle who is rescued by Prince Edward in a fairytale land is sent to the real world of New York City by evil Queen Narcissa. In New York City, Giselle meets with a divorced lawyer, Robert who lives with his daughter, Morgan. There, Giselle learns a feeling of anger and the importance of dating to get to know more about each other, both of which Giselle has never experienced before in the fairytale land, Andalasia. Eventually, her experiences in New York City have taught her that “living happily ever after” is not simply given but has to be earned by making efforts.

Since I personally thought that Disney did such a great job, I was very curious how other viewers thought of the movie. I checked others’ criticism in Japan and the U.S. written on the internet and found interesting differences in their comments and opinions in these two countries. Why do these differences exist? How differently do people in these two countries perceive “They lived happily ever after”? And why? Here in this paper, I would like to conduct a socio-cultural analysis on this Walt Disney movie, *Enchanted*.

In my paper, I will first start with how Disney’s “They lived happily ever after” films have been criticized, and, then, go on with a rather long synopsis of the movie, *Enchanted* in order for the readers to fully understand what the movie is all about, especially for those who have never had a chance to see *Enchanted*, before conducting the socio-cultural analysis.

### **Criticism on Disney’s “They Lived Happily Ever After” Films:**

First of all, how have “They lived happily ever after” films been criticized? Let me first spotlight Kathi Maio who, in her *Disney’s Doll*, argues that “underneath all the buckskin and the scales they’re still happy homemakers looking for a man.” (Maio: 1998) According to Maio, Disney’s first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, produced in 1937, set a

standard and established a pattern for the later Disney heroines to follow. She points out that:

Snow White is young, virginal, pretty, sweet-natured and obedient. Domestic drudgery doesn't faze her since she is sure that a handsome owing-class chap will, someday soon, come and save her. ... It is prototypical Disney. Young women are natural-born happy homemakers who lie in a state of suspended animation until a man gives them a life. Older women are the enemy, especially if they seek power. And the working class (hardworking, but dirty and uncivilized) are there to serve the rich and privileged, never questioning their subordinate position. Although the Disney team made use of different fairytales over the years, the basic formula for telling women's stories through animated features changed very little from *Snow White* to *Cinderella* (1950) to *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). (*ibid.*)

As already mentioned above, Maio criticizes on *The Little Mermaid* and *Pocahontas*, which were introduced to us in 1989 and 1995 respectively. Even though thirty years passed after Disney produced *Sleeping Beauty*, Maio claims that the standard and the pattern that Disney set and established for Disney heroines never altered. She questions if Ariel has lived "happily ever after" in the end as follows:

Since *The Little Mermaid* is a Disney flick, Ariel gets her voice back and she gets the guy. But she is nevertheless forced to abandon completely her sea world (her family and friends) for the land-locked kingdom of her Prince. In the end, Ariel is a woman without a social support system, investing her entire life in a romance. Not a situation that I've ever found to have 'happily ever after' written all over it. (*ibid.*)

As for *Pocahontas*, Maio explains that Disney's romance seekers "casually re-interpreted" a true story from Native American history, by blending with "their traditional all-for-love Princess tale."

Suffice it to say that Disney's buckskin Barbie bears little resemblance to the pre-pubescent girl who first met John Smith. Her real name was Matoaka and her 'saving' of Smith from 'execution' was probably nothing more than a tribal adoption ceremony. There was no romance between the two. She called him 'father' when she met him again, years later. ... Later, as a publicity gimmick for the Virginia colony, she was taken to England where she sickened and died. It's hard to make two upbeat cartoon adventures out of such a tragic story. So Disney didn't try. Instead, they drew a barefoot babe and gave her cute, comical animal sidekicks and a penchant for falling in love with hunky Anglos. Sadly, millions of people around the world saw *Pocahontas* not only as a colorful cartoon but as a palatable history lesson. (*ibid.*)

Kathi Maio is not the only one who criticizes Disney's passive, subordinate, and dependent portrayal of heroines. In ABC's news story entitled as *What's Wrong With Being a Princess?*,

which appeared on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, Peggy Orenstein, who has written extensively about women's issues, worries and questions whether perfect-looking princesses are good role models for girls. Orenstein claims that she wants girls to live in reality, not in fantasy and that "All they know is that Cinderella is really pretty, and she has a lot of bling." (ABC News: 2007)

It really is ultimately about looking pretty, and having a lot of stuff. And as somebody who studied body image, I really worry about what it's setting girls up for. Will the girl who is wearing "Princess" across her chest when she's three be wearing "Spoiled" across her chest when she's six, and "Porn Star" when she is 12? (*ibid.*)

