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Fantasy: A Journey Through The Genre

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Abstract

This project looks at the creation of a fantasy world and the fantasy genre in films, and analyses it as a whole. The fantasy genre is often seen as a means of escapism and is many times overlooked in terms of storytelling. In this project, I shall delve into the identifiable tropes and clichés that are prevalent in the fantasy quest genre, in particular, the Hero's Journey. I show my own building of a fantasy world and the problems that I faced in writing a fantasy film script, and my attempt to balance the use of the tropes and find new ways of writing in the genre. The project also covers some of the limitations in available literature on the fantasy genre in regards to a female protagonist.

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Synopsis

Jhanki, a 16-year-old in Singapore, is an artist whose overbearing parents have forbidden from studying her passion. When her father finds out that she has secretly still been taking art lessons, he destroys her work in his fury. Jhanki only manages to save one of her sketchbooks before fleeing in terror to her safe haven, the community center. There, Jhanki encounters the strange but friendly librarian being attacked by a group of oddly dressed men. While attempting to help Patrick out of his situation, Jhanki gets pushed through a portal in the pool, and emerges in a well.

A terrified Jhanki is taken in front of a Council, realizing but not quite believing that she has wound up in another world. Her fear keeps her from speaking up, even as she learns a little about the world and the drought it is suffering, and she is sentenced to the dungeon. However, the Crown Princess Amita overhears her uncle Thomas, the Regent, give orders to have Jhanki killed, and sneaks off to free the other girl in order to get answers as to Thomas' actions and Jhanki's appearance.

The two girls' plan to escape back to Jhanki's world is halted when they see that the well has been destroyed. They narrowly escape the castle and the city after remembering that there are stories of a second well. The girls approach a village where Jhanki takes the lead when she realizes that the villagers are not happy to see Amita. She pretends to have kidnapped the Princess and asks for help. However, the villagers do not trust her, and eventually plot to turn the girls in to the soldiers approaching. Jhanki manages to talk them into letting her and Amita leave, but they still direct her towards an eerie forest that is rumoured to turn people mad.

Having no choice, the girls enter the forest and get separated. They hallucinate their “normal” lives – Jhanki sees her father berating her while Amita sees Thomas in a quiet moment between family. Jhanki breaks out of her hallucination by fleeing her father, again, and due to her fear of the forest, breaks Amita out of her hallucination by slapping her. They exit the forest, arguing, and do not notice the soldiers that are behind them until it is almost too late. They run from the soldiers, but do not get far. Jhanki does something foolish and brave – she tackles a soldier on a horse – and the girls manage to escape the soldiers.

They follow the path Jhanki sketches from stories she heard from Patrick and reach the First Village, where the villagers are hostile and rough. Still, the girls manage to talk the villagers into showing them the pathway to the second well. There is a chasm for them to cross, and the only way they can is by revealing truths they have refused to even admit to themselves. Their secrets almost cost their faith in each other, but they persevere and reach the other side of the chasm just as soldiers enter the cavern. The girls attempt to fight back and flee, but are knocked unconscious.

When they wake up, they have been tied together and are surrounded. Thomas attempts to sway Amita back to his side, but fails. He then reveals he has Patrick prisoner, but this only motivates the girls to try harder to escape. They escape their bonds and retrieve weapons, and manage to hold themselves away from harm as Amita reverses the drought Thomas started. The tides turn on Thomas, and he is captured, though Patrick is killed.

Jhanki chooses to go back home and face her parents. She confronts her father, and blatantly tells him that she is not giving up her art to follow his set path for her. Her mother tentatively and silently supports her as she breaks free of the constraints.

Fantasy As A Genre

Fantasy is a term used by most to describe something created from one's imagination, something that does not exist in the world as we know it. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word 'fantasy' as "a creation of the imaginative faculty whether expressed or merely conceived" and "imaginative fiction featuring especially strange settings and grotesque characters". (n.d.)

