

2022

"I Am No Man": The Importance of Female Archetypes in Fantasy

Madelynn Johnson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorstheses>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

“I AM NO MAN”: THE IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN FANTASY

Madelynn Johnson

Faculty Supervisor: Becky DiBiasio, Ph.D.

English Department

A Thesis Submitted to Fulfill the Requirements of the
Honors Program at Assumption University

Spring 2022

Table of Contents

“Maternal Instincts”	2
“The Queen and the Dragon”	14
“Of Witches, Knights, and Silver Rose”	18
“I Am No Man”: The Importance of Female Archetypes in Fantasy	27
<i>Tolkien’s Defense of What Was Lost</i>	30
<i>Jung: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious</i>	32
<i>Fantasy, Archetypes, and Women</i>	33
<i>A Deconstruction of “Maternal Instincts”</i>	36
<i>A Deconstruction of “The Queen and the Dragon”</i>	38
<i>A Deconstruction of “Of Witches, Knights, and Silver Rose”</i>	39
<i>Women in Fantasy Going Forwards</i>	41
Bibliography	43

“Maternal Instincts”

Long ago, in the ancient world, there lived a people called the Ophilisks. While they resembled humans, they were not creations of Zeus, but rather, children of Nyx, mother to all monsters and the deepest darkest Night. Their women had hair of serpents and their men had no legs, but slithered along the ground like adders. Humans feared them, and the two peoples were in continuous tension. To ensure survival, the Ophilisks kept away from humans, though they did enjoy the same breed of thinking and organization as their antagonists. Ophilisks had great cities and kings and thinkers and craftsmen, just as the humans did. Their regard for the arts and for politics was just as unmatched, though practiced in different ways, according to their own custom.

But the Ophilisks held a belief much deeper and more profound than the humans—a great respect for life, especially those of their children. So it comes to no surprise that such a people with such a belief would stop at nothing to ensure the health of young ones, including ones not born to them. It was not uncommon for Ophilisk mothers to nurse human babies at their breasts alongside their own infants. The humans’ disregard for “less than perfect” children was seen as a disgrace by these children of Nyx, and so, many Ophilisk city-states held within their walls gorgons, naga, and humans alike. Their medicine treated sickly human children; those who were missing limbs were supported in every way they could be; those of varying intellect were taught of the world as best their new parents could provide. Those without sight or hearing or speech were integrated seamlessly.

This is a tale of one such human child—found cast out of the gates of mighty Athens and taken in by a traveling naga to be raised by his family. I pray the Muses give me the voice to tell it well.

~ ~ ~

Dazeus stretched as he awoke early one morning. He slowly got himself standing and reached for his walking stick, the top of it etched to resemble a cobra with its hood flared. He put the cobra's head under his arm and held onto the bar at its middle, resembling the end of its tail, and went about his room getting dressed. He was careful to be quiet—his sister Thora was still curled up in bed, the thin purple snakes on her head silent for now. Once dressed, he made his way to the kitchen, finding his mother up and cooking porridge. Dazeus smiled at her taller form standing straight, her red snakes coiled together just so to form a bun. He thought his mother was beautiful, like his sister was. “Good morning, Mama.”

The gorgon jumped and turned around. “Olympus above, child... You scared me!” She chuckled. “You usually aren't up before the sun. Are you sure you've rested up?” The boy nodded and went over to her, hugging her legs. “Mhm! I'm hungry. Is breakfast ready?” His mother bent over and hugged him back, patting his head. “It just finished up, yes. Is your sister still asleep?” As Dazeus went to answer, a naga with a blue snake trunk slithered inside, his long tawny hair held back and a pack slung over his shoulder. He saw Dazeus and beamed, quickly zipping over and grabbing him off his feet and pulling him into his strong bare chest. “Daddy!” Dazeus cried out, giggling when his father tickled his sides before putting him down to kiss his mother's cheek. “Kindling is chopped already, Pheris?” She asked, laddling some porridge into bowls.

“Aye. Set it under the windowsill, dear.” He took a bowl for himself and for Dazeus, setting them on the table and hugging Thora when she rushed towards him, her brother's shouts having woken her. “Thora, Dazeus, sit for breakfast and let your father breathe,” their mother teased with a smile, kissing Thora on the cheek as she gave her a portion of the meal. The two

excitedly sat to eat, Pheris setting down his pack and rummaging through it. “Caught some stray birds on the way. Thought you’d like them for a stew.” He pulled out three limp ducks and set them aside with reverence. “I’ll go hunting later on with the others.” He looked up at his wife and muttered, “It seems this season will not be a barren one, Kana.”

Dazeus noticed his mother sigh in relief and relax. “Thank the Titans for that... The city’s stores wouldn’t hold up well with another tight winter.” After setting things aside and sitting at table, the small family had their meal as the sun rose and the morning mists cleared. Pheris looked out the window and smiled. “Helios promises a fine day. All of Basilos will enjoy this weather, no doubt.” Finishing her food first, Thora turned to her father. “Then can Daz and I go play by the stream outside the city?” The naga furrowed his brow and paused before rumbling, “I believe that decision is up to your mother.” Kana looked between her two eager children, her gaze resting longer on Dazeus, before turning to Pheris. “They’re old enough to go together now. But,” She turned to Thora, who was already helping her brother stand and grab his walking stick. “Stay together, you two. Look after each other. If anything happens or if you see anything you shouldn’t, run right back home. Understand?” The two smiled and nodded, hugging both parents. “We understand!”

~ ~ ~

The two siblings walked out of Basilos’s gates and down to the field and stream before it. Thora was patient with her brother and his slower pace, holding his hand as they went down the hill to make sure he had his footing. Once at the bottom, they rested a moment and picked some berries from a bush for a snack. “What do you think Daddy will catch today?” Dazeus asked, his lips and fingers stained purple from the berry juice. Thora shrugged. “Dunno...Maybe he’ll catch a big deer like last summer!” The two grinned at each other before going to the stream to wash

up. As Thora took off her sandals and splashed around in the cool water, Dazeus sat by the water's edge and looked for pretty rocks. He dug his hands into the mud and washed off what he found, putting agreeable specimens aside before looking for more.

As he sat up to stretch, he froze at the sight of two figures on the horizon. They were male...but they had legs. And they were starting to run towards them, drawing weapons. "Thora! *Humans!*" His sister turned to see where he was pointing before paling. She got out of the water and quickly put her sandals back on, helping her brother to his feet and running with him. "Help! Help! They're after us!" She screamed, the guards at the gate yelling as they took notice of the approaching threat themselves. Dazeus tried his best to keep up, but yelped as he tripped and his sweaty hand slipped from his sister's grasp. He grunted as he hit the ground and tried to crawl away, still holding onto his walking stick. Thora turned and tried to get back to her brother, but when she saw how close the humans were, she yelped and ran fast to the gate, screaming for their parents as the guards began to gather their weapons to defend the city.

Dazeus frantically tried to climb up the hill, but was suddenly stopped by the humans who grabbed him and flipped him around. Dazeus cringed and held his arms up to his face, whimpering, but slowly lowered them and opened his eyes to see that the humans were staring down at him in surprise. Their gaze turned to his walking stick, and then to his lower half before they scowled in disgust. "I thought it was a naga...Instead, we find a boy with one leg. It's a miracle he's even still alive. The gods must pity him." They kicked him aside and he gasped, coughing from the impact. He teared up and tried to stand as they climbed the hill further, towards the gates. Before the guards could rush out though, Dazeus saw his sister return with their parents.

Pheris shot out of the gate with a sword in hand. One of the humans stopped and quickly fired his bow at the gorgons, but the naga intercepted the attack with his sword. Unfortunately, the same archer fired off another arrow and Pheris cried out as it pierced his side. The children screamed, Thora running towards her father and brother. Seeing her son on the ground, her husband wounded, and her daughter running towards the assailants, Kana rushed forwards and stood in front of her family as the other human rose his arm to toss his spear. Her snakes rose up and her eyes flashed as she hissed menacingly and bared her fangs. The humans did not look away in time, and their screams were cut short as they froze—turned to stone.

