Editor's Introduction

**FIRST CLASS PRIZE ESSAYS:**

*Second Prize, Fall 2014*
From Boom to Bust: The Decline of the Mon-River Valley ........................................1
*By Carolyn Campbell, McAnulty College of Liberal Arts*
*Instructor: Dr. Jessica McCort*

*Third Prize, Spring 2015*
Unmasked, Untamed, Unabashed—Angela Carter’s Writings.................................8
*By Ann Therese Lambo, Rangos School of Health Sciences*
*Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Cepek*

*First Prize, Spring 2015*
“You Remind Me of the Babe With the Power”: How Jim Henson Redefined the Portrayal of Young Girls in Fantastical Movies in his Film, *Labyrinth* .................15
*By Casey Reiland, McAnulty College of Liberal Arts*
*Instructor: Dr. Jessica McCort*

*Third Prize, Fall 2014*
Duquesne Cuts Sports Programs.................................................................21
*By Tyler Pollack, Palumbo Donahue School of Business*
*Instructor: Michael Begnal*

*Second Prize, Spring 2015*
The Return of the Screwed Up: An Analysis of *The Turn of the Screw* ............26
*By Ashley Begley, McAnulty College of Liberal Arts*
*Instructor: Matthew Heilman*

*First Prize, Fall 2014*
Caucasian Girls and Samurai Swords: Dualism in Kill Bill ...............................30
*By Emily Mattern, McAnulty College of Liberal Arts*
*Instructor: Dr. Erin Speese*
Editor’s Introduction

By Danielle St. Hilare

In the following pages you’ll find wonderful examples of many different kinds of writing: argumentative essays, literary and cultural analyses, and studies of problems facing our world today. While their topics and aims differ, they are alike in their excellence. These six essays were produced by students in Duquesne University’s First-Year Writing program, and they won top honors in our annual competition. Of the many essays submitted to this competition, these were the finest—and they truly are excellent examples of what motivated, talented, hard-working students can produce.

The faculty and graduate students of the English department teach the first-year writing classes (“Thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum” and “Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing”), but the students in the classes come from across the university. This year the prizewinners represent three of the University’s nine undergraduate schools: Business, Health Sciences, and Liberal Arts. Our goal for the first-year writing classes is to provide a space where Duquesne’s diverse students come together and have a common intellectual experience. The students here examine everything from feminist heroism in the film Labyrinth, to the cutting of sports programs at Duquesne, to the decline of the Mon river valley. Our students are engaging with the world, with creative texts, and with the conditions of their own lives. They are doing what students in a first-year writing class are supposed to do, and doing it impressively.

Although excellent, these essays are not perfect; I have declined to line-edit them because I want the Duquesne community to see what its first-year writers are actually doing—and to show our incoming freshmen what they can realistically aspire to produce. These essays show minds struggling with complicated issues; they are a snapshot of a process of thinking.

I’d like to thank all of the graduate students and faculty who undertook the task of judging these essays. This year, our judges were Jim Purdy, Matt Ussia, Jeff Stoyanoff, Justin Kishbaugh, James Leary, and Sue Howard. Thanks to all of them for their hard work, and particular thanks to Nora McBurney and Anna Harp for their admirable administrative work. As ever, I’d also like to thank the Office of the Provost, whose support keeps this contest and journal going; Michelle Boehm and the staff of the Public Affairs office, who design and produce this journal; and of course all of the magnificent instructors in the First-Year Writing program.
FROM BOOM TO BUST: THE DECLINE OF THE MON-RIVER VALLEY

By Carolyn Campbell, McAnulty College of Liberal Arts
Instructor: Dr. Jessica McCort

Growing up in southwestern Pennsylvania, I am no stranger to the coal mines and steel mills that define the heritage of Pittsburgh. As a child I would often go with my father and brothers fishing along the Monongahela River, between the towns of Elrama and Monongahela. We would park in an abandoned parking lot just outside of a steel plant and walk down to the rivers edge, where we would then set up our equipment to fish. As the hours passed I would sit watching the countless barges, loaded high with coal, carry their loads down the river to the steel plant and eventually return up river, empty of its cargo to repeat the cycle. I would hear the trains chug by on the railroad tracks on top of the hill behind me and watch them pass by on the opposite side of the river in front of me. Both my brother and I would try to count the seemingly endless number of railroad cars, but in the end losing track and giving up. I would also watch the tall smokestacks of the mill as they emitted the artificial clouds that obscured the blue sky. Then as the sun set and night descended, I would look at the steel factory, glittering like a metropolis in the dark; an odd sight of beauty. As a child I could never of understood the importance of that steel mill to the the townsfolk of Monongahela, who somewhat strangely, consider themselves lucky to have it there. They say this because the mill provides jobs to the area and keeps the population from incessantly dissipating, as it continues to do in many of the neighboring towns due to the closure of the steel mills and coal mines there. This deindustrialization began in the 1980s as globalization was taking root, and its consequences are still visible and felt today by the residents of the Monongahela River Valley.

The Monongahela River Valley is an area that includes many of the southern suburbs of Pittsburgh that once contained a vast number of the steel mills and coal mines that made Pittsburgh famous. It spans the towns as far south as Charleroi and Donora and continues north along the river unto the towns of Duquesne and Homestead, just outside the city of Pittsburgh. Today, however, many of these suburbs are in decay with a declining and aging population as well as increasing poverty, crime, and drug abuse rates. To thoroughly comprehend the situation these towns are facing and have real firsthand experience, I drove, on more than one occasion, for hours through the valley localities along the river, heading south to north and then north to south. While driving through many of these towns I saw everywhere low-income housing in disrepair, abandoned houses with broken windows, boarded-up store fronts, and rampant graffiti. Often I did not feel safe driving through the neighborhood streets of such an environment and was sure not to linger or appear lost. I wondered how this could be if Pittsburgh was “the most livable city” (Pittsburgh). I didn't have to research the history of Pittsburgh on the internet to answer my question, I needed only ask the people who lived through it. Anyone who grew up here during the 1970s or lived here in the 1980s can tell you all about the closing of the coal mines and steel mills.

My grandfather, Louis Campbell Sr, worked for many years—since being a teenager—in the coal mines of southwestern Pennsylvania, around the area of South Park and Thomas Jefferson. When the mines closed in the 1980s, due to the low demand of coal which was the result of the collapse of the steel industry, he told me, “I didn't know what to do” (Interview). “The mines were my life. I spent almost ten hours a day, everyday except Sunday in there and just like that, I was out of work and my life changed. I
didn’t know what else to do, mining was all I knew” (Interview). These feelings were experienced by many men of my grandfather’s generation and are best exhibited in the song “Steel Mill” by David Berkeley;

There’s a steel mill, shut down when spring came
My dad worked his life there,
I was doing the same.

Now I don’t know what to do with my days.
The kingdom comes to workmen,
So the preacher he says.

And there’s voices, sometimes well you know.
And the devil comes a knocking,
When the money gets low.

Cause it’s a story
Heard round each bend.
A man works his heart out,
And is broke in the end. (“Steel”)

My grandfather didn’t have a college degree or work experience outside of the mines and so was left to a lifetime of making money at whatever he could do. After being forced to leave the coal industry, he spent many years at odd jobs to make money including: running a christmas tree sales business in the winter and a lawn motor repair and cutting service in the summer. Then after that for many more years, until recent retirement, he was a janitor at South Park High School. He now works at flea markets as a keysmith and sells paintings he made on slabs of grey slate, similar to the coal that once defined his life. He grew up preparing to enter the mines, as his father did. My family, like many working-class American families of the time, worked for generations in the steel mills and coal mines. It was there way of life, which they passed down to their children who graduated high school with the usually limited options of work in heavy industry or join the armed forces. Also like many families of Pittsburgh, my father’s great-grandfather emigrated to the United States to work in the steel factories here, so that he may have a better life for his family. From there on my family worked in the industry until the mines were closed and the factory doors shut in the 1980s. This is a history not exclusive to my heritage, but that of the region whose residents will tell similar stories time after time when asked about the closing of the steel mills; an infamous occurrence here in Pittsburgh.

The facts are that after a long decade of decline, by the end of the 1980s, above seventy five percent of the steel production in the Pittsburgh area was closed (Dietrich). The Pittsburgh Quarterly described the situation by stating, “Sprawling facilities running along the Monongahela and Ohio rivers toppled like ten pins... The demise of the steel industry in Pittsburgh played out with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy” (Dietrich). By the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s the steel industry in Pittsburgh collapsed as the city and its surrounding areas faced massive deindustrialization (History). Japanese and Korean companies provided strong competition and even destruction to the Pittsburgh economy by flooding the market with cheaply produced metal from overseas (Saporito). The closing of the steel mills was the first domino to fall in a long chain of failing industry. Soon after the fall of the steel industry came the decline of the railroads and mines that depended so heavily on the production of steel. Coal mines, just as with the steel
mills, were forced to cut back and initiate large-scale layoffs, putting many men who had been working for generations in the mines out of work. The decline of heavy industry also had an adverse affect on local businesses as the population of Pittsburgh and its suburbs decreased due to the decline of jobs (History). No business and no jobs meant that the unemployment rate of the Pittsburgh area reached above a soaring 18% during the 1980s (Briem). Modern day Pittsburgh, in a stark contrast to the past, has no steel mills within the radius of its city limits (History). The economy of the city itself has for the most part rebounded. However, the suburbs of Pittsburgh, primarily the Monongahela River Valley, are still recovering from the downturn experienced from the closure of the steel mills and other heavy industry factories, which was for Pittsburgh, the ending of an era. The deindustrialization of Pittsburgh has caused lasting social and economic effects on the Monongahela River Valley such as population loss and a rise in unemployment, but with most attention paid to the rise of poverty and its effects.

One of the most noticeable effects deindustrialization has had on Pittsburgh and its surrounding areas is population loss. The population of McKeesport, once an industrial hub and city of pride for Pittsburgh, was 55,355 in 1940, whereas in 2010 the population was recorded at a mere 19,731, with a continuing steady decline (McKeesport [city]). This negative trend of population can also be seen in another suburb of Pittsburgh just down the river from McKeesport, the community of Braddock. The population of Braddock during the 1950s reached a peak at more than 20,000. However, after the industrial decline that affected the Pittsburgh region in the 1980s, the population as recorded by the US Census Bureau in 2010, was only 2,159 (Schnarrenberger). The city of Pittsburgh itself faced similar population devastation. The population of the city peaked at 676,806 in 1950 (History). During the decades following and especially after 1980, the population began to decrease so that the population as recorded in 2000 by the US Census Bureau was 343,600, or in other words almost half of what it was during Pittsburgh’s industrial heyday (Dietrich). The population loss of Pittsburgh and its suburbs during the second half of the twentieth century was a direct result of the deindustrialization of the area and also had adverse affects on the economies and social aspects of life for residents there.

One of the most noticeable effects deindustrialization has had on Pittsburgh and its surrounding areas is population loss.

However, it is arguable that the most severe effect deindustrialization has had upon Pittsburgh and the Monongahela River Valley is the rise of poverty. The loss of employment opportunities, population, and business associated with deindustrialization has created a rise in poverty in Pittsburgh, particularly among the suburbs located in the Monongahela River Valley. Braddock, home to Andrew Carnegie’s first steel mill, was once bustling with people and life. However, today it is now described by many people as “Hell” (Future). The situation of Braddock is best described by one journalist who visited there in the statement; “Once an envied example of what U.S. industrial prowess could do for the lifestyle of workers, Braddock’s main street is now a stretch of boarded up store fronts and crumbling houses, lots filled with garbage, and ghosts of warehouses and factories that stopped humming long ago” (Future). I recently drove through Braddock to witness first hand how deindustrialization has affected the community and can personally attest to the previous statement about Braddock’s main street. Braddock today is the poorest town in Allegheny County. According to John Fetterman, the mayor of Braddock, “Today the poverty rate in Braddock is three times the national average with half the town on public assistance and a murder rate, up until a few months ago that was at least six times the national average” (Future). He also goes on to state that “While you can purchase a house in Detroit, on average, for $19,000 in Braddock homes go, if they go at all, for $6,000” (Future). This is a profound statement because many people tend to think of Detroit as an area where real estate is near worthless due to unfavorable living conditions,
and in comparison to the selling prices of a house, it seems that Braddock fares even worse. According to the Heritage Community Initiative, which seeks to improve communities dealing with poverty, there is currently no grocery store, pharmacy, bank, or ATM machine located in Braddock (Schnarrenberger). This is most likely due to the high levels of crime and violence that occur there and can be associated with poverty. In 2009 it was reported that 57.9% of people in Braddock had an income below the poverty level, in comparison to 16.4% for the state of Pennsylvania (Braddock). That means that over half of all people living in Braddock do not have the adequate income to support themselves. Similarly in McKeesport, a city near Braddock, the poverty level, although not quite as extreme as in Braddock, has reached a significant level. McKeesport was once the fifth largest city in Western Pennsylvania, during a time when the streets were lined with busy store fronts. It was even once host to a debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, and was later visited again by John F. Kennedy in 1962 (Cloonan). Today McKeesport is a place most people try to avoid. When driving through the streets of the small city, most of what one sees are vacated, vandalized, deteriorated, and boarded up houses often overgrown with weeds. Many of the cars parked along the streets are old models that have dents or rusted-out spots in the bodywork. In McKeesport the per capita money income in the past twelve months, based on an average of the years 2008 to 2012, was $16,749 in comparison to an average of $28,190 for the state of Pennsylvania, a difference of almost $12,000 (McKeesport [city]). The median household income for the same time period for McKeesport is $26,608, whereas the average for Pennsylvania is $52,267 (McKeesport [city]). That is a difference of $25,659, or almost half of what the majority of Pennsylvanians make. The average household income for McKeesport is less than what the average person in Pennsylvania makes. This means that whereas the percentage of persons below poverty level for Pennsylvania is 13.1, in McKeesport it is 28.8.