Fantasy fiction follows certain patterns in most medium – a secondary world; magical elements, or magic in and of itself; and an appeal to a pastoral idea, or pseudo-medieval settings. (TVTropes, n.d.) However, clear-cut definitions of the fantasy genre are no longer applicable as the lines between the many different genres blur. Many fantasy pieces include technological advances and gothic elements, making the distinction between the usual science fiction and horror fares unclear from the fantastical.

The medium of film to tell a piece of fantasy fiction allows one to create a visual and physical representation of the fantastical through the use of editing and special effects. (Brenner, 2003) This is especially true in recent times, as technology has advanced to the extent that the physical representations of the story look as real as one's own surroundings. While the "private experience" in prose narratives "may allow room for the imagination", "film creates the fantasies of our imagination". (Brenner, 2003)

Unlike most genres, fantasy films mostly exist outside the realm of truth, either in setting or in situation, or in both. They "transcend the bounds of human possibility and physical laws". There is a sense and element of myth and magic, wonder and the extraordinary in fantasy films, and they tend to serve as a form of escapism for viewers. (Dirks, n.d.)

Creating a fantasy film begins with creating a character and giving them a problem or challenge to overcome – the hero (or heroine, as it were) must go through some experience that changes and challenges them before the end of the film. They may undertake a journey of some sort that ends with a reward, be it monetary or spiritual. In many fantasy films, there are creatures other than humans – elves, gnomes, dwarves – that add to the idea that the world is not the viewer's. Every element is designed such that the viewer is detached from their world and placed into another and taken on a journey with the hero or heroine.

The Fantasy Quest

Many fantasy films revolve around the protagonist undertaking a quest in what is perhaps the “oldest and hardest, and most popular of all literary genres”. (Auden, 1962) So many of the fairytales we have grown up listening to follow the six essential elements of a quest story:

- 1) A precious object and/or person is to be found and possessed or married.
- 2) The protagonist undertakes a long journey to find it, for the seekers do not originally know its whereabouts.
- 3) A hero. The precious object cannot be found by just anybody, but only by the one person who possesses the right qualities of breeding or character.
- 4) A test, or a series of tests by which the unworthy are screened out and the hero revealed.
- 5) The guardians of the object who must be overcome before it can be won. They may simply be a further test of the hero's worthiness, or they may be malignant in themselves.
- 6) The helpers, who, with their knowledge and magical powers, assist the hero, and without whom the hero would never succeed. They may appear in human or in animal form.

(Auden, 1962)

These elements can be found in *The Wizard Of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, wherein Dorothy sets out to see the Wizard and seek his help in getting home – the first and

second elements; Dorothy is joined by the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion, and her character is shown to be good and kind – the third element; they are confronted by a series of problems, among them the Wicked Witch of the West and her minions – the fourth element; the Wizard, Dorothy's way home, is proven to be powerless in helping her, further testing her character – the fifth element; and finally, Glinda the Good, who guides Dorothy from the beginning manages to send Dorothy home – the sixth and final element.

Further examples of these elements can be seen in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, whereby Frodo sets out to destroy the One Ring with a group of people and encounters much trouble along the way. *The Hobbit* is a similar journey where Bilbo sets out with a company of dwarves to help them reclaim their home. Both examples were originally written by J.R.R. Tolkien and made into films by Peter Jackson in recent years. *Shrek* is another example of this genre, where Shrek sets out to rescue Princess Fiona and reclaim his swamp.

In the simplest of terms, a fantasy quest story is about a hero embarking on a journey to achieve a goal. (Skwirk, n.d.) In writing a quest story, one must take the protagonist and disrupt their seemingly peaceful lives and set them off on a journey to reclaim that life. Ultimately, at the end of the journey the protagonist is changed in fundamental ways – Shrek falls in love and becomes a more open person; Bilbo becomes a bit of a recluse and an odd hobbit according to his neighbours.