In her newspaper article, *What's Wrong With Cinderella*, which appeared in The New York Times on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Orenstein first introduces what a 1980 "antidote to Disney" picture book, *The Paper Bag Princess*, tells us as follows:

The heroine outwits a dragon who has kidnapped her prince, but not before the beast's fiery breath frizzles her hair and destroys her dress, forcing her to don a paper bag. The ungrateful prince rejects her, telling her to come back when she is dressed like a real princess. She dumps him and skips off into the sunset, happily ever after, alone. (Orenstein: 2006)

Then, she explains that *Thelma-&-Louise*-like feminist's fantasy expressed above, is not definitely what she wants for her daughter, either in the following:

The fact is, though I want my daughter to do and be whatever she wants as an adult, I still hope that she'll find Prince Charming and have babies, just as I have. I don't want her to be a fish without a bicycle; I want her to be a fish with another fish. Preferably, one who loves and respects her and also does the dishes and half the child care. ... There has to be a middle ground between compliant and defiant, between petticoats and paper bags. (*ibid.*)

Probably, the middle ground that Orenstein has been looking for can be found in Kaye Dacus' *Writing the Romance Novel: Happy Ending or Happily Ever After?*. According to Dacus, the reality that Disney lacks in its feature movies is the "lose," and she defines it that it is the part of the story in which:

the hero and heroine are separated, when something comes between them that will possibly take one away from the other. It is their struggle to make things right again, to reconcile their relationship, that lends credence to the idea that these two people will be content together for the rest of their lives. (Dacus: 2008)

According to Dacus, romance writers strive for "happy ending" in which readers can be certain with confidence that this couple will be together in ten, thirty, and even fifty years down the

road, while Disney has been finishing up its stories, simply indicating that this couple will live “happily ever after,” with what their future life is really going to be like, unexplained.

As I have explained above, Disney’s romance movies have been criticized by various writers. Disney’s passive, subordinate, and dependent portrayal of heroines has always been the same. No matter what the heroines are and no matter what background they have, Disney has always molded them into the standard and the pattern that they set and established for its heroines over half a century ago. These all-for-love princess tales do not give much good role models for young girls. For example, Disney’s “happily ever after” does nothing, but setting up unrealistic expectations for what life is really like, after the prince and princess exchange their forever happy true-love’s kiss.

What about newly-released *Enchanted*? Does it have to bear the same criticism again? Is the heroine still naive as the previous ones? Does she still give a bad role model image to young girls? Doesn’t “They lived happily ever after” still mean much in the end? Here, I would like to introduce a rather long synopsis for *Enchanted* in the following in order to assist you to understand what the movie is all about.

### **Synopsis of *Enchanted*:**

*Enchanted* begins in animation with Julie Andrews’ narration about the fairytale land of Andalasia where the evil queen, Narcissa, played by Susan Sarandon, wants to keep her reign as long as possible. For that purpose, she has tried very hard to keep her step-son, Prince Edward (James Marsden) away from the young maidens, so that he will not get married, and she will not consequently lose her throne. Meanwhile in the forest, Giselle (Amy Adams in animation) is busy making a statue of the ideal love of whom she has been dreaming. Her animal friends, including her best friend chipmunk, Pip, help her make the statue and find the perfect pair of lips for it. For Giselle, the true love’s kiss with it is the most important thing in the world.

Then, we see Prince Edward hunting and catching a troll with his servant, Nathaniel. As the prince hears Giselle sing and starts toward Giselle’s home, Nathaniel (whom we will later notice that he is on the queen’s side) intentionally lets the troll go after Giselle. He doesn’t want the prince to meet with Giselle, but Edward rescues Giselle from it and convinces her that they have now met and that they will then be married tomorrow. By believing their “living happily ever after” wedding, Giselle arrives at the castle the next day and is escorted into it by Nathaniel who locks her accompanied animal friends out of the castle entrance. Then, she is stopped by the queen in disguise as an old hag, who tricks and pushes her into the bottomless wishing well that will eventually lead to a “no fairytale land,” New York City.