How can it be that a once sprawling center of industry and activity can have such outstanding conditions of poverty? The answer is deindustrialization, which created high unemployment rates, few employment opportunities, and increased dependence on government assistance among many other factors. The deindustrialization of Pittsburgh that occurred during the 1970s through the 1980s has had many lasting negative effects on the region, particularly the Monongahela River Valley.

The high rates of poverty in the Monongahela River Valley, as a side effect, have fostered the presence of rampant drug-use and sales, in addition to increasing crime rates. The ever-increasing manifestation of the drug business and ensuing rise in property and violent crime rates are trends that pervade the former steel communities of the Mon-Valley. An associate professor of criminology at the University of Pittsburgh, Emily Owen, believes that there is a direct correlation between the deindustrialization of the region and increased crime. Although there may be an initial brief stage of decreased crime after industry collapse, she states that, “...if unemployment remains steady and new jobs don't fill the place of the loss of industry, crime can increase, especially as people leave the town in search of jobs” (Guza). Since 1980 crime, both property and violent, has experienced exacerbation. Monessen, a town situated in the Monongahela River Valley, in 2003 reported 89 cases of violent crime, which equates to 10.4 per 10,000
people. This is in contrast to the Pennsylvania state average of 40 violent crimes per 10,000 people. Property crime there was also above average at 312 per 10,000, whereas the state average was 243 (Guza). This example is reminiscent of many communities of the Mon-Valley, not just Monessen. The problem is accurately described by Daniel Zyglowicz, a professor at California University of Pennsylvania, who during childhood lived in Monessen; “There’s less opportunities. Even for young people, there is very little for them to do in town. But still now, there is a lack of jobs in the area. Many people feel there is no other alternative” (Guza). This lack of opportunity for employment influences a rise in crime rates and drug-use rates because people have more time, less hope, and see no other available options (Guza). Selling drugs allows them to readily earn money with perhaps less difficulty than it would be to find a legal job. According to Owen, the criminology professor at Pittsburgh University, “As opportunities dry up, opportunities in crime increase” (Guza). Drugs are “the Valley’s fastest growing business” (Grata). The widespread presence of drugs is also seen in Monongahela, although considerably less due to a crackdown by the police. The Police Chief there, Brian Tempest, has stated that “Drugs were pretty rampant. Heroin was everywhere. There was police officer who worked here who was selling drugs while on duty. You could drive down the street and see the drug dealers” (Guza). The subsistence of a drug industry in the region can also be described by Carroll Township Police Chief, Paul Brand, who has stated “Almost every time we solve a personal theft, forgery, credit card fraud, shoplifting, burglary or robbery, there’s someone behind the crime with a drug issue” (Grata). It is reported in a TribLive article published online that a major company located in the Mon-Valley region once published a need for employment and correspondingly, had several hundred applicants for the positions. Of the applicants, “two-thirds were disqualified because they couldn’t pass the drug test, because they had an arrest record or because they had both strikes against them” (Grata). This drug epidemic that permeates the Mon-Valley degrades the communities there and increases crime. Such an environment only serves to further discourage people from moving to the region. Therefore it is necessary to focus efforts on eliminating poverty, because by doing so one is cutting off the head of the monster and so injuring the extremities that derive life from it. When the root of the problem is gone then the outgrowths of it are also diminished and have the possibility of being eliminated.

These negative trends that plague the Monongahela River Valley are not new to society and have the potential of being abolished and even reversed if effort and attention is directed to solving the problems. High rates of poverty, drug abuse, and violence among others problems can be forgone by actions, in a broad sense, such as creating jobs, spurring investment, giving tax breaks to businesses, investing in real estate, and terminating dependence on the government. The main problem, that is the seed of many attributive issues— aforementioned—is poverty, which generates drug abuse and violence. Therefore, poverty should be the main target of attack in the effort to rebuild, revitalize, and improve the communities of the Mon-Valley, so that the quality of life may also improve and restore pride to its constituents.

The first step that need be taken on the uphill climb to economic sustainability and social cultivation is the creation of jobs and economic opportunities available by spurring investment in the region. The best way to eliminate poverty is to help people help themselves by generating self-sustainment and eliminating government dependence. The creation of jobs, and more particularly those that require skilled labor, will increase the average income, and so reduce the poverty rate. This is a simple but essential and effective solution. Investment in a venture capital market will incite entrepreneurship and the opening of small start-up businesses. But more importantly is the increased employment opportunities available in the industries of advanced material and high-tech manufacturing as well as innovative materials that are usually the product of large companies. Availability of jobs in such industries will attract educated young adults and will also encourage others, those who have not already done so, to pursue further education in post-secondary institutions. The creation of jobs leads to the issue of the need to improve education, another topic of significance, which will in turn open opportunities to ascend the ranks of social stratification and create an environment less susceptible to violence and hard-drug addiction. Many of the communities in the Mon-Valley, including Monongahela, Charleroi, Monessen, Donora, and
Brownsville, experience low educational attainment levels, (measured by individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree), below the state level. According to information found in the 2000 U.S. Census, the percentages in some communities such as Donora, Brownsville, and Monongahela, being around 7%, are close to half that of the state percentage, being 14% (Mid Mon Valley). It is no secret that individuals who hold a college degree of some sort are more likely than individuals who only hold a high school diploma or GED to get a job. Therefore it is important to provide a quality high school education that prepares graduates to enter into college or post-secondary institutions, where they may receive training needed to fill the job opportunities of the 21st century industries like high-tech manufacturing or health sciences. This type of education is mostly absent from the school districts of the Mon-Valley due to the high levels of poverty which influences funding for their programs. School districts in poor neighborhoods are almost always lacking in necessary resources and are severely disadvantaged in comparison to schools found in affluent neighborhoods. Improving education means improving the chances of success in attaining a well-paying job which produces self-sustainment. The creation of jobs is of foremost importance and is comparable to a drop of water falling into a pool of water, where it initiates a ripple effect upon the once stagnate surface. It will allow population growth, which will spawn racial and economic diversity, which will help to stabilize the local economy and safety of the community, which will improve the standards of living and quality of life for the constituents of the community, which is the overall goal of the rehabilitation of the Monongahela River Valley.

A testament to the success of community revitalization and renewal is the relatively new Southside Works. The South Side of Pittsburgh was previously, during the pinnacle of industrialization, a landscape of steel mills and low-income housing for those who worked in the mills. Today the South Side is under development and has experienced much improvement from a decade ago. The Southside Works was constructed in the first few years of the 21st century on the land where Jones and Laughlin steel works once stood and now houses local companies, retail stores, up-scale restaurants and rental units (The Atlantic). The South Side is a rising neighborhood that continues to grow out of the shadow of the steel industry and into the spotlight of the technology industry. It is home to the headquarters of some major tech corporations and institutions like Carnegie Mellon’s Research Institute. The youth that fill Pittsburgh’s universities during the weekdays, fill the cafes and bars of the South Side on Friday nights and weekends. This is in stark contrast to the South Side before the turn of the century when former steel mills lay vacant and rusting and most people left the South Side for downtown or Oakland on the weekends. The South Side is not perfect, it still experiences higher than average rates of crime and violence in some areas, but rehabilitation is a gradual process and it is still occurring. The South Side is an example of the success that many communities in the Mon-Valley can experience if an investment of time and resources is made in revitalizing them.

During the 1980s Pittsburgh experienced unprecedented deindustrialization that led to an economic downturn and the degradation of its suburbs located in the Monongahela River Valley. The closing of steel mills and coal mines associated with heavy industry meant massive job loss and a rise of unemployment. It also meant the end of a way of life for many of the residents in the affected communities. The lack of jobs and opportunities for advancement in turn convinced, and often left people with no other option, than to move away from Pittsburgh and its steel towns to find better economic opportunity. The loss of employment opportunity led to an increase of poverty which, to this day, plagues the Mon-Valley and has also increased the levels of violence and drug use. These communities are in need of revitalization to reverse the negative economic and social trends. This can be achieved by spurring investment in the region—as happened with the South Side—creating job opportunities and opportunities for advancement, and creating self-sustainability. These solutions will help to restore the broken communities and make them safe environments for future growth.
Works Cited


“Interview on Decline of Industry in Pittsburgh.” Personal interview. 09 Dec. 2014.


Unmasked, Untamed, Unabashed – Angela Carter’s Writings

By Ann Therese Lambo, Rangos School of Health Sciences
Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Cepek

Fairy tales are more than just stories about dragons, knights and princesses in far-off castles. Fairy tales, from their very beginning, intend to teach as much as they entertain. Morals and societal beliefs are deep within glamorous balls and true love’s kisses, changing in meaning and importance as society moves forward through time. Although principles of society are taught in all forms of literature, fairy tales are the stories heard from the beginning of life, read to young children at bedtime, allowing their imaginations to run free. Everyone can remember tales they first heard as a little child, so much so that they can still recite their plots well into adulthood. Fairy tales have become such a core part of the human experience that it’s impossible to think that they can be reworked. Or can they? Angela Carter answers this question through her short story collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, painting old female characters in a new light full of triumph and strength. Angela Carter rewrites fairy tales to bring out the innate power of the feminine, not only in her own fairy tales but also in the original works themselves, forcing her female characters and the women who read her works to claim control of their own sexuality and their feminine existence.

To understand Angela Carter as an author, her work must be looked at in greater detail. Carter was hardly content as an author to deal with the ordinary, moving instead to explore the extraordinary through magical realism and feminist theory. Carter’s works, which include a versatile mix of radio plays, short stories, novels, and poetry, came at a time of second-wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting the ideals of women of the times who wanted social and sexual freedom from the patriarchy. Carter’s extensive use of imagery and dark, Gothic themes set her apart from other authors of the time period, truly characterizing her fiction as unique and provocative. In an article written by Helen Simpson, she quotes Carter, who says herself that she is drawn to “Gothic tales, cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious,” (Simpson). These themes are the main focus of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, the concept of taking these fantastical and wonderful tales and using the imagery within them to ignite the thoughts of the unconscious and inspire thinking beyond that of the everyday.

Carter’s flair for the fantastical was first exercised when she was commissioned to translate Charles Perrault’s 17th century fairy tales to English. Her beautiful translation was a labor of love, each word chosen deliberately to serve the purpose of conveying the morals of each story. The act of translating left such a lasting effect on the author that she began considering how she would take the same tales and make them her own. Carter then moved from the position of the translator to that of the revisionist, and *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* was born.

While Carter did an exceptional job of translating Perrault, and her work has become a well-known edition of fairy tales, it is important to note that Carter’s rewriting of the fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* intend them to be stories of her own, inspired by the original tales. The morals and themes present in the original tales are taken from their original works and molded to fit Angela Carter’s...
vision of how the story should be. This concept is different from that of translation, which is simply conveying the same exact story almost word for word. As Hennard states, “Carter’s translations carry a straightforward message articulated in the moral, whereas her rewritings for adults destabilize authorship and open up textuality and meaning, and thus capture the hidden complexity of Perrault’s deceptively simple and pseudo-naïve contes (tales).” (30) By translating Perrault's tales and then writing her own interpretations, Carter seeks out the hidden meanings within the stories and brings them forward for her own purposes, using her own distinct imaginative writing style to bring forth new imagery.