Similarly, in my project, I take my protagonist Jhanki out of her rather controlled life and send her to another world whereby she must come out of her shell

and fight her fears in order to survive. In doing so, not only does she help herself, but also her companion, the Crown Princess Amita, and the people of the land she has found herself in, even if that is not her intention initially. The completion of the quest is not just for the good of the protagonist, then, but for the common and greater good – in this case, by helping the other, the protagonist helps all the people of the world. (Auden, 1962) Frodo too sets out to destroy the Ring to save all of Middle Earth from Sauron.

There are two types of quest heroes – the first being the obvious, the one who resembles a hero, his worth and bravery is recognizable by all. Examples of the first would be the Prince in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, who sets out to rescue the Princess from her eternal sleep. The second is the hero whose worth is shown when his “manifest betters” fail and he steps up. Many times he owes his success not to himself, but to his helpers – Shrek's success in part goes to Donkey, without whose help he would never have gotten his swamp back and gotten the girl. (Auden, 1962)

There are subtypes of the quest genre – namely the Detective story, where the goal is the answer to a question; the Adventure story, where the journey and the goal are identical because the quest is for more adventures; *Moby Dick*, here the object and the malevolent guardian are combined and the objective is not possession but destruction; and lastly, the Kafka novels in which the hero fails to reach his or her goal. (Auden, 1962)

In many quest stories, the hero undertakes the journey alone, away from the people he or she cares about, or travels with people he or she may not know well or be

comfortable with. In this project, the protagonist is not the actual undertaker of the quest. Instead, she is quite literally pushed into a situation that forces her to undertake the quest. The quest can be said to have been originated by the mentor figure Patrick, a presence felt throughout the story but seen only at the beginning and the end. Jhanki sets out on her journey with the Princess in order to find a way home, and for the Princess to find answers pertaining to her father's disappearance. Traveling together involves the girls figuring out how to get along in order to reach their desired outcome. In this case, the protagonist is not the hero in the typical sense. Neither is the princess. (Pearson, 1991)

The Heroine's Journey

Most stories follow what is deemed as the traditional Hero's Journey – the One True Story type, or the monomyth, as defined by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1949). The book is an analysis on mythology and fiction and argues that almost all stories are mapped out almost perfectly to one narrative pattern. The male protagonist is called upon to act in a secondary world, usually of strange powers and events, whereupon he usually receives some supernatural aid, often in the form of a magical advisor or mentor, in order to face some trials and tests. Near the end, the hero is gifted with a “boon”, which is the goal of the quest, usually what the hero sets out on the quest to achieve. Says Campbell (1949):

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.” (Campbell, p.23, 1949)

George Lucas has stated that the structure of *Star Wars* has been influenced in large part by Campbell’s work - “it came to me that there really was no modern use of mythology...so that's when I started doing more strenuous research on fairy tales, folklore and mythology, and I started reading Joe's books. Before that I hadn't read any of Joe's books.... It was very eerie because in reading *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* I began to realize that my first draft of *Star Wars* was following classical motifs.” (Larsen and Larsen, 2002, p. 541)

However, on a global level, mythology and fiction are rife with other narrative patterns, amongst them the feminine, or heroine’s, journey. In Victoria Lynn Schmidt’s *45 Master Characters* (2001), she describes the heroine’s journey thusly:

“The feminine journey is a journey in which the hero gathers the courage to face death and endure the transformation toward being reborn as a complete being in charge of her own life.

Her journey starts by questioning authority, then gaining the courage to stand up for herself, and finally embodying the willingness to go it alone and face her own symbolic death.” (p. 199)

Where in the Hero's Journey the protagonist often rejects inner exploration in favour of external – “His journey ends with questioning authority and his role in society, and by finding his authentic self.” (Campbell) – the feminine journey is largely one of self-reflection throughout the external journey. Despite the title, the feminine journey is gender neutral. The protagonist can be either male or female, and the story will remain the same, though most often, as in the case of this project, the protagonist is female.