Upon arriving in the middle of Times Square through a manhole, Giselle wearing her wedding dress, tries to find the prince’s castle in this unfamiliar town. Being ignored by busy, unfriendly New Yorkers, causing a car accident, and having her tiara stolen by a homeless, Giselle manages to find a castle billboard on top of the Palace Casino, desperately asking for

help in the rain. While Giselle is suffering, Robert Phillip, played by Patrick Dempsey, is in a divorce settlement meeting in which a couple is fighting over a Hank Aaron baseball card, and his secretary tells him it is time to pick up his daughter, Morgan. She asks Robert if he has told Morgan about his plans to marry his girlfriend, Nancy (Idina Menzel), to which he says "No." In the cab home, he gives Morgan a present. It is not the fairy tale book she wanted, but a book about inspirational women including Madame Curie and Rosa Parks, instead. At a traffic stop, Morgan sees Giselle trying to get into the castle billboard on a roof and gets out of the cab. Robert follows her and ends up catching Giselle falling off the roof. Instantly, Morgan believes that she is a princess and wants to help her, but Robert thinks that she is absolutely insane. They end up bringing her to their apartment to let Giselle freshen up, but she is exhausted and quickly falls asleep on the couch while Robert tries to call her a cab. He, then, has to decide to let her stay overnight when he sees her sleeping.

Giselle wakes up the next morning and notices that the apartment is filthy. Just like she did back in Andalusia, she goes to the window and sings to the city animals to come and help her clean the house. Roaches, flies, rats, and pigeons come to clean the apartment. A one-legged pigeon drops a plate while cleaning, which wakes up Morgan and Robert. While they are busy trying to get rid of the animals, Giselle is taking a shower. At the same time, Nancy arrives to bring Morgan to school and gets the wrong idea when she sees Giselle in her towel with Robert and leaves. Robert follows to catch her, but she gets in a cab and leaves.

Back in Andalusia, Pip explains to Prince Edward what had happened to Giselle. Edward and Pip, then, follow Giselle into New York to look for her. Queen Narcissa, however, is very upset about this and flirts with Nathaniel to convince him that he also should go to stop Edward from finding Giselle. Thus, Nathaniel goes into New York City as well. Now, Prince Edward, Pip, who cannot speak a human language any more in the "no fairytale land," and Nathaniel are in New York City to find Giselle.

When Robert comes home, he sees that Giselle has cut up the apartment curtains to make a new dress. Then, he becomes extremely angry with her. This is the emotion that she has never seen in the fairytale land. After taking Morgan to school, Robert brings Giselle to work and leaves her with the secretary while he has a conference with the same divorcing couple as the day before. Queen Narcissa, as she can see what is happening in the real world, sees Robert trying to help Giselle through the fish tank in the law office and is apparently not happy.

When Prince Edward, Pip, and Nathaniel all go to lunch, this angry Narcissa shows up in a pot in the restaurant kitchen and gives Nathaniel three poisoned apples. All he has to do is to get her to have one bite, and she will go to sleep. Pip accidentally hears this and tries to explain the evil plan to Edward through charades. Sadly, Edward who is not good at guessing, does not understand. With this evil plan in mind, Nathaniel tells Edward they should go their separate ways to look for Giselle.

Meanwhile, Giselle begins talking to the divorcing couple and gets very sad about the fate of their marriage when finding out they are separating. Robert, then, brings her to Central

Park where he plans to leave her. He gives her money and says "Good by," but she gives the money away. Being upset, he catches up to her and walks with her. He asks about her prince, and she explains that they have only known each other for a day. That surprises him very much because he has known Nancy for five years. Then, he explains the concept of dating to her, but obviously, she has never heard of it before. Robert insists that a couple should get to know each other on a date before getting married. At this point, Nathaniel shows up as a street vendor and offers Giselle a free caramel poisoned apple. She takes it, but accidentally throws it away when passionately talking about love. She explains that true love's kiss is the most powerful thing in the world through singing with people in the park in a musical style, and she says that she cannot wait any longer for it. Prince Edward hears her singing and tries to locate her, but gets run over by some park bikers.

Giselle helps Robert make up with Nancy by sending her flowers and getting him to bring her to a ball. Nancy seems very happy because what he has done is far more romantic and spontaneous than what he usually does for her. Robert explains to her that he only wants to help Giselle, and they make up. Tired Edward and Nathaniel have checked into a hotel with Pip to rest. While Edward flips through TV channels, Nathaniel traps Pip in the closet and goes after Giselle. Meanwhile, Giselle and Robert are at a pizza restaurant where she asks if they are on a date. Robert explains that people don't bring their children on dates. In fact, Morgan is there with them. Then, he starts talking to Giselle about his wife, who left him and Morgan for no real reason. There, Nathaniel appears as a waiter with free poisoned apple martini, and Robert jokes that that is poisonous. When she is about to drink it, freed Pip shows up and tries to stop Giselle from drinking the martini. People in the restaurant are surprised at the rodent, and Nathaniel appears to have succeeded in throwing Pip trapped in a pizza in a pizza oven.