Everyone was silent for a moment before Kana relaxed. “Is everyone alright?” Thora helped Dazeus up and brought him to their parents. The family hugged each other tight before Pheris sat up and ripped the arrow out of him, his blood starting to soak through the chiton he had only just put on a moment ago. He glared at the statues of the men frozen in horror. “I need to get this tended to...And these need to be carried inside.” He waved to the guards and they rushed over to help bring the statues in and help Pheris to the hospital. Dazeus shrunk down and sniffled. “Mama...I’m sorr-“ Kana immediately hushed him and held him close. “None of this was your fault, Dazeus. Nor was it your sister’s. You did just what you were supposed to.”

“But now Daddy’s hurt! And you could get in trouble!” Thora nodded, looking just as guilty. The elder gorgon sighed and held their hands as they walked into the gates that closed behind them. “Nevermind that...The elders will know what to do. Everything will be sorted out just fine. You’ll see.”

~ ~ ~

Later that day, after Pheris’s wound had been tended, Dazeus and Thora sat with their parents in the grand meeting hall with many other denizens of Basilos. The statues were placed

where all could see, and the elders of the city were seated behind them, their leader standing before them. Dazeus could tell that the elders were not happy, which only made him feel worse. “This sudden attack on two of our children by humans is an outrage!” The High Elder cried out. “We have left the humans alone for decades! Centuries, even! And yet, we are still hunted as if we are wild game!” The crowd roared in agreement before the rattling of some of the elders’ tails silenced them. “We have done nothing, and yet nothing is sacred to them. No treaties, no hunting territories...not even hiding away in the shadows is enough to placate their wrath!”

Thora sat next to Dazeus and fiddled with her hands. He bit his lip and did the same. The elders looked on uneasily at the statues, including the High Elder, who paused to sigh. “Unlike the humans, we do not crave constant war. It is possible for us to coexist on the body of Gaia, under her beloved Ouranos.” The crowd muttered a mix of prayers and agreement, some Ophilisks motioning respectfully to the earth and sky in reverence. Dazeus and Thora copied their mother when she did this as well. “But humans’ tempers run hotter than the Phlegethon. This we know all too well. So how shall we prevent conflict?” Now the High Elder turned to the Ophilisks behind him. The other elders talked among themselves, the crowd shifting uneasily. Several choices of action were put forward for vote, but Dazeus was too focused on what the humans had said to him and done with him earlier to remember them all.

He snapped back to attention however, when one elder stepped forward with the suggestion that they return the humans from their statue forms. “It is a ritual that can be done in the temple courtyards,” she said, gesturing to the statues. “When awoken from their slumber of stone, they will not remember what has happened. If we leave them far enough away, they will wake thinking they fell asleep on the road.” The crowd and the others agreed to this, though there was one who spoke up. “You forget that the herbs and roots needed for such a practice

have been out of season here for quite some time. We've not had a chance to replenish them yet." There grew an uneasy silence as the elder continued. "Someone must collect them and return with them before we can right this unfortunate circumstance...And said ingredients would best be found with the humans at market!" Somehow, the silence became even worse. Dazeus paled and shivered at the thought of dealing with more humans, but as he glanced at his father who still held his bandaged side and the statues in the middle of the hall, he knew who had to go.

"I will go!" As he stood and shouted out his declaration, the crowd gasped and started to mutter. His mother shook her head, both parents and his sister shocked beyond belief. The Head Elder even looked surprised. "*You*, boy? Are you certain?" He nodded and puffed out his chest. "I am Dazeus, son of Pheris and Kana. Those statues are my fault...They thought I was a naga, so they came to hurt me." He paused to shiver and sigh shakily. "B-But I'm gonna make it right! I'll get what you need so that we can fix everything again!" The Head Elder's look softened and he chuckled. "Very well, then. But know this, Dazeus: you *are* a naga. And a proud one, from the looks of things. This is your home, and you have bravely chosen to help protect it." Kana now stood and held Dazeus close. "Honorable One, I will go with my son. I fear for his safety if he were to go alone." The old naga nodded. "I see. We will provide you both with supplies for the journey ahead. You will leave tomorrow and return as swiftly as the wind. Basilos thanks you."

That night, Kana went to put her children to bed. Once Thora was in bed and asleep, she turned to Dazeus, who was lost in thought. "Mama?"

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"Do the Titans pity me?"

His mother's eyes widened. "Why would you say that?" The boy fiddled with his bed sheets before muttering, "The humans said I was only alive 'cus their gods do..." She frowned and hugged him close. "My sweet boy...Don't you *ever* listen to things like that...It's not true." She smoothed out the blankets and smiled at him. "You are alive because you are meant to be. You are alive because you are wanted, and loved, and cherished. And I pray to Mother Nyx every day in thanks for giving you to me. You and Thora are the greatest gifts I could have ever hoped to receive." Dazeus smiled and sniffled, hugging her tight. She kissed his forehead and helped him lay down. "Now you rest up...We start our journey tomorrow morning early."

"Ok...I love you, Mama."

"I love you too, sweetheart."

~ ~ ~

Dazeus and Kana travelled for what seemed like eons to the child before reaching the outskirts of the great city of Athens. Once there, Kana stopped the horse they shared and took out two cloaks, handing one to her son. "Here. Put this on." Dazeus was confused, but obeyed. Once it was fastened securely around him, he felt a tingling sensation in his leg. He went to cry out, but his mother stopped him—or at least a woman who *looked* like his mother did. His eyes widened as he took in the woman before him that wore a similar cloak to his, but no longer had snakes, fangs, or scales on her face and neck. The scales were missing, and in the place of snakes was long brown hair. Her blue eyes had rounded pupils. "Mama...Is that really *you*?!" She smiled, showing normal teeth, and nodded. "Aye, it is. The elders enchanted these cloaks. They will have us pass as human in the city. Haven't you noticed your change? It is meant to help you walk better." Dazeus looked to his leg...only to see another right beside it! He was dumbfounded.

Kana laughed as she dismounted their horse and helped her son down. He wobbled as he figured out his balance, then slowly tried walking around on two legs. After several minutes of practice, he was walking and running just as his sister and mother did. He hugged his mother tight and laughed. "This is amazing!" She chuckled and patted his back. "I'm afraid it isn't permanent... The change is only for the one time we wear these cloaks. Once we take them off, the spell is over and we'll return to normal. So remember to keep yours on the entire time we're inside, ok?" He nodded eagerly and held her free hand as the two of them led their horse through the city gates and into Athens.

Dazeus gazed at everything in awe, comforted by the fact that all the humans saw him as one of their own. Some children ran past them and waved at him. People in the marketplace smiled at him and his mother. He did his best to be respectful and "blend in," as his mother murmured to him, and with the pleasant responses and reactions he received, he grew proud that their plan was working. As he went around with his mother and helped her grab everything they needed however, Dazeus couldn't help but slowly think back on the humans that had attacked his family. If they had all been human, and he had both legs, would they have been just as friendly as the ones he was seeing now? Why did they look at him with scorn before, despite him not being a naga by birth? The more he came to realizations such as this, the more quiet and reserved he became. The adventure he was having with his mother was losing its charm. He wanted to go back home to his sister and father at Basilos.

As Kana was finishing up their shopping, Dazeus heard some shouting nearby. He turned towards it, recognizing it as the same type of shouting that the humans had done when they attacked him and his sister. He held onto his mother's arm tight as he watched a human be thrown from a house mere feet from them and onto the street. Dazeus's eyes widened in fear as

he watched the human be attacked by another. The human on the ground only had one arm. Realizing this, he teared up and let go of his mother, darting off through the crowded street and away from the spectacle. Kana yelled for him to stop but he wouldn't listen. He ran and ran and ran as far as his legs could carry him before darting behind a house at the edge of the city and collapsing to the ground, sobbing.