Schmidt outlines the stages of the Heroine's Journey in her book in nine stages divided into three acts – Act 1, The Illusion of a Perfect World; the Betrayal or Realization; the Awakening or Preparing for the Journey; Act 2, the Descent or Passing through the Gates of Judgement; the Eye of the Storm; Death or where All is Lost; Act 3, Support; Rebirth or the Moment of Truth; and finally, Full Circle or the Return to a Perfect World.

Blogger Flutie writes about the Heroine's Journey in regards to recent media, breaking down the stories into the nine stages of the three arcs in her posts on Tumblr.com. She looks at Disney's *Tangled* and *Dragon Age 2* in regards to her analysis. I have looked at her views on *Tangled* and added my own analysis on other films and television programmes of recent years, as well as how this structure mirrors my own project.

Act 1

In *Tangled*, the story opens in the ‘perfect world’, whereupon Rapunzel lives in her tower, safe and shielded from the outside world. She is kept from the uncertainty of life and risks, and essentially, from her own personal growth as well. However, it can be said that in most cases, as in Rapunzel’s, the protagonist knows that this bubble they live in is not as perfect as it first looks. This might result in a state of denial about their life, or in some cases, a helpless sort of depression due to the inability to cause any change in their life.

Rapunzel wants to leave her tower to see more, knowing there is life outside her little world, but is under the overwhelming control of the woman she believes is her mother. In order to cope, she succumbs to the emotional manipulation of Mother Gothel – “Mother Knows Best” – and tries to convince herself that freedom is not what it seems.

Similarly, in the SyFy channel’s *Alice*, the heroine lives a normal enough life, seemingly fulfilled and content with her work and her relationships. She is not sheltered from the harsh realities of life, but rather tries to ignore them, building walls around her heart, resulting in an inability to let go of her father’s disappearance and a phobia of commitment with men. While her mother tries to convince her to let go of the past and move on to the future, she is unable or unwilling to do so, content to live in her bubble of familiarity in her routine.

In *The Well*, Jhanki is unwilling to push the boundaries of her life, and has convinced herself that she is content with the way her parents control her actions. Her willful ignorance stems from her fear of her father’s disapproval and anger at any

perceived disobedience. Her one act of rebellion is to secretly continue to take art classes, but this 'perfect world' is shattered when her father finds out and not just forbids her to continue with her art, but burns her artwork in front of her.

Which leads to the painful realization when something, usually out of the protagonist's control, shatters their illusion and shows them in no uncertain terms that their 'perfect world' is not that perfect. She is pushed into a situation whereby she has to decide if she wants to go on and "actively face her fears" or stay in her bubble and become "a passive victim". (Schmidt) This is where the protagonist comes to the hurtful conclusion that their coping mechanisms are not working and are only harming her. This is where they must choose to change. The actual changes come later, but this is where the active choice in their next step comes in. In this project, it is Jhanki managing to save one sketchbook before fleeing from the house and her father's anger.

For Rapunzel, this happens when Flynn steals into her tower and Rapunzel brains him with her frying pan, showing her that despite her mother's insistence, she is apparently able to take care of herself. Another of Gothel's manipulations is revealed when Rapunzel sees for herself that Flynn's teeth are not fangs like she has been warned, but just like her own. This leads to a part of her wondering if anything she has been told is true, and results in her taking matters into her own hand and forcing Flynn's hand in helping her leave her tower.

For Alice, her boyfriend's proposal and her rejection is as per normal in her life due to her commitment-phobia. However, he slips the ring into her pocket, and

she follows behind him to return it, and subsequently witnesses him being taken against his will. This results in her finally gathering the will to fight against her usual recitence to get him back, and she follows him through the Looking Glass, a literal representation of her taking the first step to change her nature and make a commitment in her relationship.