Back at the hotel room, Edward sees Giselle being interviewed about the rodent attack on TV and leaves the hotel to find her. Upon arriving at the right address, he knocks on every single door in the building, finding lots of interesting people at each door.

At Robert's apartment, Giselle is telling a bedtime story to Morgan while Robert watches and smiles. Robert then tries to tell her that Edward will not perhaps come for her after all. She gets very angry about what he has just said, and at the same time, she is also excited about feeling angry. They both know that they are feeling a connection to each other.

At the bar in the pizza restaurant, Nathaniel is talking to Queen Narcissa who is now in his drink. She tells him that she is very disappointed in him and that she is now coming to New York to get Giselle herself. Her anger breaks all the glasses at the bar including the one Pip is trapped in.

The next morning, Robert wakes up to see that Giselle has made herself another dress and this time, smiles at this. When the three sit down to breakfast, Prince Edward knocks on the door. He and Giselle are finally reunited, but Giselle feels that it is not the same between them, although arrogant Prince Edward does not seem to notice. She tells him that she wants to go on a date with him before they leave for Andalusia, and he agrees. She leaves Robert and

Morgan who are very sad to see her go. At work, Robert meets with the divorcing clients who were touched by Giselle and have decided to stay together. Then, he notices that he misses Giselle.

Meanwhile, Giselle and Edward are on their date. Uncertain Giselle asks Edward to stay for just a little longer and go to the ball, but she promises him to go home after that. Giselle goes back to Morgan and tells her that she is going to the ball. Morgan, then, takes Robert's emergency credit card, and the two go shopping. They go to shops for clothes, shoes, jewelry, a haircut, and pedicure. They bond over not having mothers and enjoy their shopping time together.

In the evening, Queen Narcissa arrives and heads toward the ball. Nancy and Robert are already there, when Giselle and Edward make their entrance. Robert and Giselle see each other as the couples meet and greet. Edward introduces Giselle as the love of his life, to which Nancy comments is very bold and romantic. It is announced that you dance with someone you did not bring to the ball. Robert and Giselle dance together, and Nancy dances with Edward. At the end of this dance, Edward and Giselle plan to leave. As Giselle is sadly watching Nancy and Robert, the old hag shows up and offers her a poisoned apple that will make her forget all the sad memories. She bites the apple and falls asleep. The old hag drags her into an elevator and tries to turn back to Narcissa, but Edward stops her. She says that she does not know what happened to Giselle. However, when Nathaniel shows up and explains her evil plan, Narcissa tells that Giselle will die at midnight. Robert remembers what Giselle said that true love's kiss was powerful and tells Edward to kiss her. He kisses her several times, but it does not wake her. Robert, then, realizes that it is he who has to kiss her, but he doesn't know if he should do it. With Edward and Nancy's "Go," he kisses Giselle. She wakes up, and they kiss again.

Queen Narcissa is obviously angry at how this has turned out and does not want to be removed from the throne because of her ill behavior. She then turns into a huge dragon and runs up the building with Robert in its hand. Giselle follows Narcissa and tries to save Robert. In their confrontation, Narcissa eventually ends up dropping Robert, who is saved by Giselle, and, then, Narcissa falls to her death. Giselle and Robert kiss happily on the roof of the building. On the other hand, Nancy and Edward are clearly upset about what has happened. Nancy finds that Giselle has left her shoe, and Edward puts it on her foot. The shoe fits perfectly, and a new fairy tale couple is, then, created.

In the end of the movie, Edward and Nancy get married in Andalusia. In New York City, Giselle runs her own line of fashions with different animals helping her make dresses. Robert is also there, and Morgan is wearing one of the dresses. While Nathaniel is at his book signing about his life in New York City, Pips does his book signing about his time in New York City in Andalusia. Lastly, Robert, Giselle, and Morgan in the apartment are having fun and living happily ever after.

### **Analysis on *Enchanted*:**

*Enchanted* is well-made simply because it has been made to evenly please traditional and contemporary audience. To be more precise, the movie has succeeded in giving the audience alternatives for what we prefer in our lives. First of all, the movie introduces two places for the events to take place, a fantastic world, Andalasia, and a real world, New York City. There is a typical prince, slaying trolls in Andalasia, and there is a typical divorced lawyer, living with his daughter in New York City, on the other hand. A woman untraditionally rescues a man, by slaying a dragon, while a shoe fits a woman's foot to determine the destiny between her and a prince. Lastly, there is a typical fairytale wedding in Andalasia for the newly weds to live happily ever after. On the contrary, in New York City, there may be a typical re-marriage between a man with his daughter and a woman who now finds a job, and they all make efforts to live happily ever after. And there are more as seen in the following.