Kana caught up to him shortly after on horseback. She tethered the horse to a post and went to him, hushing him and holding him close to wipe away his tears. "They-...They hurt someone like me, Mama!" He sobbed shakily. "They were just like them but missing an arm and they *hurt* them!" Kana shook her head and continued to console her son, holding his head in her hands. "Shhhhh...You're alright, ok? Our cloaks hide us, remember? And we're done, so we can go home now. Just hush..."

"But why would they do that, Mama? Why did they hurt them?"

"...I don't know, sweetie. I don't know."

The disguised gorgon held her child until he calmed down, then smiled at him sadly. "There. All better. Let's head home, hm?" Dazeus nodded and stood, his mother untying their horse and bringing it over to him. As he moved to go over to his mother, his cloak caught onto the pile of kindling nearby and tore. As soon as it did, Dazeus gasped as the tingling returned and he started to fall forwards, only on one leg again. Kana went to catch him, and he grabbed onto her cloak, pulling it off her. Her scales, fangs, snakes, and slit pupils returned again as she caught him. The two whipped around when they heard a gasp behind them.

Staring at them with wide eyes was a human woman, a baby in a sling to her chest. No one moved. Kana held Dazeus close to her. He could hear her heart pounding. The woman stared at Kana, then saw Dazeus and his one leg. A look of recognition seemed to pass over her face.

Dazeus was confused at this until he took in her face, the baby with all four limbs she held tightly to her breast, and what she uttered softly to his mother: “Take care of him.”

Kana nodded slowly, a mutual understanding passing between them. She mounted their horse and had it gallop off without another word or look from either woman to the other. Dazeus watched as the woman, her baby, and the house grew smaller and smaller on the horizon until it disappeared behind them.

~ ~ ~

After returning home, Kana and Dazeus gave the herbs and roots to the elders, who promptly had the statues transferred to the temple courtyards for the ritual. The priests and priestesses performed it and had the two humans returned to normal. Still unconscious, they were quickly transported to the far end of the field, away from Basilos. It was there they awoke and, remembering nothing, went on their way back to their city. Dazeus and his mother kept their encounter with the human woman to themselves. He asked his mother in private if they had to worry about more humans coming to get them, but Kana shook her head and said, “No...She let us go because we didn’t harm them.”

A week or so after the humans had been left in the field and wandered off again, Dazeus went to fetch water from the stream. As he filled the bucket he brought with him, his parents watching from the gate in case the worst should happen again, he saw a small basket a few feet away. Putting the bucket aside, he made his way over to the basket and lifted up the blanket within it, revealing fruits, cheese, fresh bread, and other such treats. His eyes widened. As he reached for an apple, he saw there was a note in the basket as well. He picked it up and slowly beamed at who the basket was addressed to—“Dearest One-Legged Boy.”

He tucked the blanket and the note back into place and put the basket on his shoulder, awkwardly getting back to the bucket and grabbing that as well. He called out to his parents as he made his way back to them, and they too were in awe at the gift. In seeing the note, Kana smiled knowingly, she and her son sharing a glance before they went back through the gate. Dazeus received more baskets such as this for many years all around the day of his birth, the note eventually changing to include his name once the sender learned it.

“The Queen and the Dragon”

Long ago in the age of heroes, the kingdoms of Vavia and Epitor were united through marriage. The new kingdom, named Revaria, was first ruled by King Thadian the Swift and Queen Evelyn the Kind. King Thadian was known for his diplomacy; though he seemed cold to many, his heart beat strong for his people. His wife was a loyal and just queen who cared for all she saw.

A few short weeks after their union however, tragedy struck the capital city of the new kingdom: a great dragon attacked the castle in the dead of night and took the fledgeling king in its massive talons! The beast’s might was so terrible, the knights’ weaponry did nothing to its thick hide. After the dragon disappeared into the clouds, the fair queen wept for the loss of her beloved. They say her sapphire eyes gleamed with falling stars, such was her crying. After night had turned to day however, the queen resolved to kill the beast and return with her husband.

As she readied for her journey, the mother to the king, Sabeline the Wise, gifted her a pendant. “Wear this with your armor, fair daughter,” said she. “You will need the might of the body and the might of the gods to dispel all evils. I cannot go with you, but I pray this will grant you some of my power,” for Sabeline the Wise was a powerful arcane scholar and knew of many things. “I will think of you and my husband on the journey,” the young queen declared. “For Revaria needs us both, and the dragon has taken the earth from the river, so how can this seed grow and flower?”

Queen Evelyn donned her steel and mounted her steed, then rode to the gates of the capital and beyond, seeking the dragon’s trail to the Scarlet Mountain. The beast’s lair was home to many precious red stones, among them rubies, garnet, and fine quartz. These stones gave the mountain its name, but the wealth within it drew monsters of all sizes and strengths to it, making

mining perilous. The good queen feared the worst for her husband, but had faith in the gods as she rode towards the horizon that he would be spared the dragon's hunger.

After days of travel, the queen came across an encampment of ogres—cousins to giants, the stupid brutes were known to rip men's arms off in a rage. The good queen drew her sword and shield, then hid her horse in a thicket to protect it from harm before taking on the creatures. Such a battle was before her, one that sent shivers into the hearts of all men! Her shield was dented by their blows and she was knocked aside and braised by their clubs, fair skin turned blue and purple by these godless brutes. But wit and steel prevailed and Queen Evelyn soundly defeated each beast, though there were five in total!

After days of travel, the queen came upon a swamp. Her steed made its way slowly through the muck, but was stopped by the vines of terrible beasts—giant plants with maws of beasts, their mouths dripping with poisonous spittle! Though they had no eyes nor ears, they sensed her sword being drawn from its sheath and pulled it from her grasp. Her sword cast aside, she dismounted and tried to retrieve it, only to be tangled by the vines of the vicious flora. Struggling against them, feeling their grip only tighten, she remembered the words of the old queen and took the pendant in hand. Calling on the gods, she focused on the image of a candle flame and saw the same image roar to life on the vines entangling her. Now freed, she struggled to keep the flames tame. Fire from the gods has its own will—only those with strong minds can leash it. But Queen Evelyn had the flames devour the flora before the beasts reeled and disappeared; she mounted her steed once again and rode on to the Scarlet Mountain.

After days of travel, the Scarlet Mountain lay before the queen. She tied up her steed at its base and began the climb to the dragon's keep, shortly coming to it and its guard—a being made of the very precious stones the mountain possessed! The gods created these guardians of

stone and gem before the rise of humans, and many hid from the world. But this one chose to guard the very beast that had taken the king! The queen fought against her foe valiantly, using sword and strength and pendant and magic from the gods, but lo! The creature of rock was stronger than the steel and held against the flames. The fair queen was beaten and battered, cast against the mountainside by this brute. Queen Evelyn's strength had failed her, and the guard made to cast her off the mountainside to her doom, but her thoughts went to her family and the people of Revaria—of Sabeline the Wise and her parting words. She then thought of her beloved, the king, and she felt strength return to her. She again picked up her sword and stood to fight, her steel and pendant no longer failing her. The being of rock fell to its knees, and the good queen rushed inside the mountain to find the one who had given her fortitude in her darkest hour.

Upon entering the horde, the queen was in awe at the bright rubies that lined the walls. Her wonder turned to hatred as her eyes fell on the sleeping dragon, curled up in the cavern. She moved slowly towards the beast, stopping mere feet away when she saw gaps in the hide about its neck. She raised her sword to run it through, but froze when the beast opened its eye and saw her. It growled in warning, but did not move. The fair queen was about to rush in and seize her chance when she realized that the beast's eyes were a familiar bright green, and its scales were black like his hair...