These steps to actively make the change, in these cases a literal step out of their comfort zone and into a whole new playing field, is the so-called awakening of the protagonist. In many cases, there are people who would oppose these changes, telling the protagonist that they are unable to make these changes and that they should not, in fact, even attempt them, as achieving their goal would be too difficult or too painful. Before this step, sometimes, the protagonist may go through a period of “why me?” that is passive and often indulgent in their unwillingness to break away from their bubble. However, by the time they have made their choices and are taking the step, they have flipped around to be unwilling to remain in their little world, knowing now that it is limited and limiting.

Act 2

And therein leads to the second arc of the story, and the descent, or the judgment where the protagonist must face the facts that things actually need to change and that they need to make those changes in order for them to have any effect. The only way to make these changes are for the protagonist to be metaphorically stripped bare and come into their own inner strength to confront fears and the obstacles that they face. They are not as lethal as these may seem though. They are dangerous

enough that the protagonist must give up their illusion of control and learn to trust their instincts. This stage can often be a long one, taking place throughout the second arc of the story, and sometimes even extending into the third act.

In this project, Jhanki learns this when she is sent to another world to keep from being immediately killed by Patrick's attackers, only to find herself in even more danger. She must dig deep into herself to find a way to help the Princess find the answers she seeks, and in turn help herself. Instead of finding herself wanting, she finds that she is stronger than even she thought.

Rapunzel faces her fear of strangers in the Snuggly Duckling, taking control of the situation herself despite her fear once she realizes that Flynn, her 'protector', is all but useless against the ruffians. This causes her not just to view him in a different light, but see herself in a new and positive light as well.

Once she is in Wonderland, Alice has to face literal obstacles in the form of capture, where upon she uses her ingenuity to escape, and then has to overcome her mistrust of strangers and accept the help of one offering it to her. This results in her having to put her life and her boyfriend's life in another's hand, taking control away from her.

The protagonist thus comes to realize that they are not half-bad when faced with adversary. They are stronger, better, smarter than they think, than they have been told they are. But of course, nothing is ever easy. Maybe they get cocky and take a misstep. Perhaps they let supporting characters convince them that things are over

before they truly are. Whatever the case, they let their guard down – and get hurt all the worse for it.

Jhanki steps up to take charge of the situation when she and Amita reach a village where it is evident that the Princess is welcome. However, Amita chooses not to see Jhanki as helpful, and instead finds every excuse to belittle Jhanki's actions. Even Jhanki breaking the other woman out of a hallucination is not something that Amita appreciates at first.

A touching scene between Rapunzel and Flynn as they escape from the soldiers and get trapped in an underwater cave has Rapunzel realizing that she does not need Flynn as a protector or guidance, and has her coming to see him as a friend instead of merely support. Alice and Hatter have a similarly touching scene where Alice begins to see Hatter in a different light – less of a criminal and more of a man making the best he can in a horrible situation. She begins to realize that it is okay for her to let people in, and sometimes they can surprise you in a good way.

These realisations are often repeated as often as necessary until the protagonist has dealt with all their fears and obstacles. It is a cleansing of the protagonist's soul, and allows them to learn to trust themselves and reevaluate what matters the most. Rather than being the lowest point, it is an important step to eventual enlightenment and self-actualisation.

Rapunzel goes through these realisations three times, as the film is a short one. First, in the tavern Snuggly Duckling, then in the fight scene with the soldiers and in

the passageway under the Snuggly Duckling, and finally, in the cave, where they think all is lost and so Flynn reveals his biggest secret – that his name is Eugene. This gives Rapunzel the courage to reveal her biggest secret to him, and ultimately saves their lives. Flynn does not save the day here but rather acts as the support for Rapunzel to use the courage she did not she had to bring them salvation.