#### **Other Traditional Plots Introduced in the Movie:**

- A heroine can communicate with animals.
- A prince rides on a horse.
- A heroine is rescued by a prince.
- A prince has a stepmother.
- A poisoned apple is introduced to kill a heroine.
- People sing and dance.
- There is a ball.
- An old woman offers a poisoned apple to a heroine.
- A heroine eats a poisoned apple and falls asleep.
- There is a twelve o'clock deadline.

#### **Other Contemporary Plots Introduced in the Movie:**

- A prince rides on the top of a bus.
- There are modern gadgets such as cars, bicycles, TV sets, and cell phones.
- There is a divorce.
- There is a lawyer.
- A man and a woman go on a date.
- There are many diverse people in New York City.
- People use a credit card to become pretty.
- A heroine does not wake up with a prince's kiss.

Therefore, Walt Disney Pictures introduces the traditional plots that they have valued for a long time and cleverly intertwines them with the contemporary alternatives, or the facts of life, some of which should have been mentioned in Disney's works in order to let children know that "living happily ever after" cannot always happen in our real lives. With these two kinds of plots coexisting together, the audience can choose to enjoy either traditional Disney or

contemporary Disney, by acknowledging the other. Or you can enjoy this whole new Disney. As a matter of fact, I personally like their whole new approach. When Edward and Nancy tie their knot in Andalusia, there is a phone call to her cell phone from the real world. In New York City, Giselle runs her own line of fashions with different animals helping her make dresses just like in Andalusia. As seen in these, there is reality in fantasy, and there is fantasy in reality. After all, this is what *Fantastic World of Disney* is all about.

### The Findings from the Movie Criticism from the People in Japan & the U.S.:

I randomly selected 50 reviews each from Japanese and the U.S. viewers who had watched *Enchanted*, from the movie review section of Amazon.com and Amazon.jp. The following are what I have found on how they review the movie:

#### Findings from the Reviews from the 50 Japanese Viewers:

<b>Cute</b>	<b>22.1%</b>
· Giselle is cute.	(13.6%)
· Other characters (including Pip) are cute.	( 8.5%)
<b>Interesting</b>	<b>44.1%</b>
· because the movie uses Disney's traditional plots (poisoned apples, etc.) in the scenes of New York City.	(25.4%)
· because songs and dances are nice.	(13.6%)
· because Prince Edward is funny.	( 1.7%)
· Others	( 3.4%)
<b>Disappointing &amp; not-Disney-like</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
<b>Fantastic</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
<b>Heart-warming</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
· able to see family problems in the U.S.	(1.7%)
· Disney's world view is reflected on the contemporary society.	(1.7%)
· able to gain happiness after experiencing many things together & deepen a relationship.	(1.7%)
<b>Fun</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
<b>Romantic</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

#### Findings from the Reviews from the 50 U.S. Viewers:

<b>Politically correct</b>	<b>37.5%</b>
(The movie succeeded in breaking Disney's traditional standard and pattern.)	
<b>Interesting</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
· because songs are good.	(14.1%)
· because the movie is funny.	( 6.3%)

· because characters, animation, story, etc. are good.	( 4.7%)
<b>Fun</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
<b>Cute</b>	<b>7.8%</b>
<b>Romantic</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Heart-warming</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Disappointing &amp; not-Disney-like</b>	<b>4.7%</b>

As seen above, many American viewers have clearly responded to the criticism on the traditional description of Disney's heroines. One review from Danielle Turchiano from Van Nuys, California appears to explain how *Enchanted* differs from other Disney's fairy tales accurately as follows:

Little girls today don't believe in fairytales the way they did even a decade ago: they see much more commonly now that the women in their own lives closer resemble the women from Lipstick Jungle--struggling to balance work, family, friends, and romance--rather than the princesses staring out their castle windows, dreaming of the prince who will come save them from a life of gold-collar imprisonment. Nothing seems like it could ever be as picture-perfect as those brightly-colored cels we remember so well from our childhood, but Director Kevin Lima tries his hardest with *Enchanted*, creating one part traditional fairytale (for the kids) and one part slightly sardonic chick flick (for the moms and big sisters). For both, though, *Enchanted* incorporates modern-day feminist theory to challenge traditional roles for princesses and real world women alike. (Amazon.com, Customer Reviews, *Enchanted*: 2008)