After hearing the beast moan sadly, the steel dropped to the ground and the queen embraced the dragon's head. "Oh, Thadian! Sweet Thadian!" She cried. "I have found you!" Though she could not explain how it happened, this was not the beast that first took her husband away—it was he himself! The queen held the dragon close as best she could, and starlight tears soon began to fall from her eyes again. "There is nowhere you can stay in Revaria," she sobbed. "Must the gods be so cruel as to separate us so soon?" The dragon moaned in agreement and

stayed close to his wife as she begged and prayed for assistance. But as she did, her tears that landed on the beast shone brilliantly. As she watched, the dragon was changed back into the king, who collapsed into her arms!

But, alas, now it was the king who wept, despite his queen's joy! "A man I am now, but for how much longer? The people will not take a dragon for a ruler, and you should not have a monster for a husband. I should stay here," he said, holding her close. Queen Evelyn took his head in her hands and smiled. "I married one man and will love no other. Man or beast, Revalia will thrive under our rule. The gods will aid us with your ailment, and all will be well. You shall see." With these words, the queen took the king to her horse and, after many days' travel, the two arrived home to fanfare and celebration.

And so it was that Revalia's first king was both dragon and man until his dying breath. The crest of the kingdom bears his likeness, and all those of his bloodline are one with the beasts.

“Of Witches, Knights, and Silver Rose”

Once upon a time, in a kingdom called Berin, there was a knight named Godfrey the Good. One day, he was sent by the king to destroy the “Shadow of Berin” that lay hidden in the forest. Godfrey was warned that this threat was a coven of witches that cursed and hexed the people of Berin with potions and spells, tortured those they tempted into the woods until they screamed, and did even more despicable crimes. He was sent to rid the kingdom of the witches before they could do any more damage to the kingdom. This was a noble quest, and he promised to see it done himself.

Godfrey rode into the forest and kept a wary eye out for any tricks or schemes of the witches. The deeper he went into the forest, the more he felt like he was being watched... Godfrey turned around, only to be met with a grinning tree beast! He yelled and urged his horse onward, seeing more and more of them as the knight and his steed galloped away until he turned his head too fast and hit it on a low tree limb, the impact knocking him out cold.

~ ~ ~

When he finally awoke, Godfrey was in a small, dimly lit cottage with a crackling fireplace that held a bubbling cauldron. His head throbbed and moving made the pain worse, but he was panicked. Where was he? What had happened? As he tried to move to stand, the door opened and an old woman shuffled in. She was hunched over and used a walking stick. “I wouldn’t get up, if I were you,” she warned. “You’ve a nasty head wound. That takes time to heal proper. Rushing about when injured does no one any good.” The knight tensed. “Who are you and what do you want from me?”

“My name is Cyrene. I am one of the elders here, in Silver Rose. As for what I want from you...” She shuffled closer and scowled at him. “Shut your mouth and lie back down. I meant

what I said and I refuse to wrap that fat head of yours again, just to protect what little is inside it!” He reached up and touched his forehead, feeling bandages. He slowly laid back again, looking the woman over with suspicion. “Silver Rose...What village in Berin has a name like that?” Cyrene scoffed and turned to the cauldron. “None. This place is not a village. It is a refuge. A safe haven. A hidden community.” She stirred what was in the cauldron with a wooden spoon before looking up at him. “Though you were probably told that it was something else: a shadow.”

Godfrey paled. He was in the very coven he was sent to destroy, and he was at the mercy of a witch! “What do you plan to do with me, then?” He asked, fear turning his stomach. The witch rolled her eyes. “As soon as that head of yours is fixed up, I’m kicking you out. You’ve been nothing but a nuisance for me already, and you’ve only been here for the night!” Cyrene turned back to the cauldron and stirred it more, adding some ingredients to it every so often. Godfrey heard her muttering to herself in a strange language and began to panic—he had angered a witch, and now she was going to curse him with a potion and magic spells!

As he moved to get up again, two young children ran into the cottage, yelling for the witch. The yelling hurt his head, as did the attempt at standing up. He heard the witch shouting towards him and perhaps the children before his vision went blurry and he collapsed, his vision black. He did not wake up again for a few hours, and when he did, he was alone. He strained to see the cauldron and was nearly sick when he saw that it was empty, when before it was filled to the brim with brew. He shuddered thinking of what possibly had happened to the children after he lost consciousness earlier in the day. Godfrey slowly looked around and saw his armor, sword, and shield set aside. To his surprise, each piece looked polished and well kept. “*I have to*

get out of here,” he thought. “I must do my duty before these crones do any further damage to Berin!”

Moving slowly, Godfrey managed to get himself standing without worsening his head. He strapped his scabbard to his belt and slowly walked to the door, opening it and going outside. The fresh air did him good, but the sight he saw next confused him. Outside the witch’s cottage was a spread-out village of similar cottages, some small farms and shops, even a blacksmith’s and some storehouses for grain and such. The cottage and some other abodes were set about a green, similar to the village he called home. Some houses had patches of farmland in front of them within the common. He saw people outside doing their daily tasks, such as hanging laundry to dry, going shopping in the market, grabbing kindling for the hearth, or playing games in the fresh air. Most of those he saw were women, but he also saw some other men doing heavier work or sitting outside and smoking pipes.

The knight felt himself relax slightly. The atmosphere of the area reminded him of home, and while he was wary of his situation, it seemed that he was safe, at the very least, for the time being from any harm. Godfrey jumped and paled when he heard a scream, however. Drawing his sword, he ran towards the source of the scream, only to come to the very end of the village, with few people around. There was a building with many women going in and out, carrying bloodstained rags and buckets of water. Another scream cut through the air, prompting Godfrey to rush inside, where he was greeted by the strong smells of herbs and medicine.

Inside, there were many men, women, and children of various ages lying in bed. Some were bandaged from head to toe, others were missing limbs or were just sleeping with sweat on their brows. The women inside were staring at Godfrey, frozen in fear as they glanced at his weapon. Godfrey was focused on the source of the screaming, which had now turned to crying—

a few women were helping a younger woman with her newborn child. The mother held her baby and had them suckle once they were cleaned off and swaddled as she caught her breath and was tended to by the midwives. He was wrong about the reason for the screaming. But as he went to sheath his sword, he saw another woman give a bandaged man a few beds down something to drink from a bowl. Once he finished and laid back, she put the bowl aside and held his hand, placing the other on his head. Godfrey saw the man's hand go limp and fall from her hand.

He strode over and raised the tip of the sword to her chin. "What did you do to him," he asked in horror. "What potion did you give him?!" The woman was frozen in shock. The two were shaking: the witch from fear, and Godfrey from adrenaline and anger. "That is *enough!*" Godfrey turned to see Cyrene shuffling towards them as fast as she could, a hand pressed to her back. "Put that damned thing away! You're in a healing house, for gods' sake!" Godfrey glared at her, but lowered the sword. "If this really *is* such a place, then why has this woman just committed murder?" Cyrene took her walking stick and hit Godfrey in the shins. "Ever heard of it 'being one's time,' you thick-headed tin can?" The knight sheathed his sword and winced, rubbing his legs. "The people here come from all over Berin for treatment from the coven... We are fortunate to be blessed with the knowledge and the natural materials to make medicines and salves for many ailments. Unfortunately, there are still some illnesses that we cannot rid patients of..." The woman Godfrey had confronted pulled the sheets up and over the man's head after crossing his arms over his chest. He felt a pang of guilt as he looked over the rows of beds. Many patients looked just like the man who had just passed...

"There are many people from this coven who have left villages willingly for one reason or another and joined us after they found us. But many were cast out of their homes for being different than the rest." Cyrene stretched a bit, then winced and stopped, returning a hand to her

back. “Many patients with leprosy, for example, come to us because they were abandoned and cast out for their ailment. We give them comfort and treatment as best we are able until it is their time.” She glared up at Godfrey. “I was just finishing up handing out those rations with the young ones when you had to butt in and get into mischief, stubborn bull that you are. You’re lucky we haven’t cast you out yet.” She grabbed his arm in a strong grip and tugged him with her out of the building, the women there going back to their nursing duties.