Dark imagery may be the style of choice for Carter, but the themes and beliefs in her works go much deeper than stylistic choices – Carter uses her writing to convey the importance of the female, bodily and spiritually. Angela Carter is a feminist author; she believes that strength of the feminine being comes from acceptance of sexuality and the strength it provides for women. Carter was writing in 1970s England, where feminism was experiencing a powerful resurgence and women everywhere were emancipating their bodies and themselves. Women in England were gaining national attention through their works dealing in history and fiction, and were making strides in the political realm, with Margaret Thatcher as the first female prime minister (Simpson). Despite these incredible strides, women like Carter, who had written seven novels prior to The Bloody Chamber, were still forced into the shadows, hungry for change and recognition in their everyday lives. Feminist scholars at the time revisited past works of literature and found inherent feminine themes, using the lessons of the past to teach ways of living for the future. Many had decided that the only way to gain respect in the present was to show its prevalence in the past. This task was not easy, however. According to Veronica Schanoes, a psychoanalytic feminist scholar:

They [feminist scholars] rewrote stories that had been supposed to be already universal, highlighting the ways in which those stories had not been universal, had overlooked or violently distorted women's experiences. In doing so, they challenged the borders not only of the self, but of story itself, refiguring the relationships among traditional stories and their revisions, as well as the function of the fantastic.” (143)

Angela Carter was an incredible supporter of this idea of breaking through past literature’s borders to apply to modern times. Feminist scholars consider themes of female power and solidarity universal, and fairy tales were considered the universal form to convey these themes, due to their longevity and their prevalence in everyday culture. Carter knew when she began writing that the concept of the fairy tale would capture the imagination of readers, who would come to the work with preconceived notions of the plot and the roles of every character. Carter rewrites, according to Hennard, to “reconsider the poetics and politics of the fairy tale against the grain of preconceived ideas about the genre. In turn, she revived the fairy tale from her own perspective and in her own time as a fundamentally modern genre from which all kinds of readers can learn” (31). Carter's intention was to convey the feminist perspective she believed so wholeheartedly in to everyday readers, in order to further the second wave of feminism she identified with so strongly.

Charles Perrault, however, is on the complete opposite end of the literary spectrum when it comes to the writing of fairy tales. His stories are filled with female characters, all deceivingly depicted as smart and virtuous, characters that, as stated by Duggan, are the “champions[s] of womankind,” much like Perrault himself (211). Hennard furthers this praise of Perrault by stating that, as an author, he was surrounded by women authors and feminine influences, addressing “social and gender issues (in a veiled and subtly humorous fashion) and [debating] the role of art and literature,” (30). Perrault, however, viewed women in a negative light, as most men of the 17th century viewed them, and only saw them as good if
they were subservient to the dominant male species (Duggan, 213). Perrault’s female characters are abject in the eyes of Duggan, meaning “impure, unholy, criminal, sinful, or loathsome in certain practices, objects, or individuals,” simply because they are feminine, and the feminine form is abnormal and sinful in the male world (212). When taking this into account, the female characters in Perrault’s fairy tales suddenly become victims, fearful, timid creatures who deserve their punishments in the end of the tale for their sin of being female.

Perrault’s interpretation of women is one that is seen across the literary genre of the fairy tale. The female personality and the female place in society is defined entirely by the male in the world of fairy tales, and there is little to no room to interpret these characters in their own stories beyond their subservient role to men. Even if a female character finds a chance to escape, such as in the original fairy tale *La Barbe Bleue* where the young wife disobeys her rich, noble husband and enters his forbidden chamber, “female desire is put into check by a male...that manages to purify, tame, and subdue female characters, or completely expel them from the body politic,” (Duggan, 224). Women were forced to feel shame for the sheer fact they were women, that they possessed female bodies that were so radically different from the perfect form of the male. Perrault and other fairy tale authors of the 17th century believed that their female characters were meant to teach lessons against natural female curiosity and behavior – in essence, to show society what not to do. Perrault’s “female characters are ‘abject’ precisely because they threaten male identity and hegemony, and they must be rejected or repelled then subdued before being reintegrated into the body politic as passive (reproductive) vessels in order to neutralize the threat they represent,” meaning womanhood in itself is a threat and must be made subservient to male ideals in order to exist all (Duggan, 224). Perrault’s treatment of female characters, although shocking and misogynistic, was unfortunately the norm in society of the time, and his writings – as most literary works tend to do – reflected the patriarchal belief system of the time period.

Angela Carter saw the blatant abjectification of women in Perrault’s tales not as an end-all condemnation of the female form, but as an opportunity to convey her ideas by turning preconceived notions of female existence on their heads. In all of Carter’s rewritten tales, the heroine experiences some sort of trauma – in *The Bloody Chamber*, it is the objectification and rape by the nameless protagonist’s husband and in *The Company of Wolves*, it is the grandmother’s death by a wolf eating her and the effect it thus has on Little Red Riding Hood – only to come out of their horrid experience stronger and more connected with their femininity than they were before. Society is pitted against these women, but instead of backing down, “they refuse to internalize negative evaluations imposed by a hostile judge and, rejecting mortification or self-punishment, turn the incriminating regard back toward its source in critical indictment of the (real or imagined) contemptuous other,” (Johnson, 50). Carter puts her heroines in a position of shame, much like society does to all females, and forces them to use their feminine strength to become shameless, to use their self-esteem that comes from being a woman to their advantage and assert their autonomy in life. Angela Carter aims to untame her protagonists. These feminine characters take charge of their own experiences, showing that their womanhood is their most important defining feature instead of a source of shame.

Carter’s use of these strong characters, especially in fairy tales, might not make sense to the readers as a form of moral encouragement for women, but its intention is to actually teach women by example. Since Carter was writing during the second wave of the feminist movement, she wanted to create characters that all women could relate to. Readers are able to actively respond to her text, “to construct [their] own fiction for herself from the elements of [her] fictions,” and to take the morals and values they’ve learned throughout their own lives, much like the original fairy tales they read as children. These stories call for their readers to be active, much like the heroines within the pages. Carter says of her own work, “I am
all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode,” (Hennard, 2), perfectly summing up the reading experiences of her own work. Carter took new wine, the feminine ideals that she holds close of women being in charge of their sexuality, and put them into old bottles, the framework of a fairy tale that has been around for ages. These stories were inside the old molds of the fairy tale all along, and when Carter adds the new concepts that feminists held so closely, it creates a dynamic, powerful message of female power that the reader has no choice but to understand. The reader can look at the text anew, forgetting every expectation and belief they had about fairy tales and find that Carter’s deep, complex messages about feminine strength and sexuality were in place in these tales all along.

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Carter’s writing is best understood, however, by looking deeply into her works in comparison to their original tales. The titular short story of her collection, *The Bloody Chamber*, is based on Charles Perrault’s *La Barbe Bleue*, features a narcissistic seventeen-year-old bride taken into the adult world of sexual power struggle by her domineering, abusive Marquis husband. The young bride, forced to her shame on her marriage bed, continues her disgraceful journey as she disobeys her husband and discovers his dead wives in his secret chamber, ready to die for her transgressions only to be saved by her mother’s sudden arrival. Carter uses Perrault’s original story to “[emancipate] women’s bodies from attributions of cultural shame, empowering women characters with independence and agency, and bitterly denouncing the arrogant cruelty of human predators,” (Johnson, 48). She presents the audience with an innocent, almost helpless narrator, so blinded by love and the want of material objects, that the reader has conflicting opinions about her. The initial impression is one of annoyance, as the narrator brags about her husband and the numerous gifts he lavishes upon her, beautifully detailed through Carter’s writing (Carter, 3-6). The language used in the story is ornate and dense, transporting the reader into the lush world of the sadistic Marquis and his curious bride. Its meant not to confuse but to invite the reader, bringing them into the world of the nameless Marquise so they feel every emotion as she feels, the shame of the loss of her virginity to the horror of discovering the chamber to the triumph of being reunited with her mother so close to death. Carter uses this inclusive technique to put the reader in the place of the narrator, having them experience her views on feminism first hand.

*The Bloody Chamber*’s writing brings the reader in to see the power struggle between the feminine and the masculine, beginning in favor of the twisted Marquis. The young Marquise is submissive to her much-older husband, accepting his gifts and blindly following him to his isolated castle. The Marquise is characterized immediately as naïve and innocent – “I was seventeen and knew nothing of the world,” she says herself – to give the reader an underwhelming view of her as a person, only to be shocked at the end when she wins the fight against her controlling husband (Carter, 4). Despite her naïveté, the young girl soon realizes who she is dealing with while perusing her husband’s library, only to find violent, pornographic works. She is then subject to a violent consummation of marriage, described by Carter as “a dozen husbands impal[ing] a dozen brides,” to show truly how weak she is in the hands of her sadistic husband (Carter, 15). However, the young Marquise is not entirely innocent – she is actually in touch with her sexuality, described by Johnson as being “tantalized by the implicit arousal of her burgeoning sexual power, ‘aghast to feel [her] self stirring’ with the thrill of lascivious desire,” (50). Thus, the power struggle includes a facet of female sexuality, as the Marquise fights against her desires and allows her husband to sexually control her. Carter
sets up a tale that could very easily end in the defeat of the female’s sexual freedom and understanding, but she “refuses to offer a schematic, monologic tale of male lechery and female victimization, as the ingénue feels thrilled by the exhilaration of libidinous exchange,” (Johnson, 50).

Carter highlights her belief in acceptance of the feminine form and feminine sexuality through the narrator’s – and her mother’s – final stand against her husband. The Marquise begins her rebellion against the patriarchy when she deliberately disobeys her husband and enters his forbidden chamber while he is away, only to be presented with the horrors of his preserved dead wives (Carter, 29-30). However, upon discovering the dead bodies of the women that held the wifely title of Marquise before her, the young girl realizes that she was “one of them” and would be killed by her husband (Carter, 30). At this point in the story, it seems as if the narrator has accepted defeat with her sexual responsibility and her autonomy – she cannot win the power struggle that consumes her relationship with the Marquis. She continues to blindly accept his demands, barely putting up a fight when the Marquis explains how he will kill her by decapitation, perpetuating the male dominance in the sexual power struggle so representative of their relationship (Carter, 39). The young Marquise, however, is able to finally regain the power of the female form – her husband cuts her dress from her body mere moments before her mother bursts into the castle to save her (Carter, 42). Carter finally allows her young protagonist to gain control of her own sexuality, shown literally through the young woman’s naked form as she accepts what will happen to her. The narrator is also able to accept and understand the strength of the female itself, however, when her mother shoots her husband-turned-murderer, using her “dead husband’s firearm in a paradoxical assertion of androgynous female triumph,” (Johnson, 52). To conclude, the narrator understands the importance of her strength as a female, whether it is through the acceptance of her sexuality in a blind lover that cannot see her physically but emotionally, or through the respect and gratitude she feels toward her mother, a figure showing solidarity with her daughter as well as other females through maternal instinct. Carter allows both central women in the story to win the power struggle against men together by showing the audience that solidarity and acceptance of sexuality are two important aspects of the feminine existence.

Carter uses The Bloody Chamber to present the power struggle and eventual triumph of the feminine, but she uses The Company of Wolves in a very different way – the story presents its female protagonist as a strong, independent character from the start. The longest of Carter’s three wolf tales, The Company of Wolves begins with a series of anecdotal tales about werewolves and the terror they are capable of inflicting on humankind – even their howls are horrifying, described as “the sound of the rending you will suffer, in itself a murdering,” (Carter, 141). Carter presents the wolves as a threat – a very definite masculine threat. Reminiscent of the power struggle between men and women in The Bloody Chamber, the wolves in this story represent domineering strength over the feminine. They have a power over every other character in the story, an imminent threat to everyone that crosses their path. Carter presents them in the same hostile fashion that men appear when they shame the female form. Red Riding Hood, on the other hand, is presented very differently from the protagonist in The Bloody Chamber – she is young, free, and well aware of her sexuality. According to Carter, the girl is virginal, but not submissive –

“...she has just started her woman’s bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month...she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane...she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing,” (Carter, 146).

Red Riding Hood’s initial description is one of strength. She is just becoming a woman, yet she is comfortable in that sexuality and will use it to her advantage. Carter distinguishes the character not only
from her other characters, who experience shame in order to find their innate sexuality and to accept their feminine form, but from the original Little Red Riding Hood, which features the young protagonist being deceived and eaten by the wolf figure. The original tale teaches young girls to not so easily follow strangers, following the belief that women inherently victimize themselves purely because they are women. However, in true Angela Carter fashion, the author takes the moral and turns it on its head, teaching her readers instead to have no fear of female sexuality and to embrace the power of women. Little Red Riding Hood as a character is the epitome of a daring girl-turned-woman – she is “fearless in pubescent pride...wrapped in the cloak of a protective hymeneal membrane that gives her a narcissistic conviction of virginal invincibility,” (Johnson, 56). She knows that she is just becoming a woman, and that her sexuality will give her power in the world, particularly the world of the tale that is dominated by the male power of the wolf. She is different than the other women in the tale, like her grandmother, who has lived her life and ends it by submitting, in a sexual manner, to the power of the wolf, seeing the “young man, eyes like cinders, naked as stone, approaching her bed,” (Carter, 149). Little Red Riding Hood is so new in her sexuality, which works to her advantage in the fact that she has no fear of what is around her. She has not lived her life and not had the experiences had by her elders, and therefore has no fear. Although that bravery can be attributed to innocence, Carter instead chooses to present it as a characteristic indicative of a strong female character, and uses it to show her audience how to take responsibility for that female strength.