Despite the fact that the viewers both in Japan and the U.S. come up with similar reviews such as the movie is interesting, fun, cute, romantic, heart-warming, etc., the shocking difference between the viewers of these two countries is that the politically- correctness has never become a major issue in Japan unlike in its counterpart. Only three Japanese reviews listed in "Others" somewhat touch on the social and life issues that Disney wants to convey. Why does this difference exist? It is because the Japanese appear not to find Disney's passive, subordinate, and dependent portrayal of its heroines offensive as much as the Americans. As a matter of fact, I asked 20 Japanese female students and another 20 students from the U.S. these two questions. The questions are: "What kind of image do you have on Disney's animation heroines?" and "Would you like to be a Disney heroine?" These female students are those who are studying at Obirin University in Machida (Tokyo). I randomly selected the Japanese students at one of the cafeterias on campus during their lunch break and asked them these two questions. As for the American students, they came to study at Obirin as exchange students from various Obirin-affiliated universities for usually a year. And the results are stunning:

**What kind of image do you have on Disney's animation heroines?**

**Response from the Japanese students:**

- Cute 80%
- Romantic 20%

**Response from the American students:**

- Not realistic 60%
- Dependent 20%
- Helpless 15%
- No brains 5%

**Would you like to be a Disney heroine?**

**Response from the Japanese students:**

- Yes 100%
- No 0%

**Response from the American students:**

- Yes 0%
- No 100%

It is crystal-clear that American women today do not believe in fairytales the way they did even a decade ago, as Danielle Turchiano from Van Nuys, California explains above. However, the Japanese still think that Disney heroines are cute and that *ohimesama dakko* (holding her in his arms like a princess) is romantic. It is very interesting to mention that over 9 out of 10 couples in Japan get married in western-style and they, especially the brides-to-be, want to have a "Cinderella wedding" at a chapel, wanting to be pronounced as "a man and his wife" in a foreign language by a foreign minister with a foreign choir singing celebrating songs for them, according to the bridal advisers, Akira Takagi and Hiroyuki Shigematsu who work at Hotel Rapport Senjukaku and Odakyu Hotel Century at Sagami Ohno respectively in the Machida area. In fact, *Zekushi*, a Japanese monthly bridal magazine, frequently introduces many bridal studios throughout Japan that can offer this "Cinderella wedding" to their brides-& bridegrooms-to-be. Why do the Japanese women want to be Princess Cinderella in the West, but not to be Princess Kaguya in a Japanese fairy tale, *Taketori-monogatari* (A Bamboo Cutter's Tale)? Moreover, where is this Western adoration of the Japanese coming from?

Ruth Benedict in her *Japanese Behavior Patterns* explains this Western adoration of the Japanese nicely. According to Benedict, the Japanese have the distinctive world view in which they strongly believe that they are #1 in the world. But yet, at the same time, the Japanese place the Europeans and Americans very close second, because they helped the Japanese modernize and reach where they are now. They respect and adore European and American cultures as well and continuously adopt many aspects of them in order to make themselves look more civilized. As a matter of fact, the Japanese are eager to learn Western languages, and owning a Western automobile is more prestigious than the domestic. Likewise, marrying in western-style, therefore, is another way for the Japanese to feel and look more civilized.

Then, what about Japanese enthusiasm about this “being cute” business? As already mentioned above, 22.1% of the Japanese movie reviews have found the movie “cute,” while only 7.8% of the U.S. counterparts think the same. Moreover, 80% of the Japanese students have found Disney heroines “cute,” while the U.S. students have not. It is also interesting to mention that all of these 20 Japanese students at Obirin University answered me that they wanted to be told by their friends that they were cute, when I asked them how they wanted to be told regarding their characteristics, appearance, etc. Furthermore, a monthly entertainment & audition information magazine, *De☆View* did a survey to 108 newly-debuted actresses between the age of 12 and 24 on which one she is more pleased with when people say to her that she is pretty or that she is beautiful. The results have found that 52% prefer being said that she is cute. These remind me of how one American student’s amazement about the Japanese who are very conscious about being cute, is expressed in her blog as follows:

Tokyo was the last leg of our trip. Tokyo is a very cool, large city with a LOT of personality. It was definitely an experience. People dressed in crazy fashions (Harajuku) and all things Japanese pop culture you can imagine were a part of the city (Akihabara). Everything in Tokyo is so kawaii (cute), sometimes I felt like I was on kawaii overload. Even warning signs have cute little anime characters on them giving the peace sign. Tokyo was a little hectic for me because it was so crowded (you should have seen the subway cars) but I really enjoyed it. (Michelle Aldridge: All about Japan^\_^)