“Young ones? You mean those children?” Cyrene nodded as she dragged the knight into her cottage, not stopping when he hit his head on the low threshold. Surprisingly, he didn’t feel faint from the added damage. “Of course I do! Those rascals should know better than to come screaming at an old lady, but they mean well and they like to help around the coven. Their mothers should be proud.” Cyrene was looking through a cupboard as she spoke. “They’re off now playing some games at home as their parents do their work. Close that door already and get inside!” Seeing the old woman move to hit him again, Godfrey quickly did as told and went to sit down on a stool by the hearth, seeing a new brew in the cauldron. “Is this more food?”

Cyrene picked some jars from the cupboard before closing it and shuffling over to the hearth, putting the jars down on a table beside her. She began adding some of the jars’ contents to the brew as she stirred. “No...I’ve run out of medicine for my back, so I’m replenishing my stores.” Godfrey looked over her curved back again. “There’s no way for those at the healing house to straighten it for you? None at all?” Cyrene grimaced. “We may be witches, boy, but we are not gods. The best I can do is treat myself for the pain. Otherwise, I’ll have this old thing the rest of my life.” Godfrey nodded solemnly and watched in silence as the old woman finished mixing up the medicine before bottling it all into portions that she put away in a storage room.

She took one bottle of it with her out to the hearth and sat by the fire with a blanket, the whole time muttering and chanting the same spells again.

Now more curious than afraid, Godfrey cleared his throat softly. “Are you saying something special?” Cyrene perked up after taking a swig of the medicine. “Just saying poems and songs that my parents taught me when I was younger. I’m not from Berin, you see. My family traveled here when I was a little girl.” The knight sat back against the wall, staring deep in thought at the hearth’s flames. “You know why I was sent here, don’t you?” Cyrene took a few moments to finish her medicine before she sighed in relief and nodded. “Aye. Your kind has tried to come for us for years. It’s why we have the guardians on the outskirts. They guide those who need our skills to us, and keep away intruders.” Godfrey’s eyes widened. “Those trees with faces...*Those* are the guardians?”

“Quite the scare, eh? They’re very sweet, most of the time. But they aren’t very big fans of the king’s knights. Their bark is supposed to be worse than their bite, but one of them got you by mistake when you tried to run off.” The knight saw that Cyrene looked more relaxed in her position. “Your horse is at the stables for when you’re set to leave.” He nodded. “If you knew why I was here, then why didn’t you cast me out once you wrapped me up?”

Cyrene scoffed. “Because unlike your ‘royal highness,’ Silver Rose accepts all and cares for all, no matter who they are. I know he feeds you and your ilk all sorts of rumors and lies about us, and you all blindly believe without knowing the truth. But having seen that we are not monsters, Sir Knight, what say you? Still think we are nothing more than fodder for your steel?” Godfrey winced and turned away from Cyrene, feeling guilty again. He rubbed the bandages on his head and went to lie down. He put his scabbard aside and laid down, muttering a ‘Thank you’ as he fell asleep.

~ ~ ~

Godfrey stayed in Silver Rose for two weeks to ensure that his injury healed fully. He helped Cyrene with her duties and got to know the other women of the coven, helping out where he could. He started to learn how to make medicines, poultices, and salves at the healing house, and he worked the bellows at the smithy to ensure that the coven had the metal goods it needed to thrive. He played with the children and even witnessed some spellcasting, potion-making, and magical rituals being performed by the witches when necessary. After he was sure his injury was healed enough for him to return home, he knew that he could not complete his quest.

But as he readied his horse for the journey home, he noticed a commotion at the gates. He and Cyrene rushed over once they realized what was happening—at the gates was a mounted man in similar armor to Godfrey, and he had a party of twenty other men with him. Godfrey scowled when he saw who it was, and he drew his sword. “Captain Hugo the Brave.” The captain looked both surprised and amused when he saw Godfrey, but laughed when he saw the women of the coven coming forward in a crowd behind him. “So you survived...But you’ve given in to their sirens’ song, then?” He grinned. “If you think you and the work of these devil women can stop us, you’re mistaken. You failed in your quest. Now it is up to us to finish it.”

Godfrey remembered the knights rushing forward to attack, but the rest was a blur. He had come forward to fight the captain, but he didn’t remember any of his attacks hitting his foe. All kinds of magic was happening around him—elemental attacks of fire, earth, air, and water; potions were thrown; plants sprung from the ground and entangled the knights’ horses; and some knights just completely vanished into thin air. It didn’t take long for the knights to retreat back into the enchanted forest, with no great bloodshed spilt on either side. The gates were closed and the women cheered. “Won’t they keep coming back?” Godfrey asked Cyrene worriedly. For the

first time since they met, the old woman smiled at him. “I think they know what will happen if they try again.”

A celebration was held that night to celebrate the protection of the coven. There was food, drink, and dancing. Fireflies and faerie fire lit the village, and everyone was in good spirits. Godfrey was given proper thanks for his aid, and he enjoyed the celebration as much as everyone else, perhaps even more. As he went to sit down after a dance, he noticed a tall young woman still dancing, her long black hair flowing down her back and swaying with her movements. Cyrene shuffled over to Godfrey. “I see you’ve noticed my daughter.” He blushed. “Is that improper of me?” The old woman chuckled. “Not at all. Unlike some of the other elders, I’m not overly protective of my children.” They watched the woman dance and spin for a while before Cyrene said, “Silver Rose was formed by us old folk. It is good that we have many strong and capable young ones around to take over when our time is up.” Godfrey smiled when Cyrene’s daughter bowed to her partner. He sat up when he heard Cyrene’s words and nodded. “I understand.”

The old witch swiftly grabbed her walking stick and hit Godfrey in the back of the head. “*Ow!*” He winced and rubbed the forming bump. “I’m not talking about *you!* I’m talking about my daughter, Cora! I’d rather drop dead right now than see a stubborn tin can like *you* in charge of this place!” As much as her words (and her walking stick) stung, Godfrey couldn’t help but laugh. Cyrene seemed like a grandmother to him now, and he had to admit that she was right in her own way.

A few months later, Godfrey gathered his things from home and left the service of the king to stay in Silver Rose. He had fallen in love with Cora and now, a married couple, the two were awaiting the birth of their first child. Cyrene had married the two and was looking forward

to meeting her grandchild, though she did tease her son-in-law that the child better not be a stubborn son like himself. As they built their house and prepared for the birth of the child, Godfrey began practicing magic of his own—filling their flower beds with shimmering silver roses for his beloved.

“I Am No Man”: The Importance of Female Archetypes in Fantasy

Since deciding to pursue a career as a writer, I have been naturally drawn towards writing about women more than men. I picture them as strong and courageous, pursuing romantic relationships if they wish and caring for others because it is the right thing to do, not because such behavior is expected from them as women. I write them to show how I want women to be portrayed in popular media—not every woman is solely a mother or a wife, and no woman exists only in relation to a man. Making sure various kinds of characters are portrayed, especially if they are women, is important. While there are certainly more diverse personalities and character arcs for male characters in literature, female characters have not necessarily received the same treatment. While there has been a growing demand for strong female characters in film and literature in recent years to contrast the passive and weak female characters of the past, I feel that there is still not enough representation of diverse female characters. Certain female characters receive backlash from the public for behaving a certain way, whereas male characters who act the exact same ways aren't met with the same outcry. For example, Brie Larson's portrayal of Captain Marvel received widespread criticism after the release of *Captain Marvel* in 2019 for her arrogant and snarky personality, whereas Robert Downey Jr. received no such backlash for playing Tony Stark with a similar personality in the *Iron Man* movies as well as the *Avengers* films for several years.