Little Red Riding Hood is the winner of the power struggle from the beginning, showing the audience that she is truly “nobody's meat,” (Carter, 151). Being aware of her sexuality goes beyond knowledge of her own body – Little Red Riding Hood is aware of the feminine influence she has over others, including the wolf. She goes through the same exchange that the original Little Red Riding Hood has with the wolf – “quote here about what big body part” but it is clear that the conversation takes a more sexualized turn. Little Red Riding Hood is not interested in submitting to the power of the wolf – she knows from the minute she comes across him that she desires him, and she will use her abilities to get him. There is no fight on Little Red Riding Hood's part; rather, she takes control by throwing her own clothing into the fire, seducing him with her own body into the animal form she so desires (Carter, 150-151). The young girl wins the struggle, shown in the end to be sound asleep “in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf,” (Carter, 152). Little Red Riding Hood is in control of her enemy as well as herself, using her sexuality to show that “her corporeal self is not a helpless embodiment of female abjection.” Instead, “this brash adolescent connives with her lupine or lycanthropic suitor in a bold alliance of psychological equals. Offering her pubescent body, without shame, to an unorthodox savage mate in a tender conjugal embrace, she tames, humanizes, and domesticates the predator,” (Johnson, 56). Carter strategically turns the predator, a male figure presented as a powerful threat, into the prey, lured into seduction instead of murder by the capable Little Red Riding Hood. Carter’s belief that sexual responsibility is necessary for the female form to be equal, and her reimagining of Little Red Riding Hood captures this ideology perfectly.

From sadistic Marquises to dangerous wolves, Angela Carter’s fairy tales feature characters that are far from ordinary. Her works go beyond the typical damsels in distress being rescued from their towers – instead, Carter’s heroines rescue themselves, fearlessly facing the evils of patriarchy, asserting their feminine power, and taking responsibility of their sexuality and female form. These women explode the perfect ideal society holds of how a woman is supposed to act, mirroring how Angela Carter’s short stories explode the mold of the typical fairy tale. Her work presents a new type of woman, one who society can look up to for her strength and power. A “happy ever after” indeed.


When I was fourteen, I was very surprised when one day my mom picked me up from school and plopped a DVD of David Bowie in tights posing with a Muppet into my hands. “Remember this?!” She asked excitedly. I stared quizzically at the cover and noticed it was titled, *Labyrinth*. For a moment I was confused as to why my mother would bother buying me some strange, fantasy movie from the eighties, but suddenly, it clicked. I had grown up watching this film; in fact I had been so obsessed with it that every time we went to our local movie rental store I would beg my mom to rent it for a couple of nights. However, by the time I was five the store had closed and I began to develop other tastes in film. I completely forgot about my beloved characters of *Labyrinth*, and as I looked at the DVD in my lap I felt a wave of nostalgia wash over me. As soon as I got home I popped the movie into my DVD player and sat riveted for an hour and forty-one minutes, overwhelmed by how much a film made specifically for children could relate to someone like me. Watching the main character Sarah’s maturation from an innocent, selfish teenager into an empowered young woman is a transformation I admire a transformation that should be focused on more in fairy-tale based films. Society has become too accustomed to trivializing the role of princesses; rather than a strong figure, audiences prefer the damsel in distress in a revealing dress waiting for her knight in shining armor to save her. In *Labyrinth*, however, director Jim Henson proves that stereotype isn’t necessary by portraying Sarah as the courageous hero. She is the one who unites the various characters of the labyrinth, saves her baby brother’s life, and overcomes the power of the Goblin King (also known as Jareth) all the while wearing a sensible outfit. By depicting Sarah’s metamorphosis from adolescence to adulthood, along with her resistance against and eventual destruction of Jareth, Henson argues that young girls don’t always have to be illustrated as weak characters, and men shouldn’t always have to be presented as dominant and charming. Rather, the roles can be switched and leave just as much of an impact, if not more, on an audience.

The theme of an empowered young woman in fairy-tale films was not very popular when *Labyrinth* released. Disney wouldn’t start integrating feminism into their movies until the 1990s, and even then the company still ended their stories with the female lead ending up with the prince. When Jim Henson created *Labyrinth*, he directed a film that was the complete opposite of Disney’s, paving a path for a new attitude toward princesses. The focus of the movie wasn’t just about a girl trying to be with her “one true love” it was about her development into womanhood and the sacrifices she had to make along the way. Henson’s use of a labyrinth, then, is very significant to Sarah’s growth as a character. The labyrinth is symbolic for a journey—whether that journey might be to reach a physical goal or to grow mentally and emotionally—and a symbol for sacrifice (“Labyrinths”). Writer T.S. Miller asserts this notion by insisting, “more than anything, the labyrinth becomes the figure for fear, for entrapment, but also the figure for what a passage through...the fantastic can or cannot accomplish for the individual confronted with his or
her emerging sexuality, external violence, bodily powerlessness, and everything else that lurks inside its twistings and turnings” (Miller). In a labyrinth, a young child can be transformed. They must give up their immature ways and accept the reality of adulthood in order to be successful in their excursion through the labyrinth Jim Henson conveys this process though the main protagonist, Sarah, showing the struggles she faces internally in a fun movie that is approachable for younger children.

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Of course, feminism is a touchy and difficult subject to explain to people, which is why Henson's creative mind was important in making the film because he was able to portray this social issue in an entertaining way that the public could enjoy. Henson and his team used the technique of puppetry or, the term that Henson coined, “muppetry”, which was “his own combination of marionette and foam-rubber hand puppets” (Blau). Unlike his other movies, though, Henson had to construct puppets that would be able to converse and interact smoothly with real people (“Journey”). Brian Froud, a close friend of Henson’s and also the creature designer for the film, discussed, for example, the science and technology they had to use to build the beast, Ludo. He describes the process as, “We wanted it [Ludo] to have muscles. It had to have fluidity to it, and it had to have personality” (“Journey”). Henson didn’t want his Muppets to look like they were being controlled by people, he wanted them to be realistic as possible so that they would be able to reflect the feelings that Sarah was dealing with throughout her journey. Often there were several different Muppets for one character because they needed to show various emotions through their facial expressions, along with different actions that could only be controlled by standing up or sitting down (“Journey”). David Goelz, a puppeteer/performer in the film, claimed that what was particularly difficult about shooting *Labyrinth* was that there were three or four puppeteers for each character, and how they had to go through every line in the movie and match up a function to go with a word in that line (“Journey”). Froud emphasizes the soul that Henson put into *Labyrinth*, remembering, “he [Henson] was always wanting to make it better and more expressive...and what we discovered was that it [Labyrinth] was timely, that it was being of its time, but it continues to be meaningful for especially teenage girls” (“Journey”). Henson produces a film that contains complex characters, but a concept that every young girl can relate too. Henson conveys Sarah’s journey to heroism through a creative and unique form of art that is entertaining and also deeply relevant to its audience.

Initially, Sarah doesn’t appear heroic at all to viewers. She isn’t considerate of others and often acts as if she is the victim of some horrible life in her household. When her step-mother and father tell her that she has to babysit her little brother, she yells, “It’s not fair!” A complaint that she uses frequently throughout the movie. She behaves as if her brother is a burden and the cause of all of her troubles, blaming him for taking her toys from her room and forcing her to stay home every night, even though she doesn’t have any plans to go out anyway. Sarah’s immaturity can also be seen in the manner in which she perceives herself. Instead of acting like a teenager by having an interest in the latest pop culture,
Sarah gives the impression that she is still a child—fascinated only with the world of fantasy instead of the world of reality. Her room is filled with stuffed animals and toys, and she even likes to pretend that an imaginary goblin king is pining for her in his castle. Henson even reveals her naiveté in her outfit by having her wear a white shirt and later on a white dress, a color that is symbolic of purity and innocence. Sarah's callow attitude is the cause of the kidnapping of her brother because she wishes him to be taken away by Jareth; however, once she realizes her consequences for her actions she automatically desires for them to be reversed. Despite Sarah continually claiming that her life is difficult, she has really never had any struggles besides having to stop playing dress up in order to babysit her brother, Toby. This is why, when she is forced to make her way through the labyrinth in order to save him, she is in complete shock because she never had to take responsibility of her problems before. Even Jareth comments on her carelessness and childishness when he shows her the labyrinth and declares that Sarah's situation is “such a pity” his voice practically dripping with sarcasm. Sarah has to learn to give up her selfish, infantile ways in order to focus on what matters most: rescuing Toby. The executive producer of the film, George Lucas, explains Sarah's conflict over growing up by claiming, “She's on that cusp between being an adult and a big sister [...] and it's her struggle to kind of compete with these two things, but of course, in the end, she enters adulthood on her own terms” (“Journey”). Sarah is eventually able to release her fears about accepting adulthood, and once she does, she finally recognizes the power within her to overcome the labyrinth and the Goblin King.

Naturally, Sarah's maturation is not an easy process. She is, after all, stuck in between two different stages of her life: childhood and womanhood. One half of her still wants to rely on her imagination while the other half aspires for the freedom that grown-ups have. Eventually, Sarah learns how to balance each of these desires in her life, but she has to undergo many lessons before she is successful. For instance, she is extremely frustrated when she first enters the labyrinth, complaining about how the path constantly changes on her without any warning. At one point, she begins to draw arrows on the ground to remind her which way she had previously gone; but that plan unfortunately falls through when she spies tiny men popping out of the ground, switching the blocks which she drew her arrows on. Once again, she wails her cliché line “It's not fair!”, but instead of any of the characters showing her sympathy, two goat-like Muppets who guard doors in the labyrinth respond back to her: “No it's not! But that's only the half of it” Later on, when Jareth runs down the hours for Sarah's chances of saving Toby and he hears her childish complaint of injustice, he scoffs, “You say that so often. I wonder what your basis of comparison is?” Sarah finally realizes how petty she sounds when she is talking to Hoggle, a dwarf she befriends in the labyrinth, and he uses her typical objection against her (Carroll). Writer Shiloh Carroll emphasizes Sarah's understanding of her immature conduct by expressing, “Her [Sarah's] sudden look of understanding indicates that she's learned that things may not be fair, but they must be dealt with, not whined about” (Carroll). Like life, the labyrinth is always altering, creating new paths and removing old ones. There is no way for Sarah to stop this reorganizing from happening, she has to endure it; and once she opens her mind to unexpected change, she starts to move more boldly and swiftly through the labyrinth. Her transformation in her attitude describes the notion that if people tolerate the flexibility of life, than they are more likely to achieve success in their future. If Sarah were to continue pouting instead of coming to terms with the fact that life isn't always fair, then she would've never made any progress in the labyrinth or gained the power to defeat Jareth.

Another weakness that Sarah learns to overcome is her vanity. In the beginning of the movie, the audience can clearly tell that Sarah is obsessed with her looks and materialistic items: she is extremely protective of her toys and she also enjoys staring at herself in the mirror while putting on lipstick. As Sarah journeys through the labyrinth, though, she realizes that all of those aspects in her life are
worthless compared to rescuing her brother. Her awareness of her narcissism finally strikes her when she falls into the world of the “junk people”, tiny creatures who carry a massive amount of garbage on their backs. When Sarah meets one of the “junk people”—named the Garbage Lady—the creature takes Sarah to what she thinks is her old room and piles up all of her trinkets and stuffed animals around her. As the mountain of Sarah's toys grows around her, she suddenly discovers that all of these items are meaningless to her. They can't have any real, deep connection with her, unlike her family and friends who actually care for her. Her toys are simply rubbish, distracting her from what is really important in her life, and she finally confirms this notion by declaring, “It’s all junk! I have to save Toby!” When she gives this cry, her bedroom walls crumble around her and she finds herself at the entrance of the Goblin City, continuing on the right path. By letting go of her invaluable possessions, Sarah grows into a more confident person, because she no longer relies on materialistic needs to make her feel better about herself (Carroll). Sarah also displays her conceited ways in her relationship with Jareth. In the beginning of the film, her step-mother argues with her about how Sarah doesn’t ever hang out with friends or boys, yelling, “Well I’d assume you would tell me if you had a date. I’d like it for you to date!” Sarah yearns for a romantic relationship, but since she is still immature at this point, she isn’t able to have a real one, so she creates one for herself. She tells her younger brother a story about how a Goblin King has fallen in love with her, and would do anything to please her. When Jareth steps from her imagination into reality, however, Sarah discovers that she isn't prepared to enter into any type of relationship with him and that the love he is offering her is very superficial and not real at all. She specifically comes to this conclusion while she is at the masquerade ball dancing with Jareth. The setting is very glamourized and Jareth is serenading her with a love ballad, causing Sarah at first to be smitten by him. But as the song continues, she notices that none of it is genuine—the people, the costumes, even the ball itself are all fake. She breaks free from the trance that Jareth has put on her, and smashes the glass around the ballroom, releasing herself from the scene. Brian Henson, Jim Henson's son, comments on this part of the film, concurring, “It’s that thing that happens that girls with that age who can pull off an allusion that they’re an adult, is then they end up with the struggle of what happens when an adult man starts to respond to them? It can be scary...but in the end Sarah makes the mature decision” (“Journey”). By Sarah recognizing that her old habits were very childish and delusional, she vanquishes the hold that Jareth has over her and moves forward with the strength to rescue Toby.