What does this *kawaii* mean to the Japanese? How was this originated? In order to answer these questions, I need to go back to the time when feminist movement was at its peak in Japan during the 1970s. To describe this period, people often said that women and stockings got stronger. Activists encouraged Japanese women to seek better jobs and higher education. At the same time, they encouraged them to abandon the old-fashioned cultural values that Japanese women had accepted for centuries, such as passive, subordinate, and dependent characteristics. When adult women started to enjoy the social changes created by the feminist movement, three junior high school senior girls debuted as singers, by breaking the social standard that people should finish at least compulsory education to get any kind of work. They were Masako Mori, Junko Sakurada, and Momoe Yamaguchi. All of these three were not good at singing, but the Japanese, especially Japanese men became their fans right away because they had one thing in common. They were cute! Many young girls followed suit. They were called *kawaikochan* (cute girls) because of their appearance. Their number increased drastically when a famous audition program, *Suta Tanjo* (The Star Was Born) came on the air. Many male scouts from entertainment productions and agencies scouted *kawaikochans* who were their daughters’ age on the show. Then, were stars born? “No,” says *The Entertainer* produced by TeleJapan USA for PBS. According to the video tape, stars are not born in Japan, but are created by their productions.

*The Entertainer* depicts one *kawaiikochan* singer whose performance and future are periodically evaluated and discussed by a group of male production staff. In the end of the video tape, they conclude in their meeting that she is not really “shining” enough, suggesting that she will be replaced by a cuter *kawaiikochan* when her cuteness fades away. Why is cuteness so significant in Japan? To answer this, I first need to explain what *kawaii* really means. When people say “cute” or “*kawaii*”, we generally think of kittens and puppies. Why then are they cute? They are cute because they are harmless, submissive, dependent, subordinate, obedient, etc. These characteristics happen to be the traditional characteristics of Japanese women that were drastically disappearing from adult females due to the feminist movement during the 1970s. Many Japanese men, who were witnessing these good, old-fashioned characteristics disappear in front of their very eyes, had to do something to stop it. As you can guess, the men in entertainment business who could instantly influence millions of people through the mass media, targeted the girls in their teens who were not quite yet influenced by the feminist movement and created the Japanese women with the lost traditional characteristics in them with the new label called “*kawaiikochan*.”

Did they succeed? I am sure they did. As a matter of fact, *kawaii* is everywhere in present Japan! Now, not only the entertainers, but also ordinary girls are cute. Even sometimes, girls are forced to be cute. According to the newspaper article entitled *I Want People to Think That I Look Cute* that appeared in The Shizuoka Shimbun on February 24th, 2002, female elementary school students are constantly bullied if they do not wear cute things. In the article, one female 6th grader says, “It is rather hard for everyone to look pretty, but anyone can be cute with lots of cute things on her.” It is now Japanese people’s obsession to look cute. It is no wonder that there are hundreds of stores selling cute products throughout Japan.

I asked the twenty women at Obirin University why they wanted to be cute. Their responses are as follows:

**Why do you want to be cute?**

- |                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| · My boyfriend wants it. | 40% |
| · Boys want it.          | 40% |
| · Society wants it.      | 20% |

Furthermore, I asked 20 male students at Hiroshima Kokusai Gakuin University where I have been teaching full-time what kind of women they liked. Amazingly, they all responded that they liked *kawaii* girls. The male anti-feminists in show business during the 1970s certainly succeeded in preserving the traditional female characteristics such as passiveness, submissiveness, dependence, etc. in the younger generation in the name of *kawaii*. The Japanese viewers have never rejected Disney’s animation heroines unlike the American counterparts, because the Japanese see themselves in these heroines and, therefore, find them very cute. This is why many Japanese viewers have found *Enchanted* cute, while many of the

American counterparts have praised the politically- correctness that Disney strived to present in the movie. It appears that the politically-correctness seen in *Enchanted* may eventually alter Disney's traditional portrayal of animation heroines in the US, but in Japan, it will live happily ever after as long as the concept of cuteness sticks around.

### Conclusion:

In the US, it has been criticized that Disney's portrayal of animation heroines such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White does not accurately reflect the real world. In the US society where over 5 out of ten couples end up getting divorced, sending a message like "living happily ever after" without teaching what we should do after marriage is nothing but irresponsible.