There is a history of sexist literature that has existed for centuries, with many early stories featuring weak women being subservient to men or monstrous and evil women who only serve to seduce and bring about the downfall of men. An example that comes to mind is Homer's *Odyssey*. In the search for information on his father Odysseus, Telemachus meets with King

Menelaus of Sparta and his wife, Helen. Menelaus tells him stories about his father that move Telemachus to tears, and Helen abruptly asks him and her husband for forgiveness for her affair with Paris, which led to the Trojan War (and Telemachus' lack of a father in his life). Helen going out of her way to apologize for her risque behavior that led to the deaths of men on both sides of the resulting conflict felt sudden and off to me. It seemed to me that Homer was actively vilifying Helen, making her into a seductive woman that forced many men to lose their lives over a moment of lust.

Some modern stories that attempt to feature strong women are written rather poorly, as in the cases of men who write about such women as also being flawless and gorgeous, flouncing about in scenes clearly made to entertain the male mind as they focus on the woman's body in strange and unnecessary descriptions. The portrayal of women being inferior, weak, evil, deceitful, and akin to monsters can be found in all genres, including fantasy. But I have seen many examples of positive portrayals of women in fantasy as well, which inspire my own characters.

I see the fantasy genre as the easiest way not only to tell an entertaining story, but to discuss the deeper concepts and questions that we face in our day-to-day lives, including the matter of representation of women. J.R.R. Tolkien discusses the power of fantasy in these instances in his speech-turned-essay "On Fairy-Stories." In his speech, originally written to argue against his colleagues that dismissed the genre as childish escapism, Tolkien argues that the ancient way of looking at stories and fantasy informed the public on how to respond to fantasy texts (see "On Fairy-Stories"). Tolkien also emphasizes that while adults are capable of tapping into this idea, children slip into this thinking more easily and readily, which is why many people commonly dismiss fantasy and fairytales as for children only (see "On Fairy-Stories"). An aspect

of literature that helps to showcase Tolkien's ideas about fantasy is the presence of archetypes, which have their origin in psychology with Jungian Theory.

Jungian Theory can be used to analyze, discuss, and understand female characters in literature. It is named after Carl Jung, a psychologist who originally studied under Sigmund Freud before developing his independent ideas on psychoanalysis. Jungian Theory is dense and wildly complex, but two main concepts at its core are archetypes and the collective unconscious (Hyde and McGuinness, 59). Jung defined archetypes as reactions to various events in our lives that reveal themselves to us as images that we typically see in dreams. The collective unconscious is where these images come from, as it is a pool of images shared by all of humanity regardless of the time period or location in which people have lived. These terms have since been used in analyses of literature and in this way have come to mean images, settings, and characters that have repeated in stories for centuries and that have specific meanings that are shared across humanity.

Using both Tolkien's understanding of the fantasy genre and Jung's work on archetypes and the collective unconscious that are the basis of archetypal analysis of literature, I have created three fantasy stories of my own (printed before this critical essay) that have both familiar female archetypes and aspects of these archetypes that are changed in some way. In doing this, I aimed to not only add new narratives about women to the ever-growing web of literature in existence, but to discuss various aspects of the female experience and to represent women in a healthy and positive way. Before discussing the various aspects of each story in detail, I will discuss the background research for this thesis below.

Tolkien's Defense of What Was Lost

Tolkien believes we should address fantasy like the ancients did, as doing so allows us to examine deep truths about humanity (see "On Fairy-Stories"). This ancient view of fantasy that Tolkien refers to and believes that we have lost in the modern world is akin to the feeling one gets when completely engrossed in a book, TV show, or movie (though Tolkien was specifically referring to written fantasy fiction in his essay). Despite the fact that the audience is not physically present in the events of the story, they feel immersed in them. They are flooded with adrenaline and the emotional ambience of the scenarios they take in. In this way, imagination and emotion are embodied. They change our physical bodies by activating specific areas of our brains, causing various hormones to be released and different chemical reactions to begin. When we read a good thriller, we get a knot in our stomach as the killer looms over the protagonist. When we read a satisfying happy ending, we smile and laugh as dopamine floods through our systems. When we read a deeply sad conclusion, a lump forms in our throats, and we tear up. These reactions are not just in our heads. They are real. They are powerful. They are embodied. As stated in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, "Fantasy, for Tolkien, was a way of getting closer to the important things of life that the realistic novel never could" (Cambridge..., 69).

These emotional changes within us then drive us to action in our physical world, which in turn has the power to change ourselves. For example, when we read about or watch true stories about personalities like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, or famous trials such as the one involving the Chicago Seven, we reflect on the struggles of others. We are enraged by the injustices they faced and are saddened by the problems they endured. When we leave the theatre or put down the book, we have a fire within us to go out and change what they fought against that may very well

still exist in our society today. In instances such as these, the audience is no longer just the audience, but a key component in the action of the greater world outside the stories they have taken in. Because we are drawn into the world of a story, that world mingles with ours, resulting in us uncovering more of who we are and what our world truly is. The emotions invoked by these stories are what make fantasy and myth an embodied experience.

Ancient storytellers and poets recognized that a good story would evoke this reaction in their listeners. They strove not only to create stories to teach moral lessons, but also to provoke this embodied reaction within the public. They also used their stories as spaces to ask questions about humanity and used the transcendent experience their stories elicited in their listeners to force them to take on the perspective of the main characters. To give some examples of stories that accomplished this, we need not look further than the work of Homer. Both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* tell the story of the Trojan War. The descriptions of battles and characters and the use of eloquent dialogue were meant to sweep listeners into the heat of the moment alongside Odysseus and Achilles. Such stories were meant to give the same rush and emotional response as going into battle would give someone, without listeners having to participate in a war themselves to understand. These stories also forced listeners to see themselves as Odysseus and Achilles. When reading these stories today, just as the ancient Greeks heard them when they were told, we, too, feel the pain of losing a dear comrade as Achilles did. We, too, yearn to return home like Odysseus. And with this deep emotion, we look inward and ask questions. Do we also have a fate we know we cannot escape from? Do we run from it? Or do we face it, no matter how terrible the result? What is home to us? Why have we strayed from our intended route? What is the final push that gets us to return homeward?

Tolkien also addresses escapism in his essay. He sees the argument of fantasy being an escape from real life as frivolous, because it is obvious. Why would anyone want to stay in a depressing and stressful world all the time? Fantasy, he believes, offers a brief escape from this human structured reality that is just as fictional as the stories we escape with (Tolkien, 79). In bringing up the concern of escapism, he used an analogy of a prisoner daydreaming about life outside his prison cell. He knows that his reality is bleak, dark, and depressing, but is it unreasonable for a man in such a position to imagine anything other than his reality? Tolkien uses the prison to represent our day-to-day monotonous, stressful, and depressing lives and even greater bleak world. I think this “prison” is in fact our limited understanding. With stories, I believe we can escape this basic view. As we have already seen with the examples of the work of Homer, stories force us to see through the eyes of the main character. We may not have experience in what they are going through, but we can get a sense of such things through them. This, in turn, makes our understanding of the world larger because we have not only our own experiences, but a taste of the experiences of others.

Jung: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious

Jung’s ideas of the archetype and collective unconscious have been used in critical analyses of literature for years to showcase different meanings in various works. As Hyde and McGuinness explain in their work, *Introducing Jung: A Graphic Guide*, in psychology, archetypes are a part of how we react to various scenarios in our lives (59). We can never know our archetypes themselves due to them being unconscious, but they become known to us through projections of images that we see in our consciousness (Hyde and McGuinness, 60). Symbols that Jung’s patients saw in their dreams were interpreted to mean various things. This is how

Jung's psychoanalysis process worked, as Hyde and McGuinness explain (65). We apply the concept of archetypes to works of literature often in high school and college English classes. Analyzing certain recurring characters, settings, or symbols leads to multiple meanings for a piece of literature. For example, a story that involves fire could either reflect upon the destruction and power of flame or the light, warmth, and healing it provides. It could also reflect upon the passion and creativity of humankind.