Henson also emphasizes how ridiculous the structured gender roles are in fairy tales by conveying Jareth as having qualities that are deemed as "princess-like" and also having him depend on Sarah for his survival.

As Sarah evolves into a mature woman, her capability for heroism expands as well. It's not often that audiences see a fantastical film where a young girl isn't constantly relying on or lusting for a prince, and that is why Henson's movie is so influential. According to writer Susan Sellers, author of the book, Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women's Fiction, Sellers observes the impression of women in fairy tales by arguing, “women rarely figure as named individuals but only as the anonymous, 'beautiful' accompaniments to great men...such traditions have conspired to teach women to value themselves only in terms of the way they are perceived” (Sellers). Henson, however, moves away from this idea, instead of depicting Sarah as a frivolous princess, he provides her with qualities—such as courage, strength, and intelligence—that are usually associated with the character of a prince; therefore, restructuring the stereotype of lead female roles in fairy-tale-based films. Sarah's courage is seen when she finds Ludo,
a large, furry red beast, being attacked by small soldiers in the labyrinth. The soldiers have tied Ludo upside down to a tree and are poking him with sticks that have tiny creatures on the end of them with razor-sharp teeth. Ludo is completely defenseless, and while Sarah could just continue to walk right by, she instead decides to help Ludo by throwing rocks at the soldiers. Sarah defeats the whole army on her own and even manages to tame Ludo by scolding at him, “Now stop that! Is that anyway to treat someone who’s trying to help you?”. Typically, in most stories, the prince or knight has to confront a beast and try to conquer him, but in *Labyrinth* audiences see a teenage girl with no special powers whatsoever, not only take down a beast, but also a small army of creatures. Sarah also takes over the role of prince by resisting the different characters of the labyrinth who try to demolish her chances of saving Toby. The Fireys, monsters who can produce fire from the tips of her fingers, are perhaps one of her greatest challenges. She finds them in a forest in the labyrinth, and they attempt to stray her from her path by singing a song that contain the lyrics, “Ain’t got no problems to worry about…think small with the fire gang”. They want her to forget about her mission, and they are so desperate that they even try to remove her head. But Sarah manages to escape their tempting words and physical clutches on her by removing their heads. Her fight against them represents how she no longer is thinking emotionally, but logically; a sign of the wisdom and resiliency that she has acquired throughout her journey.

Finally, Henson also emphasizes how ridiculous the structured gender roles are in fairy tales by conveying Jareth as having qualities that are deemed as “princess-like” and also having him depend on Sarah for his survival. In most movies based off of folk tales, such as Disney, the princess, or female protagonist, is usually depicted in a very sensual manner. She dresses scandalously and sings songs to her companions about her dreams and hopes for her future. In *Labyrinth*, though, it is not Sarah who is depicted in this way, but rather the Goblin King. Jareth sings three songs throughout the movie, one about his desire to keep Toby, another that expresses his “so-called” love for Sarah, and another that describes how he has done everything Sarah wishes because he yearns for her so much. And then there is his wardrobe, specifically his tights, which are so notoriously recognized throughout the public that some parents feel uncomfortable showing their younger kids the movie. Perhaps Henson didn’t mean to make Jareth so sexual on purpose, or perhaps he did. Either way, David Bowie’s portrayal of Jareth poses the question of why society is okay with seeing a young girl’s breasts practically spilling out of her dress, but embarrassed when a man’s pants are too tight. Henson also challenges gender norms by displaying Jareth’s need for Sarah’s belief in him so he can carry on living. Jareth can’t survive without Sarah’s imagination; in fact, he only came to life because she created him in her mind. Jareth is used to getting his way, he is the Goblin King after all. Even David Bowie describes him as, “He [Jareth] is kind of spoiled. He gets everything his own way. He’s a big kid” (“Journey). But when Jareth is denied of the one thing he wishes for in life (to have control over Sara), he starts to weaken. His frustration and anger causes him to cling more fiercely onto Sarah, but his desperation only forces her to pull even further away from him. Eventually, Jareth’s power is diminished so much that he is reduced to appearing as half human/half owl at the end of the film and begs, “Just fear me, love me, do as I say, and I will be your slave”. Jareth needs Sarah to trust that he is alive and real, or else he will completely disappear. Luckily, Sarah doesn’t fall for his temptations, and finally demolishes him by declaring, “You have no power over me!”. Henson shows how a lead female character can have more power than the lead male, and still be a successful film years later. By posing Jareth as taking on the “feminine role”, and having Sarah regarded as the hero, *Labyrinth* challenges fairy tale stereotypes and sends a positive message to young girls struggling with the different pressures that growing up entails.

It’s been five years since the moment my mother gave me a copy of *Labyrinth*, and I still feel a profound sense of connection with the characters and ideas behind the film. The lessons Sarah learns as
she grows into a woman, and her wisdom and strength she gains with her maturation, is a process that Jim Henson was able to portray in an honest manner. He didn't attempt to make Sarah appear any different from who she actually was: a teenager. Yes, Sarah at one point dreams of the life of a princess, but in the end she understands that that's not really who she is or wants to be. She doesn't want to always be at the beck and call of a prince; she doesn't want to reside in a goblin castle for the rest of her life, and she doesn't not want to be able to make her own decisions and choose her own friends in life. Compared to other films being made at this time for young children, Henson directs a film that allows a girl to thrive in the world of fantasy and not be subservient to the prince, but instead have the prince be subservient to her. While the film industry has come a long way from the concept that certain qualities should only be given to certain sexes, there are still some moments where the damsel in distress emerges on screen. These are the moments when society needs to look toward Sarah, a character who truly depicts the struggle girls are faced with as they grow up: how to hold onto the fantasy while accepting reality. Life isn't about finding a prince, it's about facing the labyrinth boldly and confidently, even though the goal at the end of it might require sacrifices and a few cheesy musical numbers along the way.

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Growing up, youngsters always have dreams of playing sports through high school, in college and at the professional level. This dream of playing a collegiate sport may have been taken away from some students at Duquesne University when the men's wrestling, swimming, golf and baseball programs were eliminated in 2010 in order to focus on a core group of sports and maximize funding. This was a decision made by the University, and the Title IX sporting amendment influenced the decision. Title IX involves creating equal scholarship opportunities for women, and Duquesne has gone above and beyond that (“Requirements Under...1972”). At the University, there are now only six men's sports programs and 10 women's sports programs. I am not contending that having more women's sports than men's is a problem. However, I contend that the university should explore the possibility of reinstating the four eliminated sports, resulting in 10 men's programs and 10 women's programs. If spending can be equalized, this arrangement would be legal under the Title IX Amendment. As long as no additional men's programs are added to the athletic department, Duquesne will not face legal action in dealing with the Title IX Amendment in the future. There have been many changes at Duquesne University since 2010. If the University couldn't support 20 sports programs in 2010, that doesn't mean they can't support them now. There are a number of creative ways the University can raise money to reinstate these programs. The decision to cut four sports programs to generate more money for the remaining sports was very controversial. By reinstating the eliminated sports, Duquesne would offer additional scholarship opportunities for men, and would give students who played these sports through high school the opportunity to continue playing the sports they love at the collegiate level. There are various ways to raise money to support these four sports including fundraisers, sponsorships, sports camps, a slight increase in ticket prices, and a reduction in the amount of money spent on the remaining sports programs.

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Duquesne chose to cut men's wrestling, swimming, golf, and baseball in 2010. There were various factors that went into this decision, but the main factor involved optimizing financial resources. According to the Athletic Director, Greg Amodio, this was done to start “Focusing on and strengthening a core group of sports and maximize our ability to compete at the highest level, enhance the student athlete experience, and better utilize existing funding” (“Changes in Varsity Sports...Excellence”). Nearly 70 student athletes were affected by this move, as well as four full-time coaches and one part-time coach (“Changes in Varsity Sports...Excellence”). Amodio went on to say, “This action is in no way meant to diminish the dedication, effort or ability of these fine student athletes, coaches and alumni. They have
contributed greatly to Duquesne athletics and to the vitality and history of the University” (“Changes in Varsity Sports...Excellence”).

The move to cut these sports will reallocate one million dollars annually throughout the athletic program (“Changes in Varsity Sports...Excellence”). The Title IX sporting amendment is not what caused this move, contrary to what many people believe, but it did factor into the decision. The Title IX sports amendment is an amendment that strives to create equal scholarship and financial support for women, based on the enrollment of women at the school (“Requirements Under...1972”). According to Associate Athletic Director, Philip Raciot, the current gender enrollment at Duquesne is made up of 60% female and 40% male (Email Interview). At this time, because of the Title IX Amendment, a women’s sport could not be cut to create more money for other sporting programs. Mr. Raciot went on to say that would violate the amendment, unless it was counterbalanced with a proportionate number of opportunities and scholarships for women (Email Interview).

The four men’s sports, namely golf, baseball, wrestling, and swimming should be reinstated at Duquesne University. Unfortunately, the athletic department decided to focus on certain programs, causing some athletes at Duquesne to give up the sport they love. Duquesne offers some of these sports at the club level, but it is simply not the same level of competition. I played golf throughout high school, and really would have loved to play golf here at the Division 1 level. I play on the club team, but the level of play is not the same level of competitiveness, and as a result, is not taken as seriously. Duquesne is a great school with strong academics and a beautiful campus. I passed up Division 1 offers from Robert Morris and Ohio University, to come to Duquesne. Unfortunately, the sport I am interested in playing was eliminated by the University. According to Athletic Director Greg Amodio, this was done in order to focus on a core group of sports and ensure that they could compete at the highest level possible (“Changes in Varsity Sports...Excellence”). However, this plan has really not worked. The football team, unlike the basketball team, still does not compete at the highest Division 1 level in college football. The records of the team are starting to improve, but their play is still not at the “highest level”. The best year for the football Dukes since the sports were cut was 2011 when they went 9-2 and made the post season play-offs (“Duquesne Football Archive”). The following three years were a different story. The team did not qualify for post season play in any of those three years. Another of the sports programs that was a core focus after the cuts was the men’s basketball team. The team has not made the NCAA tournament since 1977, and they have not shown significant improvement since 2010 (“Men’s Basketball”). Since there has not been significant improvement, and since the team is still not getting better recruits who can lead the team to the NCAA tournament, I contend it’s time to reconsider the possibility of reinstating of men’s wrestling, swimming, golf, and baseball.

If there isn't enough money to support 20 sports teams here at the University, perhaps it is time to start raising money in different, more creative ways. Cutting four sports programs, taking the jobs of coaches and depriving students the opportunity to play the sport they love was a drastic step. One way to generate money to support the reinstatement of these four programs is to create a series of fundraisers. Interested parties, especially alumni and previous athletes, working with the University, could set up various fundraisers to generate revenue to save these sports. There are people, especially alumni, that were upset by these cuts and want these sports reinstated at the University. This could be a positive and profitable venture for Duquesne Athletics. Another idea for a fundraiser would be for the athletic department to hold camps, such as a baseball camp, for young athletes in the summer. This would be a great way to make money, and also interact with young athletes and teach them to play various sports. Getting these youngsters on campus might also make them want to attend Duquesne when it’s time for them to decide on a college. Approaching the regional corporate community for sponsorships and using
part of the proceeds from these sponsorships on advertisements for the camp would be a great way to
publicize the camp and, at the same time, raise large amounts of money through the sponsorships. If the
athletic department charged each participant around 300 dollars for a full week of camp, and the camp
attracted between 200 and 300 participants, that would generate a profit of approximately $70,000 after
the money spent on paying the instructors, facility use, and food are factored in. According to Philip
Raciot, Associate Athletic Director, the golf team, for example, costs around $120,000 a year to maintain
(Email Interview). With a successful one week camp, the athletic department would already be halfway
there in covering the sport for a year. According to Mr. Raciot, four million dollars would need to be
raised before the University would consider reinstating these programs. Corporate sponsorships, alumni
donations, fundraising efforts, and camps have the potential to generate that money over time.