To respond to such criticism, Disney Productions released the movie entitled *Enchanted*. In the movie, a helpless, innocent heroine of Disney's traditional animation movies, Giselle, waits for her Prince Charming to come in an enchanted forest with her animal friends. As expected, a prince whose name is Prince Edward of Andalasia comes to rescue Giselle from a troll's attack. Destiny lets them meet with each other, finally, and they are supposed to get married the next day to live happily ever after. On the day of their wedding, evil Queen Narcissa pushes Giselle in a wedding dress into a deep well, sending her to real New York City. There, Giselle meets with a divorced lawyer, Robert with his daughter, Morgan. She gradually learns that "living happily ever after" needs lots of efforts to realize. She learns the importance of going on a date and tries it with Prince Edward who came to New York City to rescue his wife-to-be. Giselle promises Prince Edward to go back to Andalasia with him after attending a ball. When she is about to go home, Giselle feels very sad to leave Robert and Morgan behind and is asked to eat an apple which is poisoned by the hag whom Narcissa has disguised as. She falls asleep, and a prince has to give a true love's kiss to wake her before the clock strikes 12 o'clock. Prince Edward kisses her, but in vain. Robert's kiss wakes her, and that enrages the evil queen. Narcissa becomes a dragon and goes out to the top of the building with Robert. Giselle goes after the dragon to slay it to rescue Robert. Disappointed Prince Edward finds Robert's fiancée, Nancy and goes back to Andalasia with her to live happily ever after. Giselle stays behind in New York City to start running her own line of fashions and try to live happily ever after with Robert and Morgan.

Disney Productions succeeded in presenting both the traditional values in which Disney has been believing and the contemporary values that it has been ignoring, and then they have given us a chance to like the fantastic or realistic side of the movie or both in order to enjoy it. Looking at the reviews of the movie from 50 viewers each from Japan and the US, I have found stunning differences in their reviews. American viewers praise the politically-correctness that *Enchanted* has presented, while the Japanese never touch on the issue. However, they have found the movie very cute (*kawaii* in Japanese).

The Japanese have never viewed the Disney animation heroines as degrading to women,

because such characteristics as submissiveness, obedience, dependence, etc. are the essence of the concept of *kawaii*. This concept of cuteness was created during the 1970s when feminist movement was introduced to Japan. These characteristics happen to be the traditional characteristics of Japanese women that were drastically disappearing from adult females due to the feminist movement during the 1970s. Many Japanese men, who were witnessing these good, old-fashioned characteristics disappear in front of their very eyes, had to do something to stop it. Men in entertainment business who could instantly influence millions of people through the mass media, targeted the girls in their teens who were not quite yet influenced by the feminist movement and created the Japanese women with the lost traditional characteristics in them with the new label called “*kawaiikochan*.” Did they succeed? I am sure they did. As a matter of fact, *kawaii* is everywhere in present Japan! Now, not only the entertainers, but also ordinary girls are trying very hard to be cute.

It appears that the politically-correctness seen in *Enchanted* may eventually alter Disney’s traditional portrayal of animation heroines in the US, but in Japan, it will live happily ever after as long as the concept of cuteness sticks around.

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「2人はその後幸せに暮らしました。」は  
日本とアメリカでいかに受け止められているか—  
ウォルト・ディズニー映画「魔法にかけられて」に関する社会文化的な考察—

増山栄一エリック

「ウォルト・ディズニーの『眠れる森の美女』や『白雪姫』等に見る『2人はその後幸せに暮らしました。』はアメリカの現実社会を適切に表していない。」とたびたび批評されてきたが、そのような批評を消し去る為に、ウォルト・ディズニーピクチャーズは『魔法にかけられて』を制作した。この映画では、ヒロインであるジゼルは悪女王ナリッサによっておとぎの国、アンダレーシアから現代のニューヨークの町に送られてしまう。ジゼルはアンダレーシアで結婚して、エドワード王子と2人でその後幸せに暮らすはずであった。この映画は成功を取めたが、その理由はディズニーが長い間大切にしてきた伝統的なストーリーラインを、『魔法にかけられて』に盛り込みながらも、それを、ディズニーがもっと前に紹介すべきであった現代的な考え方、言い換えれば日常生活の現実と一緒に映画の中に組み込むことで、「2人はその後幸せに暮らしました。」は必ずしも実際の生活の中では起きるとは限らないと示唆したからである。この成功を果たした映画に対する日本とアメリカの人たちの映画批評をインターネットで読んだ時、国の違いで批評がかなり相違していることに気が付いた。なぜこのような相違が存在するのか。「2人はその後幸せに暮らしました。」は日本とアメリカでいかに相違して受け止められているか。そして、その理由は。私は、この論文でウォルト・ディズニー映画『魔法にかけられて』に関する社会文化的な分析を行い、これらの質問に答えていきたい。

キーワード：ウォルト・ディズニー、社会文化的比較研究、女性問題