Alice goes through similar realisations with Hatter whereupon Hatter shows her that there is more to him than meets the eye, allowing her to open up about her own past. The fact that he comes back for her when she is captured allows her to fight back and helps them both to escape, building on a trust that she finally lets herself give him. The woman who was unable to let anyone see the vulnerable parts of her lets this man that she has known for barely a few days know the abandonment she fears from people.

All is lost though, when the protagonist is faced with the villain once again in the next sequence. The protagonist is caught off guard, having let their defences down, and they believe that there is nothing they can do to stop the destruction they face. They have failed at their mission, and they accept this failure. In most movies following this structure, this occurs not at the climax or end of the story, but in the middle.

Rapunzel admits defeat when she thinks Flynn has deceived her and sets back to her tower with Mother Gothel, broken-hearted. Even knowing that her world will never be as perfect as her initial assessment, she is humiliated and feeling stupid, and so heads back with her tail tucked between her legs.

Alice finds out that the boyfriend she chased after into Wonderland is the son of the Queen of Hearts, and came looking for her specifically because her father is the scientist behind the Queen's evil scheme and he hoped she would be able to break him out of his brainwashing. Alice's faith and steps into letting Jack in backfire on her, breaking her heart on two levels – showing her that her love for her father is not enough to break him free of the control he is under, and that her feelings for Jack were a way for him to manipulate her into helping him. The fact that Jack grew to care about her genuinely is a moot point, because he proves her right in not trusting anyone and keeping people at an arms' length.

In my project, Jhanki once again flees from her father's anger in her hallucination. Despite her taking the lead in the village prior to the hallucination inducing forest, Jhanki is unable to confront her father, and this results in her disappointment in herself. While she manages to break Amita out of her hallucination, Amita's anger at her only causes Jhanki to further fall back into being fearful of her surroundings.

Act 3

This leads to the beginning of act three. In the Hero's Journey, the protagonist sets out on the journey to prove himself to others around him. However, in the Heroine's Journey, the protagonist sets out to prove themselves to themselves, and then show what they have learnt to those around them. This is where the protagonist finally learns to trust again, where she cannot be betrayed again because "she has her

own strength and self-realization that can't be taken away from her.” (Schmidt) That is not to mean that the protagonist has someone swooping in to save the day. The choices to save them are still the protagonist's own. Allowing their ally to help her does not take away from the protagonist's agency – the protagonist helps the ally as the ally helps the protagonist.

Despite Flynn no longer being physically by Rapunzel's side, in taking out the sunburst flag, the symbol of his affections, Rapunzel comes to the realization that he has not left her side, and it is the flag that allows her to see the hidden sunbursts in her own mural. This results in her putting the pieces together and coming to the conclusion that she is the Lost Princess.

Jack's betrayal hurts Alice, true, but Hatter's unwavering support has Alice stepping up into finally believing that she is capable of not just saving her father from the control he is under, but also all the other innocent people. In trusting him to stand by her side and fight with her, she sees her own faith in others restored, and gathers the courage to fight again.

Similarly, Jhanki makes the decision to continue on despite her fear, and despite Amita's clear disapproval of Jhanki's fear. She embraces her fear of their situation and fights anyway, her desire to survive stronger than anything. This strength of character to keep going on despite her fear, to find a way out of her situation, whether through her wits or through a narrow escape, is a bravery that Jhanki only just begins to realize she has. It allows her, in the end, to stand side by side with Amita and face Amita's foe, and it allows her to finally confront her father.

In finding this strength, this resolve, the protagonist reaches out with open arms and eyes to grasp their goal. They have braved death and come out the other side, and they no longer fear it. They have learnt their lessons, faced their fears, and nothing can stop them.

Jhanki and Amita manage to succeed in their endeavour, and in coming to her own strengths, Jhanki finally has the courage to face up to her father and show them her worth. Their disapproval no longer confines her, and she steps out of their shadows and into her light, knowing that there are people out there who believe in her, and more importantly, believing in herself.