Where these images and their meanings came from, according to Jung, is the collective unconscious. This is a pool of images and symbols that is shared by all of humanity, regardless of the time period or place they lived. Jung believed that people who saw things they never personally witnessed or experienced in dreams saw such things due to the existence of the collective unconscious, which was tapped into when they dreamt (Hyde and McGuinness, 59). This explains why certain archetypes exist in stories from cultures that might not experience specific things often, if at all. We now turn to how fantasy and archetypes can be used to express how we view women and the female experience in our own world.

Fantasy, Archetypes, and Women

There exist many different archetypes for certain types of characters in literature, and many of them focus on women. For example, there is the enchantress, a woman who usually has supernatural powers; the mistress or seducer, who tempts the main character, usually a man, into being unfaithful; the caregiver, a mother or nanny figure; and hundreds of others. Character archetypes such as these show up in every story known to humankind, and due to their prevalence and their constant reuse, I believe we view women based on these frames. And because we take in these archetypes of women from various media as we grow up, and because

we have our own experiences with women in our lives (as well as personal experiences, if we are women ourselves), we define a woman as such. This can be positive or negative, depending on the experiences and archetypes we take in.

In turn, we then take this definition of a woman that we have made and apply it to the women we interact with in real life. For example, if a man sees women in a negative light, believing that they only exist to manipulate, use, and trick men, then he might not treat the women in his life with respect. If he sees women in a positive light, seeing them as kind caregivers and protectors, then he would be more likely to treat women in his life with reverence. However, even this positive look has a negative aspect as well: “ideal women” are put on pedestals as examples, but such examples are impossible to live up to. Individuals of various genders view archetypes differently, however. Women might look at a “negative archetype”—the enchantress, for example—and see it as positive: instead of seeing a woman that is evil and out to harm men, they might see a woman that finally has power and respect like men have had for millennia. In identifying female archetypes within the fantasy genre and analyzing their roles in the story as well as the characters’ portrayals of women, we can have a deeper understanding of the female experience and what it means to be a woman.

In undergoing the research process for this thesis, I came across Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés’s work, *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. I was surprised to find that Estés was a Jungian psychologist who was using the medium of stories to channel a female archetype she called “Wild Woman.” She connects this archetype with Jung’s ideas of the Self and the ego—in other words, this Wild Woman is how women truly are, and like other archetypes they are buried deep within the female psyche. She

argues that knowing this deep part of the soul is how women can lead happier, healthier, and more fulfilling lives:

“Wild Woman is the health of all women. Without her, women’s psychology makes no sense. This wilderwoman is the prototypical woman ... no matter what culture, no matter what era, no matter what politic, she does not change. Her cycles change, her symbolic representations change, but in essence, *she* does not. She is what she is and she is whole” (Estés, 8-9).

In other words, with this archetype, women can be who they fully are and gain enjoyment from various aspects of their lives, without feeling beat down by various harsh aspects of modern day society. Estés believes that this archetype is invaluable to having a “true” life, and women’s relationship with Wild Woman must be sustained to ensure that life: “Without us, Wild Woman dies. Without Wild Woman, we die. Para vida, for true life, both must live” (Estés, 22).

But how does one ensure the connection to this vital archetype? Like Tolkien, Estés argues that stories are the key. In her work, Estés presents folktales, fairytales, and other such stories from various cultures that bear the essence of Wild Woman, then discusses aspects of them to try and get to the heart of who and what Wild Woman is and how women can reach and tap into her. As she states, “story is far older than the art and science of psychology and will always be the elder in the equation no matter how much time passes” (Estés, 20). In fact, in discussing her process with patients, Estés mentions how stories and art can add to one’s soul, thus starting a great healing process: “The craft of questions, the craft of stories, the craft of the hands—all these are the making of something, and that something is soul. Anytime we feed soul, it guarantees increase” (Estés, 14). This, to me, sounds like the above-mentioned embodied experiences that fantasy gives us, as Estés goes on to discuss how stories helping to heal the soul help a patient process trauma and various other emotional scars and baggage. After all, according to both Estés and Tolkien, “stories are medicine.” (Estés, 15).

After taking in all this research and seeing both Tolkien and Jung's work synthesized into Estés's work, I move on to the next part of my thesis, which is very similar to Estés's project: deconstructions of the fantasy short stories I have written with various female archetypes. In each deconstruction, I discuss the archetypes and other relevant details to explore what it means to be a woman and to understand and embody the female experience in our world.

A Deconstruction of "Maternal Instincts"

The first story I am going to discuss aspects of is "Maternal Instincts," set in Ancient Greece. Each story is set in a rough "time period" that I have read fantasy stories in, with this one's setting echoing the settings of the works of Homer, Aesop, Hesiod, and many others. The main archetypes I played with in this story are female monsters found commonly in Greek myth (in this specific instance, gorgons) and the mother archetype, though "female monsters" are less of an archetype and more of a literary trope in this instance. I still wanted to utilize and explore them because they were used to depict horrific, ugly, and terrifying creatures that all utilized in some way the appearance of women.

In this story, I wanted to approach the idea of female monsters from their perspective. Instead of there only being the famous Medusa and her sisters, what if gorgons were a part of an entire other race of people that also lived alongside humans in Ancient Greece? They wouldn't necessarily be creatures whose sole goal in life is to turn humans to stone—they would have their own city-states, their own culture and customs. Though due to their proximity to humans, I imagined that they would take on many ideas that humans had, adding their ways of creating art, discussing politics, etc, to their culture. In this story, we see the other side of the coin, and it's very revealing—humans themselves are shown to be just as monstrous, if not more, than the

gorgons and naga that make up the ophilisk race, due to their barbaric treatment of those with disabilities and their careless disregard for children too weak or too different from the majority population.

To help further explore this point and to show the “humanity” of the gorgon characters that I focus on in this story, I used the mother archetype and focused largely on a gorgon mother’s interactions with her adopted human son. I decided to have her be the typical mother figure in a story and then later show the boy’s birth mother as a contrast. The boy’s birth mother is the opposite of the gorgon mother—she abandoned her child because of his disability instead of loving him unconditionally. She is even shown with a baby in a sling, showing that she essentially abandoned her child when he was not what she wanted and kept the child that she seemingly deemed “worthy” of her love and affection. However, there is more to her character than this malice.

Personally, the most powerful scene of this story to me is the confrontation of the two mothers, each one clutching her child to herself. Each is terrified that the other will bring harm to not only them, but to the child they so love and want to protect. However, neither harms the other. In fact, in a twist, it is indirectly revealed that the human woman is Dazeus’s birth mother, based on her recognition of him after seeing his face and one leg. Dazeus and his gorgon mother, Kana, recognize this as well when they realize her face is familiar and they hear her say, “Take care of him.” I wanted to include this line and the detail about the gift baskets that she leaves for him around his birthday to add more depth to her character, despite us only seeing her for a few moments. While the reader may be led to believe that she’s a cruel-hearted woman who treats even her own flesh and blood with disdain if they aren’t “perfect” or “normal,” this phrase and the gift baskets show that she does recognize her own son and perhaps feels remorseful for her

past action of abandoning him. Does she pity him? Is she doing this for forgiveness? Was she forced to give up her child despite not wanting to, or did she do so herself freely? These questions are left to reader speculation. But I wanted to show that while she may not be an “ideal” mother like Kana is portrayed to be, she at least has a moment where she tries to make it up to her child and recognizes that what ended up happening to him was best for everyone. She bids the other mother farewell with her soft phrase and the two share a mutual understanding that they did what they had to for their children—the mark of a true mother.

A Deconstruction of “The Queen and the Dragon”

The second story I am going to discuss aspects of is “The Queen and the Dragon,” set in a fictional Medieval kingdom. The main archetype I focused on in this story is the princess figure, or in this case, the queen. In many Medieval texts, the female ruler is typically very passive, is hidden away from the rest of the world, or only exists to be rescued by a male character, such as a knight. In this story, the opposite is true and the female ruler is very active in her role. I wanted to show that women are just as capable of being strong leaders as men, using Queen Evelyn as a literary example. There have been strong women rulers and government officials in the past and present, and it is time we see more of that in fiction.