I would also support a slight increase in ticket prices for events held here at Duquesne as a way for
the Athletic Department to raise additional funds. The AJ Palumbo center holds 4,406 people (“A.J.
Palumbo Center”) and if 3,000 people attend a basketball game a ticket price increase of $3.00–$4.00 can
yield an additional $9,000–$12,000 per game. With all of the men’s and women’s home games, this would
generate substantial revenue. The same is true with the football games and all other revenue generating
sporting events. Just a $3.00 - $4.00 increase in these prices would generate substantial additional funds
for the Athletic Department. With these funds, over time, the University will be able to support the
four programs. The athletic department is also allocating large amounts of money to the football and
basketball programs. If they scale this back a bit, and utilize a portion of the funds they are currently
putting into these programs for the reinstatement of the four programs that were cut, that could also be
a way of generating the necessary money to reintroduce men’s wrestling, swimming, golf, and baseball.

If there isn’t enough money to support 20 sports teams here at the University, perhaps it is time to start raising money in
different, more creative ways.

One school that also had to cut sports in order to gain funds for their other programs was the
University of California. The university cut five sports programs and these included the men’s rugby,
women’s lacrosse, women’s gymnastics, men’s baseball, and men’s swimming (“Cal preserves...teams”).
Campus officials at Cal said that the men’s rugby and the women’s lacrosse and gymnastics team
fundraised aggressively and raised between 12 and 13 million dollars. This would cover the costs of having
these sports at the university for 7 to 10 years, and they have actually reinstated these sports at the
University (“Cal preserves...teams”). This success story hints that it is possible for Duquesne to make this
happen. If Duquesne fundraises cleverly, and raises money for these programs in a variety of ways, these
sports can be back at the University. If the four sports at the University of California can raise between
12 and 13 million dollars, it seems reasonable that Duquesne can raise at least one million dollars. Even
if just one million dollars is raised through fundraising efforts, that would be enough to reinstate these
programs at the school for the time being. The programs must raise enough money to be supported
for at least four years. With that being said, according to Associate Athletic Director, Philip Raciot,
around four million dollars raised through fundraising and contributions is going to be necessary for the
University to consider the reinstatement of such programs (Email Interview). If the programs do get
reinstated, fundraising and endowments will have to continue to support these programs into perpetuity.

Some people may argue that it will not be possible for Duquesne to bring these sports back. They
might contend that fundraisers cannot raise enough money, and that fans of Duquesne sports would be
upset if the ticket prices are raised. I totally disagree with these arguments. Back in 2010 when all these
sports were a part of the University, the sports programs were performing nearly as well as they are now. The basketball team went 16-15 and didn't make the NCAA tournament, and the team has also failed to do so after these programs were cut. In the words of student, Jake Hareza, “I hate the fact that I can't play baseball here at Duquesne. The school is great, it would be perfect if I could still be playing baseball. The sporting programs were not elite back in 2010, nor are they now, so I believe the University should bring the sports back, and focus on building strong programs doing it the right way, not simply taking the opportunities away from many athletes” (Personal Interview). Some people may also argue that the golf team was not very good in 2010, so why reinstate it. That is completely unfair. If a program is not doing well, it doesn't mean that it deserves to be completely eliminated from the school's athletic program. The team could hire a new coach, increase their recruiting efforts, and turn the program around in just a couple of years. Another argument that some people may raise would be that club sports are offered for two of the sports that were cut. Indeed, golf and baseball are offered at the club level, but they’re not close to being on the same level of the sports that are offered at the Division 1 level. Matt McKim, my teammate on the club golf team said, “Club golf is honestly so laid back. It is kind of a joke to be honest. Everyone goes out the night before the tournaments and shows up the next day really unprepared. High school golf was more competitive to be honest” (Personal Interview). I totally agree with Matt’s contention. Playing golf at the club level is definitely fun, but it is not competitive at all and really does not provide the same level of experience as playing college golf. There is not a designated coach for the team, and our idea of practice is going to Schenley Park and playing six holes. Fundamentals of the game are not kept sharp, and it is really hard to take the tournaments seriously because you are not playing for anything. If these sports are reinstated, I am sure there will be many people who are pleased and in agreement. There will also be people who disagree with the move, and the arguments above are some that I believe people will raise.

In 2010, Duquesne decided to cut men's golf, baseball, wrestling, and swimming from the University's Athletic Program in order to generate more money for a core group of programs including football and basketball. Title IX also came into play as only men's programs could be cut. No women's programs were cut because equal scholarship opportunities and funding have to be present for women. I totally disagree with the move by Duquesne to cut these sports because it takes away many partial scholarships for men, which in turn, costs the University a number of students. My solution for this situation is to reinstate these sports at the University and find alternate and innovative ways to raise money. The University could hold athletic fundraisers, approach the regional corporate community for sponsorships, and get former athletes and alumni involved. The programs could utilize summer camps that would teach youngsters how to play these sports and expose them to the Duquesne campus. Also a slight increase in ticket prices may be another option. I believe this would be a viable solution, because if you are a true Duquesne sports fan, you will be willing to pay a couple extra dollars to watch the team you love play. Arguments such as that the school offers these sports at the club level will arise, but the club level is not comparable to the Division 1 level. The level of play and competitiveness is lacking, and the club sports are simply not intense enough to provide the competitive experience you are accustomed to while playing these sports. Bringing these sports back to Duquesne may be difficult, but through fundraisers and various money-making schemes, it is definitely possible to make this happen.
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Henry James’ novel *The Turn of the Screw* is a psychological thriller that centers around a sexually repressed governess yearning for the affection of a male of a higher social class than she. It is likely that the main narrator of the story – the governess herself – is unreliable, as she tells the story years later and her memory is potentially clouded by her experiences and desires. She apparently begins to see ghosts, which manifest themselves just as she is having inappropriate sexual thoughts or when she is thinking about her intense affection for the children. Although these thoughts are seemingly about her master – the uncle of her two charges – the appearance of the ghosts may represent something far more sinister, namely her hidden sexual desires for the young boy that she is meant to care for.

Harold C. Goddard was one of the first critics to believe that the governess was hallucinating due to “unconfessed love and unformulated fear” (163). Although his criticism is fairly old and sexist, he still brings up a good point. The governess comes from a background that involved a “psychically unbalanced” father, so her hallucinations would make even more sense because psychosis tends to run in families (Goddard 161). Goddard points out that the reader cannot necessarily trust the governess because there is no other point of view in the novel. The reader only gets the governess’s side of the story, so there should be an element of doubt, but the governess “cannot see her own insanity” and the only other people around are children or people who are incredibly superstitious (Goddard 167). The governess’s insanity affects those around her, and Goddard makes the point that her insanity is caused by sexual repression.

Critic Robert B. Heilman makes it very clear that the governess is not plagued by the return of repressed feelings for her master – he states that “the governess’s feelings for the master are never repressed: they are wholly in the open and joyously talked about,” and this is entirely true – the governess never hides her feelings for the children’s uncle (178). However, that does not mean that she is not hiding feelings for someone else, as Heilman fails to note. It is obvious that the governess is somehow mesmerized by the boy, Miles, even though he is only ten years old. The first narrator, a tool that James used to give the story context, also insinuates that the governess “was in love,” and the narrator easily could have been speaking about the governess being in love with Miles, as he does not state who she was in love with (James 3). The governess clearly states that Miles “was incredibly beautiful, and... everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence” (James 13). She could not hold any of his wrongdoings against him – when he was kicked out of school, she states that “he was only too fine and fair for the little horrid unclean school-world” (James 18). She is completely “under [his] spell,” even when he was behaving badly in the home (James 19).

Miles’s hold over her grows ever stronger during the course of the novel, and although she is not consciously aware of her feelings for him, it may have eventually driven her mad with primal desire. The governess states at the beginning of the novel that she is “rather easily carried away,” which may suggest that she is prone to falling in love easily, or perhaps that she is vulnerable to psychosis or hysteria (James...
This vulnerability could lead the governess to experience hallucinations, perhaps ones in which she is projecting her unconscious thoughts onto the world. Henry Sussman – a proponent for the Freudian reading of *The Turn of the Screw* – has argued that the governess “forces interpretations upon both the phenomena she observes and the words she hears,” which he then explains is due to the governess’s inferential hysteria (231). She sees these apparitions whenever she has some thought related to the children or someone of a higher class that could be considered inappropriate. For example, the first time the governess sees the old groundskeeper, Peter Quint, on the tower, she is in the middle of “giving pleasure... to the person to whose pressure I had yielded,” which means that she was having a sexual fantasy about the children’s uncle (James 15).

It is no coincidence that the governess sees the apparitions when she has inappropriate thoughts – these apparitions are a representation of her repressed unconscious sexual desires, projected onto more appropriate actors. The governess is originally afraid of Quint’s figure – and the implications about Miles that coincide with it – stating “I’m afraid of him” (James 22). The second time the governess sees Quint’s image, he is in the window just as she praises the children after having been “dazzled by their loveliness” (James 19). They had also just sat down to Sunday tea in the “grown up’ dining room,” which suggests that the governess sees the children as more adult than they truly are (James 19). The third and final time the governess sees Quint, he is ascending the staircase on a dark night. She had just finished a speech about how she intended to rededicate herself to the children because Miles was “too clever for a bad governess” (James 37). She then checks on Flora, who is fast asleep in bed, before going to the staircase where the encounter occurred. It is important to note that the governess is no longer afraid of Quint’s figure here, despite the fact that he has crept closer to her with each experience – she reacts to his appearance by saying “I had, thank God, no terror” (James 39). This is the turning point in the story at which the governess begins to give into her desire for Miles, as their relationship after this begins to blur the line between what is appropriate and what is not. Miles himself also seems to become fascinated with the governess at this point; acting out in order to make her “think [him] – for a change – bad,” so that she would believe that he would go along with whatever crude business she expected of him (James 45). The relationship merely escalates from here: he “bent forward and kissed [her]” and she had to make an effort not to cry with joy (James 45).

Shortly after seeing Quint’s third and final manifestation on the stairs, the governess begins to see Miss Jessel, who was her predecessor, and who was purportedly involved in a relationship with Quint. Jessel first appears when the governess is with Flora at the lake. While at the lake, Flora is depicted as playing with two sticks, one of which “happened to have in it a little hole” that Flora stuck another stick into (James 29). These sticks were thought to be symbolic of sexual by critics such as Edmund Wilson, which makes Miss Jessel’s appearance more interesting because it is related to a sexual interpretation of the child’s actions.

When seeing Quint and Jessel, the governess was not seeing ghosts. This is made explicitly clear by Henry James himself – in his Preface to the New York Edition of the novel, he states that “Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not ‘ghosts’ at all” (127). He suggests that they are both some other type of being, and although most of his examples are supernatural in nature, the reader could still technically consider the pair as projections of the governess’s mind. Some certainly argued this point, as James had a tendency to be incredibly evasive in correspondence. However, any supposed paranormal elements can be explained away by the governess’s psychological state. The pinnacle of a supernatural argument about the text is based on the idea that the governess would not have been able to describe Quint had he not appeared. Heilman touches on this in his critique by pointing out that “Mrs. Grose always comes into agreement with the governess” (181). He believes that she is forced to agree, but she simply agrees out
of fear. Mrs. Grose is a superstitious woman who believes in ghosts. Had the governess simply described an average man, Mrs. Grose most likely would have come to the eventual conclusion that the figure had been a ghost. The governess never had to say that she was being haunted by Quint’s ghost because her psyche was just projecting an image onto the world that was misinterpreted by an easily-manipulated, religious old woman. However, Mrs. Grose was not the one to identify Jessel; the governess was able to figure out who the woman was on her own. The fact that Jessel appeared not long after Quint serves to further reinforce the idea that the governess was displacing her inappropriate sexual desires – Mrs. Grose insinuated from the beginning that the former governess had been involved in some scandal at the estate.

**Eventually, the children’s happiness with the governess begins to fade, as they begin to fear her.**

The illicit relationship between Peter Quint and Miss Jessel is important to the governess’s hallucinations. Their relationship was inappropriate as Jessel was of a higher class than Quint, which is the same situation that the governess finds herself in with Miles. It is clear that Miss Jessel is a lady, but it is also insinuated that Quint was an adulterer and often had affairs with ladies or other servants of the household (James 32). Mrs. Grose adds that “Quint was much too free,” meaning that he was inappropriate with everyone, but particularly with Miles (James 25). One can infer from this statement that Quint was, in some way, sexually explicit with Miles, although whether he spoke in a vulgar manner about ladies or he was physically involved with Miles is not immediately known. The fact that the governess sees Quint and Jessel simply adds to the notion that she wants “an erotic transgression of class,” as critic Bruce Robbins states (239). Miles is of a higher social class than she, and she is driven mad with unrequited, unconsciously-driven love for the boy. Robbins also notes the governess’s “resemblance to the servant-ghosts,” which further reiterates the idea that the governess is projecting her situation outward onto others (240).

As the sexual symbols and innuendo throughout the novel continues, so does the relationship between caretaker and older child. The governess portrays Miles as having an interest in her, stating that “his ‘my dear’ was constantly on his lips for [her]” (James 53). Miles speaks about how her presence affects him as “a fellow who’s getting on,” probably meaning that he is taking an interest in becoming a man (James 53). Miles then goes on to call her child rearing technique “queer business,” because of her unconventional, hands-on approach to teaching him. She objects to his questioning, saying that “the whole world of reality was perhaps at that moment so fabulous as [their] actual relation” (James 60). She was blissful at that moment, which would change when she begins to question Miles about school.