Similarly, upon her realization that she is the Lost Princess, Rapunzel no longer shies away from Gothel, and instead makes the decision to fight back and take back her life. While it could be mistakenly assumed that Flynn turning up to ‘save’ her is him swooping in to save the day, it is not the case. Flynn cutting off Rapunzel’s hair is him showing that Rapunzel’s freedom is more important to him than his own life, in a last supporting act. He refuses to allow her to give up all that she has learnt about herself for him.

Alice breaks the control of the innocents held captive in the Queen’s Casino not by any external event, but by forcing them to think and feel, and remember themselves. She forces them to find the strength in themselves to break free, resulting in an overload of the system and bringing the Casino crashing down around them. Her

father, breaking out of his own control, sacrifices himself for her, and this gives Alice the fury and will to confront the Queen.

From here, the protagonist returns home a changed person, capable of living a better and more fulfilled life. Here, the protagonist encourages others to learn from their journey and break out of the illusionary worlds they may live in and set out on their own. In the Hero's Journey, the protagonist receives some external validation – a happy-ever-after. However, in the Heroine's Journey, the protagonist's reward is internal – a sense of strength and awareness of their own importance. There are more battles to be won, but the protagonist knows they can face them with their head held high and their eyes open.

In this project, Jhanki finally confronts her father, and frees herself from the bonds of his disapproval and anger. Her mother offers her silent support as Jhanki goes on to follow her dreams, no longer willing to be shackled by their expectations.

In *Tangled*, Rapunzel returns to the kingdom she was taken from, and to her parents. While she does get her happy-ever-after in her engagement to Flynn, the final shot of the movie is not the kiss between the lovers, but rather to the floating lanterns that began the whole journey in the first place. The tradition continues despite Rapunzel's return home, signifying that the cycle continues.

Similarly, in Alice, she returns to her own world and wakes up in the hospital to her worried mother, whereupon she finally lets go of the pain she harbours towards her father's abandonment, having learnt the truth. And while she gets her happy-ever-

after with Hatter appearing in her home, the kiss is not the focus, but rather the fact that the woman who is so used to being abandoned lets go of her inhibition to throw herself into the man's arms and allow herself to completely trust another person to be there for her.

Both stories in a way can be seen as a coming-of-age. However, the Hero's Journey appeals more to a masculine audience, while a Heroine's Journey can appeal to both masculine and feminine audiences. Where a Hero's Journey is commonly showcased in film and television and prose alike, a Heroine's Journey is not as widely acknowledged or appealing, and many people do not realize that there are other archetypes beyond the Hero's in storytelling. A growth in character, a realization of inner strength, is more applicable across the board, but less acknowledged as important in the coming of age story.

Female Led Fantasies

It is very rare to find a fantasy film with more than one female lead. The above examples are films wherein the protagonist is female, but any other female is relegated to an unimportant or villainous role. In *Tangled*, we have Mother Gothel as the only other woman of importance in the story, and in *Alice*, there is the Queen of Hearts. The characters that interact the most with the heroine are generally male, and

the story usually leads to a romance. This is not just seen in fantasy films, however, but in most adventure stories that have a female protagonist. *The Hunger Games* series is another such example, as is the SyFy miniseries *Tin Man*, though the latter did not end with a romantic happy-ever-after. Instead, it ended with a family reunion.

In my project, I deliberately chose to have Jhanki's forced companion on her journey be the Crown Princess instead of the Crown Prince so that the focus would less be on the prospect of the two having a romance develop, and instead be on the way they would learn from each other, and grow as people. While I know that romantic happy endings can be enjoyable, I wanted my protagonist's endgame to not be getting a significant other. Rather, I wanted to show her growing to love herself and becoming confident in herself. Jhanki grows as a person, she learns to face her fears instead of hide or run from them. Similarly, Amita also grows as a person. She learns compassion, and to face the hard truths of her life.

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