In terms of patterns within the plot, the story is organized according to Joseph Campbell’s “Hero’s Journey” organization. I decided to follow this organization for the story because many stories from this period follow it as well and the narrative seemed to fit it best. Instead of the end goal of the quest being to slaughter the dragon, I wanted to show that being a hero sometimes means knowing when to show mercy and kindness. The queen holds back from killing the dragon and finds a new solution to the problem at hand rather than using brute

strength to “win.” To me, this moment of vulnerability shows another level to what we think of when we think of strength, and I believe that *this* strength, this emotional connection that Evelyn has with her husband-turned-dragon, is a trait that women more commonly express.

A male character being a monster in some way that is “tamed” or “helped” by a gentle female character is prevalent in many stories (Ex. Beauty and the Beast, The Prince Lindwyrn, etc). I wanted to include this aspect to the story to show that besides being strong and powerful, the queen is gentle and caring. Even in the face of a dangerous situation, she is able to tame the dragon and bring him home. Women are just as capable as men to have both physical strength and emotional strength. Good rulers during the Medieval era—at least in the West—were praised for balancing their actions within these two realms, more or less (for example, knowing when to go to war and when to utilize diplomacy and exert proper control). I wanted to use the “king-dragon” character to push this idea alongside the tweaking of the typical princess/queen archetype.

I included the Queen Mother as a mentor figure to show the solidarity of mothers and mothers-in-law to their daughters and daughters-in-law. Older women help younger women grow and become stronger, but they cannot do this for them. They can only show them the way and give them the tools they need to help them thrive. They must carve their own paths to success.

A Deconstruction of “Of Witches, Knights, and Silver Rose”

The final story I’m going to discuss is “Of Witches, Knights, and Silver Rose,” which is a “fairytale” setting. I focused on the witch or old hag archetype. Witches are typically old, evil, and seemingly out to hex and curse those that trouble them with their magic. I wanted to play

with that idea here while also looking into a more “historically accurate” version of what “witches” were really like. In the story, Godfrey the Good assumes that he sees what he’s been told witches do—make potions, say magic spells, scare and harm children, curse others, and even hurt and kill people. However, every instance he witnesses has a reasonable explanation—the potion he thinks he sees is a stew that the old witch Cyrene gives out to the sick; the children he thinks Cyrene has harmed were just scolded for yelling for her and were off playing somewhere else; the spells he thought Cyrene was casting was her saying poems in another language; the screams he thought he heard from those cursed by the witches were actually the screams of women in childbirth being tended to in the healing house; and the man he thought was killed by the witch with a potion was just the man dying after dealing with a terrible illness. Things aren’t what they originally seem, and after experiencing life at the coven, Godfrey realizes that what he was originally told about witches was wrong.

The knight goes on this journey with biases and a worldview put upon him by society. He learns to grow and form his own opinions about the women of the coven after living with them and learning what their lifestyles are like. Like Godfrey, there are many men around the world who view women in a specific—often negative—way. In hearing their stories and learning what they are truly like in their day to day lives, these men can have a better understanding of the women they so harshly judge and have better lasting relationships with women.

Historically speaking, some women who were accused of “witchcraft” were practicing early forms of medicine and were healers. I wanted to show off this idea in my story by showcasing the witches taking care of others in the healing house scene. Women have always been very involved in helping other women through childbirth by being midwives, so I wanted to include that aspect as well. In the case of witchcraft scares, women that were accused of such a

practice were also often those that didn't conform to or fit into society in one way or another. Accusing them of witchcraft got rid of those that others didn't like or didn't see as "fitting in." I had the idea of the coven being very inclusive and including others that didn't fit in or didn't want to be a part of a society that rejected others in it as well. These women know what it is like to not have a home, so they made one for themselves and others who want to join them. Godfrey realized that he wanted to be a part of this community after he recognized his faults, and he becomes the father to one of the future generations of the coven.

Women in Fantasy Going Forwards

To conclude this critical analysis essay, I want to discuss what women in fantasy will be like going forward. We have already come a long way from the days of the damsel in distress, the seductress, and the monstrous women of the past, though there is still much work to be done. As I look to my future novelist endeavors and begin to dive into various online writing spheres on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, I have noticed more women of color publishing fantasy stories that feature a woman of color as the protagonist and deal with their culture and various aspects of said culture, both positive and negative. I believe that more and more women of color will come forward and add to existing fantasy works as representation becomes the norm.

Similarly to women of color coming forward to tell their stories within the fantasy genre, more and more women who identify as members of the LGBTQA+ community are publishing their works, and LGBTQA+ women are also protagonists alongside a growing number of LGBTQA+ male protagonists. With our growing knowledge of gender's wide spectrum and the

growing acceptance of LGBTQA+ characters, themes, plotlines, etc in literature, I also believe that fantasy will allow us to further question what being a woman really means and entails.

A final change that I believe will occur is the mixing of the “strong independent woman” character with the “soft feminine woman” character. Reacting to the passive and dependent women characters of the past, modern media worked to create the opposite end of the spectrum—a woman that fights her own battles, is highly intelligent, and doesn’t rely on a man to do what needs to be done. While this is certainly an admirable character, I have seen readers and writers alike begin to dissect this idea. Some wondered why being feminine and liking more traditionally feminine things were seen as “lesser” according to these women. Others noted that these characters simply had traditionally “masculine” traits superimposed onto a woman.

With this awareness rising, I believe that we will see more “balanced” female characters in fantasy. Those that don’t necessarily mind marriage prospects or wearing dresses or makeup and those that are emotionally vulnerable, gentle, and caring mixed with those that are ready to stand their ground as ruler or to ride into battle and fight if the occasion called for it. After all, women are human, and humans are multi-faceted. It’s about time that they’re written that way.

Bibliography

- Adeyemi, Tomi. *Children of Blood and Bone*. Henry Holt and Company, 2018.
- Alexander, Lloyd. "The Book of Three." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 795-874.
- De Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie LePrince. "Beauty and the Beast." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 199–208.
- De La Mare, Walter. "Little Red Riding-Hood." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 351-355.
- Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. "Introduction." *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Ballantine Books, 1995, pp. 1-22.
- Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. "Afterword." *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Ballantine Books, 1995, pp. 504-511.
- Foster, Thomas C. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines*. Harper Perennial, 2017.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Grimm Wilhelm. "Little Red Cap." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 345-347.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Grimm Wilhelm. "Hansel and Gretel." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 208-214.

- Hyde, Maggie, and McGuinness, Michael. *Introducing Jung: A Graphic Guide*. Icon Books, Duxford, Cambridge, 1999.
- James, Edward, and Farah Mendlesohn, editors. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 1-4.
- James, Edward. "Tolkien, Lewis, and the Explosion of Genre Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2014, pp. 62–77.
- James, Edward, and Nnedi Okorafor. "Writers of Colour." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2014, pp. 179–188.
- Jemisin, N. K. *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms*. Orbit, 2010.
- Lacapa, Michael. "Antelope Woman: An Apache Folktale." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 336-338
- LeGuin, Ursula K., et al. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Ace, 2019.
- Lester, Julius. "Jack and the Devil's Daughter." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 317-324..
- MacDonald, George. "The Light Princess." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 221-247.
- MacKee, Robert. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*. ItBooks, 2010.

- Marelle, Charles. "The True History of Little Golden-hood." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 348-350.
- Morgenstern, Erin. *The Night Circus*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012.
- Munsch, Robert. "The Paper Bag Princess." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 327-329
- Perrault, Charles. "Little Red Riding Hood." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 342-344.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. "'On Fairy-Stories.'" *The Tolkien Reader*, by J. R. R. Tolkien, Ballantine, New York, NY, 1966, pp. 33-90.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Yolen, Jane. "The Lady and the Merman." *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The Traditions in English*, edited by Jack Zipes et al., W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2005, pp. 324-327.