Eventually, the children’s happiness with the governess begins to fade, as they begin to fear her. Edmund Wilson makes it abundantly clear that the children are desperate to escape the estate because “they begin to resent the governess” (171). She has spiraled out of control, so the children want to get away from her because they are afraid. In his Preface, James broaches the idea that “she has ‘authority,’” which is a good deal to have given her,” but she abused that authority when she molested one of her charges and terrified the other (“Preface” 126). The governess tries to scare Flora away by telling her about the ghosts so she could spend more of her time focused on Miles. Flora’s initial fear of the governess is demonstrated in an outburst – she screams at the governess, “I see nobody. I see nothing. I never have” (James 70). After this incident, Flora “demands to be sent away” in order to escape the governess’s growing madness (Wilson 171).

With Flora gone, the governess would be able to spend more of her time with Miles. However, her plan to instill fear in the heart of the little girl also scared her young love. Miles began to “[beg] to be sent to another school,” prompting the governess to change her tactics (Wilson 171). She becomes more
erratic, pestering him to explain exactly why he was dismissed from school. When he finally gives in and tells her that he had “said things” to the boys he liked, she admits to feeling “detached and almost helpless,” lost in the “desolation of his surrender” (James 83). At first, she was “blind with victory,” but then the weight of his admission sets in. It was at this point that the governess shed her beliefs about the boy – she realized that “the obtrusion of the idea of grossness and guilt on a small helpless creature” was wrong (James 80-81). She could never have the lover she wanted, so she reacted. As Robert Heilman expected, the reader experienced “a progressive deterioration [of the governess’s mental health]” (183). However, her decline stopped after Miles died because his charms died with him. She was able to move on after her experiences, and she got another job as a governess. But the reader may never stop wondering. Perhaps it is no coincidence that, while she was holding him, “his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped” (James 85). Perhaps his heart stopped because she had murdered him.

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CAUCASIAN GIRLS AND SAMURAI SWORDS: DUALISM IN KILL BILL

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Dualism is observed in the world regularly, whether it be in the concepts of yin and yang, black and white, good and evil, or life and death; it is so commonplace that many people may fail to acknowledge or notice its impact on society. Dualism can be defined as, “a state in which something has two distinct parts or aspects, which are often opposites (“dualism” def.1). Quentin Tarantino’s Kill Bill is a two-part, cult action film that was released between 2003 and 2004, which relied heavily on the idea of dualism. The film paid homage to both the classic cinematic styles of spaghetti westerns, as well as kung fu movies of the sixties and seventies, bringing together stereotypical eastern and western aesthetics in a single work (Smelik, 187). In addition, Kill Bill features a female hero, known throughout the majority of the story as, simply, “the bride,” due to the fact that when her ex-lover, Bill, shot her, she was pregnant and wearing her wedding dress. Ironically, it is the bride who comes out on top; she survives the gunshot wound, awakes from a coma, and kills Bill, along with everyone who assisted in her attempted murder and the presumed murder of her unborn child. The bride, or Beatrix, as she is later revealed, goes on a “roaring rampage of revenge,” never wavering in her mission; however, she is displayed on multiple occasions as showing mercy to her enemies, revealing the truth that she is not simply the callous, cold-blooded killer she seems to be. Though Beatrix may show mercy to some, that does not stop her from being efficient at her job; she is able to kill an entire gang, or at least wound them beyond mobility, and escape from the grave where she was buried alive. There must be something about the bride that is outstanding enough to encourage people to view her as a hero, in spite of the fact that she is described by Bill as a “natural born killer.” I argue that in Kill Bill, the protagonist, Beatrix Kiddo, defies the various types of dualities portrayed in the film, breaking common cinematic stereotypes and furthering her role as a unique pop culture hero and icon. I will explore the dichotomies of east vs. west, male vs. female, and hero/killer vs. mother as they relate to Beatrix in context of the rest of the film. Her inability to fit into any one binary ultimately suggests she is a mold-breaking character that can be looked upon by all as an inspiration, specifically, in her steadfast ability to stay true to herself, despite all odds.

The film genres of American gangster, spaghetti western, Japanese samurai, and Chinese kung fu, are all cited as influences in Quentin Tarantino’s Kill Bill. Each of these genres can be categorized into either eastern or western in origin; they are shown clashing aesthetically and ideologically with one another throughout the film. This forms a cultural binary, which is illustrated in the character of O-Ren Ishii; she cuts off a man’s head after he voiced his displeasure in her heritage, calling O-Ren a “Chinese Jap-American half-breed bitch.” The cultural binary, or duality, is not the only categorization present in Kill Bill. Marc O’Day defines stereotypical male gender traits as: hardness, strength, activity, rationality, decisiveness, and power. In contrast, he defines femininity as: softness, weakness, passivity, intuition, indecisiveness, and powerlessness (203). In the film, few, if any, of the female characters can be described by the traditional feminine traits, but rather, are accurately described with the male traits; many of the
women in *Kill Bill* are skilled assassins, which hardly calls to mind the characteristics of weakness and powerlessness. In addition to the female characters’ attempt to step out of their stereotypical roles, or pre-determined categories, the main conflict within *Kill Bill* arises when a man inflicts harm upon a woman. Sarah Nicholson notes that, traditionally, men take on an active role, or are “doers,” while women are passive or have things done to them (190). In the movie, the female’s active role of revenge upon the male is emphasized, instead of the male’s initial attack upon the female. This complex male/female dynamic creates a gender binary, or dichotomy. In *Kill Bill*, a woman is presented as the hero; both categories of “hero” and “mother” are known as archetypes, or universal symbols that have been identified in various myths and stories of different cultures (Chen 100). Orrin Klapp states that a hero is considered to be someone who possesses super-human qualities and is admired for his or her impressive achievements and merits (57). A mother, on the other hand, is gentler and less active, associated with comfort, nourishment, and protection (Nicholson 189). These two archetypes are made to oppose one another, forming a dualism in *Kill Bill*, due to Beatrix Kiddo and Vernita Green’s seeming inability to remain assassins and become mothers simultaneously.

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*Kill Bill* contains a multitude of eastern influences, which can be observed most clearly in the characters of Hatori Hanzo, Pai Mei, and O-Ren Ishii. David Brown notes that two of these characters are played by the renowned Sonny Chiba and Gordon Lu; Sonny Chiba was a famous kung fu film star of the nineteen-seventies and Lu was an up-and-coming kung fu film star at the time of *Kill Bill*’s production (100, 102). Brown remarks upon the martial arts films of Chiba’s time, stating that, in general, they were shot poorly and were not dubbed very well (102). Chiba’s character, Hatori Hanzo, is a respected sword maker who later made a vow to never again make “instruments of death.” Lu’s character, Pai Mei, is presented as the martial arts master; he trains Beatrix and teaches her all the skills needed to complete her quest. The scenes that feature Pai Mei are shot in low quality and include a great deal of camera zoom-ins’s, as well as unrealistic sound effects. Both Hanzo and Pai Mei are presented as masters of their stereotypically Asian crafts: the art of the samurai sword and the art of kung fu. The fact that Chiba and Lu were appointed these roles, shows that these two characters could not possibly be portrayed by anyone other than experienced oriental actors in the kung fu film industry. The sub-par film quality and use of cheesy sound effects in the Pai Mei sequences are similar to the cinematic stylings of classic kung fu pictures; this gives *Kill Bill* the same vibe as is generated in the culturally eastern movies of the nineteen-seventies. One famous film series of this time period is *Lone Wolf and Cub*; it tells the story of a man traversing the snowy countryside of Japan with his son, seeking to avenge the death of his wife (Brown, 104). The film’s setting can be described as “serene,” yet once the man is forced to battle his foes, it becomes “bloody, brutal, and shocking” (Brown, 104). The third iconic oriental character in *Kill Bill*, O-Ren Ishii, is described as “queen of the Tokyo underworld.” Because of her powerful position, she is able to send an entire gang of masked swordfighters, “the crazy 88,” to attack the bride. Beatrix ends up brutally slaughtering the majority of them in a bloody rampage; this scene serves as a sharp contrast to Beatrix’s duel with O-Ren, herself. The battle Beatrix has with O-Ren takes place in a quiet and snowy Japanese garden, just the two of them being present. Both the crazy 88 and the O-Ren battle scenes are likened to *Lone Wolf and Cub*; the snowy and serene atmosphere in the *Lone Wolf and Cub* is vastly similar.
to the bride’s clash with O-Ren. Similarly, the crazy 88’s annihilation is likened to the fighting scenes in *Lone Wolf and Cub*, in that both contain elements of flying limbs and blood spraying, as David Brown states, “in huge arterial geyers” (104). Thus, Quentin Tarantino’s *Kill Bill* depicts eastern aesthetic through character traits as well as cinematography.

In addition to the film’s eastern influences, *Kill Bill* draws upon western film tradition, mostly its sub-genre, the spaghetti western. The creators of the spaghetti western, or Italian imitation of the American western genre, are director Sergio Leone and composer Ennio Moricone (Weisser, ix). J. Hoberman describes the majority of the settings in Leone’s movies as, “frontier towns with the look of decaying movie sets nestled in landscapes of Martian desolation” (38). In addition, Leone’s aesthetic is known for exaggerated spectacle; Hoberman states that “each drop of sweat” becomes a “visual event” (38). The spaghetti western genre is different from its American counterpart in the fact that it is bloodier and does not contain the patriotic self-glorification so common in American westerns (Hoberman 38). It is typical in Italian westerns for most characters to be “lone-wolfs” (Hoberman 39).

Though many settings in *Kill Bill* are eastern, some other settings include: El Paso, a strip club, Pasadena, a wedding chapel, and a trailer/camper in the Texas desert. It is inside this camper that a filthy, dirt-covered Beatrix battles her foe, Elle Driver. The two women use various items around the camper (a guitar, lamp, bucket of tobacco spit, and a toilet) as make-shift weapons until they are able to find swords. As the scene draws to a close, “A Silhouette of Doom,” a piece composed by Ennio Moricone, plays, while Beatrix and Elle cease fighting; they share an intense exchange of dialogue, each exchange bringing the camera closer to their sweat and dirt-covered faces. It is at this point that the bride makes her decision to gauge out Elle’s remaining eye, rather than kill her, as originally planned. Beatrix leaves Elle, blind, on the camper floor while she goes out into the desert on her own, smiling. Tarantino’s use of vacuous desert settings is similar to Leone’s traditional film aesthetic. His choice to use a music piece actually present in a spaghetti western film, let alone a piece produced by the most famous composer of the spaghetti western film genre, also strengthens the western influence in *Kill Bill*. The bride has no visual remorse in ripping out Elle’s eye; she even steps on the eyeball before leaving. Beatrix’s remorseless action corresponds to the lack of morality in Italian westerns, as well as the strong presence of bloodshed and gore. Beatrix works alone, as do her foes, all except O-Ren and her gang, who are eastern.

Though many characters in *Kill Bill* can be categorized into either east or west, the protagonist, Beatrix Kiddo, cannot, despite the fact that she is an American woman. Her inability to belong is showcased in the perception traditionally oriental characters, Hatori Hanzo, Pai Mei, and O-Ren Ishii, have of her. When Hanzo meets Beatrix, he believes her to be an ordinary tourist, that is, until she asks him to craft a sword for her. After much conversing, in Japanese, rather than English, Hanzo allows the bride to examine his sword collection. He throws a baseball at her after saying, “Funny, you like samurai swords, I like baseball.” Beatrix successfully slices the baseball in half and Hatori Hanzo agrees to break his vow of twenty years in order to make a sword for her. When the sword is complete, Hanzo commands the “yellow-haired warrior” to go. Bill says that Pai Mei “hates Caucasians, despises Americans, and has nothing but contempt for women.” It is clear that this is true, for Pai Mei is shown ridiculing the bride in their first meeting, but as the story continues, he appears to soften. Beatrix uses the kung fu move titled, “the five point palm exploding heart technique,” to kill Bill; it is this move, as stated by Bill, that Pai Mei teaches to no one. O-Ren is able to wound the bride during their face-off; it is at this time that she teases Beatrix with the remark: “silly Caucasian girl likes to play with samurai swords.” She apologizes for this comment later in the fight, before being scalped. In the cases of the three stereotypical eastern characters, each one treats Beatrix with varying levels contempt; however, all of them come to respect the bride for her sufficiency in traditionally eastern practices. Because Beatrix acts both like an easterner and westerner, and because she is treated as both, she does not fit into either category definitely.

In addition to the east vs. west dynamic, the film also contains a male vs. female dynamic, which is exemplified in the female characters of O-Ren Ishii and Elle Driver. Historically, in Hollywood films, if a female
character is caught “acting like a man,” in displaying masculine gender traits, she is punished, sometimes by death (Devas 49). It is also true that in myth, women are presented either as beautiful goddesses that serve as a guide for the male hero, or evil temptresses that bring men harm (Nicholson 189). Mostly, females are, stereotypically, passive, while males are active. When O-Ren Ishii was nine years old, she witnessed the murder of her parents at the hands of a Japanese crime boss. Having survived, she plotted revenge; two years after her mother and father’s death, O-Ren succeeded in seducing, and later in killing, the crime boss. She went on to become one of the world’s top female assassins and to join the “Deadly Viper Assassination Squad.” Elle Driver is also a member of this group, as is Bill’s brother, Budd. After Budd tells Elle that he buried Beatrix alive and took her Hanzo sword, the two decide to make a trade; Elle agrees to give Budd a large sum of money in exchange for the sword, however, she hides a poisonous snake, known as a Black Mamba, in the case containing the money. The snake kills Budd, and Elle nearly gets away with the money, sword, and credit for killing Beatrix. Neither Elle nor O-Ren are shown assisting a male hero, nor are they shown distracting one. Both women “act like men” in the fact that they do not portray conventional feminine traits, but pursue active roles to achieve their desired goals; it is Elle and O-Ren who are active and their male victims who are passive. Though this might suggest the two can be classified as men, this is not the case; Elle and O-Ren killed men in sneaky and deceitful ways, which corresponds to the stereotype of an evil female bringing harm upon an unsuspecting male. The two fit under the category of female, just less strictly than most.

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Elle and O-Ren fit, for the most part, into the male vs. female dynamic; however, Beatrix Kiddo does not. In addition to showcasing women as weak, dependant, and passive, classic Hollywood films objectify the female body. This objectification occurs through what is known as the “voyeuristic gaze.” The voyeuristic gaze is used in film when a male character is shown studying a woman’s body and the camera follows his gaze; the presence of the voyeuristic gaze forces the audience to adopt the man’s position in looking at the woman. In the opening scene of Kill Bill, the bride is presented as pregnant, bloody, and in her wedding dress; in other words, she is presented as the typical female victim. Despite this, she seeks revenge in killing or maiming everyone responsible for her victimization. After defeating her first opponent, O-Ren, Beatrix captures the former assassin’s lawyer and best friend, Sofie Fatale; the bride forces information from Sofie, by removing a number of her limbs, and tells her why she has let her live: “I want you to tell him all the information you just told me. I want him to know what I know. I want him to know I want him to know. And I want them all to know they’ll all soon be as dead as O-Ren.” When she says “him,” Beatrix refers to Bill, and the “them” refers to everyone else present the moment she was shot. Just like Elle and O-Ren, Beatrix ‘acts like a man’ in physically fighting those who caused her pain. Added to this, the bride is not sexually objectified by the voyeuristic gaze, in fact, the only thing that is in Kill Bill is the Hanzo sword (Smelik, t89). Unlike her female counterparts, Beatrix gives Bill, her soon-to-be victim, fair warning before she comes after him. Because she does not fit any of the stereotypical female roles and because she is not a man, Beatrix cannot be classified under either category of the male vs. female dualism.

The third dichotomy presented in Kill Bill is hero/killer vs. mother, in which Beatrix cannot be placed into because she is both hero and mother simultaneously. The reason hero and mother are presented as a dualism is that, in the film, the impossibility of being both an assassin and a mother is consistently mentioned by a number of characters, including Beatrix herself.

A hero is thought of as one who is above the average human and who is admired for their ability to stand out by proving themselves with exceptional acts; it is said that heroism goes to the extremes. In contrast, Huang-Ming Chang notes words that apply to the maternal archetype are: wisdom, sympathy, instinct, and protector.
In the film, the bride eludes death on multiple occasions; she survives a gunshot wound to the head, defeats an entire sword-fighting gang single-handedly, and escapes from a grave, among other acts. Despite murdering a multitude of people, there are times when she has spared lives; while battling former assassin Vernita Green, Beatrix tells her that in order to “get even” with her, she would have to kill her husband and daughter, as well. The bride does not do this, in fact, she has the intention of killing Vernita only when her daughter is not present; she is genuinely upset when she realizes the young girl witnessed her mother’s death, saying to the girl, “It was not my intention to do this in front of you. For that, I’m sorry. But you can take my word for it, your mother had it coming.”

The next young girl Beatrix encounters is seventeen-year-old Gogo Yubari at the House of Blue Leaves. The girl turns out to be O-Ren’s sadistic personal bodyguard and the bride begs Gogo to walk away, but she does not; Beatrix is forced to battle and kill the girl. It is also as the House of Blue Leaves that the bride faces a young and incredibly frightened member of the crazy 88; he is the last one standing after her rampage. She proceeds to spank him with her new samurai sword, telling him, “This - is what - you get - for fucking - around - with Yakuza! Go home to your mother!” Once the bride is reunited with her daughter at the end of the film, her ruthless facade cracks; she exposes her emotional side, crying upon the first sight of her child. Beatrix is shown in *Kill Bill* as portraying the invincible qualities of hero in the fact that she is able to persist in her quest in the midst of seemingly eminent death. She also displays the qualities of mother in that she does not wish harm upon children or young adults; she shows sympathy towards Vernita’s daughter, is unwilling to kill Gogo, and chastises the young sword-fighter for being involved in the Tokyo crime scene. It is important to note that the cause for Beatrix’s revenge, in part, is that she thought her daughter was dead; the entire story can be looked at as a mother avenging the death of her child, exemplified in the teary reunion of mother with daughter. Since the bride is both hero and mother, she breaks the dichotomy.

The character, Beatrix Kiddo, is shown to fit into both categories of the east vs. west, male vs. female, and hero vs. mother dichotomies; she is both respectful and remorseless, powerful and weak, ruthless and merciful, good and evil, unfeeling and emotional, and selfish and selfless. In the film, Bill compares the bride to Superman, in that both she and Superman are exceptional, yet they attempt to fit into a society full of average human beings, Superman by disguising himself as Clark Kent, and Beatrix by creating the alias, Arlene Plympton. Bill says to the bride: “You would’ve worn the costume of Arlene Plympton. But you were born Beatrix Kiddo. And every morning when you woke up, you’d still be Beatrix Kiddo.” He goes on to tell her, “I’m calling you a killer. A natural born killer. You always have been, and you always will be... and no matter how much beer you drank or barbecue you ate or how fat your ass got, nothing in the world would ever change that.” It is in Bill’s conversation with the bride that director, Quentin Tarantino, reveals the reason for the public’s admiration of Beatrix, despite her seemingly questionable morality. Even though the bride is shown making questionable moral decisions, such as in her choice to maim the entire crazy 88, she is an effective role model due to her determination and resolve to stay true to herself as a “natural born killer.” She purposely does not fit into any socially-constructed dualities and is, therefore, a hero in her own right; she does not act in the way filmatic heroes traditionally do, rather, she acts in a way that seems right to her. Though the chances of a former female assassin going on a bloody rampage to avenge the death of her daughter seem slim to none, Beatrix effectively illustrates a realistic hero; her quest is driven by an incredibly real love for her child and she executes her mission in a way that suits herself, not caring if her way is accepted by society or not. Ultimately, *Kill Bill*’s protagonist, Beatrix Kiddo acts as a powerful role model and icon because she stays true to herself, overcoming socially-constructed ideals and categories, inspiring others to do the same.

Brown’s short article illustrates the various ways eastern culture, most notably 70’s kung fu films, have influenced and impacted Kill Bill. Brown lists a great deal of specific kung fu films, explaining their unique correlation to Tarantino’s film, while also pointing out less obvious evidence of eastern integration, including the presence of renowned kung fu stars Sonny Chiba, David Carradine, and Gordon Lu as Hatori Hanzo, Bill, and Pei Mei, respectively (100). Brown points out the stylistic similarities between Kill Bill and traditional kung fu films, going on to state that Tarantino does more than simply replicate these classic martial arts films, but actually modernizes the genre and pays it tribute in an artistic and original manner (104). I could not find any information on David Brown, however, the article was published in Metro, which is published by the Australian Teachers of Media Incorporated (ATOM) and is a peer-reviewed journal. I will use this article to show the eastern influences present in Kill Bill, which contrast with the western influences.


Chang shows that there exists a connection between archetypes and mythology. He goes on to argue that these archetypes are still present in our world today as a result of the “collective unconsciousness” that humans share (100, 101). He goes on to define and explain the various archetypes of: Anima, Animus, Mentor, Mother, and Shadow (104-107). Huang-Ming Chang is a professor at the University of Catalonia and Eindhoven University of Technology. I will use the description of the mother archetype, as well as, the information that supports the fact that mythical concepts are still present in films and books today. I will use this in order to be able to compare mythical stereotypes that are discussed in other articles, with the characters of Kill Bill.


Devas explores the role of hero in The 39 Steps and states that the white, male hero is capable of doing as he pleases, as a result of his gender and race, showcasing a sense of dominance and imperialism (46). She makes it clear that where women attempt to “act like men” in the film, they are punished and where they stick to their pre-determined role, they are still at the mercy of men (49). She does this by examining the hero’s two contrasting female love interests. Angela Devas is a lecturer in film and media studies at Thames Valley University. I will use this article to show Beatrix’s uniqueness in the fact that she does “act like a man” and is not punished, but is, in fact, rewarded.


Hoberman describes the basics of the “spaghetti western” film genre, a genre formed by the Italian take on the American western (38). He gives a great deal of information on the genre’s impact as a whole, and notes a variety of important films, directors, and composers. I will use Hoberman’s writing to affirm that Kill Bill is influenced by these spaghetti westerns, in comparing scenes of spaghetti westerns to the scenes of Kill Bill. The author, J. Hoberman, is an experienced critic and the source, itself, is a magazine article. Despite this, I think it is safe for me to use since I will not be using the opinions or arguments made by the author, to support my claims.

Klapp defines and analyzes stereotypical heroes, villains, and fools as they are depicted in popular culture. He also looks at the psychological aspects of these characters as well as how they are perceived by their audience. Although this article is older than the other sources I will be using, the information is still relevant and the stereotypes discussed within the article have changed very little, if at all. The author, Orrin Klapp, was considered to be one of San Diego State College’s top sociological researchers and professors. Klapp received his Doctorate from the University of Chicago in Sociology. I will be looking at the differences between hero and villain in order to prove that Beatrix is neither a stereotypical hero, nor a stereotypical villain. I will also use this article to explain why, despite this, she is still considered a hero, rather than a villain.


Nicholson explains, in detail, Joseph Campbell’s idea of the “heroic journey” and shows the ways men and women are portrayed in myth. She argues that Campbell’s “monomyth” leaves no room for the possibility of woman as hero (190). She defines mythic concepts and explains the various ways myths can be read, going on to provide examples that illustrate the role of woman to be predominantly passive, even in the case she is considered “hero,” making her less than her male counterpart (192-193). Sarah Nicholson is a professor of religion and gender studies, literature and academic writing practice in Sydney, Australia. I will be looking at Nicholson’s comparison of male and female, as well as hero and villain in mythology to show that Beatrix contains qualities of multiple stereotypes.


O’Day examines the various aspects of action films that utilize a female protagonists; he refers to this genre of film as “contemporary action babe cinema (202).” He makes the argument that “action babe cinema” does more than simply burdening young women, expecting them to act like “real men” and look like “real women.” He states, rather, that these films contribute to a change in gender representation, as well as, relationships, in a way that is appealing to both men and women, alike (216). O’Day does this by focusing on gender binaries, the importance of fitness, and the common structure shared among films of the genre. He provides a multitude of examples, including, but not limited to, *Tomb Raider, X-Men, Charlie’s Angels,* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.* Marc O’Day is an associate dean of Humanities at Suffolk College and he has other published works under the subjects of fiction, film, and television. For my paper, I will, mainly, be looking at O’Day’s section on gender in “action babe cinema,” however, I will look at other portions in less depth.

In this book chapter, Smelik discusses classic feminist film theory, with the help of film heroines, Lara Croft and Beatrix Kiddo, ultimately affirming that Beatrix a far more complex and empowering character (179, 191). She discusses the traditional film concepts of “voyeuristic gaze,” “narcissistic gaze,” and the “Oedipus” framework, while using Lara Croft as an example. She then compares and contrasts Beatrix with Lara and shows that traditional film concepts are not present in Kill Bill. Anneke Smelik is a professor in Visual Culture at the Department of Cultural Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen and has publications on cultural memory, human and machine, authenticity in fashion, and visual literacy. I will be using the information on traditional feminist film study and Beatrix's difference from other female film heroes to show that she does not fit fully into the stereotypical male vs. female dualism.

Notes


2 Smelik 180.

3 Orrin Klapp, Heroes, Villains and Fools, as Agents of Social Control (1954) 57.